Title
Producing, Collecting, and Displaying Phulkari Embroidery from Punjab, c.1850 to Present

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Publication Date
2015

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Producing, Collecting, and Displaying *Phulkari* Embroidery from Punjab, c.1850 to Present

By

Cristin Ruth McKnight Sethi

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Joanna G. Williams, Chair
Professor Patricia Berger
Professor Munis Faruqui

Spring 2015

Abstract

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This dissertation examines the production, collection, and display of *phulkari* folk embroidery by looking at the ways in which textiles move from sites of production in Punjab to sites of consumption and display in South Asia, North America, and Europe, beginning in the middle part of the nineteenth century and continuing to the present day. Part of the motivation behind this study is to understand the circulation of *phulkaris*: how and when did these textiles enter collections, become categorized as "art" and displayed in exhibitions, and take on new meanings during processes of acquisition-display? Another motivation for this study is to understand what can be gleaned through close visual examination of objects, and exploring the process of making - a process which, in this case, is deeply informed by gender and gendered constructions of labor.

With these themes in mind, this dissertation begins with a focus on production, that is on objects and artists. The Introduction looks critically at the origins of *phulkaris* with particular attention to previous literature on the subject and the contours of existing archives. The first chapter ("Abstraction and the Category of 'Phulkari'") examines the diverse styles of embroidery identified in scholarship and museums as "phulkari," and explores the role of abstraction in the motifs and compositions of several individual textiles. Chapter Two ("Embroidery as Writing in Figurative *Sainchi Phulkaris*") focuses on the women responsible for making *phulkaris*, and identifies ways in which we can read individual women's "hands" and female agency in these objects, particularly in figurative, narrative *phulkaris*. Acknowledging that women's voices and biographies are rarely seen in traditional archives (e.g. as text, as pen and paper), these textiles become compelling objects that mark a woman's perspective and presence.

Shifting gears the final three chapters explore the ways in which *phulkaris* have circulated in collections and practices of display, namely large-scale exhibitions and museum galleries. Chapter Three ("Women's Work: *Phulkari*, Flora Annie Steel, and Collecting Textiles in British India") focuses on the figure of Flora Annie Steel, a British woman living in Punjab in the late nineteenth century, who collected and wrote about *phulkaris*. This chapter looks closely at the

way Steel depicts *phulkaris* in her oft-cited 1888 essay, and the subsequent effects this had on early collections and exhibitions of *phulkaris* in British India. Chapter Four ("Embroidery for the New Nation: Collecting and Exhibiting *Phulkaris* in India after 1947") centers around the growing presence of *phulkaris* in museum collections in India following the partitioning of Punjab in 1947, and explores how these textiles were leveraged as objects of national interest and celebration. The fifth and final chapter ("(Re)Defining *Phulkari* as 'Sikh Art'") examines recent collections and exhibitions of *phulkaris* in South Asia, Europe, and North America which frame these textiles within the context of "Sikh art" - an emerging and somewhat controversial category within South Asian Art History - and shows how these objects have been re-inscribed in the name of religion. The Conclusion discusses recent practices of producing *phulkaris* as well as visual citations of *phulkaris* in contemporary art, and proposes ways to understand this diverse body of material given the contexts of circulation and display discussed in previous chapters.

Each of these chapters aim to examine the role of gender in the making and framing of these textiles, and to explore the ways in which production and consumption of *phulkaris* in a number of global and historical settings have dramatically altered their meanings over time. Ultimately this study provides a case study for understanding the complex circulation of objects and their shifting uses and meanings when collected and displayed in new locations and cultural situations.

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Preface

The "I" in *Phulkari*

On our first wedding anniversary my husband and I received a *phulkari* from my grandmother-in-law, Amiji. We were sitting at the dining room table of my in-laws' house in Rochester, New York, and had just finished a celebratory dinner. Amiji didn't say much when she gave us the *phulkari* - a simple, but elegant *bagh* densely embroidered with gold- and cream-colored silk threads - and in fact, I remember my mother-in-law, Uma, actually presented the gift to us. Being a great lover of textiles and all things handmade, Uma had lovingly folded and stored Amiji's *phulkari* for decades in her bedroom closet. Amiji told us that this *bagh phulkari* was originally made by her older sister at their mother's insistence, sometime when the family lived in Lalpur, Punjab (in the Hoshiarpur Tehsil in present-day India) most likely in the 1930s or 40s. This *phulkari* took Amiji's sister about three years to make; in those days the family did not have electricity in the house, so the *phulkari* was made entirely during daylight hours. Amiji recalled that her mother took great care of *phulkaris*, and had two *baghs* which she gave to Amiji. One Amiji gave to a tailor to cut up and stitch into a robe (something she now regrets). The other she gave to Uma. Uma rarely used this *bagh*, and in fact one of the few times that it actually left her closet was during our wedding a year earlier when we hung it as a canopy over the Guru Granth Sahib.

Both Uma and Amiji were well aware of my interest in Indian textiles, and in *phulkari* in particular, and both my husband and I were honored by the gift. I first learned about and fell in love with *phulkari* quite a number of years earlier when, as a newly minted college graduate, I interned in the Costume and Textile Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and amongst other things did research on two very different-looking *phulkaris* in the museum's permanent collection. What I learned during that initial project - a general introduction to styles and stitches, and an understanding of the popular, often romantic, associations between *phulkari* and the Punjabi land and people - lays the foundation for my present inquiry. While several years have passed since the time I first saw and studied the LACMA *phulkaris* to when I began my current Ph.D. dissertation project - and several other textiles and objects have captured my attention - *phulkaris* have remained a strong interest of mine.

Why Phulkari?

Very often over the course of the last three years as I have been working on this project, people have asked why I am studying *phulkaris*. One of my interests as an art historian is to think about how and why canons of art are formed, and particularly why certain objects enter into museum collections and surveys of South Asian art and other objects do not. I am also fascinated by what happens when objects circulate away from their makers or initially-intended locations of use, enter into new cultural situations, and acquire different meanings. I am not alone in having these interests. Richard Davis, Igor Kopytoff, Arjun Appadurai, and Finbarr Barry Flood have all written eloquently about the biography of things and the different social lives that objects

experience when moving through time and space - studies which have had profound influence on the discipline of Art History.[1] I am also inspired by the wealth of scholarship on museology and collecting practices, which encourage exploration of archives and sites of history-making as subjects in themselves; that is, not simply what is *in* an archive (e.g. museum or private collection), but rather how that archive came to be and what its origins says about history, politics, or culture.[2] My graduate mentor at UC Berkeley, Professor Joanna Williams has also written and spoken about the question of canon-formation within South Asian art, and has in many ways inspired my investigations along these lines.[3]

For me, as an historian and a great admirer of South Asian textiles and objects often identified as "craft" or "folk art," I have spent many hours studying the historiography of these kinds of materials and considering how and when they entered into collections - both public and private - were categorized as "art," displayed in exhibitions, and took on meanings of various kinds during these processes of acquisition-display. I view makers - artists, craftspeople, and designers - as key players in the life of an object, but not the sole source. Collectors, curators, and consumers are equally responsible for making meaning out of objects and contributing in significant ways to how, when, and why objects circulate in the world.

This study emerges out of my desire to engage with a textile art from South Asia that has an interesting and complex history of circulation. I specifically wanted to work with a group of objects that originally moved in domestic circles and did not have a long history of trade outside of South Asia (e.g. as did *kalamkari* textiles from the Coromandel Coast, or block-printed textiles from Gujarat, both of which were traded around the world from a very early period). I was also interested in makers who were not typically considered "professionals" and accordingly invisible in familiar surveys and censuses of crafts and craftspeople from the subcontinent (an area where male weavers, dyers, and embroiderers have been notably present). *Phulkari* emerged as a compelling case study, and particularly so because unlike other embroideries that were made by "non-professional" women and circulated in domestic settings (e.g. Rabari or *kantha* embroidery), there was not a large extant group of contemporary embroiderers working with this

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[1] See Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, 1997); Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 64-9; and Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[2] Particularly useful texts on this subject include Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (Les mots et les choses)* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966); Sheldon Annis, "Museum as Staging Ground for Symbolic Action" in *Museum International* 38, 3 (1986), 168–171; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1988); Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991); Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); and most recently Kavita Singh and Saloni Mathur, eds., *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia* (Delhi: Routledge, 2014).

[3] See in particular Introduction in Joanna G. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) and the American Council for Southern Asian Art Roundtable Panel organized by Prof. Williams, "Loose Canons in South Asian Art: A Mixed Blessing?" at the College Art Association symposium, Spring 2009.

material (or so I thought when I began this study!). Furthermore, popular histories of *phulkari* frame it as an art form that abruptly ended at the time of the partitioning of Punjab.[4] And yet, everywhere I looked - in museums around the world, in private collections, and in people's homes - I found *phulkaris*. For me, it became clear, that there was a story missing about *phulkaris* in existing scholarship, and one that I have attempted to address here. Most of the existing studies on *phulkaris* focus on its production and "original" use as part of a woman's dowry and/or marriage celebrations. Missing however from many of these studies is a close examination of the textiles themselves.[5] Accordingly, my discussion of the production of *phulkaris*, particularly in Chapters One and Two, attempt to fill in this gap by considering in close detail several *phulkaris* from various collections. My study does not claim to be a comprehensive history of *phulkaris* nor does it present every moment when *phulkaris* were collected or exhibited. Instead, I have chosen a few compelling moments that offer insight into the many different meanings attached to this cloth.

[4] See in particular Jasleen Dhamija, "Embroidered Gardens of Flowers: Bagh and Phulkari of Punjab," *Threads and Voices*, edited by Laila Tyabji (Mumbai: Marg, 2007); Gillow, John and Nicholas Barnard. *Indian Textiles* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008); and Rond, Frederic. "Phulkari: Ancient Textile Heritage of Punjab." *Indian Heritage Gallery*: www.indianheritage.biz, Paris, March 2010.

[5] A notable exception is Harjeet Singh Gill's excellent book, *A Phulkari from Bhatinda* (New Delhi: Department of Anthropological Linguistics, 1977).

Acknowledgments

Over the last several years as I prepared for, actively researched, and wrote this dissertation, I have been blessed with knowing and working with numerous colleagues, mentors, friends, and loved ones, all of whom have helped make my study possible.

I am grateful for the many women and men who invited me into their homes and shared with me their passion for *phulkaris*, family stories, and more often than not a delicious cup of tea or a meal. I am also indebted to scholars who shared their thoughts and contacts, and provided words of encouragement during various points of this project. In particular, thank you to Roopinder Singh Bhaggeria, Neelam Man Singh Chaudhary, Indira Dayal, Sanjana and Kanta Dogra, Karuna and B.N. Goswamy, Anu Gupta, Ravneet Kaur, Raman Mann, and Sikander Singh in Chandigarh; Rajendra Sidhu in Patiala; Subashini Aryan, Chhote Lal Bharany, Jasleen Dhamija, Veena Dhaliwal and family, J.S. Hitkari, Krishna Lal, O.P. Jain, Jyotindra Jain, H.N. Minas, Gulshan Nanda, Gogi Saroj Pal, and Surjit Singh in Delhi; Noorjehan Bilgrami in Karachi; Joginder Ahluwalia, Melia Belli Bose, Judy Frater, Atreyee Gupta, Linda Dalrymple Henderson, Peter Hoffenberg, Mark Kenoyer, Janice Leoshko, Anne Morrell, and Bishakha Shome; the staff at the Institute for South Asia Studies at the University of California, Berkeley; Matt Joyce, John McChesney-Young, and staff in the History of Art Department at UC Berkeley; faculty at UC Berkeley who offered guidance along the way, in particular Patricia Berger, Vasudha Dalmia, Prachi Deshpande, Munis Faruqui, Beate Fricke, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, Margaretta Lovell, Sugata Ray, Upkar Ubhi, and my inspiring and supportive advisor Joanna G. Williams; and graduate student colleagues Matthew Culler, Aglaya Glebova, Sam Henneberry, Aaron Hyman, William Ma, Padma Maitland, Laure Marest-Caffey, Tara McDowell, Oliver O'Donnell, Kailani Polzak, Sandra Sardjono, and Michelle Wang who graciously read early versions of chapters and provided invaluable feedback.

Special thanks also to individuals and institutions who allowed me access to important archives of *phulkaris* and texts, including Poonam Khanna and the library staff at the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh; the incredibly generous and thoughtful staff at the National Museum, New Delhi, in particular Anamika Pathak, who shared her ideas, insight, and friendship; Ruchira Ghose and staff of the Crafts Museum, New Delhi; Sudha Dhingra at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi; Sunaina Suneja, Maria Angelica Vargas and the hard-working staff of the Nabha Foundation; Kishore Singh and Poonam Baid at the Delhi Art Gallery; Smita Singh at the Srinivas Malliah Memorial, New Delhi; staff at the American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi; staff at the Calico Museum, Ahmedabad; library and archives staff at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Qamar Adamjee, Susie Kantor, Forrest McGill, Jessica Kuhn and staff at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; Narinder Kapany and Sonia Dhami at the Sikh Foundation, Palo Alto; Darielle Mason and staff at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Victoria Bradshaw and staff at the Hearst Museum, Berkeley; Christian Luczanits and Helen Abbot at the Rubin Museum, New York; Rosemary Crill and Susan Stronge at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; staff at Textile Museum Canada, Toronto; Cathy and Frederick Asher; Ghiora Aharoni; Dale Gluckman and staff at the Los

Angeles County Museum of Art; and Caroline Dechert and staff at the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe.

I am particularly indebted to Madhu Bhullar in Chandigarh for her tireless support of my project, for providing introductions to friends who love *phulkaris*, and for her warm hospitality and enjoyable company. I truly could not have done this study without her help. I am also grateful to Captain S.P.S. Suri and family as well as Dr. Kusum Chopra in Delhi, and Raveena and Tony Suri in Chandigarh for their warm hospitality and endless encouragement.

Special thanks to my late father-in-law Gurdip Singh Sethi who provided sage wisdom, helped me trouble-shoot many difficult Gurumukhi translations, and graciously invited me into the large, robust, and loving Sethi clan.

I am grateful for my family for their support and encouragement, and in particular to my parents Linda and Rick for being an endless source of inspiration and love; my mother-in-law Uma for her insight and good humor; my gorgeous and brilliant children Haroun and Kusum for providing much-needed comic relief and perspective; and most of all for Sanjit - my editor, my collaborator, my heart. This dissertation is for you.

INTRODUCTION

Locating *Phulkaris,* In and Out of Archives

> Before this language of language, it is the thing itself that appears, in its own characters, but within the reality that has been patterned from the very outset by the name...The process of naming will be based, not upon what one sees, but upon elements that have already been unfolded in the process of description.
>
> - Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things (Les mots et les choses)*, 1966.[1]

Very often the way in which we encounter objects is in museums. Various kinds of things from numerous places and diverse time periods appear in uniform display: propped on pedestals, framed by plexiglas, attached to brief textual descriptions (ironically referred to by museum professionals as "tombstones"), and arranged chronologically or thematically to tell particular stories about the histories of people, science, or art. And yet, the context of these archives of material and visual culture is only one facet of a larger history of an object, what Igor Kopytoff and Arjun Appadurai refer to as an object's biography.[2] Objects, like people, move through time and space, interact with other bodies, and acquire new names or identities. They are not static things, but participate (sometimes quite actively) in complex processes of being.

Along the same lines, Richard Davis argues that objects acquire meaning through "communities of response," or dynamic exchanges of viewing and interpreting.[3] Understandably, this meaning is not embedded in an object nor is it fixed at the moment of an object's creation - for when exactly is that "moment"? The initial onset of an idea? The creation of a design? The acquiring of materials? The actual fabrication? And yet art historians have traditionally privileged the perceived moment of creation (e.g. the origins of a thing). As this dissertation will show, by studying processes of collecting and exhibiting we are able to give attention to those moments after fabrication, to acknowledge the importance of a thing's biography and the many different interactions that humans have with objects.

It is through this lens that we can truly see and interpret *phulkaris*, not merely as objects that "are from" Punjabi villages or "made by" female embroiderers, but as multi-faceted things that circulate, take on different meanings and values, and experience new contexts of viewing.[4] At times these various meanings and values might collide (e.g. *phulkari* as Pakistani art, *phulkari* as

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (Les mots et les choses)* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 130-139.

[2] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 64-9

[3] Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, 1997), 7.

[4] I am not alone in finding inspiration from Kopytoff/Appadurai's work as a vantage point through which to study *phulkari*. See Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion" in *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia* (2010). Maskiell's excellent essay focuses on textual references to *phulkaris*' movement, less on the textiles themselves.

Indian art), at other times they coalesce, ultimately participating in what Davis refers to as the "history of remembering" -[5] different people at different times viewing and interpreting the same object in different ways. We shall see that *phulkaris* mean something very different to Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, a British writer living in Punjab in the late nineteenth century, and to Dr. Narinder Kapany, a collector of "Sikh art" currently living in Palo Alto, California. These multiple, seemingly contradictory meanings, uses, and viewing contexts for *phulkaris* ultimately contribute to its rich biography; they are as Finbarr Barry Flood suggests, secondary or tertiary lives or uses of an object that are just as meaningful - and are not contradictory or degradations of - its first use.[6]

The museum context - and its immediate way of seeing objects -[7] emerges out of a larger history of knowledge systems and classification. In his much-studied and often-cited text, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault presents to the reader a brief (Western) history of classification and its theoretical underpinnings - the how and why things have been described, named, and ordered in certain ways. Moving from the Ancient Greeks to the Age of Enlightenment, Foucault argues that the process of classification and taxonomy began from a very early period - as soon as people used language - but found particular force in the minds of nineteenth-century scholars studying the past. It was during this time that knowledge was manipulated, used, and set as "truth" - the legacy of which the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are still unraveling. For this reason this dissertation begins its temporal focus in the middle of the nineteenth century.

As this study will show, *phulkari* becomes "phulkari" not because the motifs on the cloth look particularly like flowers (*phul* = flower), but rather because they have been given this name in endless descriptions and histories of the cloth. Museums and their contexts of display constitute a key moment in the naming of *phulkaris*. We will also see that this process of description, of naming and defining objects like *phulkaris*, is also evident in what museums choose to hide or obscure.[8] For meaning in museums is made through the way an object is hung or displayed (its verso hidden, its original use denied) as well as by what is left in storage or not collected. For example, the kinds of *phulkaris* that appear in the Textile Gallery at the Crafts Museum in New Delhi are quite different in composition and material from the ones folded and kept inside trunks in the museum's storeroom. Those choices - of what to show and how to show it - become the apparatus for viewing and interpreting *phulkaris*, the nomenclature we use to create meaning from this diverse set of objects.

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[5] Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, 7.

[6] Finbarr Barry Flood, "Appropriation as Inscription: Making History in the First Friday Mosque of Delhi" in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, edited by Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011): 121-147. See also Flood, *Objects of Translation* (2009).

[7] See Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 25-32.

[8] Foucault discusses the importance of museums not for what they show or allow us to see, but rather for what they hide or obscure. See Foucault, *The Order of Things,* 137.

What's in a Name?: The Etymology of *Phulkari*

Perhaps the most logical place to start a study of *phulkaris* is with the name. Conventional scholarship on the subject translate "phulkari" from Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi as some iteration of "floral work" or "flower craft" - definitions that stem from dividing the word into its two roots: *phul,* meaning flower and *kari*, derived from the verb "to do" (*karna*) or the noun "work" (*kar*).[9] In our current understanding, *phulkari* refers to a style of embroidery, dominated by the darning stitch, originally made throughout the Punjab region of present-day India and Pakistan.[10] The darning stitch is sometimes known as the elongated running stitch, single-sided satin stitch, or in South Asia as *rafugari*.[11] Much of the literature and oral traditions surrounding *phulkaris* focus on the women responsible for covering large cloths with this type of embroidery. The cloths were typically used as large shawls or veils known as *odhini* (or *orhni*) by the women who made them or by their recipients, though a *phulkari* could also take the form of a range of household or personal items such as wall hangings, bedcovers, table covers, cushion covers, and *kurtas* (tunics).[12] These women learned the art of embroidering *phulkaris* from their mothers, grandmothers, or older female relatives and friends; a girl began to embroider at a young age, and eventually was tasked with making *phulkaris* to be included in her dowry upon marriage. Other popular stories recount how a grandmother would begin to stitch a *phulkari* upon the birth

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[9] *Kari* is actually operating here as an adjectival noun, suggesting possession or description: the flower's work or flower-style work.

[10] There are other forms of *phulkaris* made outside of Punjab, specifically darning stitch embroidery made in other regions of Pakistan such as Swat, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the Northwest Frontier Province or NWFP). Swati *phulkari* is perhaps one of the more popular and visually distinctive types. This dissertation takes as its focus forms of *phulkaris* made in what was considered to be the region of Punjab prior to 1947, now encompassing parts of the Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh as well as the Punjab province of present-day Pakistan. For further discussion of other kinds of *phulkaris* see Nasreen Askari and Rosemary Crill, *Colours of the Indus: Costume and Textiles of Pakistan* (London: V&A/Merrell Holberton, 1997); and Noorjehan Bilgrami, *Tana Bana: The Woven Soul of Pakistan* (Karachi: Koel Publications, 2004).

[11] To make the stitch, an embroiderer draws a piece of thread (in the case of *phulkari*, untwisted silk or cotton floss) through the base cloth (A) using a thin needle and leaves a long float of thread on the surface before drawing the needle and thread back through the base cloth (B). The result is a long distance between points A and B. Embroiderers sometimes count the number of warp and weft threads on the base cloth to determine the next location to draw the needle and thread. These are themes that gets picked up and repeated by later authors who reinforce the technique of counting threads from the reverse of the cloth as a defining feature of *phulkaris*, even when close examination of actual textiles suggest very different methods of embroidery. There is some debate about whether or not the term "darning" is appropriate to use when describing *phulkaris*. The darning stitch is an elongated running stitch, which can either be used to create pattern or diapering much in the same way that an extra-weft thread would ornament a brocade weave. Other times this darning stitch turns back on itself, appearing more like a single-sided satin stitch. Some scholars disagree with the term darning because of its connection to mending, in which case the stitch attempts to replicate the warp and weft of a cloth to patch up a hole. Because the darning stitch used in embroidering *phulkari* is employed in the creation of pattern and motif, some feel that the term diapering is more appropriate. Flora Annie Steel uses both terms (darning and diapering) as have many subsequent scholars. However, the term darning seems most prevalent in scholarship on *phulkaris*, and for this reason I have used it to avoid confusion. In addition to the darning stitch, artists used a range of stitches when making a *phulkari*, including chain, herringbone, buttonhole, stem and Cretan stitches. For further elaboration on the stitches used in *phulkaris* and in other textiles from South Asia see Anne Morrell, *Indian Embroidery Techniques at the Calico Museum of Textiles: A Working Guide* (Ahmedabad: Sarabhai Foundation, 2000).

[12] Feliccia Yacopino, *Threadlines Pakistan* (Karachi: Ministry of Industries, Government of Pakistan, 1977).

of a girl, and that that *phulkari* would serve as one of the many *phulkaris* (sometimes 51 or 101 pieces) given to a bride as part of her dowry. *Phulkaris* were an important part of a woman's material wealth that she brought with her to her new home after marriage. In addition to being worn as *odhinis*, *phulkaris* were also used as *bistre* (bedding fabrics), layered with *chaddars* (thin sheets) and *dhurries* (thicker woven rugs) to create cushioning on a *charpoy* (woven cot). For special social functions or religious ceremonies *phulkaris* were hung on the walls of homes and temples. *Phulkaris* were also sometimes used as cloth wrappers for wedding gifts and sacred objects, and as offering to deities and visiting officials or foreign dignitaries.[13]

The earliest textual references to *phulkaris* appear rather late in the presumably longer story of its life.[14] Flora Annie Steel uses the term "phulkari" in her 1888 article of the same name, and presents to us one of the first English-language uses of the term.[15] Writing in the 18th century, in his story *Heer Ranjha*, Waris Shah references *phulkaris* as some of the items in the Heer's dowry, and Devyani Mitra Dutta argues that the counted-thread embroidery described by the seventh-century author Banabhatta in his Sanskrit text *Harshacharita* may in fact be a reference to *phulkaris* and *baghs*.[16] Earlier mention of embroidery in Punjabi sources do not necessarily use "phulkari" but instead "kasida," a general term for embroidery. Often cited as an early textual reference to *phulkaris* is a line from a Sikh hymn (*shabad*) in *Rag Basant Hindol*, attributed to the First Mehl or Mahila (i.e., Guru Nanak), which reads:

> ਕਢ ਕਸੀਦਾ ਪਹਿਰਹਿ ਚੋਲੀ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਣਹੁ ਨਾਰੀ = *kadh kasida pehreh choli, ta tum janoh nari* = when you embroider your own blouse, only then will you be considered an accomplished lady.[17]

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[13] S.S. Hitkari, *Phulkari: The Folk Art of the Punjab* (New Delhi: Phulkari Publications, 1980), 36-38; and Kapila Vatsyayan, *Embroidery in Asia: Sui Dhaga, Crossing Boundaries with Needle and Thread* (New Delhi: Wisdom Tree Publishers, 2010).

[14] For as numerous historians of South Asian textiles like to point out, there is evidence of embroidery being made on the subcontinent since premodern times, namely with the discovery of thread needles at excavations in Mohenjo Daro. While it seems dubious to directly connect ancient needles to more contemporary practices of embroidery, this does suggest that stitching of fibers occurred in South Asia at a very early period. For more on early textiles on the subcontinent see Mark Kenoyer's essay "Ancient Textiles of the Indus Valley Region" in Bilgrami, ed., *Tana Bana* (2004). Unfortunately extant textiles do not shed the same convincing light in terms of the South Asian origins of embroidery. Some of the earliest South Asian embroidery that exists is from the 16th century, made for the Mughal emperors, and currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

[15] Flora Annie Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab," *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, 2 (October 1888): 71-2.

[16] See Jasvinder Kaur, "The Past and Present of Phulkari," *The Tribune India*, March 6, 2015; and Devyani Mitra Dutta, *A Catalogue on Phulkari Textiles in the Collection of the Indian Museum* (Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1985), 10.

[17] Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 13 attributes this line to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is partially correct as the Rag Basant Hindol is part of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. I am grateful to Dr. Joginder Ahluwalia for his assistance in helping me track down the original source for this text; based on email correspondence, May 2011.

If the attribution to Guru Nanak is correct, then this *shabad* would have been written sometime in the late 15th / early 16th century. There are no references to *phulkaris* in classical literature and few *phulkaris* have survived prior to 1850.[18]

That said, the term *phulkari* appears outside of textual references, in popular songs and poetic lines circulated through oral tradition.[19] Some such lines connect the making and collecting of *phulkaris* to a girl's marriage:

> ਦਯਾਂ ਲਾਖ ਫੁਲਕਾਰੀਯਾਂ ਜਿਥੇ ਧੀ ਦਾ ਆਦਰ ਹੋ = *dayan lakh phulkarian, jithe dhi da aadar ho* = I promise to give one lakh [100,000] *phulkaris* for my daughter (for her wedding), only in a home where she is respected.[20]

Others make reference to longing and desire, and use *phulkaris* to symbolize a wistful, forlorn young bride:

> ਉਤੇ ਫੁਲਕਾਰੀਅਂ ਮੈਂ ਰਹਾਂਦੀ ਕੁਨਆਰੀ ਸਾਉ ਪੁਤ ਪਰਦੇਸ਼ ਨੂ ਤੋਰੀਅ ਆਯੇ = *utte phulkarian main, rahandi kunwari, saau put pardes, nu toria aye* = veiled in a *phulkari*, the bride wishes she had remained a maiden, cursing her mother-in-law, who has sent her son away to a foreign land.[21]

> ਫੁਲਕਾਰੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਰੇਸ਼ਮੀ ਰੰਗ ਨਾ ਆਯਾ ਠੀਕ ਛੇਤੀ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਦੇਵਨੇ ਮੈਂ ਰਸਤਾ ਰਹੀ ਓਡੀਕ = *phulkari meri, reshmi rang na aiya theek, chheti darshan devne, main rasta rahi udeek* = the silk color dye of my *phulkari* has become imperfect as I was watching the road and imploring my lover to return.[22]

Some scholars suggest that the name "phulkari" arose through its connection to a similar darning stitch embroidery from Iran known as *gulkari* (*gul* is Farsi or Persian for "flower"), with the assumption that the name "phulkari" was picked up as the stitch traveled to Punjab from points further West.[23] Shehnaz Ismail makes a similar argument for connecting the darning stitch used in *phulkaris* with embroidery in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, though in all

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[18] Joss Graham, "Phulkari and Bagh: The Embroidery Shawls of the Punjab," in *Asian Embroidery*, ed. by Jasleen Dhamija (Delhi: Crafts Caouncil of India, 2004): 113-124.

[19] Several of these have been reprinted in various secondary sources, however there is rarely a citation attached to these couplets that give place of origin or date. For the most comprehensive list see Durgesh Shankar and Charu Smita Gupta, *Phulkari of Punjab*, catalogue accompanying exhibition organized in conjunction with the Crafts Museum, New Delhi (Chandigarh: Government Museum and Art Gallery, 2002).

[20] The implied speaker of this verse is a mother or maternal figure. Original reference in Durgesh Shankar and Charu Smita Gupta, *Phulkari of Punjab*, 3, though translation my own with the assistance of Dr. Kusum Chopra.

[21] Durgesh Shankar and Charu Smita Gupta, *Phulkari of Punjab*, 3-4.

[22] Durgesh Shankar and Charu Smita Gupta, *Phulkari of Punjab*, 4.

[23] "Gulkari to Phulkari," *Asian Textile Journal*, January 2001, 64.

examples the name "phulkari" persists.[24] Furthermore, as Judy Frater astutely points out, "stitch is not style,"[25] and we must be wary of drawing sharp lines of origination between various darning stitch embroideries from the larger Central and South Asian worlds - of which there are many - to the embroideries found in Punjab.

Most likely the term "phulkari" arose as a name to identify the earliest form of darning stitch embroidery in Punjab, particularly the motifs that took the form of small flowers (*butis*) stitched onto readily available handspun, handwoven cotton cloth (*khaddar*). The *khaddar* base cloth used to make a *phulkari* was spun, woven, and dyed locally, while artists purchased the unplied silk threads (*pat*) from traveling merchants, very often tribal women, who brought silk from Afghanistan, Bengal, Kashmir and China.[26] Some of the earliest extant *phulkaris* feature these simple floral forms. An early 19th century example originally from the Central Museum, Lahore, now in the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh depicts a regular pattern of stylized floral forms repeated across a large (approximately 9 x 4 feet) cloth, typical of early *phulkaris* (Figure 0.1). Because silk floss was an expensive commodity and not readily available in rural Punjab, the embroiderer's choice to employ darning stitches when making a *phulkari* was a practical consideration that reflected silk floss availability and a woman's budget. While early *phulkaris* were sparsely embroidered, as these textiles grew in popularity, patterns became denser and thus more expensive silk thread was needed as a way "to display the wealth and prestige of the family at the important occasion of marriage when alliances are formed."[27]

Even painted depictions of *phulkaris*, such as Amrita Sher Gil's famous canvas, *The Bride,* feature these simple, small floral motifs (Figure 0.2). The female figure in *The Bride* appears wearing a typical Punjabi style wedding costume, distinctive for the metallic head ornament (known as a *chonk*) over which appears a red-colored veil embellished with small floral forms. The diaphanous veil hangs from the *chonk* and falls across the woman's shoulders and chest, covering her upper body with light-yellow flowers. Sher-Gil, who grew up in Lahore and spent time traveling in Punjab, was particularly drawn to rural and female subjects, and very likely came in contact with *phulkaris* being made and worn.[28] While Sher Gil's handling of paint and abstraction of form in *The Bride* render the details of the female figure's garment somewhat

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[24] Shehnaz Ismail's "A Stitch Travels: Embroidery in Swat Kohistan, Swat Valley and Hazara" Bilgrami, ed., *Tana Bana* (2004), 32- 41. Ismail concerns herself with the origins of *phulkari* from Swat Kohistan, Swat Valley and Hazara in North Pakistan.

[25] Based on email correspondence with Judy Frater, February 2015.

[26] Michelle Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past" and "Honor, Desire, and Fashion"; Shehnaz Ismail's "A Stitch Travels; Dhamija, "Embroidered Gardens,";Joss Graham, "Phulkari and Bagh: The Embroidery Shawls of the Punjab," in Asian Embroidery, ed. by Jasleen Dhamija (Delhi: Crafts Caouncil of India, 2004): 113-124.

[27] Graham, "Phulkari and Bagh" (2004), 121.

[28] For more on Sher-Gil, see Geeta Kapur, "Body as Gesture: Women Artists at Work," *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000); Sonal Khullar, *Artistic Labor, Sexual Form, and Modernism in India, c. 1930 - 1980* (Ph.D. dissertation, History of Art, University of California, Berkeley, Spring 2009); and Sonal Khullar, "Three Traditions in Modernist Art," in Vasudha Dalmia, ed., *The Cambridge companion to modern Indian culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

difficult to read, visually, the depiction of light yellow flowers on the red-colored veil are comparable in style to those in the 19th century *phulkari* from Lahore. Other paintings by Sher Gil make similar visual reference to *phulkaris*, though a *phulkari* of a slightly different style, one that appears embroidered onto a thicker, darker hued, *khaddar* base cloth. Take for example, Sher Gil's *Woman on Charpoy*, which depicts a female figure reclining on a cot (*charpoy)* while another figure, holding a traditional-style fan (*pankha*) attends to her (Figure 0.3). Near the reclining woman's right foot a piece of fabric - possibly a depiction of an embroidered *phulkari* - falls from the *charpoy* onto the floor. In a letter to Karl Khandalavala written in 1940, Sher-Gil describes *Woman on Charpoy* and the embroidery depicted in the scene:

> I have just finished a picture. A girl in red flowered clothes (the Punjabi dress, tight red trousers, shirt and veil) is reclining on a charpai, its posts of an incandescent red rise round her like tongues of flame. A fat dark woman in the background in green is fanning her - (ruddy blackish brown tones in the flesh very attractive). The wall behind them is a warm darkish, transparent yellow. The charpai itself a yellowish off-white. There is a dark blue drapery on it that sweeps the ground with little magenta and cream coloured embroidered flowers.[29]

It is possible that the "dark blue drapery...with little magenta and cream coloured embroidered flowers" that Sher-Gil describes, is a *phulkari*. The small floral motifs depicted on the dark blue-colored cloth in Sher-Gil's painting are markedly similar to the stylized floral forms found on numerous *phulkaris*, and particularly reminiscent of a *nilak phulkari* from a private collection in New Delhi which features comparable geometricized "flowers" (almost cross-like in their rendering) on an indigo-dyed *khaddar* base cloth Figure 0.4).[30] Scholars often discuss these paintings by Sher-Gil as representing the artist's interest in Indian folk culture and rural bodies, and the inclusion of *phulkaris* in Sher-Gil's compositions may serve to create a visual connection along these lines: embroidered cloth as emblematic of Punjabi women, particularly brides, and rural spaces. For our purposes, Sher-Gil's canvases offer an early example of *phulkaris* being worn, and in particular earlier styles of *phulkaris* characterized by a sparse display of embroidered "flowers." These earlier styles are, as we shall see, vastly different from the motifs and compositions that have come to dominate the art form and are popularly considered the quintessential *phulkari* motif.

Wrought on coarse handspun, handwoven cotton *khaddar*, the artists responsible for making *phulkaris* transformed the relatively simple darning stitch into a seemingly endless array of stylistic variation and decorative motifs. Several scholars have attempted to identify the numerous styles of *phulkaris* that exist, and early scholarship in particular espouses two broad categories or types of *phulkaris*: those from the eastern regions of Punjab (present-day India) and

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[29] *Amrita Sher-Gil: An Indian Artist Family of the Twentieth Century* (catalogue for exhibition at Haus der Kunst, Munich and Tate Modern, London). Munich: Schirmer / Mosel, 2008. Plate 98.

[30] The name *nilak phulkari* attributed to this style by virtue of its dark blue (*nila*) hue.

those from the western regions of Punjab (present-day Pakistan).[31] More recent studies move beyond a simple East-West binary, and have assigned specific names to some of the many stylistic variations of *phulkaris* that exist now in museums and private collections; classifying and ordering *phulkaris* according to motifs, composition, and technical details and sorting them into categories such as *thirma phulkari*, *nilak phulkari*, *bagh*, *sainchi phulkari*, *chope*, *shishedar*, and *darshan dwar*.[32] In some cases the names make direct reference to visual aspects of the *phulkari*: *nilak phulkaris* (*nila* means blue) are embroidered on a deep blue or black background and thought by some to be connected with the Hindu god Krishna (Figure 0.5);[33] *shishedar phulkaris* (*shisha* means mirror) incorporate small mica or glass mirrors in addition to darning stitch embroidery (Figure 0.6); and *darshan dwar phulkaris* depict large gateways (*dwar* means door or entrance; Figure 0.7). In other cases the names are slightly more poetic: *bagh*, which means garden, refers to a *phulkari* that is densely embroidered, so much so that the embroidery threads completely cover the cotton base cloth beneath - creating a lush garden of stitches and motifs (Figure 0.8). One variation of a *bagh phulkari* - and there are numerous - is a type called *Bawan Bagh* (*bawan* means 52), a name presumably referring to the number of distinct patterns embroidered on the cloth (Figure 0.9).[34] *Phulkaris* such as these were made by older, more skilled embroiderers, as a kind of sampler of the various embroidery stitches and patterns they were accomplished in making. Still other names are somewhat obscure and their reference points and meanings are unknown: *sainchi* has several meanings in Punjabi including "original" and comes from the word "sucha" or "suchi" meaning pure or uncontaminated, perhaps a suggestion that these *phulkaris* are of an older style (Figure 0.10).[35] However, some scholars argue that *sainchi phulkaris* are connected to *sanjhi*, a form of the Hindu goddess worshipped throughout

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[31] Flora Annie Steel's articles, some of the earliest English-language texts written about *phulkari*, make general statements about different styles according to geographical location. However, assertions about stylistic differences in Eastern vs. Western Punjab (and accordingly made by Hindu, Sikh and Muslim embroiderers) occurs more dramatically in scholarship written after the partitioning of Punjab in 1947. Hitkari explains that while there are two broad distinguishing categories of phulkari - phulkari from East Punjab and phulkari from West Punjab - great deal of variety exists from Tehsil to Tehsil and District to District. Hitkari also explains that *phulkari* from Western Punjab were popularly made and worn in Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Hazara, Jhelum, and Sialkot, whereas *phulkari* from Eastern Punjab had origins in Amritsar, Jullundur, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozpur, Bhatinda, and Patiala. He also identifies a group of *phulkari* from the Ambala, Rohtak, and Hissar districts of Haryana. Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 8, 14. See also Dhamija, "Bagh and Phulkari of Punjab," *Marg* 17 (March, 1964): 15-24 and "Embroidered Gardens of Flowers" (2007); Gill, *A Phulkari From Bhatinda* (1977); and Valerie Berinstain, *Phulkari: Embroidered Flowers from Punjab* (Paris: Association pour l'etude et la documentation des Textiles d'Asie, 1991).

[32] See in particular Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkaris* (New Delhi: Phulkari Publications, 2008); Charu Smita Gupta's essay, " Picturesque Frame of Non-cognitive Expression: Phulkari," in Vatsyayan, *Embroidery in Asia: Sui Dhaga* (2010). See also Kumari Rampa Pal, *The Phulkari: A Lost Craft* (1955).

[33] According to the object's panel description in the textile gallery at the Sanskriti Foundation, curated by Jyotindra Jain.

[34] Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980). It is not entirely clear what "counts" as a pattern in a *Bawan Bagh*; many contain 30 or 35 (not 52) patterned squares arranged in a grid in the body of the cloth as well as numerous *pallu* (end border) and selvedge border patterns.

[35] I am grateful to Professor Upkari Ubhi (Berkeley) and Dr. Kusum Chopra (Delhi) for their thoughts on this translation.

North India, and a topic explored further in Chapter Two.[36] The variety of styles of *phulkaris* are numerous and the origins of their various names are not always apparent in textual or oral traditions.

Possible Visual Precedents, Near and Far

When textual references or the etymology of the term "phulkari" fail to offer a clear historical narrative, it is tempting to turn to earlier embroidered textiles as possible visual precedents. After all, textiles have circulated in and out of the Indian subcontinent for quite sometime and there is a great deal of evidence to suggest cross-cultural exchange amongst communities in Punjab and those further West in Central Asia and Europe as well as with those to the East, in China and Japan.[37]

Domestic-made embroidery from Punjab's immediate neighbors offer compelling visual comparisons to *phulkaris*, particularly when looking at examples that incorporate the darning stitch. In fact the provinces of Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkwa (previously North West Frontier Province or NWFP) in present-day Pakistan, the territories of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the neighboring Indian states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh each have rich embroidery traditions that share materials, techniques, motifs, and/or forms with Punjabi *phulkaris*.[38] When looking at these neighboring textile traditions it is difficult, and I would argue unnecessary, to make claims about the origins of certain motifs or embroidery stitches in an attempt to pinpoint a single source for the kinds of materials, techniques, and forms that we see in Punjabi *phulkaris*. Instead, it is more fruitful to think of these neighboring regions, and the textiles they produce(d), as proximate places with kindred traditions. The geo-political borders that currently divide these areas were at one time more porous, and objects, particularly textiles - worn on bodies or folded in bags - moved in and out of communities and across geographies. The itinerant Afghani merchants who sold silk thread (*pat*) by weight for use in *phulkaris* to women in Punjabi villages[39] could very easily have sold the same thread to women

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[36] See in particular Jasleen Dhamija, "The Sacred Grid: Bagh, Phulkari, and Sainchi." Published in conjunction with an exhibition at Gallery Art Motif, New Delhi, October 2013; and wall labels for the *sainchi phulkari* at the National Museum, New Delhi, written by Dr. Anamika Pathak.

[37] Mughal era documentation in particular illuminates the history of cross-cultural exchange and the role of textile artisans in the Punjab. See Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For more on Chinese silk trade to India after European involvement on the subcontinent, see Stephen Dale, "Silk Road, Cotton Road or ... Indo-Chinese Trade in Pre-European Times," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, 1 (2009): 79-88; and Leanna Lee-Whitman, "The Silk Trade: Chinese Silks and the British East India Company," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1982): 21-41.

[38] For a general overview of embroidery in present-day India and Pakistan, see Sheila Paine, *Embroidery from India and Pakistan* (London: The British Museum, 2001).

[39] Jasleen Dhamija, "Embroidered Gardens of Flowers: Bagh and Phulkari of Punjab," in *Threads and Voices: Behind the Indian Textile Tradition*, ed. by Laila Tyabji (a special edition of Marg, Vol. 58, No. 4, June 2007): 45. Silk pat came not only from Afghanistan, but also from Kashmir and Bengal. See Joss Graham, "Phulkari and Bagh: The Embroidery Shawls of the Punjab," in *Asian Embroidery*, ed. by Jasleen Dhamija (Delhi: Crafts Caouncil of India, 2004): 113-124.

embroidering in NWFP, Balochistan, or Rajasthan. Jasleen Dhamija explains that these merchants sold a variety of objects besides thread (including household utensils, makeup, and toiletries), and also served as matchmakers, carrying messages between secret lovers.[40] It would not be surprising if the occasional finished example of embroidery also circulated with them as they traveled from village to village. Indeed some scholars identify all darning stitch embroidery from present-day Pakistan and the Northwest regions of India as "phulkari."[41]

Darning stitch embroidery from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa / North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) offers perhaps the closest visual affinity to *phulkaris* of Punjab. For example, a shawl from the Swat Valley of NWFP uses the same darning stitch as Punjabi *phulkaris* and similarly incorporates stylized floral medallions throughout the body of the cloth (Figure 0.11). In fact one style of Punjabi *phulkari*, known as *thirma phulkari* and originally produced in the northern part of Punjab in present-day Pakistan, is characterized by red- or magenta-colored silk threads embroidered onto white cotton *khaddar* (Figure 0.12), as in the Swati example. Along the same lines, a dress from NWFP created from silk threads embroidered using darning stitches onto a black cotton base depicts stripes and floral forms that recall the feathered-edged motifs and symmetrical compositions of many Punjabi *phulkaris* (Figure 0.13).[42]

The visual affinity between Punjabi *phulkaris* and embroidery in the NWFP is not surprising, and may be the result of shared embroidery techniques, circulated through trade and cross-cultural exchange across this large region.[43] According to Shehnaz Ishmail, "the forced migrations of the Swatis from the 15th century onwards to neighbouring Mardan Basin, the Mansehra valley, Hazara and Punjab have carried on the tradition of the darning stitch."[44] Furthermore, as Nasreen Askari and Rosemary Crill explain, textual evidence and documentation from the late nineteenth century confirm moments of considerable contact and continuous movement between the areas of NWFP, Swat, Kohistan, Hazara and Punjab with regards to materials and techniques, specifically the one-sided satin or darning stitch.[45]

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[40] Dhamija, "Embroidered Gardens," 47.

[41] Joss Graham, "Phulkari and Bagh" (2004): 113-124; and Bilgrami, *Tana Bana* (2004). Askari and Crill explain that in the case of embroidery from the broad NWFP region, the term "phulkari" implies the use of a longer darning stitch / float, and in some cases references the use of diamond and chevron motifs that appears in embroidery from both Punjab as well as Hazara regions. Askari and Crill, *Colours of the Indus* (1997), 131.

[42] *Phulkaris* created using black-colored cotton base cloths are typical of the Hazara region in NWFP, typically worn by brides during the religious part of the wedding ceremony. A red *phulkari*, by contrast, is made by the bridegroom's family, placed over the palanquin (*dohli*) used to carry the bride in the procession to her husband's home, and later worn by the bride for several days to symbolize the consummation of the marriage. See Yaccopino, *Threadlines Pakistan*, 42.

[43] However, according to Askari and Crill, Swat *phulkaris* may be embroidered on the front, rather than reverse, as in Punjabi *phulkaris*. Askari and Crill, *Colours of the Indus* (1997), 133. The shared use of the darning stitch, however, is clear.

[44] Shehnaz Ismail, "A Stitch Travels" in Bilgrami, ed., *Tana Bana* (2004), 40.

[45] Askari and Crill, Colours of the Indus (1997), 123-30.

Elsewhere within South Asia there are several embroidery styles that share visual elements with many of the different styles of Punjabi *phulkaris*: the darning stitch of *suf* made by nomadic communities in Rajasthan and Gujarat very closely resemble the darning stitch of many *phulkaris*; animal, human, and vegetal forms depicted on *sainchi phulkaris* share compositional and formal elements with figurative motifs found in *rumals* from Himachal Pradesh, *kanthas* from Bengal, embroidered *chandarvos* from Saurashtra, and *sujnis* from Bijar; and the combination of unplied silk threads on cotton *khaddar* is familiar to a great many embroidery traditions throughout the region.[46]

In particular, scholars draw comparisons between the satin stitch embroideries in *rumals* of Himachal Pradesh with those of *phulkaris*,[47] particularly figurative styles of *phulkaris* such as *sainchis* (Figure 0.14). Often taking the form of embroidered wrapping cloths, these *rumals* were made in and around the Hindu courts of the Punjab hills (Pahari region) now in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India. The connection between *phulkaris* and *rumals* is not unfounded: the two embroidery traditions have a close regional affiliation (made in the Punjab plains and Punjab hills, respectively) and both employ a very similar stitch (Figures 0.15 and 0.16).[48] There are, however, numerous stylistic and thematic differences between the two art forms, not to mention their very different sizes, methods of production, and uses. *Phulkaris* were typically embroidered by women of all classes and creeds throughout Punjab, and almost exclusively take the form of large shawl-size cloths for draping or wearing. *Rumals*, by contrast, were made by upper-class women living in and around the Rajput courts of the Punjab Hills, most notably the court at Chamba; were often created in conjunction with professional male court painters; and typically take the form of smaller embroidered squares, circles, or rectangles of fabric used to wrap

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[46] See Sheila Paine, *Embroidery from India and Pakistan* (London: The British Museum, 2001); Jasleen Dhamija, ed., *Asian Embroidery*; Judy Frater, *Threads of Identity* (1995); Anne Morrell, *Indian Embroidery Techniques* (2000).

[47] These *rumals* are not handkerchiefs, as the name suggests, but decorative wrappers or coverings for religious offerings or other objects (e.g. presents given to a bride and groom on the occasion of marriage, offerings made to a Hindu deity). The embroidery used on these *rumals* is also employed for decorative *cholis* or blouses and scarves. A.K. Bhattacaryya argues that it is perhaps the prominence of embroidered scarves in this style that is the likely source for their name *rumals*. A.K. Bhattacaryya, *Chambā Rumāl* (1968).

[48] Regarding stitch, a notable difference between *phulkaris* and *rumals* is that *rumals* often employ a double-sided satin stitch so that the stitches appear reversible and evenly distributed on both sides of the base cloth. By contrast *phulkari* embroiderers employ the single-sided satin stitch, which covers the "front" of the base cloth leaving tiny dots of embroidery on the verso. Bhattacaryya argues that "in some cases of Chamba embroidery, the influence of phulkari technique and pattern from Eastern Punjab is largely noticeable... The similarity of these lies not only in the pattern or the technique itself, but also in the fact that the base is coarse *khaddar* in both cases and the yarns are untwisted silk of deep yellow, white, orange, red and blue." Bhattacaryya, *Chambā Rumāl* (1968), 6.

offerings and gifts.[49] These embroidered *rumals* typically incorporate religious, particularly Vaishnavite themes, and as with *sainchi phulkaris* are made by drawing an outline of figures and forms in charcoal, ink, or thread onto hand-spun cotton base cloths before filling in these forms with a range of colored untwisted silk or metallic threads (Figure 0.17).[50] With these, rather prominent, differences in mind, it is difficult to make strong claims for affiliation between these two diverse embroidery traditions.

Instead, a more compelling visual comparison can be made between *sainchi phulkaris* and woven cotton bridal *dhurries* - thick cotton tapestry-woven cloths that were and continued to be made throughout rural Punjab and Haryana, in some cases likely made by the same women who created *sainchi phulkaris*. The production and use of bridal *dhurries* echoes many of the same themes that scholars highlight when talking about *phulkaris*: made by young Punjabi women, particularly Jats, for their own dowries; technical skills passed down from mother to daughter; created during respites from agricultural or household duties; and forming an important part of a woman's dowry and personal wealth.[51] Similar to *phulkaris*, woven bridal *dhurries* constituted an essential part of a woman's *bistre* or bedding, and would often be layered on a *charpoy* below embroidered sheets and cloth covers (as is the case with some *phulkaris*). When not in use the layers of *bistre* would be rolled up and placed at the foot of a *charpoy* or rolled like a bolster pillow at the end of *charpoy*, allowing the *dhurrie* pattern to be visible.[52] Punjabi women who remember *phulkaris* being used in the home (a practice that very rarely continues in the present day) describe a similar function for *dhurries*: draped across a dowry chest or placed on a *charpoy* or low trunk to be used as impromptu seating for guests.[53]

Examination of actual woven bridal *dhurries* similarly suggest visual correlations with *sainchi phulkaris*: both share vibrant color palettes and the incorporation of whimsical motifs and geometric patterns (Figure 0.18). For example, a curious compositional device of depicting a horse and rider as stacked forms, with the human rider appearing as if standing on top of the horse (rather than straddling the horse's back), is typical of many *sainchi phulkaris* (Figure 0.19a and b) - not to mention several other folk embroidery forms throughout South Asia, including

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[49] Chamba *rumals* in turn are often connected to Pahari miniature paintings, the paintings produced by male artists working in the Rajput courts of the Pahari region. Bhattacaryya emphasizes the "considerable influence of the pictorial art of miniatures, specially from Basohli and Kangra" on the silk embroideries of Chamba, and argues that the subject matter and stylistic relationship between Chamba *rumals* and Pahari paintings originated through political relationships between various courts of the region as early as the 17th century. The stylistic linkages drawn between *rumals* and Pahari paintings, particularly those from Kangra, are their shared color choices, comparable depictions of flora and fauna, and inclusion of a floral border around an interior "scene". Thematically, scholars emphasis the comparable Vaishnavite themes and poetic subject matter that dominate both Chamba *rumals* and many Pahari paintings. See Bhattacaryya, *Chambā Rumāl,* 2-7.

[50] See Bhattacaryya, *Chambā Rumāl* for a general description of Chamba *rumals*.

[51] Housego and Shankar, *Bridal Dhurries of India* (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 1997).

[52] Housego and Shankar, *Bridal Dhurries of India* (1997), 20.

[53] Based on interviews and conversations with women in Chandigarh, Patiala, and Delhi in October 2012, February and March 2015.

examples from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Bengal. This motif also appears in bridal *dhurries* from Punjab (Figure 0.20). Artists depict stylized flower or *phul* motifs throughout *dhurries* as in *phulkaris*, and in both they appear as geometric medallions or lozenges floating throughout a composition (Figures 0.21 and 0.22). Even figurative depictions of *gore* or Englishmen wearing European-style shoes and pith helmets (Figures 0.23 and 0.24) as well as geometric compositions that incorporate stepped lozenges often known as *panch rang* (five colors) or *saat rang* (seven colors) by virtue of the number of colors present, diamond motifs, and zig-zag stripes (*leheria*) can be found in both *dhurries* and *phulkaris* alike (Figures 0.25a and b).

Outside of South Asia, the range of darning or single-sided satin stitch embroidery is vast and diverse. Further west towards Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, there are a number of embroidered textiles that share compositional strategies, materials, and techniques with those of *phulkaris*.[54] As with *sainchi phulkaris*, stylized floral forms and depictions of animals and birds on these cloths are rendered in a flat, graphic style that makes no attempt at shading or depicting three dimensional volume. These stand in stark contrast to early satin stitch embroidery of Eastern Central Asia, which similarly depict a variety of floral motifs and animals as one finds with *sainchi phulkaris,* but instead created using illusionistic handling of forms and complex shading of silk threads to suggest three-dimensionality (Figure 0.26).[55] Some scholars even argue that certain stylized floral patterns found in *phulkaris* from Hazara, Lahore, and Multan have possible Chinese and Tibetan influence.[56]

One thing that is clear when looking at a number of darning stitch embroidered cloths made throughout Asia is that there is nothing particularly fixed or static about the ways in which artists make or use textiles: stitches travel, styles change, and artists incorporate elements from one garment and use it in another. The cotton dress from the NWFP now in the Victoria and Albert Museum is a good example of a textile that combines elements from several parts of Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan (Figure 0.13). As its catalogue description says,

> the 'phulkari'-type medallions recall the embroideries of Swat and Hazara, while bands of embroidery on the sleeves and the triangular inserts into the skirt suggest contact with Indus Kohistan. The intricately braided decoration on the neck is

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[54] See for example the embroidered tablecloth with flowers and peacocks from the British Museum (1993 AS24.7; reproduced in Sheila Paine, *Embroidery from Afghanistan*, 28-9); and an Uzbek curtain from c. 1900 originally in the Musee de l'Homme (now Musee Quai Branly) reproduced in Roland Paiva and Bernard Dupaigne, *Afghan Embroidery*, 103. For more on Uzbek and Afghani embroidery see Kate Fitz Gibbon and Andrew Hale, *Uzbek Embroidery in the Nomadic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2007); and Christina Sumner and Guy Petherbridge, *Bright Flowers: Textiles and Ceramics of Central Asia* (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 2004).

[55] James C.Y. Watt and Anne E. Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 172.

[56] Yaccopina, *Threadlines Pakistan*, 42.

> close to the type used by the Mangalli nomads of western Afghanistan, who were traditionally also to be found on the Pakistan side of the border.[57]

Just in the same way that people circulate, interact, and adapt, so do embroidery stitches, materials, techniques, motifs, and compositional elements. With this in mind, we need to approach the study of *phulkaris* from a position that allows for the flexibility of their making and use, and not fixate on tracing motifs to a particular region - inevitably such attempts will lead us astray.

Phulkaris in Secondary Sources

When reviewing scholarship on *phulkaris*, there are several themes that continually surface: the gendered nature of *phulkaris*, both the process of their making as a quintessential example of "women's work" as well as their use as an important part of a woman's dowry and material wealth; the connection between *phulkaris* and religious identity, and by extension variations of *phulkaris* according to region based on religious affiliation (particularly differences amongst eastern regions Hindu/Punjab/India and western regions of Muslim/Punjab/Pakistan); and *phulkaris'* connections to rural spaces, folk life, and folk art. While each of these characteristics are worthwhile for thinking about *phulkaris* - and I will now address each in turn - I would argue that they reveal less about the textiles themselves and more about the ways in which people have historically thought and talked about *phulkaris*. Instead of allowing these various characteristics to illuminate "truths" about the ways *phulkaris* were created or used, I find them useful for understanding a particular moment in time, for scholarship or popular culture, that offers insight into the different ways that people valued *phulkaris*, textiles in South Asia, and material objects more generally.

Phulkaris in Secondary Sources: *Phulkaris* as "women's work"

Most scholarship highlights the fact that *phulkaris* are "domestic" textiles made by non-professional female embroiderers working in their homes, creating objects which were not sold in the market but instead circulated amongst friends and family members.[58] According to S.S. Hitkari, a leading authority on *phulkaris*, "in their leisure hours in the afternoon women, young and old, would gather together in the compound of someone's house and had a session of plying the *charkha* [spinning thread], embroidering *phulkaris*, knitting a garment, etc. exchanging pleasantries and gossips [sic], singing and laughing. Small girls eight to nine years old would watch and pick up from their mothers or other elderly women how to ply the needle and in

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[57] Victoria and Albert Museum, online catalogue database: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70008/dress-unknown.

[58] Askari and Crill, *Colours of the Indus* (1997), 95; Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 7; J.L. Kipling, "The Industries of the Punjab" (Reprinted from the Official "Punjab Gazetteer") in *The Journal of Indian Art*, Vol.2 , No. 20 (October 1888): 34.

course of time would become expert embroiderers."[59] In this description *phulkaris* are just one of many textile-making activities that fall under the purview of women, and are part of female social interactions. Accordingly, the act of making *phulkaris* physically and symbolically connects women across generations and families. Scholarship on *phulkaris* also highlight their symbolic role as an object of warmth and comfort, a material extension of ideal female nurturing. These embroidered shawls, garments, and cloth wrappers are used or worn by a woman's loved ones, accompanying them on their travels and keeping them warm during harsh Punjabi winters.[60] As Dhamija explains, "a newborn baby after being bathed is wrapped in an old *phulkari*, used by the grandmother. Its soft texture is considered appropriate for the infant. The shawl also carries the aura of the venerable grandmother, her love and her blessings."[61]

Phulkaris are most often referenced for their role in wedding ceremonies and as important objects in a woman's dowry - either as part of a woman's possessions or as objects gifted between the bride and groom's families during the course of an engagement or nuptial rites. Two styles of *phulkaris* in particular, *vari-da-bagh* and *chope*, have been used in wedding ceremonies to drape over the bride and/or groom.[62] *Sainchi phulkaris*, which feature depictions of figures, animals, and household objects are thought by some to be pictorial "blessings and wishes for the future happiness and prosperity of the bride and groom. Elaborate wedding jewelry is frequently embroidered over the place where the shawl falls over the head."[63] In some cases a woman would begin embroidering a *phulkari* upon the birth of a daughter or granddaughter in anticipation of supplying matrimonial gifts for the girl when she came of age (or matrimonial gifts for a son/grandson's future bride). Once a young woman had become adept in embroidery, she would create *phulkaris* for her own dowry.[64] In this way *phulkaris* have real material value for a family and can be a crucial part of a woman's wealth.

These descriptions of *phulkaris* serve to acknowledge the creative labor of women, and emphasize that this kind of work has both symbolic and material value within a family and community. Particularly when the vast majority of scholarship and popular discussion of textiles in nineteenth-and twentieth-century South Asia focus on "professional" (read: man-made) rather than "part-time" (read: woman-made) crafts,[65] the emphasis on *phulkaris* as valued women's

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[59] Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 15. The "leisure hours" described by Hitkari also emerges in Flora Annie Steel's description of *phulkaris* from a century earlier, and a theme addressed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[60] Pal, *The Phulkari* (1955).

[61] Dhamija, *Threads and Voices*, 50.

[62] Joss Graham in *Asian Embroidery*, 121.

[63] Joss Graham in *Asian Embroidery*, 124.

[64] Jasleen Dhamija identifies some of the stages of *phulkari* embroidery, which became increasingly complex as a young woman's skills developed. See Dhamija, *Threads and Voices*, 48.

[65] See Abigail McGowan's *Crafting the Nation* for an extended discussion on crafts during the colonial and post-independence periods.

work is necessary and worth reiterating. And yet these sources verge on the nostalgic and romantic, and ultimately define ideal forms of femininity as constantly productive, and frame notions of leisure and the making of *phulkaris* along gendered lines.[66]

Phulkaris in Secondary Sources: *Phulkaris* and Religious Identity

Another theme that emerges in scholarship on *phulkaris* are their connections to religion. Many sources assert that women, in addition to singing folk songs while stitching, would recite prayers before beginning embroidery, or in some cases after the distribution of sweets and *prasad* (blessed food), suggesting that the very act of creating *phulkaris* is religious in nature or marked as sacred.[67] Writing in the late nineteenth century, Flora Annie Steel asserts that *phulkaris* are primarily the purview of Hindu Jats in Punjab, with the exception of some Muslim women in Hazara making very fine *phulkaris* and *baghs*.[68] Steel's statement says more about demographics and community affiliation of the embroiderers than it is an assertion about the religious content or meaning of a *phulkari* - a conflation that is not surprising for a colonial source. Later scholarship defines *phulkaris* along a regional binary connected to religion: *phulkaris* made from the western regions of Punjab (now Pakistan) were made by Muslim women, while *phulkaris* from the eastern regions of Punjab (now India) were made by Hindu women.[69] While there are several worthwhile distinctions made by scholars when differentiating between *phulkaris* that originated in the western vs. eastern regions of Punjab (e.g. finer *khaddar* and limited color palette in the West vs. incorporation of figurative motifs in the East),[70] categorization based on religious identity is difficult to ascertain and often falls along post-Partition geo-religious borders even when the *phulkaris* in question were made well before 1947. Beginning with Hitkari's 1980 book Sikh women become identified with *phulkaris*, and some scholars go so far as to place Sikh women at the center of *phulkari*-making.[71]

Many of these statements connecting *phulkaris* to different religious communities are difficult to back up with textual evidence, and indeed scholars very rarely cite their sources for these claims. Instead much of these attributions seem to come from personal experience, oral narratives, or hearsay. Actual examples of *phulkaris* offer some hint of religious affiliation, as I explore in subsequent chapters, most compellingly with regard to figurative styles of *phulkaris* such as

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[66] This is a theme that will be examined in further detail in Chapter 3.

[67] Kushwant Singh, *Warm and Rich and Fearless,* 42; Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 15. See also Krishna Lal, *Phulkari*: *From the Realm of Women's Creativity* (2013).

[68] Steel, "Phulkari" (1888), 1.

[69] Askari and Crill (1997), 98; Shehnaz Ismail draws a direct connection between this older Swati embroidery to *phulkari* of Hazara and Punjab, and repeats much of what is already written about *phulkari* of Punjab, namely that it is embroidered by both Muslim and Hindu population and that Muslim embroiderers used geometric patterns (triangles, diamonds, chevrons) while Hindu embroiderers depicted ritual objects and narratives. Ismail, "A Stitch Travels," 40.

[70] Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 33-34.

[71] Singh, *Warm and Rich and Fearless,* 42. This theme is addressed further in Chapter 5.

sainchis and *darshan dwars* discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. To my mind, it matters less whether an embroiderer was a Muslim or a Hindu or a Sikh. Instead what is more fruitful to explore is *why* previous scholars have found it important to reference religion when talking about the history of *phulkaris,* a question that I tackle further in Chapter 5. Ultimately, it seems, the question about religion is a hold-over from colonial census reports and gazetteers that take pains to organize and order people and labor according to caste affiliation and religious community. Steel, writing at the height of the British Raj, not surprisingly emphasizes religion in her discussion of *phulkaris*. Other scholars, then, feel the need to respond to or correct the colonial record, adding new layers of affiliation and re-asserting *phulkaris* for yet another group. Hitkari's project, for example, was in many ways an attempt to reinsert Sikh artists into the history of *phulkaris*, a history which had up until that time centered on Muslim and Hindu women.

With the exception of *sainchi phulkaris* and *darshan dwar phulkaris* - which I argue, in Chapter Two, have tangential religious connections, with the textiles potentially operating as part of worship - I think it is perhaps more useful to view the connection between *phulkaris* and religion as one of many parts of a woman's life. Wedding ceremonies often incorporate substantial religious practices (e.g. the recitation of phrases from the Granth Sahib, the incorporation of Vedic rituals, the presence of a religious leader like an *imam*) alongside regional or family traditions, sometimes in ways that are difficult to dissect or differentiate. *Phulkaris* are part of those practices. Because births, marriages, and deaths are rituals very often marked by religious traditions of some kind, it is not surprising that *phulkaris* have become attached to religion, being an important material addition to those significant life transitions. Religion, then, is just one part of a *phulkari*'s multi-faceted identity.

<u>*Phulkaris* in Secondary Sources: *Phulkaris* and "the Folk"</u>

Another part of a *phulkari's* identity is its connection to rural life and "folk" culture. Writing for the Government of Punjab on the occasion of a festival of *phulkaris* in the 1950s, Rumpa Kumari Pal asserts that a *phulkari* is "not just a 'craft'; it symbolises the entire complex of life and feeling and understanding of the village society in the Punjab."[72] Kushwant Singh and B.N. Goswamy discuss *phulkaris* as "art of the folk," made and used by "ordinary" people untethered to court traditions, classical artistic norms, or art forms that dominate elite consumption.[73] For Goswamy in particular, *phulkaris'* identity as "folk art" is one of its most endearing qualities, making it "earthy," " warm," accessible, and a form of "direct artistic expression."[74] As Goswamy explains, the *khaddar* base cloths used in *phulkaris* could be spun and woven at home, dyed nearby (e.g. by the dyer or *rangrez* in a town or village), and then embroidered at home

[72] Pal, *The Phulkari,* Foreword.

[73] Singh, *Warm and Rich and Fearless,* 42; and Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour,* 233.

[74] Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour,* 233.

using motifs that came to mind or inspired from scenes that a woman saw in her village:[75] a seemingly "direct" link between village space and artistic expression.

These romantic associations between *phulkaris* and village life are balanced with a fair amount of the pejorative as well. Hitkari, for example, asserts that *phulkaris* and *baghs* are used and embroidered throughout "the entire countryside... [by the] unsophisticated and illiterate women of Punjab" -[76] a view of rural populations that echoes colonial reports on Indian villages and relies upon the presence of a presumably sophisticated, literate, urban viewer. Scholars have theorized about the category of "folk" in ways that are useful for understanding how the term has been used in South Asia, both as a general political and cultural concept as well as more specifically when discussing handmade objects such as *phulkaris*.[77] Significant to many of these discussions is the way in which rural / urban, village / city, and by extension folk / modern are concepts that not only define each other (as opposing ideas or spaces), but are also dependent on each other for their very existence. Rather than being a descriptive term, "folk" is a theoretical relationship that acquires meaning as a local, "timeless," marginalized, bounded community only when compared with "modern civilization" and practice.[78] Within South Asia, the category of folk has been leveraged as a potent strategy for political and cultural nationalism, and concomitantly, the site of the village has been imagined as a culturally "untainted," Hindu, heteronormative, and idealized space for education, labor, social relationships, and creative practice.[79] Not surprisingly, nationalist discussions of "folk" borrow heavily from colonial and Orientalist rhetoric that position Indian villages and villagers (imagined as the stewards of folk culture) as simultaneously innocent (infantile), nurturing (feminized), threatened, and endangered stalwarts of Indian tradition.[80]

What is perhaps more interesting than dissecting the perceived binary between village/city and folk/modern is understanding why the interest in folk art emerges, and in particular why in certain moments in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries we see peaks in interest

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[75] Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour,* 233.

[76] Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980), 14

[77] See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1985); Roma Chatterji, "The Category of Folk," *Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology*, edited by Veena Das (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Vasudha Dalmia, *Poetics, Plays, and Performances: The Politics of Modern Indian Theatre* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[78] Chatterji, "The Category of Folk," 567.

[79] See Chatterji, "The Category of Folk" as well as Gandhi's various writings on the Indian Village, e.g. M.K. Gandhi, *Cent Per Cent Swadeshi or the Economics of Village Industries* (Ahmedabad, 1960).

[80] There has been much written on colonial and nationalist perspectives on Indian villages. See for example Ananda Coomaraswamy, The Indian Craftsman (first published 1909; New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1989); Ashutosh Kumar, "Marx and Engels on India," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1992): 493-504; Irfan Habib, *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perspective* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1995); Surinder Jodhka, "Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 32 (Aug. 1-16, 2002): 3343-3353; Louis Dumont, "The 'village community' from Munro to Maine," *The Village in India*, edited by Vanana Madan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

in *phulkaris*, highlighted as a quintessential folk art and an embodiment of Punjabi villages. In her 1999 article, "Embroidering the Past," historian Michelle Maskiell aims to do just that; she discusses the ways in which colonial and nationalist literature (both in post-Partition India and Pakistan) positions *phulkaris* as products of gendered labor and romantic objects of "folk" life.[81] She argues that colonial British understanding of *phulkaris* (in large part informed by the writings of Flora Annie Steel) reflected British notions of folklore and folklife, and the romanticization of rural India. Nationalist writers and activists inadvertently borrowed much of the language and tactics of these colonial writers in their efforts to champion and revive *phulkaris* as "authentic" folk art, as means for rural development, and as part of regional and national heritage.[82] What Maskiell misses, however, is the opportunity to understand this history by looking at actual *phulkaris* and how their circulation in collections and exhibitions indicate the meanings of the art form.

Connected with discussions about rural experience and the concept of folk is that of "craft," a category which centers on handmade objects like *phulkaris*. As Abigail McGowan has shown, the debate about crafts and their importance within India's cultural history, began in earnest in the nineteenth century as both Indians and Britons alike embraced crafts as an extension of India's "timeless" villages.[83] And while nationalists and colonialists used the same vocabulary to talk about crafts and craftspeople (e.g. spiritually-minded, timeless, embodiment of "pure" villages, etc.), the ways in which they defined "craft" changed over time, dependent on shifting policies, economic factors, and cultural imperatives.[84] Most significantly for the study of *phulkaris* are the craft documentation initiatives started by the British, which isolated a single craft as a type, gave it historical and cultural significance, and justified government intervention to "save" it. In the case of *phulkaris*, Flora Annie Steel, writing for the *Journal of Art and Industry* in 1888 as well as the display of *phulkaris* in colonial-era exhibitions[85] served to document and define *phulkaris* as distinct from other embroidery practices. In these contexts *phulkaris* were positioned as a particular style of embroidery (e.g. darning stitch), unique to a particular region (e.g. Punjab), and connected to certain geographical and social spaces (e.g. villages, domesticity). When scrutinizing the colonial record alongside actual *phulkari*s, as this present study attempts to do, what becomes clear is that many of these characteristics that defined *phulkaris* in the nineteenth century and have continued to color scholarship through the present day are in fact arbitrary and often narrow views of a much broader practice. In fact, many *phulkaris* use a variety of embroidery stitches beyond the darning stitch, are made outside of Punjab (e.g. according to some scholars Swat and Hazara have their own styles of "phulkari"[86]),

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[81] Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past"

[82] See also Gilmartin and Maskiell, "Appropriating the Punjabi Folk: Gender and Other Dichotomies in Colonial and Post-Colonial Folk Studies."

[83] Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (2009), 7.

[84] Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (2009), 11-15.

[85] Discussed in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 5.

[86] Based on email correspondence with Professor Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, October 2010.

are sometimes made in cities, in professional capacities, and in rare cases, by men. Ultimately, colonial-era definitions of *phulkaris* framed rather diverse, broad-reaching practices of embroidery as a single, containable, consumable entity to support knowledge acquisition projects of the British Raj and related growing capitalist interests in buying crafts from India. The legacy of this practice is evident in the post-colonial era, where after independence, craft difference became public policy and Indian crafts were mobilized to "root the modernizing nation envisioned by Nehurivian socialism in the rich, warm tones of cultural tradition."[87]

Similarly, the notion of "tradition" has long been associated with folk art or craft, particularly because the materials, techniques, styles, and compositions that these creative practices utilize are visually repeated throughout a particular geography, amongst a community, or across generations. For example, we see similar *phul* (flower) motifs or the depiction of wedding jewelry throughout numerous *phulkaris*, made by different people, at different times, and in different locations. Presumably, such motifs are part of the tradition of *phulkaris*. In her discussion of Rajasthani court painting, Molly Aiken compellingly argues that "tradition is intelligent" and that such repetition is thoughtful and deliberate (rather than derivative).[88] The repetition of form, composition, materials, and processes that constitute the "tradition" of *phulkaris* are culturally-rooted and reiterated to the level of iconic: a brightly-colored palette of silk floss against muted *khaddar* or the simple four-petaled *phul* motifs are the symbols of *phulkaris* - a point I return to in the Conclusion. The first chapter attempts to dislodge some of these assumptions and unpack exactly what kinds of embroidery fall within the category of "phulkari."

Archives, Geography, and History

With this historiography of *phulkaris* in mind, the gaps in current research, and the numerous questions that arise when looking at this diverse body of material, this present study aims to critically examine *phulkaris* with an eye not only towards production (the focus of almost all studies of *phulkaris* to date), but also with attention to *phulkaris'* subsequent collection and display. In particular, this study focuses on how gender informs practices of making, collecting, using, and exhibiting these rich, and incredibly diverse textiles.

The study begins with a focus on production, that is on objects and artists. The first chapter ("Abstraction and the Category of 'Phulkari'") looks closely at the diverse styles of embroidery identified in scholarship and museums as "phulkari," and explores the role of abstraction in the motifs and compositions of several individual textiles. Chapter Two ("Embroidery as Writing in Figurative *Sainchi Phulkaris*") focuses on the women responsible for making *phulkaris*, and identifies ways in which we can read individual women's "hands" and female agency in these objects. Acknowledging that women's voices and biographies are rarely seen in traditional archives, and by looking closely at several figurative, sometimes narrative, *phulkaris*, I argue that

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[87] McGowan, *Crafting the Nation*, 189.

[88] Molly Aiken, *Intelligence of Tradition*.

these objects can be read like a form of writing that reveals something about the otherwise "anonymous" women who embroidered these cloths.

Shifting gears, the final three chapters explore the ways in which *phulkaris* have circulated in collections and practices of display, namely large-scale exhibitions and museum galleries. Chapter Three ("Women's Work: *Phulkari*, Flora Annie Steel, and Collecting Textiles in British India") focuses on the figure of Flora Annie Steel, a British woman living in Punjab in the late nineteenth century, who collected and wrote about *phulkaris*. This chapter looks closely at the way Steel depicts *phulkaris* in her oft-cited 1888 essay, and the subsequent effects on early collections and exhibitions of *phulkaris* in British India. Chapter Four ("Embroidery for the New Nation: Collecting and Exhibiting *Phulkaris* in India after 1947") centers around the growing presence of *phulkaris* in museum collections in India following the partitioning of Punjab in 1947, and explores how these textiles were leveraged as objects of national interest and celebration. The fifth and final chapter ("(Re)Defining *Phulkaris* as 'Sikh Art'") examines recent collections and exhibitions of *phulkaris* in South Asia, Europe, and North America which frame these textiles within the context of "Sikh art" - an emerging and somewhat controversial category within South Asian art history - and shows how these objects have been re-inscribed in the name of religion. The Conclusion discusses recent practices of producing *phulkaris* as well as visual citations of *phulkaris* in contemporary art, and proposes ways to understand this diverse body of material given the contexts of circulation and display discussed in previous chapters.
Each of these chapters aim to critically examine the significant role of gender in the making and framing of these textiles, and to explore the ways in which production and consumption of *phulkaris* in a number of global and historical settings have dramatically altered their meanings over time.

The contours of this current study are dependent in large part on the depth and breadth of existing archives of *phulkaris* that I have mined over the last few years. Predominantly these are large public museums as well as private collections of various sizes in North America, Europe, and South Asia. I found *phulkaris* on display in museum galleries and in dusty storage containers. I also found numerous *phulkaris* in the homes of men and women, draped on sofas or carefully folded in trunks and suitcases stored in closets. While I have used these various archives for the objects they house, treating them as repositories, I am also aware of their roles as subjects in themselves. As Foucault argues, museums, like many archives are not important for what they show or allow us to see, but rather for what they hide or obscure.[89] During the course of my research I have tried to note where possible, the strengths and weaknesses in these archives, the pauses and gaps, and also what these archives reveal about the history of *phulkaris* and collecting. The conclusion of this study attempts to synthesize some of these observations.

Most of the *phulkaris* I have studied were made prior to the partitioning of Punjab in 1947, before the emergence of India or Pakistan as nation states, and the apex of mid-twentieth century nationalism. Studying this material from my position as an art historian in the 21st century, after

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[89] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 137.

much has been written about "Indian art" and "Pakistani art," I see scholarship and popular discussion about *phulkaris* falling into both of these rather difficult-to-decipher categories. Particularly with *phulkaris* there is nothing, visually, about them that distinguish them as "Indian" or "Pakistani" except for the location of the archives and collections where these objects can be found, the nationality of the people who own or use them, and the government funding that supports craft revival efforts or exhibitions of the material. With this in mind, I try as much as possible in this study, to focus on Punjab - as a region with a particular colonial and postcolonial experience, and a unique cultural history in which *phulkaris* have played key roles. For how is one to assign national identity to a *phulkari* that was made in Lahore, taken to Delhi after 1947, and eventually landed up in a museum in the United States in the late 1990s?

One of the challenges for my study - and perhaps the biggest lacuna in my research - has been the changing political climate in Pakistan and the difficulty I have had in connecting with institutions and traveling to the Punjab region within that country.[90] As a result, all of my fieldwork in South Asia has been done in India. I have researched contemporary craft in Pakistan, and from these sources have gleaned some sense of the current state of *phulkari* production in that country - though certainly much more work can be done particularly with regards to museum formation and exhibition history. My hope is that I will be able to travel to Pakistan in the future, adding an important element to my study of *phulkaris'* production, collection, and display.

[90] I have had the most difficulty in securing concrete connections at institutions in Pakistan to justify and logistically support my travel there. Over the course of a few years and numerous letters, I have tried to no avail to communicate with curators, professors, and scholars at institutions in Lahore and Islamabad. Without concrete connections, I was hard-pressed to secure funding or make other arrangements for a research trip.

CHAPTER ONE

Abstraction and The Category of "Phulkari"

The textiles that we think of when we hear the word "phulkari" are those that are worn on the body, as shawls or head-coverings, particularly during a wedding. Even now, as part of wedding celebrations women in a Punjabi family will don *phulkaris* and *baghs* - both old and new - on top of saris or *lengha-cholis* (long skirt and blouse). For many, these are festive garments, auspicious in color, deeply connected to a woman's marriage, both as objects comprising a dowry and as garments worn during the many traditional festivals of a wedding ceremony. Many of the stylized motifs - identified by scholars as various floral or vegetal forms - that grace *phulkaris* echo the actual flowers that appear in wedding ceremonies, strung as garlands that cover the bride and groom and hang from walls and tables. But are the motifs that appear on these many *phulkaris* actually depictions of flowers from real life? Or is there another visual vocabulary from which artists pull when embroidering silk forms onto cotton cloth? Most striking perhaps is the sheer variety of *phulkaris* that one sees in these festive occasions. A diverse array of motifs and compositions that say more about *phulkaris'* diversity (as complex and multivalent forms of embroidery) than their singularity (as a recognizable "style" from Punjab) - a fact which begs the question of whether or not the term "phulkari" is even appropriate to use for such a wide-ranging tradition.

Recent scholarship has done an excellent job of identifying different "types" of *phulkaris* and assigning names to various motifs and compositions. With each subsequent study there seem to be more and more types identified. Flora Annie Steel writing in the late 19th century spoke primarily of *phulkaris* and *baghs* without much discussions of different styles within these two categories.[91] S.S. Hitkari writing nearly 100 years later expands the definition to include *chopes*, *shishedar phulkaris*, *sainchi phulkaris*, and *darshan dwar phulkaris* alongside specific styles of *baghs*.[92] Scholarship of the last decade has expanded Hitkari's list of *phulkari* types to include numerous styles, seemingly endless in their variety: *nilak phulkaris* made on cloth dyed a deep blue (*nila*) color, *leheria baghs* which feature wave (*leheria*) patterns, *gunghat baghs* characterized by the presence of motifs intended to be worn over a woman's head as a veil (*gunghat*), and *belan baghs* named after the dominant motif found on the cloth: rolling pins (*belans*) used to make *chapattis* (roasted flat bread).[93] There is even a motif named after the *chapattis* themselves (more specifically the *parantha* or deep fried flat bread motif). Other "types" of *phulkaris* are named after motifs depicting everything from shafts of wheat to game boards to bitter gourds to marigolds. This list goes on and on. Some motifs are auspicious symbols, connected to objects associated with fertility and abundance. Others seem more

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[91] Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab" (1888).

[92] Hitkari, *Phulkari* (1980). Hitkari's 2008 publication on *phulkari* designs expands this categorization even more. Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkari* (2008)

[93] See in particular Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkari* (2008); Vatsyayan, *Embroidery in Asia: Sui Dhaga* (2010); Bharany*, A Passionate Eye* (2014); and Lal, *From the Realm of Women's Creativity* (2013).

mundane. And despite the varieties added to the many different *phulkari* "types" the meta-category of "phulkari" itself is taken as a given, without questioning the ways in which these many diverse textiles are related.

This chapter looks closely at a number of embroidered textiles from Punjab which have previously been identified in scholarship as "phulkaris" and seeks to understand the stylistic, formal, and compositional qualities that define this art form. What exactly makes a *phulkari* a *phulkari*? What links together the very diverse styles of *phulkaris*? Furthermore, on a formal level, what are *in* these objects? Can we really see objects like rolling pins and waves amongst the highly abstract and geometricized forms that cover these cloths? What kinds of motifs appear in *phulkaris* and do these motifs have any bearing on the textiles' use, making, or meaning? Drawing from these various questions and looking closely at several styles of *phulkaris*, this chapter examines the range of textiles typically classified as *phulkaris* and suggests alternative ways for "reading" them through close examination of motifs, compositions, materials, and techniques.

Cataloguing Styles of *Phulkaris*

The fixing of "phulkari" as a term and the process of classifying its various styles emerges in large part through the establishment of museums and private collections. The diversity of embroidered textiles that fit within the category of "phulkari" becomes apparent in many such archives, where *phulkaris* include everything from large cotton cloths with sparse geometric embroidery (*chopes*) to pieces with figurative forms and narrative elements (*sainchis*) to dense embroidery that complete obscures the base cloth beneath (*baghs*). It seems, at times, that the only commonality between these diverse textiles is their large size. In many collections, both public and private, where *phulkaris* are on display, each textile appears framed by large wooden and plexiglas supports held in place by an impressive armature that allows the viewer to "flip" through each *phulkari* as if turning the pages of a book (Figure 1.1 and 1.2). This armature directly links each *phulkari* together - they are, after all, quite literally connected - insuring that the visitor thinks of these diverse embroideries as of the same place, producer, and process - possessing a similar history.

The most surprising style of embroidery to be included within the category of "phulkari" is that of *chope* (or *chobe*),[94] a name that refers to an extra-large sized cloth used almost exclusively during weddings. Traditionally, a *chope* is presented to a bride by either her maternal grandmother or her maternal uncle. She receives this gift either after the ceremonial wedding bath (*vatna*) or during the ceremonial presentation of cream and red bangles (*chuda*). Most often a *chope* is embroidered by a girl's maternal grandmother or by her mother soon after her birth

[94] Hitkari suggests that it may not be entirely accurate to consider a *chope* a *phulkari* because it is not made with the characteristic darning stitch. However, he includes *chopes* in his discussion of *phulkari* types because of its importance to marriage ceremonies. See Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkaris* (2003), 23.

and in anticipation of her marriage.[95] Invariably artists use gold-colored threads when making a *chope*, embroidering them onto *khaddar* dyed a deep red hue.[96]

The inclusion of *chope* as part of the category of "phulkari" raises several interesting questions about classification, use, and embroidery techniques. Unlike most other *phulkaris* which are dominated by the darning stitch, *chope* are made with an intricate pattern of double running stitches, the result being a textile which is perfectly reversible from the front to the back (Figure 1.3). Rather than a dense covering of silk floss made by darning stitches, as one typically finds in *phulkaris*, the motifs of a *chope* appear as if a complex lattice or architectural *jali*[97] that filters the color of the deep red base cloth beneath.

The patterns created from double running stitches are quite distinctive in appearance from the darning stitches of other styles of *phulkaris*, suggesting that the art form itself is not necessarily defined by its stitch, as early scholarship on the subject suggests,[98] nor does it require the incorporation of specified forms or motifs. Instead a common thread amongst *phulkaris* might includes 1) their use, for weddings or special occasions; 2) their vibrant color palettes, particularly the incorporation of traditional shades of red and gold, both considered auspicious; 3) their large formats; and 4) their makers, the Punjabi women who embroidered and often wore and used these richly decorated cloths.

While the lattice-like motifs on a *chope* and their composition throughout the cloth appear to be abstract in nature, scholars suggest that they in fact hold symbolic meaning: for some, the triangular forms pointing upwards represent the Hindu god Shiva and the male aspect, while the triangular forms pointing downwards represent Shakti, the female aspect - depictions intended to illustrate the bride and groom, and offer wishes for a happy union.[99] This along with the auspicious color palette of a *chope* make it an appropriate symbolic choice for weddings.[100]

Along the same lines, other styles of *phulkaris* that appear more geometric and abstract in nature very often hold symbolic meaning, such as an example from the late nineteenth century currently in the National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum in New Delhi (also known as the Crafts Museum) which incorporates a row of motifs along its selvedge border often thought to represent

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[95] For an expanded discussion on the use of *chope phulkari*, see Charu Smita Gupta, 2010; and Hitkari, 2003.

[96] On occasion a *chope phulkari* will include stitches in other colored threads, though the dominant thread choice is gold-colored.

[97] *Jali* refers to the carved marble or stone screens used in Indian architecture. Simple *jalis* are found in Hindu temples from the 8th century in Karnataka (Chalukya) and Orissa, and later developed in Islamic architecture during the Sultanate and Mughal periods.

[98] Flora Annie Steel (1888); Hall and Irwin (1973) 161-65; Hitkari (1980).

[99] Hitkari, 1980, 27-8; Hitkari, 2003, 24.

[100] The gold-colored threads represent prosperity while the red *khaddar* is a symbol of health and fertility

mirchi or chili peppers (Figure 1.4).[101] The same cloth includes at one corner a very characteristic *phulkari* motif, that of a *phul* or flower form with stylized symmetrical petals that appear almost feather-like in their rendering (Figure 1.5). This is a motif we will see again and again. Some scholars suggest that the *phul* is in fact a depiction of a marigold.[102] When looking at other *phulkaris* from a similarly early time period one sees a variety of seemingly abstract motifs which have specific references to objects in the "natural" world: for example, the *char kalia* or four-spoked petal motif (Figure 1.6) and the wheat motif (Figure 1.7), both of which appear throughout later *phulkaris*, albeit in slightly altered forms.[103] The motifs incorporated into later twentieth-century versions of *phulkaris* sometimes appear quite similar to their 19th century counterparts. The *phul* and *chili* motifs in particular have changed little over the last hundred years (Figures 1.8 and 1.9). The *char kalia* motif retains some of the basic shape (four-pointed cross-like form) of earlier *char kalias* (Figure 1.10), but is otherwise a new motif altogether. And, the wheat motif of the nineteenth century has been replaced by a form that appears more illusionistic in its representation of stalks of wheat which grow throughout the Punjabi countryside (Figures 1.11 and 1.12).

Perhaps the most celebrated and elaborate style of *phulkaris* are *baghs* ("garden of flower work"), which take the abstraction of nature within their motifs one step further. The degree of abstraction found in *baghs* is so extreme that any illusionistic reference to actual flowers or forms from nature is obscured amidst a density of embroidery stitches. Despite this extreme abstraction, artists draw connections between the motifs on a *bagh* with objects from the natural world. For example, many consider the white-colored lozenge motifs found in some *bagh phulkaris* to be representations of the moon, and accordingly give it the name *Chand Bagh* or "Moon Garden" (Figure 1.13). Another popular and impressively dense *bagh* is a style that is completely covered in gold-colored silk embroidery. Known as *vari-da-bagh*, this style of *phulkari* is typically embroidered by the mother-in-law of a bride, and the concentric square or diamond motifs that dominate the body of the cloth are thought to be highly symbolic (Figures 1.14 and 1.15). Some scholars consider these motifs on a *vari-da-bagh* (Figure 1.16) to represent geographic place, from the macro to the micro: the outermost square/diamond symbolizing the earth, the middle one symbolizing the family's town or *mohalla* (neighborhood), and the inner most square/diamond symbolizing the house of the bridegroom.[104] Other scholars suggest that this motif represents multiple golden lotuses.[105]

These exquisitely embroidered textiles are the most labor intensive style of *phulkaris,* taking months, sometimes years to complete. The rough *khaddar* base cloths are barely detectable beneath a dense garden of embroidered forms, revealing the artist's mastery of embroidery and

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[101] These motifs were particularly popular in *phulkari* from the Malwa region of Punjab.

[102] See Anne Morrell; also Textile Gallery at Sanskriti Museum curated by Jyotindra Jain.

[103] Charu Smita Gupta after Hitkari discuss at length the various stylized motifs that appear in *phulkaris*.

[104] Hitkari, 2003, 25. See also Charu Smita Gupta, 2010.

[105] See wall text at Sanskriti Foundation, curated by Jyotindra Jain.

her attention to the evenness of the stitches, even on the reverse of the cloths (Figure 1.17). In fact the evenness of the darning stitches coupled with the dense geometric patterning that characterize *baghs* appear as if an embroidered version of supplementary-weft weaving. In many ways, these embroidered cloths are as Jasleen Dhamija suggests, "a poor woman's brocade."[106] *Baghs* in particular are made through a technique of counting warp and weft threads to determine the next location for a stitch. With this basic warp-weft grid as a base, the long floats of a darning stitch is quite reminiscent of the long floats of a weft thread being passed via a shuttle through the loom's warp, as in brocade weaving. The difference of course is that a woman need not have a loom (a large and rather cumbersome object) to create a *bagh*, but instead need only a single needle and a bit of thread, to embroider when time and space permits.

The Abstract "Phul" of *Phulkaris*

Baghs and *chopes* in particular raise questions about the role of abstraction in *phulkaris*. It is tempting to hunt for motifs amongst the geometric patterns that cover a cloth, searching for a reference to a flower or vegetable form or an animal or bird motif rendered nearly imperceptible due to its extreme stylization. Among *phulkaris*, abstraction occurs not only through the geometric rendering of actual motifs (flowers, stalks of wheat, birds, etc.) but also through composition: the manner in which an artist arranges forms across the cloth transforms individual motifs into pattern and ornamentation. Particularly with *baghs*, it is clear that the abstraction of forms and their repetition into pattern recalls woven textiles, which by their very nature are geometricized and abstract: the loom requires a degree of abstraction in that forms must be articulated along strict horizontal and vertical orientations, weft and warp threads.

Abstraction in textile art has very often drawn inspiration from the technical limitations of weaving and its inherent abstraction. When speaking of the infamous *Turkish Treatise*, a document popularized by Georges-Pierre Seurat and Paul Gauguin in the late nineteenth century and allegedly written by a seventeenth century Persian poet named Vehbi Mohammed Zunbul-Zade, Joseph Masheck explains that the arabesque and textile weaving (or what he calls, "the carpet paradigm") were hugely influential for Post-Impressionist artists interested in issues of abstraction in painting.[107] Early art historical theories of abstraction such as those found in the writings of Wilhem Worringer opt for more philosophical interpretations of abstraction over metaphors of weaving. Worringer pushes the origins of abstraction away from Western Europe, by arguing that a number of geographically and historically disparate cultures and artistic practices exhibit an "urge to abstraction" which is not a purely aesthetic desire, but instead "the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world."[108] In other words, abstraction of forms is a way for artists to reconcile and visually depict the cosmos, the forces of nature, and the larger surrounding environment. It is useful to consider that the

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[106] Based on conversation with Ms. Dhamjia at her home in New Delhi in October 2012.

[107] Joseph Masheck, "The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness" in *Arts Magazine*, 51 (New York, September 1976), 88.

[108] Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy* (London, 1953), 14-15.

practice of abstraction - whether in a Cubist painting or a highly geometricized *bagh phulkari* - reveals an artist's interest in alternative ways of seeing and representing forms.

To some scholars, abstraction is the practice of distorting, geometricizing, and/or stylizing forms or imagery that have direct counterparts in the natural world. For others, the role of abstraction lies in reproducing forms using non-representational or symbolic color, and emphasis on the materials or techniques of an artistic medium (as determining form).[109] On a *phulkari*, abstraction may take the form of distorting or geometricizing the shape of a moon, using the counting of warp-weft threads as a guide (as we see in the *Chand Bagh*) or it make be the depiction of a peacock rendered in bright magenta and gold threads rather than more representational colors, e.g. blue and green. Ultimately, as Meyer Schapiro points out, our definition of abstraction rests on precisely how we define representation.[110] Accordingly, the geometricized forms typical of many *bagh phulkaris* appear that much more abstract when placed in comparison to figurative (and as I argue in Chapter 2, sometimes narrative) *sainchi phulkaris*. A so-called *Chaupar Bagh* shows how an isolated form (e.g. a single *chaupar* or parcheesi board) may appear illusionistic, but once repeated and rendered into a pattern those individual motifs recede from view and the overall result is an abstracted composition.

When looking at the very diverse range of styles of *phulkaris* what is clear is that abstraction occurs along a spectrum of illusionistic depictions. In other words one can detect varying degrees of abstraction when considering a handful of *phulkaris*. *Baghs* and *chopes* very often appear to be the most abstract, while figurative styles of *phulkaris* like *darshan dwars* and *sainchis* occupy the other (illusionistic) end of the spectrum. There are numerous other styles of *phulkaris*, several of which I will consider below, which occupy a kind of middle ground, somewhere in between motifs and patterns which are highly abstract and those which are predominantly representational. It is striking that museums and scholars label all of these textiles as "phulkaris" even if their compositional and formal qualities are quite different from one another.

Ambiguities of Abstraction and Narrativity: The Figurative as Pattern

The vast majority of extant *phulkaris* in public and private collections throughout the world cannot be easily categorized into styles such as *chope*, *bagh*, *sainchi,* or *darshan dwar*. Instead, most *phulkaris* fall somewhere in between these typologies and accordingly are not strictly geometric-abstract nor are they clearly figurative. Very often, an artist will include illusionistic depictions of animal and human figures in the corners of a *phulkari* that is otherwise dominated

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[109] Alfred Barr explains that in the context of art the words "abstraction" and "abstract" are confusing and paradoxical terms, that one can easily use as a verb, adjective and noun. "The verb *to abstract* means to *draw out* of or *away from*. But the noun *abstraction* is something already drawn out of or away from—so much so that like a geometrical figure or an amorphous silhouette it may have no apparent relation to concrete reality." Alfred Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York, 1936), 11.

[110] Meyer Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," in *Marxist Quarterly* (New York, 1937), 85. Here Schapiro critiques Alfred Barr's definition of abstract art, as the opposition of representational art (which is a passive, non-artistic mirroring of things).

by abstracted floral or vegetal forms, as in a *phulkari* from a private collection that depicts wheat motifs arranged in neat rows across the body of the cloth, echoing perhaps the manner in which farmers plant seeds in parallel rows in a field (Figure 1.18a and b). This *phulkari* has petal motifs near the end borders as well as small chili motifs along the selvedge (side edge) of the cloth. Unusual however are a few sections of the cloth, which the embroiderer has used to depict more representational motifs that depart from the otherwise consistent, abstract handling of forms that appear elsewhere on the *phulkari*: a large peacock with variegated tail feathers appears in one border (Figure 1.18c); a long row of women's jewelry dominates another edge of the cloth (Figure 1.18d); two human figures, dressed in simple loincloths typical of gymnasts or wrestlers appear close by, their legs separated and their arms raised in action as if their bodies are about to meet (Figure 1.18e); and a lone male figure appears next to two animals (Figure 1.18f).

What is most interesting about these figurative forms are the styles in which they are rendered, quite different from the neat rows of wheat. The embroiderer has departed from a method of counting warp-weft threads that was used to create the motifs in the body of the cloth, and instead has adopted a "looser" hand in depicting the animals and humans; she has outlined each form using a simple running stitch in a contrasting color, which allows these motifs to appear more organic in shape - rounded and curved - without following a strict horizontal and vertical warp-weft grid of the *khaddar* beneath. The artist then filled in each form with a variety of colored threads using a darning stitch, but one that, again, does not follow a warp-weft guide. With this change in technique, the artist has also experimented with perspective and composition. The figure depicted next to the two animals (Figure 1.18f) appears as if seated on a cart, which the viewer sees from the side so that only one wheel is visible. By contrast, the jewelry (Figure 1.18d), likely a row of forehead ornaments known as *maang tikas* worn by brides for their weddings,[111] appear as if viewed from above, with the *tikas* laying flat on the ground. Interestingly, the way in which the artist has repeated these *tika* forms, in a neat row along the edge of the *phulkari*, creates a kind of pattern: the artist has filled in every other *tika* with pink and green threads - a choice made less to depict actual wedding jewelry, but which instead one that turns the *tika* into a form or motif that once repeated becomes an ornamental pattern.

Other *phulkaris* similarly render animal and human forms into pattern. Take for example a so-called *Tota Bagh Phulkari* (Figure 1.19), which depicts a colorful display of birds (likely parrots or *totas*) in a repetitive pattern across densely-embroidered cloth. The birds depicted here have legs, eyes, and in some cases a slight articulation of a wing - all features which hint at illusionistic rendering, despite the high degree of abstraction the artist has used in their depiction. A similar *tota bagh* from a private collection shows a later stage of abstraction (Figure 1.20). Gone are the legs and wings; a small beak attached to an oval body is the only indication that these forms are in fact birds. In both *phulkaris*, the neat rows of birds creates a rhythmic pattern across the cloth, much in the same way as a repeat pattern of floral motifs or lozenges found on other *phulkaris*. By abstracting and repeating the bird motifs the artist has removed the identity

[111] For more on Indian wedding jewelry, see Usha R. Balakrishnan, *Alamkara: The Beauty of Ornament* (New Delhi: National Museum, 2014).

of these motifs as birds, and instead rendered them into forms, manipulated as pattern or ornamentation. Furthermore, by using non-representational colors to depict the birds (hot pink, white, and sage green) and alternating each color in a systematic way, the bodies of the birds form diagonal lines across the *phulkari* and create a sense of abstraction and pattern.

Numerous other examples depict repeat patterns made from figurative forms (Figures 1.21, 1.22, and 1.23), prompting questions about the role of ornamentation in these cloths. A key question to consider is how art historical scholarship can help us interpret the ornamentation found so prevalently on *phulkaris* - ornamentation which is both abstract and illusionistic in nature. Two prominent voices in theorizing ornamentation can be found in Alois Riegl and Gottfried Semper, each of whom articulate opposing perspectives on what ornamentation in art reveals about artists, and provide useful arguments for thinking about the practice of abstracting forms in art. Semper, a staunch materialist, argues that ornament is the direct result of material and technique. For example, he proposed that geometric motifs originated in woven textiles because the loom's structure of warp/weft and the process of weaving dictated the geometric rendering of forms.[112] Riegl, by contrast, pushes against the materialists and in favor of the idea of *kunstwollen*: the desire to make art in a particular style that transcends practical limits imposed by materials or techniques. For example, instead of geometric patterns as a happy accident of weaving different colored fibers together, Riegl considers them to be a conscious choice on the part of the artist that tells us something about how she framed her relationship to the world.[113]

Most productive for thinking about ornamentation on *phulkaris* is, in a way, to combine both the Semperian materialist theory and Riegl's idea of *kunstwollen*. We know that many artists created *baghs* and other abstract-geometric *phulkaris* by using the warp and weft threads of the *khaddar* base cloths as a kind of grid (which were much more visible due to their handspun, handwoven characteristics); "counting threads" to determine the placement of the next embroidery stitch. Such a technique lends itself to creating geometric motifs, strictly following the vertical warp and horizontal weft lines, and fits easily within Semperian theories about ornament being the result of material and technique. And yet, in figurative *sainchi phulkaris,* the subject of the next chapter - such as two characteristic examples, one in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Figure 1.24) and another from the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh (Figure 1.25) -[114] the situation is quite different, and much more akin to Riegl's ideas about a *kunstwollen*. The artists of these textiles appear to not have been limited to the confines of material or technique and instead created ornamental forms that are curvilinear, undulating, quite at odds with the weft-warp grid of the *khaddar*, and perhaps suggestive of the artist's thoughts about the world

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[112] Semper, *Architecture and Other Writings*.

[113] Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament* (reprint 1992).

[114] Figures 1.23 and 1.25 are *phulkaris* that Hitkari might identify as *suber phulkaris* by virtue of the four corner flowers and one central flower that appears in the body of the cloth. Hitkari explains that suber *phulkaris* were worn by brides during *sapat-padi* or *lavan* rituals in Hindu and Sikh weddings respectively, and have connections to the male and female principles as well as earth and the cosmos. Both of these *phulkaris* would seem to be later, elaborated versions of *subers*, in which other kinds of motifs (e.g. cows, other animals) appear surrounding the floral forms. See Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkaris* (2003), 24-25.

around her. While from a technical standpoint embroidery on *phulkaris* are additive and not necessary for the structure or stability to the cloth, they do add warmth and softness to the *khaddar* (the silk *pat* threads creating a thickness and suppleness that *khaddar* alone would not possess). The embroidery also adds important cultural and material value. In this way, ornamentation is significant to a *phulkari*'s function and meaning.

Conclusion

All *phulkaris* were originally intended as objects to wrap human bodies and three-dimensional objects, to cover contoured surfaces, and to take the shape of the forms beneath. In doing so the depictions on the cloth would fold and overlap, and in some cases, when worn, appear as if moving through space. One of the most fascinating aspect of *phulkaris* is the dramatic contrast that appears between the coarse cotton *khaddar* base cloth, and the highly lustrous silk *pat* threads. The difference between these two materials - the rough and the soft, the dull and the shiny - is accentuated when these cloths are put to use. The silk *pat* catches light and the colors begin to shift slightly in shade and tint with movement. Depictions of *phul* motifs or a row of wheat cease to be static visual representations fixed on a two-dimensional surface, but undulate and in many ways become animated when the cloth moves through space and time. Similarly, the lattice-like patterning on a *chope* becomes almost architectural when worn by a bride during a *vatna* or *chuda* ceremony, as if a structure covering her body. Furthermore, the thick covering of silk threads on a *bagh* would have created an insulated layer to protect its wearer from the elements, surrounding her with a garden of flowers. These aspects of *phulkaris* are difficult to ascertain when one views them in static hanging displays at a museum or gallery exhibition, and instead the viewer is left to imagine how these large cloths might have functioned, and operated as "living" objects - held, worn, wrapped, and displayed by a woman and her family - much as one can see at a Punjabi wedding party.

With all of these diverse forms of *phulkaris* and their varied uses it is in some ways difficult to reconcile that these are all the same kinds of cloth, all *phulkaris*. In the end, is "phulkari" simply a catchall for embroidery from the larger Punjab region? The "phul" of *phulkari* does not always appear in a composition and one wonders if the earliest forms of *phulkaris*, those that feature small floral *butis* found in older cloths or depicted in Amrita Sher-Gil's canvases, are the pieces that gave "phulkari" its name. The variations of *phulkaris* that exist and are cited by scholars make visual reference to everything from sesame seeds to bitter gourds to playing cards.[115] But, does it make sense to call them *phulkaris*? In fact it is worth noting that the practice of extensive categorization of different "types" of *phulkaris* is something that has emerged within the last several decades, a time period when not many *phulkaris* were actually being made.[116] Instead

[115] For example, the styles of *Til Patra* (sprinkled sesame seeds), *Karela Bagh*, and *Ikka Bagh* (with ace of diamond motifs). See Hitkar (2003); and Lal, *From the Realm of Women's Creativity*, p.13-15.

[116] The Conclusion of this study looks a few contemporary examples of *phulkaris* being made.

scholars pull from existing collections of embroidery, and link oral narratives and memories with visual interpretations of the motifs and compositions on these cloths.

This recent spate of classifying *phulkaris* by type recalls the colonial impulse for taxonomy, and seems in many ways to be a practice that could be performed in perpetuity, for better or for worse. What I propose instead of endless names of "types" is a thorough examination of what actually appears in these textiles. And, as the next chapter attempts, to look closely at the forms and figures depicted on these cloths to gain some insight into how the artists framed their worldviews. For as most studies about *phulkaris* suggest, the women - who generally remained anonymous and are assumed to be from rural locations - sit at the center of the practice of making and using these textiles. They are the ones who inspired their designs and moved these cloths through space and time. And while it may be difficult to piece together a comprehensive biography of their lives and works, perhaps, in some small way, we can gain an insight into something of their experiences by looking closely at what they made with their hands.

CHAPTER TWO

Embroidery as Writing in Figurative *Sainchi Phulkaris*

The first room of the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh, which greets the visitor upon entering the museum complex, showcases several *phulkaris* from the permanent collection (Figure 2.1). Some of these textiles were originally housed in the Central Museum, Lahore and came to Chandigarh to be included in the museum's collection when it first opened in 1968.[117] Others are acquisitions from local dealers or gifts from private donors. Nearly all are from the early- and mid-twentieth century, with a few from the late nineteenth century.[118] One *phulkari* in the gallery stands out as unusual: a small figurative hanging made by the artist Dayawanti in 2003 (Figure 2.2).[119] This textile appears similar in material, composition, and subject matter to earlier figurative *phulkaris* known as *sainchis*,[120] which typically depict a variety of animal and vegetal forms embroidered across a large cloth. Not far from Dayawanti's piece in the gallery is one such *phulkari*, made sometime in the early 20th century (Figure 2.3).

What is most intriguing about Dayawanti's *phulkari* are the motifs she chose to include: a central floral form, wedding jewelry, figures playing *chaupar* (a game similar to *pachisi* with early roots in South Asia), and a small train filled with passengers - all depictions which are familiar to earlier *sainchi phulkaris*. In Dayawanti's piece, these motifs appear disconnected and indexical: they are visual references or citations to similar motifs found on older *sainchi phulkaris*, on pieces in museums that Dayawanti has seen and from which she drew inspiration.[121] There is no sense that these forms, on Dayawanti's *phulkari*, tell a story. Looking at other, earlier examples of *sainchi phulkaris*, however, the role of narrativity (either its presence or absence) is not quite so clear.

<u>Narrativity as Evidence of the Maker?</u>

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[117] The objects from the Central Museum, Lahore were divided on April 10, 1948. The pieces that were intended to go to India were held in a temporary gallery space in Simla. They arrived in Chandigarh in 1963, again temporarily held in the nearby art college until the new museum was inaugurated on May 6, 1968. For a comprehensive history of the museum, see *The Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, India: A Handy Guide* (Chandigarh: Government Museum and Art Gallery, 2003).

[118] There are a few *phulkaris* in the museum's storage that are given a date of early 19th century, though their provenance is not clear.

[119] Based on my visit to the museum in October 2012; in my subsequent visits I found the piece no longer on display.

[120] It is unclear why the name "sainchi phulkari" is given to these textiles. In Punjabi, "sainchi" has several meanings. Perhaps the most relevant for our purposes is that "sainchi" originates from the term "sucha" or "suchi" meaning pure, original, or uncontaminated, perhaps a suggestion that *phulkari* are of an older style. However a more compelling etymology is the connection to "sanjhi" the name for goddess worship as practiced by young, unmarried girls throughout North India. Please see later in this chapter for a detailed analysis of the sainchi-sanjhi connection.

[121] As per my conversation with Dayawanti when I met her at her home in Mohali, Punjab, India in October 2012.

When confronted with figurative *phulkaris* like *sainchis*, some of which contain narrative, it is tempting to imagine that the maker, the otherwise anonymous embroiderers of these cloths, is somehow close at hand. That is, that we - as scholars in the twenty-first century - by looking closely at the cloth can understand something of the mind and personality of the woman responsible for its embroidery if we are able to decipher the story depicted on the cloth. Perhaps more so than with *phulkaris* bearing abstract and geometric motifs, depictions of animals or human figures on *phulkaris* - either rightly or wrongly - make it easier to wonder whether or not the artist was trying to tell us something about her life and experience because, after all, figurative motifs are more accessible, relatable, and seemingly understandable than a dense pattern of highly geometricized flowers.

Michelle Maskiell cautions against over-emphasizing close visual analysis of *phulkaris* when she says, "while it is tempting to 'read' *phulkaris* as transparent evidence of Punjabi embroiderers' own voices...reading motifs embroidered in the past is fraught with the strong likelihood that *phulkaris* become mirrors reflecting back the interpreter's concerns rather than windows for historical investigation."[122] Maskiell was specifically referring to the more typical, abstract styles of *phulkaris* and *baghs* that were explored in Chapter One, however her caution could as easily apply to figurative *sainchi phulkaris*. I agree that healthy skepticism about interpreting motifs is necessary and the very idea of any textile as "transparent evidence" for the artist's "voice" is ripe with romanticism and ahistoricism. However, there still exists much important evidence that can be gleaned from close visual analysis. I also think we must not rush too quickly to dismiss the value of the visual, for the details of the embroidered motifs in *phulkaris* - their forms and composition, and the ways in which they have been produced - are records of something (exactly what is still up for debate) that the artists intended to present. And in the face of a body of material (*phulkaris*) made by otherwise anonymous artists, the details of the material itself becomes our only real evidence for their creative practices.

Unknown *Phulkaris*: Embroidery as Writing for Otherwise Anonymous Artists

There has been much discussion in South Asian art history about the visibility/invisibility and identity/anonymity of artists. Mughal painting ateliers have long been considered one of the first places where the names and biographies of individual artists were known.[123] Emperors Akbar and Jahangir have not only noted the names of their favorite painters in court biographies, but in some cases gave them public praise, and in many cases paintings from those artists' workshops

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[122] Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past."

[123] For an expanded discussion on the role of painters in Mughal courts see *Master Artists of the Imperial Mughal Court,* ed. Pratapaditya Pal (Bombay: Marg, 1991); *Mughal Masters: Further Studies,* ed. A. K. Das (Bombay: Marg, 1998); and *Masters of Indian Painting*, *1100-1900*, eds. Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, and B.N. Goswamy (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2011), 2 vols. In her dissertation, *The Emperor's Eye and the Painter's Brush*, Yael Rice offers an in-depth analysis of the role of painters in Mughal ateliers and their relationships with the imperial body. See *The Emperor's Eye and the Painter's Brush: The Rise of the Mughal Court Artist, c.1546-1627*, University of Pennsylvania, 2011.

bear their names in inscriptions or even include a portrait of the painter.[124] Outside of Mughal ateliers, scholars have discussed the names and biographies of painters working for Rajput courts[125] or at Hindu pilgrimage sites such as Nathdwara.[126] Unfortunately, prior to the contemporary period, there is limited information about South Asian artists,[127] and within that limited field the most extensive research has been done on the identities and biographies of painters.[128] Our knowledge of artists working in other mediums is much more general, and based on *jati* and community affiliations, geographical locations, and the medium in question.[129] As Romila Thapar points out, while it is possible that artists in the premodern period signed their names on the monuments they built, instead, more readily, we find the names of the donors.[130]

Textiles are no exception. There is very little information about the identity and biographies of artists working with textiles in South Asia, and very often fiber artists are identified by group according to their technical specialty (e.g. *julahas* or weavers, *rangrez* or dyers, etc.), a practice itself that began in large part during the colonial period and fulfilled the British impulse for taxonomy and the desire to "know" India's inhabitants. Within the history of *phulkaris*, there is similarly very little information known about the actual artists responsible for embroidering these cloths. It is only recently with artists such as Dayawanti when names have been specifically linked to objects. Some *phulkaris*, however, do bear inscriptions. These traces of the artist tempt us with the possibility of knowing more about them, if not their ages or places of origin, then at least their names.

Take for example a *phulkari* in the Textile Museum of Canada which bears an inscription written in pen on its reverse, in both Gurumukhi and Hindi: ਕਰਤਾਸ (*kartaas*) / मनु(*manu*) (Figure 2.4).

Kartaas and Manu are likely names of individuals, and because each name appears on the

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[124] Paintings made under Jahangir's patronage in particular are worth noting for their reference to individual artists. See for example Jahangir enthroned on an hourglass, from the *St Petersburg Album*, c. 1615-20, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, currently in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (F1942.15a). Not only is this painting signed by the artist Bichitr, but it also includes his portrait at the bottom of the page. As Yael Rice argues, these inscriptions "reveal important insights into how artists' fashioned their own professional identities." Rice, *The Emperor's Eye and the Painter's Brush*, 12.

[125] See in particular Joanna Williams, *Kingdom of the Sun: Indian court and village art from the Princely State of Mewar* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2007); and B.N. Goswamy, *Nainsukh of Guler: A Great Indian Painter from a Small Hill-State* (Zurich: Artibus Asiae, 1997).

[126] Tryna Lyons, *The Artists of Nathdwara: The Practice of Painting in Rajasthan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[127] For a recent discussion about the anonymity/identity of artists in South Asia see B.N. Goswamy, *The Spirit of Indian Painting* (2014).

[128] Even within the study of modern "craft" in South Asia - a category of objects with few historical records - Mithla painters have received a great deal of attention and visibility, much more so than artists working in textiles, clay, stone, wood, and metal. See David Szanton's work on Mithla painters. This

[129] See Michael Meister, ed. *Making Things in South Asia*

[130] Romila Thapar, "The Social Role of Craftsmen and Artists in Early India" in Meister, ed., Making Things in South Asia, 13-16.

phulkari in different directions, they were most probably inscribed on the cloth at different times. What these inscriptions may indicate is not necessarily the embroiderer(s) of the *phulkari*, but instead, perhaps the weaver and/or dyer of the cloth, a practice which was not uncommon. In some examples of commercial production of *phulkaris*, a patron's name would be indicated in pen on the reverse so as not to disturb the embroidered composition on the front. Another *phulkari* in a private collection has a pen inscription on the reverse of the cloth in Gurumukhi which reads: ਅਮਰੀਕ ਸਿੰਘ (Amriik Singh), again an individual's name, likely a Sikh man (Figure 2.5). In most cases these pen inscriptions are names, though who these names refer to is unclear: perhaps the embroiderer of the *phulkari*, the weaver or dyer of the *khaddar*, or the patron who commissioned or acquired the cloth. Whether or not these inscriptions refer to the artist or the buyer, they do acknowledge the process of making a *phulkari* and its subsequent use - ultimately referencing the people involved in various aspects of a textile's production and circulation.

Other *phulkaris* include embroidered inscriptions, and perhaps are more intentional markings or signatures by virtue of their being rendered in thread rather than ink. Take for example a partially completed embroidered inscription at the *pallu* (end border) of a *phulkari* in a private collection in Palo Alto, California (Figure 2.6). It reads: ਸਨਤੀਂ ਠਾਕਰੀ ਨੰਦੋ ਭਾਗ ਦਾ ਚੰਦੋ ਦਾਨੀ ਕਟਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਚੰਦੋ (*Sunteen Thhakree Nundo bhag da Chundo Dani Katar Singh Chundo*).[131] It is likely that this inscription makes reference to four different women (Sunteen, Thhakree, Nundo, and Chundo) who may have worked collectively on this *phulkari*, a practice which was not unusual. It was also not uncommon for a single embroiderer to include the names of her friends or family members (as a kind of homage), even if those women had no hand in actually embroidering the cloth. The inscription also includes the name of an individual, perhaps a man, Dani Katar Singh, who may have commissioned the cloth or was otherwise connected to the embroiderer(s). The fact that the four female names have been embroidered using four different colored threads, while the male's name remains unfinished / without embroidery, suggests that what we see on the *phulkari* is a kind of signature or label, marking the presence of the female embroiderer(s) and/or other women in her community.[132]

The textual writing that appears on *phulkaris*, I would argue, is only one form of writing that occurs on these cloths. In her study of gender and technology in Late Imperial China, Francesca Bray describes embroidered goods that recall *phulkaris*, both in their making and use. She explains that embroidery was done within the inner quarters of a house, often with numerous women coming together - meeting, talking, and stitching.[133] Typically, embroidered textiles were

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[131] I am grateful to all who contributed their thoughts on the translation and interpretation of this inscription. In particular, thanks go to Professor Upkar Ubhi, Mr. Gurdip Singh Sethi, Dr. Kusum Chopra, and Dr. Joginder Ahluwalia. Mr. Sethi pointed out that the inscription has a rhyme to it: *Sunteen Thhakree Nundo / bhag da Chundo Dani Katar Singh Chundo.*

[132] Other examples include Figures 2.7 and 2.8, both of which likely reference a person's name. The entirety of these inscriptions is difficult to translate by virtue of the condition of the textile and the presence of several broken or missing letters.

[133] Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (UC Press, 1997), 267.

made by women for their dowries, and often embodied symbols of fertility and showcased the skills of a bride.[134] Significantly, Bray argues that embroidery was a kind of female counterpart of writing, which was more closely associated with the work of men, and in some cases was connected with cultivation, refinement and civility.[135] The concept of embroidery as a female counterpart of writing, is, I believe, a potent way of thinking about many forms of embroidery, generally, and *phulkari* specifically. Judy Frater similarly talks about the language of Rabari embroidery, and how "reading" individual motifs on a textile can provide insight into the identity of the maker or wearer.[136]

If we are to view embroidery as a form of writing, what is the vocabulary of this stitched language? What are the letters, the diacritical marks, the words or phrases? Can we understand intonation, syntax, or metaphor? Furthermore, if we are able to become fluent in the language of embroidery, is it possible to determine precisely what an artist is trying to say? Moving beyond the textual inscriptions found on some *phulkaris*, this chapter explores *phulkaris* as a form of writing, looking closely at formal and stylistic elements of figurative styles of *phulkaris* known as *sainchis*. What exactly were artists "writing" in these *phulkaris*? When the words of women did not always enter into archives in traditional ways (e.g. as text, as ink and paper), can we consider textiles such as *phulkaris* as a declaration of a woman's voice, agency, visibility or presence? Can we understand the making of a *phulkari* as a way for a woman to write her own history?

Stories Written In Silk: Narrativity and Meaning in Figurative *Phulkari*

> It is as if someone, sitting down to embroider...was recalling a fair to the mind, or recording what goes on all around...children walking, women carrying pots, men huddled together playing *chaupar*, wedding jewelry...[137]
>
> - B.N. Goswamy

S*ainchi phulkaris*, in particular, have received comparably little critical scholarly attention despite their unusual figurative forms and compositions. In general, scholars attribute *sainchi phulkaris* to the eastern regions of Punjab (part of which is now in the Indian states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh), specifically to the districts of Bhatinda and Faridkhot, though some also come from the northern regions of Punjab near Pathankot.[138] I have encountered *sainchi*

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[134] Bray, *Technology and Gender* (1997), 265.

[135] Bray, *Technology and Gender* (1997), 266. Bray supports her claim through analysis of the word *wen*, a term that connotes elite cultural practice. According to Bray, embroidery was the female form of wen and a term often used to denote embroidery patterns.

[136] Frater, *Threads of Identity*. Scholars have long attached semiotic approaches to "reading" visual objects, with varying degrees of success. See in particular Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Hackett Publishing, 1968) and Roland Barthes, *Rhetoric of the Image*.

[137] Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour*, 238.

[138] Hitkari, 1980. Also referenced in Charu Smita Gupta, 2010.

phulkaris in numerous museum collections, including those on public display in galleries. However, there is very little analysis attached to these textiles, and no discussion as to how and why this form fits within the larger category of *phulkaris*.[139]

Hitkari argue that *sainchi phulkaris* present a catalogue of "everyday life" in a Punjabi village as experienced by the rural women who made and used these textiles, a position that is widely accepted without question. B.N. Goswamy describes *sainchi phulkaris* in similar terms - the embroiderer depicting all that goes on around her. According to Hitkari "the embroiderer puts on the cloth what she sees all around her in the village...[and] in fact these [*sainchi*] *phulkaris* encompass the whole life of the village" from domestic scenes of churning butter or grinding corn to common cooking ingredients, to children's toys, women's jewelry, and hair combs.[140] Subsequent scholars have picked up on these interpretations.[141] However, the motifs in these *sainchi phulkaris* seem to be more than a simple catalogue of "everyday life" in rural Punjab, as Hitkari and Goswamy suggest, and instead hint at aesthetic conventions, modes of storytelling, and ways of making and being that are unique to place and time. Jasleen Dhamija is one of the first scholars to propose the connection between *sainchi phulkaris* and the worship of Sanchi (or Sanjhi) Devi,[142] a theme I examine in more detail later in this chapter. Whether or not we agree with Dhamija's proposition, it does seem clear that several *sainchi phulkaris* incorporate narrative meaning, beyond a simple catalogue of "everyday life," and instead reveal insight into the women who made them.

The degree to which artists are embroidering stories and whether or not these *phulkaris* employ narrativity depends in large part on how we define narrative. Aristotle provides a classical framework for approaching narrative: a story with a plot that has a clear and definitive beginning, middle, and end.[143] However such a fixed notion of narrative is limiting and fails to account for asymmetrical stories or narratives that have multiple time frames and various points of entry or exit. Ursula K. Le Guin provides one alternative example for thinking about narrative: stories which are structured like hoop-snakes, composed entirely of "middles" without any beginning or end.[144] The Aristotelean approach, to its own detriment, does not allow narrative to exist in seemingly simple stories that may lack a coherent or well-developed plot. Instead it is more useful to allow narrativity to be culturally-dependent, specific to time and place, and, in some cases, an attempt on the part of a narrator or author to record or recall something that

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[139] The National Museum in New Delhi is the exception; Curator Anamika Pathak has included a reference to Sanjhi Devi in the panel text about sainchi phulkari in the Textile Gallery's anteroom. See Chapter 4 for more details.

[140] Hitkari, *Phulkari*, 1980, 30.

[141] See for example Sui Dhaga, Krishna Lal, and Passionate Eye. For an extended discussion of these figurative *phulkari* see Hitkari, *Phulkari*, 1980, 29-32; and Gill, *A Phulkari From Bhatinda*.

[142] Jasleen Dhamija, "The Sacred Grid: Bagh, Phulkari, and Sainchi." Catalogue accompanying an exhibition of the same name at Gallery Art Motif, New Delhi, October 2013.

[143] See Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (1986).

[144] Le Guin, "It was a dark and stormy night," 190.

happened or perhaps what could be. This function of narrative as a way of giving an account of personal experience and desire resonates, as we shall see later in the chapter, with the pictorial depictions in *sainchi phulkari*.

In order to understand the role of narrative in visual objects we must consider when and in what forms narrativity appears. In his analysis of Christian painting, Franz Wickoff defines three main narrative modes as useful tools for interpreting images: 1) monoscenic, in which one moment in a story is depicted; 2) polyscenic, in which more than one moment in a story is depicted; and 3) continuous, in which figures can be repeated and are shown doing a variety of activities in a continuous setting.[145] Vidya Dehejia uses a similar framework of narrative modes to a successful end in her analyses of early Buddhist sculpture and Jagat Singh's *Ramayana* paintings, and provides a useful foundation for understanding narrativity in South Asian art.[146] Dehejia expands Wickoff's three narrative modes to include linear, synoptic, and narrative networks.[147] However can we map these modes of narrativity onto any / all visual objects (such as *phulkaris*), and if so, how do narrative modes depicted in visual forms affect our understanding of a particular story or event?

Take for example a *sainchi phulkari* made in the first half of the 20th century currently in the permanent collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Figure 2.9). The depiction of a large flower in four corners as well as the center of the cloth suggest that this *sainchi phulkari* might also be a *suber* - a type of *phulkari* worn in a wedding ceremonies when the bride and groom circumambulate the ritual fire or the Guru Granth Sahib.[148] The presence of other kinds of forms (e.g. animals, figures) on the *phulkari* suggest that it is a later style *suber*, in contrast to earlier *subers* where five large flowers would dominate the composition. Looking closer at the human and animal forms it becomes apparent that there are several narrative elements in this *phulkari*, specifically with reference to myths and folktales popular in Punjab, again suggesting that not all *sainchi phulkaris* depict scenes from "everyday life" as Hitkari would have us believe.[149] On the left side of the cloth, the figure lying in the lap of another figure is perhaps a representation of the folk hero Mirza sleeping in the lap of his lover Sahiban, while his faithful mare Bakki is tied to a nearby tree (Figure 2.10). The figures on horseback riding towards the couple are likely

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[145] See Franz Wickoff, Die "Wiener Genesis." Vienna, 1895, translated by E. Strong as *Roman Art: Some of Its Principles and Their Application to Early Christian Painting*. New York, 1900, referenced in Lavin, *The Place of Narrative* (1990). Kurt Weitzmann also expanded on these narrative modes, proposing submodes, and in fact his article "Narration in Early Christendom," in *American Journal of Archaeology*, LXI, 1957 is referenced by Dehejia in her analysis of Indian Buddhist art and discussion of narrative modes.

[146] Dehejia, "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art," (Sep., 1990); and Dehejia, "The Treatment of Narrative in Jagat Singh's "R! m! ya" a" (1996).

[147] See in particular Dehejia, "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art," 382-86.

[148] See Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkaris* (2003) for further discussion on *suber phulkaris*.

[149] In my research I have encountered several other *sainchi phulkaris* which incorporate depictions from folktales, which suggests that this *phulkari* is not unique.

Sahiban's angry brothers, the Sials, who intend to kill Mirza and return Sahiban home to her scorned fiance, Taha Khan of the Chander clan (Figure 2.11).[150]

While it is tempting to use the narrative modes defined by Dehejia and Wickoff to interpret this *phulkari*, none of them perfectly captures the unusual narrative strategies that the artist has employed in the cloth. For example, the depiction of the story of Mirza-Sahiban has elements of continuous and linear narrative modes as defined by Dehejia/Wickoff: the angry Sial men on horseback appear to be riding towards the pair of lovers, one scene or moment in the story flowing continuously into another. However, the artist does not clearly repeat the figure of the protagonist(s) as in continuous narrative, nor does she employ a specific compositional device to divide the scenes (e.g. a tree or column) as in linear narrative.[151] Instead these two scenes appear surrounded by other kinds of depictions that have little or nothing to do with the story: figures playing the flute, figures holding vessels, dogs and peahens, cassia flowers, and two large lotuses. It is possible that the depiction of two figures fighting, which appear close to the figures of Mirza and Sahiban, are one of the Sials (possibly Sahiban's brother Shamir) battling against Mirza after he has awoken (Figure 2.12), although *phulkaris* often depict figures of wrestlers (as we saw in Figure 1.18f) of which this might be a depiction.

One argument for interpreting these fighting figures as Mirza and Shamir (and not two wrestlers) is that each of these figures raise one arm to hit the top of their foe's head. In popular versions of the story Mirza kills Shamir with his sword and then Mirza eventually dies from a blow to the back of the head by one of the other Sials. If we accept this reading of these two figures, then the artist could be employing a polyscenic narrative mode in this section of the cloth: three moments in the story - the Sial men riding towards the couple, Mirza-Sahiban lying together under a tree, and the final battle between Mirza and Shamir - flowing in a roughly counter-clockwise composition. In this case, the artist has depicted these three moments in the narrative without regard for consistent scale or orientation of the figures, creating a kind of narrative sphere - not unlike the narrative networks that Dehejia proposes - in which the story unfolds on the cloth. To my mind a "narrative sphere" suggests more connections between various scenes in a story in comparison to narrative networks, which Dehejia argues offer a viewer multiple points of entry into a narrative that is itself non-linear in structure.[152] By contrast, the Mirza-Sahiban narrative depicted in this *phulkari* does not have multiple points of entry given that events happen in the story a linear way (e.g. Mirza and Sahiban recline together under a tree *before* the battle between Mirza and Shamir).

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[150] In some versions of the story, Mirza and Sahiban are pursued not only by the Sial men, but also by Sahiban's scorned fiance, Taha Khan, or one of his clansmen, the Chanders. For a good textual version of the story of Mirza-Sahiban, see Harjeet Singh Gill and Eric Vikramjeet Singh Gill, *Heer Ranjha and Other Legends of the Punjab* (New Delhi: Harman Publishing, 2003).

[151] It is also possible to interpret this depiction as a single scene (monoscenic as defined by Dehejia/Wickoff): the angry Sial clansmen set out on horseback in search of Sahiban, while at the same time (elsewhere in the forest) Mirza rests on Sahiban's lap.

[152] Dehejia's "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art," 382-86.

It is also possible that this *phulkari* includes depictions of the Hindu deity Krishna, appearing in a red garment holding a gold-colored flute (Figure 2.13a-c).[153] In this scene Krishna (Figure 2.13a), meets with one of the milk maids (*gopis*), possibly his lover Radha.[154] The *gopi*, who the artist has depicted wearing a red and gold-colored *odhini* or veil, brings Krishna a jug of milk (2.13b). It is as if the artist has taken liberty with the narrative and depicted Krishna exchanging his flute for the jug of milk that the *gopi* brings him (Figure 2.13c). This story bisects the depiction of Mirza-Sahiban in the *phulkari* and operates as a tangential narrative that adds complexity and richness to the overall piece. A similar tangential narrative occurs on the right side of the *phulkari*, where the artist has depicted a male figure balancing two baskets across his shoulders, each basket containing a smaller figure (Figure 2.14). This very likely illustrates a story from the Hindu epic the *Ramayana* in which the pious youth Shravan Kumar carried his elderly parents to various pilgrimage sites only to be killed accidentally by King Dashratha who was hunting in the forest of Ayodhya. The larger figure is likely Shravan Kumar, carrying his elderly parents in baskets across his shoulders - a theme that appears throughout numerous *sainchi phulkaris*. However, little else from the *Ramayana* appears in this section of the *phulkari*, and instead we see the figure of Shravan Kumar floating amidst a sea of animals, flowers, birds, and other humans playing games such as *chaupar*.

Regardless of whether or not we employ Wickoff/Dehejia's narrative modes to interpret the composition of the *phulkari*, what is significant are the scenes that the artist chose to depict, and through that choice her prioritizing of certain elements of a story. For the artist, the depiction of Mirza sleeping in Sahiban's lap, the Sials riding towards the couple, and the final battle between Mirza and Shamir stand in as metonyms for the larger story. A viewer familiar with the tale of Mirza-Sahiban would see these images as fulfilling a larger narrative function, representing, in just a few small depictions or pieces, the whole of the story.[155] Similarly, the figure of Shravan Kumar carrying his elderly parents is a single depiction sufficient to elaborate in the viewer's mind a larger narrative. The artist's choice for what scenes to depict also places emphasis on certain moments in a story, prioritizing them over others. In this way, narrative is not about adherence to a particular textual or oral rendition of a story, but rather visually depicting the essence of that story. The artist of this *phulkari*, then, participates in writing in needle and thread yet another version of a favorite, local tale.

Other ways in which narrativity appears in *sainchi phulkaris* are through the repetition of similar motifs or categories of objects (the "words" or "phrases" perhaps, if we are to extend the writing metaphor), which creates a kind of loose narrative theme for the work. Take for example, a

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[153] An alternative reading of the figure of Krishna could be the hero Ranjha from the popular Punjabi folk tale Heer-Ranjha. See Gill and Gill, *Heer Ranjha* (2003).

[154] Hitkari discusses similar depictions of Krishna and *gopis* in Hitkari, *Designs and Patterns in Phulkaris* (2003).

[155] Roma Chatterjee speaks eloquently about a similar narrative function in *pata* paintings. See Chatterjee (2012).

phulkari from the early twentieth century that features acrobats and performers (Figure 2.15).[156] Among the many figures depicted on the cloth is a man juggling (Figure 2.16), an acrobat flipping backwards next to a figure performing with a dancing bear (a practice that is now illegal) (Figure 2.17), and a figure balancing on a bamboo pole performing a feat known as *bansa rani*, a common practice of local acrobats and performers (Figure 2.18). Another street performer is depicted with two monkeys (Figure 2.19), likely performing the so-called monkey marriage or *bandar aur bandaari ka vivah*. Even the large animals that border the cloth appear performative, as if on parade (Figure 2.20). Furthermore, the depictions of two men fighting with swords (Figure 2.21) and another two wrestling with weights (Figure 2.22) also represent popular forms of entertainment that one might see in a village setting, perhaps by local, traveling performers![157]

While the artist may not have intended to convey an explicit narrative in this *maichi phulkari*, there is a sense that she was working with a particular theme for the cloth, and that these depictions connect to describe a series of performances or moments, much like the scenes of a story. What is unusual is that not all depictions on the cloth follow this theme: in addition to the acrobats and performers, the artist has embroidered floral and vegetal motifs (perhaps setting the stage for this scene?), an older gentleman with a cane (Figure 2.23) and a British figure wearing a pith helmet (Figure 2.24) - perhaps audience members of an acrobatic performance, though also perhaps simply local figures in the village.

A third way in which narrativity appears in *maichi phulkaris* is through a single scene which references a larger moment or event, not unlike the monoscenic narrative mode as described by Dehejia/Wickoff. Take for example another *maichi phulkari* from the twentieth century that features two large trains embroidered along the selvedges of the cloth (Figure 2.25). The artist has depicted the trains as if they are moving in opposite directions, their cars filled with passengers and their engines puffing black smoke (Figure 2.26). At the center appear four men playing *chaupar* (Figure 2.27). Perhaps the figures depicted along the center of the cloth are waiting for the trains, and the colonnade in which they stand is a railway station (Figure 2.28).

However, these trains seem more significant than a mere depiction of scenes from everyday life. Trains were and remain a potent symbol in South Asia. They represent travel, longing, and desire. Trains marked the rural Punjabi landscape, criss-crossed by railway lines, and were responsible for moving people in and out of villages and towns. Depictions of trains might represent a woman's longing for her loved ones who have moved away, including daughters

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[156] The diverse depictions of animals and humans on this *phulkari* are relatively naturalistically rendered and recall those of courtly *rumal* embroideries from the nearby Himalayan foothill region. This particular *maichi phulkari* is sometimes called circus *phulkari*, by virtue of the depictions of acrobats and performers that appear throughout the cloth.

[157] Mock fighting and performances of wrestling were popular forms of entertainment in India since well before the early modern period. See Blake, "Courtly Culture under Babur and the Early Mughals," in Journal of Asian History, 1986; and Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50 (4), October 2007: 490-523.

absent for marriage or husbands traveling for work or army service, or they may depict her own yearning for adventure and the unknown that lay beyond the railroad tracks.[158] Elaborate wedding jewelry - in the form of a gold-colored *nath* (nose ring), *har* (necklace), a forehead *tika*, and a pair of earrings (*bali*) rendered in white thread -[159] are also prominent in this *phulkari*, and might similarly reflect the artist's longing, in this case her desire for gold trinkets and ornaments (for herself or her daughter) that might be more exquisite than what she had or was able to afford in real life. Wedding jewelry could also signal a woman's desire for a successful matrimonial match. Details of wedding jewelry in another *phulkari* in the National Museum, New Delhi seem to make this connection explicit: a small veiled figure, presumably a young bride, appears in diminutive form beneath an elaborate necklace (Figure 2.29). Accordingly, some *sainchi phulkari* motifs might show the everyday, as Hitkari and Goswamy emphasize, but they might also show wishes, dreams, and fantasies translated onto cloth.

Not all *sainchi phulkaris* have clear themes or narrative references, and instead they include a range of motifs that seem disconnected. A *phulkari* from c. 1850-1925 currently in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (Figure 2.30) is one such example: a large lotus form shares the center of the cloth with a *chaupar* board, while human and animal figures appear scattered throughout, surrounded by floral motifs and peacocks. One figure rides a horse, others a camel and an elephant. Figures appear to be wrestling, walking with the aid of a cane, carrying water jugs upon their heads and balanced across their shoulders, and playing with small nearby birds. A train with passengers lines the bottom of the cloth, just inside a border of animal forms and cassia flowers. What is striking, however, is the juxtaposition between the ordered symmetry of the borders of the cloth with the seemingly random display of figures and forms in the body of the cloth - as if a hedge of flowers and neat encircling of birds contains an otherwise chaotic village scene.

This *phulkari*, like many other *sainchi phulkaris*, is not explicitly narrative in its composition. It depicts a cacophony of activities and objects that may reference an embroiderer's experiences of rural life in Punjab. However, once worn or displayed for a special event, these figurative forms could serve to incite dialogue and perhaps storytelling as a viewer "reads" the motifs embroidered onto the cloth. While the role of narrative is limited in this context, making indirect reference to categories of people and activities, the figurative nature of this *sainchi phulkari* sets it apart from other kinds of *phulkaris* that appear abstract and geometric in nature.

<u>*Sainchi* as Sanjhi: Narrativity and Folk Worship of Sandhya Devi</u>

[158] This is a theme prevalent in the book and film *Pather Panchali*. See Bibhūtibhūshaṇa Bandyopādhyāẏa, Pather Panchali, *Song of the Road: A Bengali Novel* (London, 1968) and the film of the same name by Satyajit Ray.

[159] See Balakrishnan, *Alamkara*.

An alternative reading to many of the scenes found in *sainchi phulkaris* is through a connection to a form of the mother goddess known as Sanjhi Devi,[160] and specifically to the temporary wall displays that are created during a two week period in August / September to honor her, as practiced by many women in the northern regions of India.[161] Some scholars argue that Sanhji worship occurs slightly later, in September-October, during the nine days of Navratri.[162] During this time - for some which coincides with *pitra-paksha*, the worshipping of deceased ancestors at the conclusion of the rainy season - young, unmarried girls create displays on the exterior walls of their homes using a variety of objects including flowers, shells, tinsel, colored paper, cow dung, turmeric, and sandalwood paste (Figure 2.31a+b).[163] Each day the wall display tells the story of the goddess Sanjhi and incorporates a specific theme or motif, culminating with a depiction of Sanjhi Devi herself (known as *kota*), which serves as the focal point for a *puja* or *aarti* (worship) (Figure 2.32a+b). The daily rituals surrounding the making of Sanjhi, often called *lila* or play, connect both with ancestor worship of *pitra-paksha* as well as devotion for the mother goddess. Some practices of Sanjhi worship involve not only the creation of wall decorations (*alpona yantras*), but also include story-telling, singing, and fasting.[164] A focal point for the young girls who make or "play" Sanjhi is that the mother goddess will eventually grant them a good husband and lots of children.

There are several motifs that appear in certain practices of daily Sanjhi play that echo forms found in s*ainchi phulkaris*. These include depictions of the game *chaupar*, representing entertainment for the deceased ancestors, a theme for the fourth day (Figure 2.33a-d); male and female ascetics, a theme for the eighth day (Figure 2.34); an old man and an old woman, representing respect for the elderly, a theme for the ninth day (Figure 2.35); the churning of milk into yoghurt and ghee, a theme for the tenth day (Figure 2.36); and a royal procession

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[160] The name "sanjhi" has several possible etymologies in Hindi and Sanskrit including "sajavata" / "sajja" meaning "decoration" as well as "sandhya" meaning evening - a reference to the time of day when Sanjhi worship occurs. See Asimakrishna Das, *Evening Blossoms: The Temple Tradition of Sanjhi in Vrndavana* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996); and the film *Sanjhi* by IGNCA. According to Alka Patel, Sandhya Devi is a form of the Mother Goddess as a one year old baby. See ArputhaRani Sengupta, ed. *Cult of the Goddess* (New Delhi: National Museum Institute, 2015), 267. According to Stella Kramrisch, Sanjhi Devi is a form of the Great Goddess Hoi. Kramrisch, *Unknown India* (1968).

[161] Dhamija, "The Sacred Grid." See also Betty Dashew Robins and Robert F. Bussabarger, "Folk Images of Sanjhi Devi," *Artibus Asiae* Vol. 36, No. 4 (1974): 295-306. Pupul Jayakar describes a similar practice called Sanjh-ka-kot and argues for a connection between the forms drawn on walls during sanhji play and symbolic mandalas. See Jayakar, *The Earthen Drum*, 118-144.

[162] Robins and Bussabarger, "Folk Images of Sanjhi Devi," 297.

[163] Asimakrishna Das, *Evening Blossoms: The Temple Tradition of Sanjhi in Vrndavana* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996); *Sanjhi*, a film in the IGNCA's Intangible Heritage Series (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Directed by B.S. Rawat, Script by Dr. Gautam Chatterjee. See also Betty Dashew Robins and Robert F. Bussabarger, "Folk Images of Sanjhi Devi," *Artibus Asiae* Vol. 36, No. 4 (1974): 295-306; and "Sanjhi Devi in Folk Art" in Kang, *Punjab Art and Culture* (1988), 28-29.

[164] Robins and Bussabarger, "Folk Images of Sanjhi Devi," 297-8. Jayakar, *The Earthen Drum*, 128-131.

accompanied by numerous figures and animals, a theme for the 12th day (Figure 2.37).[165] Many of these same motifs appear in *sainchi phulkaris*, suggesting that there might in fact be a connection between the two art forms. For example, could the depictions of *chaupar* that appear throughout numerous *sainchi phulkaris* be connected to the fourth day of Sanjhi worship? Or perhaps instead of reading the depiction of Shravan Kumar as a reference to the *Ramayana*, might we instead be seeing Shravan Kumar as a symbol of respect for the elderly and a theme of the ninth day of Sanjhi worship?[166] Furthermore, might the depiction of wedding jewelry that appear in numerous *sainchi phulkaris* be related to young girls' worship of Sanjhi Devi and their hopes for a good matrimonial match? Strikingly, the symmetrical arrangement of floral forms and animal figures that appear on many *sainchi phulkaris* echo the symmetrical displays of Sanjhi worship. Even the theme of *lila* or "play" connected with Sanjhi - meant to evoke the whimsical play of Krishna, Radha, and the *gopis* - recall the playful displays of circus performers and entertainers, not to mention depictions of Krishna and Radha/gopis themselves, that appear in many *sainchi phulkaris*.[167]

If we are to believe the Sanjhi-*sainchi* connection, then the displays on *sainchi phulkaris* are not merely depictions of "everyday life" but instead a visualization of the 15 days of Sanjhi play. In this view, the textile itself becomes a narrative of Sanjhi and a ritual object which, when displayed on a wall, might serve as a focal point for worship. Furthermore, the Sanjhi-*sainchi* connection implies that the name "phulkari" is more complex than previously thought: the "phul" could refer not merely to floral motifs rendered into geometric patterns embroidered onto cloth, but also as a direct reference to the real flowers that serve a central role in creating Sanjhi displays.[168]

Another style of *phulkari* which hints at sacrality are so-called *darshan dwar phulkaris*, which typically depict rows of doorways or gateways (*dwar*) across the body of the cloth. Popular belief explains that *darshan dwar phulkaris* were gifted to a temple or *gurudwara* by devotees as prayers or offerings in exchange for *darshan* (divine sight) or wish fulfillment.[169] It is difficult to confirm this use of *phulkaris* because few *gurudwaras* or temples contain *phulkaris,* and

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[165] There is also a form of Sanjhi worship that occurs in some temples, connecting with *bhakti* of Krishna and Radha, and linked with devotional poetry written in *Brajbasha*. See Asimakrishna Das, *Evening Blossoms: The Temple Tradition of Sanjhi in Vrndavana* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996)

[166] Or for that matter, the depiction of the older gentleman with a cane as seen in Figure 28

[167] Taking the Radha-Krishna connection in Sanjhi one step further, one could argue that the depictions on *sainchi phulkaris* of female figures carrying pots on their heads, evoke women walking through the forests of Vrindavan, on their way to the Jamuna river to fetch water, and that the men steering bullocks carts make reference to the verdant, rural landscape of Braj.

[168] For more on the significance of flowers in Sanjhi see Dasa, 27.

[169] Hitkari, 1980, 27. The practice of gifting *phulkari* to a temple or *gurudwara* is much talked about, though difficult to confirm with concrete evidence.

religious leaders with whom I spoke over the course of my research deny the practice.[170] There are a few embroidered shawls in old *gurudwaras* in Punjab - which do include darning stitch embroidery comparable to *phulkaris* - however these textiles have been kept by the *gurudwaras* because of their connection to specific gurus or important figures within the Sikh community.[171] That said, the compositions and forms of *darshan dwar phulkaris* are unique and suggest a more significant role and meaning for these textiles.

Many *darshan dwar phulkaris* are now in museums and private collections around the world - far removed from an earlier life as a sacred object. Take for example, a 19th-century *darshan dwar phulkari* currently in the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh (Figure 2.38). In this piece, as with many *darshan dwar phulkaris* (see Figures 2.39, 2.40, and 2.41), a series of figures appear standing inside doorways, and carrying vessels on top of their heads. There are typically two rows of figures and doorways facing each other, running the length of the cloth, with a contrasting motif or pattern along the center of the *phulkari*. Animals, birds, and wedding jewelry appear scattered throughout the space. Hitkari suggests that these *darshan dwar phulkaris* depict arched verandas built around temples for the purpose of *Parikarma* or circumambulation.[172] While it is unclear exactly what these gateways are intended to depict in terms of actual architecture, they certainly echo much older religious buildings in the general region, specifically the pointed entryways seen on medieval Hindu temples in Kashmir,[173] such as the sun temple at Martanda built around the early 6th century CE (Figure 2.42). If religious structures are the origin of the form, the figures inside the arched openings could be worshippers carrying offerings in pots on their heads.[174]

While the embroidery in many *darshan dwar phulkaris* has a density to the stitches that recalls abstract *baghs*,[175] the figurative elements in these cloths suggest some kind of story or message is being conveyed in the forms and compositions. It is likely that these *phulkaris* had a ritualistic or symbolic role, and oral histories attest to this. However their actual use in temples or other religious settings is not well-documented. Most likely they served as ornamental *chaddars*,

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[170] It is not surprising that temples or *gurudwaras* do not contain *phulkaris* today. The role of textiles in religious spaces in South Asia is often a temporary presence: a cloth placed over the Guru Granth Sahib for a moment while a *shabad* is spoken, a temple sari gifted to a deity who wears it once (and simultaneously blesses it) before temple priests sell it at weekly auctions, or a brightly colored piece of fabric that is offered to a *dargah* and placed momentarily over a saint's tomb.

[171] See Bhayee Sikander Singh and Roopinder Singh, *Sikh Heritage: Ethos and Relics* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2012).

[172] Hitkari (1980), 27.

[173] I am grateful to Dr. Darielle Mason for her thoughts on this.

[174] Alternately, Hitkari suggests that the line of gateways in *darshan dwar phulkaris* could illustrate a street scene: rows of houses with figures standing in each doorway, watching passersby. This scenario seems more plausible when depictions such as trains appear along the center of the cloth, as in the PMA example.

[175] The dominant stitch used in most *darshan dwar phulkaris* is pattern darning, a kind of elongated running stitch that creates consecutive floats of thread across the cloth arranged into various shapes. The prominent visibility of the floats of thread is something shared in *baghs*, where long floats of threads completely obscure the *khaddar* base cloth beneath.

perhaps to cover a sacred book or object, or were temporarily hung on the walls during a special event.[176]

Syntax of *Phulkaris*

If the motifs of a *phulkari* are the words and phrases of the composition, then perhaps the stitches themselves are letters and diacriticals. In some cases the details of embroidery stitches - e.g. how even or uneven they appear on the base cloth - reveals evidence of the artist's "hand." The manner in which a *phulkari* has been embroidered can tell the viewer how experienced or inexperienced an embroiderer is (and accordingly may hint at her age), the care the artist put into the work, and possibly if more than one embroiderer was working on a single cloth. Take for example a *darshan dwar phulkari* with two rows of large doorways running lengthwise along the cloth, as is typical of *phulkaris* of this style (Figure 2.43). A number of forms appear inside and around the gateways: human figures, vehicles, animals, wedding jewelry, and vegetal motifs - again, quite typical of *darshan dwar phulkaris*. What is unusual about this *phulkari*, however, is the manner in which the artist(s) has embroidered these forms, created using a deft application of pattern darning stitches in neat and even rows (Figure 2.44). Lozenge motifs on the selvedges (side borders) similarly incorporate pattern darning stitches done in a skillful manner. By contrast the human and animal forms that appear throughout the cloth, seem to have been embroidered by a different "hand" or perhaps done at a different time, in haste (Figure 2.45). These darning stitches are loose and uneven, and lack the refinement of the stitches in the gateways. Perhaps this cloth had multiple artists, of multiple skill levels, that worked together embroidering. Alternately, this *phulkari* could have been made over a longer period of time by a single artist whose skills developed as she worked on the cloth. Either way, these stitches reveal the handmade quality of the *phulkari*, the variations inherent in this type of work, and offer us some evidence of the woman / women involved in its making, perhaps even marking the time that it took to create this piece.

The composition of a *phulkari* may also hint at the artist(s) involved in its making. Numerous *sainchi phulkaris* are composed of motifs arranged concentrically around a central floral form, suggesting the involvement of multiple hands embroidering, perhaps seated in a circle (Figure 2.46). These cloths were used in a variety of ways, most likely as covers for bedding (*bistre*), placed over cots (*charpoys*) or dowry chests, or hung on the wall. The composition of this *phulkari* belie these many uses, with the orientation of figures and forms appearing at odds with the ways in which it would have been displayed. Instead, the compositional logic seems more akin to the process of embroidering: by many women, seated in a circle, chatting and stitching.[177]

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[176] More research in temples and *gurudwaras* in Punjab is needed to uncover the historic use and role of *darshan dwar phulkaris*.

[177] Conversations with Punjabi women who remember seeing phulkari being made when they were young or who made phulkari earlier in their lives attest to this collaborative working style. Even Amiji's phulkari, which I reference in the Introduction, was embroidered by Amiji's mother and sister, working together.

Another way in which an artist's "hand" is visible on a *phulkari* is in the color of the silk threads. Take for example a *bagh* in a private collection in New Delhi (Figure 2.47). The white-colored silk threads used in the *leheria* (wave) pattern in the central portion of the cloth appear to be slightly different shades (Figure 2.48). A similar phenomenon is apparent in another *bagh* (Figure 2.49), in which the artist has used different shades of gold-colored threads at different places in the cloth (Figure 2.50). Less subtle variations appear in *phulkaris* where an artist has substituted one color for another (e.g. inserting yellow threads in a field of magenta, see Figure 2.51). What these variations reveal is the passage of time, and an artist's embroidery stitches marking that time.[178]

Silk threads used in *phulkaris* were transported from outside Punjab, and sold in villages and towns by nomadic merchants, very often tribal women. The thread was thus extremely expensive by local standards. Usually women could acquire only a small amount at a time, depending on availability and budget. Accordingly, a single *phulkari* often incorporates embroidery threads from many different sources and dye lots, purchased at different times. While an artist might consistently use gold- or white-colored threads for the background of a *phulkari*, as in these *baghs*, slight variations in the shade and hue of the thread usually remain visible. These subtle variations reveal not only the expense incurred in making a *phulkari*, but also the time it took an embroiderer to complete a piece.

Conclusion: Embroidery as an Everyday Act of Resistance

Considered in conjunction with the manner in which most *phulkaris* were made - at home, by women during their "leisure" time when household chores and agricultural work was finished, very often embroidered in groups or in the company of other women -[179] the marking of time that occurs in the variation of silk thread raises a number of interesting questions about the role of *phulkaris* for the artists. If we consider embroidery to be a form of writing, then the stories that Punjabi women "wrote" in the form of *sainchi phulkaris* are diverse and multivalent, and if anything produce more questions than answers. For even as one looks broadly at embroidery and other forms of folk art across regions in South Asia, some of the same kinds of motifs appear. Depictions of women churning milk into ghee or figures seated around a game of *chaupar* are not unique to *sainchi phulkaris*, but appear in folk embroidery from Rajasthan and Gujarat as well as in tribal Warli paintings of Maharasthra, suggesting a larger visual rhetoric being employed across diverse folk art forms. Perhaps rather than indexical images of "everyday life" - a categorization which feels uncomfortably simplistic and romantic, as if assigned to rural folk by more cosmopolitan and paternalistic urban viewers - the depictions on a *sainchi phulkari* are a kind of visual journal,[180] containing not only reflections of moments and motifs from daily life,

[178] This theme is discussed further in Chapter 3.

[179] For an expanded discussion of the "leisure" time involved in making *phulkaris*, please see Chapter 3.

[180] I am grateful to Bishakha Shome for thoughts on this.

but also recounting dreams and wishes, recollections of past events or rituals, and sketches of things that appear or are yet to come.

The challenge for any writer is finding the time to write, to carve out a place within a home or space within the tasks of a day to sit down and put pen to paper or hands to keyboard. Similarly, finding the place and space to embroider a *phulkari*, was important for a woman though not always easy. In many agrarian communities in Punjab a married woman's day began before sunrise with the preparation of tea and food for the family, and ended around nine o'clock at night, after the rest of the family had gone to bed. In between she might be responsible for all or some of the following: caring for children, washing clothes, grinding spices, hauling fuel, cooking, and cleaning.[181] Depending on the family structure these tasks may have been carried out under the watchful eye of the woman's mother-in-law or sisters-in-law. Setting aside the time to work on a *phulkari*, to sit in an open courtyard and sing and embroider with friends or family,[182] may have been a precious and rarified event, perhaps even a moment that went against the dominant social systems that monitored a woman's movement and work both inside and outside of the home.

In his article "Everyday Forms of Resistance," James C. Scott argues that subaltern figures, such as women, push against dominant social systems in subtle ways, everyday, and while at first glance their efforts may seem barely detectable, they accumulate overtime into actions with profound meaning.[183] Can we consider the activity of taking time in the middle of the day to gather with other female relatives and friends and embroider a small portion of a large *phulkari* to constitute an everyday form of resistance? Admittedly, embroidering a *phulkari* is not necessarily the stuff of political protest, but it could be a subtle form of pushing back against individuals or social systems that contained woman's bodies and actions. Michelle Maskiell suggests that the style of *odhini* that a woman chose to embroider could be interpreted as an act of subversion or agency, even as the final garment served as a *pardah* or veil.[184] Roszika Parker describes the stereotype of the "silent embroiderer" who sits quietly, thinking, and counting stitches - her silence a kind of resistance to the world around her and an act that suggests her

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[181] For more on the social roles of Punjabi Jat women see Sandra Constance Murray, *All in the Family* (Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, UC San Diego, 1984), 21-23; and Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981). Prem Chowdhry "Customs in a Peasant Economy: Women in Colonial Haryana" in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990): 302-325. See also All in the Family - Sandra Constance Murray Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, UC San Diego, 1984; and Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981); and Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion."

[182] An image often referenced in scholarship on *phulkari*. See in particular Jasleen Dhamija's "Embroidered Gardens of Flowers: Bagh and Phulkari of Punjab," in *Threads and Voices: Behind the Indian Textile Tradition*, ed. by Laila Tyabji (a special edition of Marg, Vol. 58, No. 4, June 2007), p.49.

[183] Scott, James C. "Everyday Forms of Resistance," *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 4.1 (2008): 33-62.

[184] Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion."

autonomy.[185] Parker also argues that the problem with the stereotype of the silent embroiderer is that it denies anything subversive in her work; it is a silence maintained for the benefit and comfort of men.[186] However, the silence is precisely what makes the act of embroidery an *everyday* form of resistance; it is an action that appears quotidian, familiar, unsuspicious, and accordingly a perfect camouflage for an almost imperceivable form of protest / pushing back. Michel de Certeau's discussion of *la perruque* in *The Practice of Everyday Life* suggests a similar way of reading subtle acts of defiance or agency as resistance. For de Certeau *la perruque* ("the wig") is a tactic used by workers to very subtly subvert dominant systems, in this case the employer / place of work. He explains that "*la perruque* may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on 'company time' or as complex as a cabinetmaker's 'borrowing' a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room."[187] In these cases, perhaps also with the making of a *phulkari*, what is being subverted is time and the assumptions of how that time *should be* spent. For *phulkari* artists, who in the course of art history are otherwise anonymous or "invisible," embroidering a *phulkari* is one way of marking their presence and agency. Following de Certeau, Grace S. Fong similarly argues that "through embroidery...individual [Ming and Qing period] women were able to create a space of local and limited empowerment for themselves and other women."[188] Might the same be said for embroiderers of *phulkari*?

Returning to the often-quoted line from the *Rag Basant Hindol*, attributed to the 15th/16th centuries - which reads "when you embroider your own blouse, only then you will be considered an accomplished lady"[189] - it seems as though the practice of embroidering was itself a socially-sanctioned activity linked with ideal forms of femininity, not quite the stuff of everyday resistance. However, even if the practice of embroidery was socially-sanctioned, the content of the embroidery and the ensuing conversation, may not have been monitored, and accordingly could provide the opportunity for women to "speak their minds." In other words, while engaging in an appropriate "female" task of sitting with girlfriends and embroidering a *phulkari*, a woman could insert a subversive image, such as a caricature of a British resident or a depiction of her quarreling in-laws or neighbors (the otherwise innocent "wrestlers" that appear throughout these cloths?). Furthermore, the collaborative nature of some *phulkaris* and the coming together of

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[185] Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: The Women's Press, 1984).

[186] Parker, *The Subversive Stitch,* 10-11.

[187] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 25.

[188] Grace S. Fong, "Female Hands: Embroidery as a Knowledge Field in Women's Everyday Life in Late IMperial and Early Republican China," *Late Imperial China*, Volume 25, Number 1, June 2004: 1-58.

[189] ਕਦਿ ਕਸੀਦਾ ਪਹਿਰਹਿ ਚੋਲੀ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਣਹੁ ਨਾਰੀ = *kadh kasida pehreh choli, Ta tum janoh nari*. Hitkari 1980, 13 attributes this line to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is partially correct as the Rag Basant Hindol is part of the Guru Granth Sahib. I am grateful to Dr. Joginder Ahluwalia for his assistance in helping me track down the original source for this text. Based on email correspondence, May 2011. This line is quoted in numerous texts about phulkari, used to create an early origins for the cloth. See most recently, Krishna Lal, *From the Realm of Women's Creativity* (New Delhi: IGNCA, 2013).

women to embroider is described eloquently by Durgesh Shankar and Charu Smita Gupta who use the metaphor of the *sanjha chullah*, the common kitchen or "shared hearth in the village, where the women of the community got together every evening to bake chapattis...best exemplifies the working of a team ethos" that characterize many *phulkaris*.[190] One wonders if the name *sainchi phulkari* is connected to this sense of *sanjha* - of group, commonality, and collaboration - rather than a reference to Sanjhi Devi or a literal Punjabi translation of "pure" or "original."

The anonymity of the artists of so many *phulkaris* and the lack of biographies or other evidence to explain the motifs in the cloths, leaves present interpretations of *phulkaris* to the realm of conjecture. What does seem safe to conclude, however, is the fact that these artists were trying to say something (again, exactly what that something is, is hard to know). But their work does excite the imagination and suggests vibrant and varied creative minds at work in the making of these cloths. Each *phulkari*, as Jasleen Dhamija suggests, is "expressive of [a] woman's creative talent"[191] and allows us, as viewers to dream and travel with them.

While writing a history of *phulkaris* based on motifs embroidered on the cloth and information about the artists is difficult, what is possible, is to understand how these textiles circulated at different places and moments in time. Let us now turn, in the final three chapters, to explore a few such moments when *phulkaris* were collected, displayed, written about, and referenced by different people around the world for very different reasons. Each of these moments offer another view of *phulkaris*, another facet of their identities and meanings, and reveal the complex ways in which human actors manipulate material objects.

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[190] Shankar and Gupta, *Phulkaris of Punjab*, 2002.

[191] Dhamija, "The Sacred Grid."

CHAPTER THREE

Women's Work: *Phulkaris*, Flora Annie Steel, and Collecting Textiles in British India

[In Rohtak, *phulkari*] is a work of leisure - the work of women, who, after doing yeoman's service with father or husband in the fields, sit down in the cool of the evening to watch their threshing floors, and leaning, as I have often seen them, against the heaps of golden grain, darn away with patient, clumsy fingers at the roll of ruddy cloth upon their lap.

- Flora Annie Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab," Journal of Indian Art, 1888.[192]

People speak of the art of India with bated breath, but the natives of that country have very little real artistic sense. On the slightest provocation they fly to aniline dyes; they prefer Manchester goods to their own beautiful hand-printed fabrics...And yet India is full of indigenous arts and crafts, and when untempted by the West these remain in many ways beautiful exceedingly.

- Flora Annie Steel, "Arts and Crafts," *India*, November 1905.[193]

In 1888 Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, novelist and long-time resident of British India, published a short article in the *Journal of Indian Art* (hereafter *Journal*) about *phulkari* textiles.[194] The 1888 *Journal* article was not the only time when Steel had turned her attention (and pen) towards textile arts of India and the artists responsible for making them - subjects she both revered and detested as evident by a chapter on "Arts and Crafts" from her 1905 book *India*. Written with a British audience in mind, Steel's 1888 *Journal* article on *phulkari* is both ethnographic and didactic. She describes for the reader the types of women who make this embroidery, the social circumstances in which they work, and how to identify good quality cloth, with special attention to characteristics to look for and avoid when purchasing *phulkaris*. Steel highlights some of the unique visual features of *phulkaris*: silk floss, usually in shades of golden yellow or white, embroidered onto handspun, handwoven cotton fabric known as *khadi* or *khaddar*.[195] The comparably muted shades of the "ruddy" *khaddar* - typically dyed a rusty red-color with madder root or a deep shade of blue with indigo - contrasted with the vibrant colors of the dense silk embroidery. Steel also spends time describing technical features of *phulkari* embroidery,

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[192] Flora Annie Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab," in *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, No. 24 (London, 1888). Kumari Rampa Pal echoes Steel in her emphasis of *phulkari* as a work of leisure, "the work of women who, after the day's labour, or in the serene hours of early morning, sit down and embroider peacefully the crimson-dyed home-made cloth." See Pal, Foreword.

[193] Flora Annie Steel, *India* (London: Adam and Charles Black, Soho Square, November 1905), 106.

[194] Flora Annie Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab," in *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, No. 24 (London, 1888). The *Journal of Indian Art* became the *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* in the mid-1890s when there was a desire on the part of the publishers to expand the journal's readership and contributors. See Hoffenberg, "Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad" in *Victorian Periodicals Review* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 192-213.

[195] There are some early examples of *phulkari* in which the embroiderer has used cotton floss instead of or in addition to silk floss, as well as additional colors beyond golden yellow and white (e.g. light green, dark purple, and later with aniline dyes, magenta).

highlighting in particular its method of diapering or surface decoration made from darning stitches worked entirely from the reverse of the *khaddar* base cloth, requiring that an embroiderer use warp and weft threads as a guide to determine the placement of stitches ("counting threads"). Other key features of *phulkaris* highlighted by Steel include their origins in rural Punjab, particularly the regions around Rohtak, and their connection to Hindu Jat women, who "untouched by Muhammadanism or Sikhism" produced the "truest" form of *phulkaris*, "uncontaminated by exotic amendments."[196]

Most striking about Steel's *Journal* article on *phulkaris* are the number of color plates she includes to illustrate her text. To accompany the barely one and half pages of textual description, there are 15 pages of illustrations each showing two different kinds of *phulkaris*, in some cases with a picture of the reverse of the cloth to reveal the quality of the stitches. The images begin with a depiction of "very old work" as well as recent work that retains motifs and stitching techniques of the past or "new patterns, but old methods" (Figure 3.1).[197] As the color plates continue the examples move further from the "true" form of *phulkaris* produced by Hindu Jats in Rohtak, and show instead variations of embroidery, as in the intricate *baghs* made by women in the Hazara region (Figure 3.2).[198] The images also depict work that is coarser and poorer in quality, as well as pieces Steel deems "illegitimate" because they are not made by counting threads (Figure 3.3). Finally the viewer is presented with two samples of *phulkaris* at their very worst (Figure 3.4): one the so-called *Manchester Bagh*, which Steel identifies as a "specimen of the cause of *phulkari* deterioration" and the "result of native bad taste"; and the other the *Jubilee Bagh*, which she deems the "result of English bad taste."[199] For Steel, these final examples are the result of embroiderers "tempted by" the aesthetic influences of the West, a form of cultural exchange which Steel continued to frown upon as evident by her 1905 text - a sentiment she shared with other British authors.

While the actual textiles reproduced in Steel's article have disappeared, the details of her life suggest that alongside her growing interest in writing about *phulkaris*, Steel began to collect

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[196] Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab," 71. Jat refers to a community of farmer-warriors who lived primarily in the Northwest region of India (mostly Punjab and Rajasthan). It is worth noting that Hindu Jats were not the only women responsible for making *phulkari*. This was a form of embroidery made throughout the region by women of many different castes and religious communities, and as this study will show was even made in some cases by men for commercial purposes.

[197] Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab."

[198] In 1849 when the British gained control of the Hazara region after the first Anglo Sikh War, it divided the region into three administrative districts (*tehsils*) and added it to Punjab. When the Northwest Frontier Province was formed in the early twentieth century, Hazara became part of NWFP. It is now in Pakistan as part of the the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (formerly NWFP).

[199] Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab." The name *Manchester Bagh* is a reference to the robust textile industry in Manchester, England, which was famous for mass producing textiles on mechanical looms, many of which mimicked Indian styles of handmade fabric, for both Indian and British consumers. The name *Jubilee Bagh* references the celebrations of both Queen Victoria (as Empress of India) and British Imperial rule on the subcontinent in general. Steel uses both of these names rather disparagingly, to refer to the "corrupting influence" of British taste on traditional *phulkari* designs.

examples of the embroidery. It is likely that the illustrations included in the article are from Steel's own collection, and were eventually given to the Lahore Museum sometime between 1875 and 1893, six years before Steel left India.[200] This chapter focuses on Steel's interest in *phulkaris*, and examines how the textiles collected by Steel and illustrated in her *Journal* article frame nineteenth-century British conceptions of *phulkaris* as "women's work" and what this tells us about the nature of collecting, circulating, and depicting *phulkaris* during this period. As this chapter will show, Steel's article emerges as an early voice advocating for and discussing the craft labor of women. And yet, Steel herself was an unusual figure whose position on Indian women was circumscribed by a larger colonial discourse on craft and Orientalist ideas of India and Indians. Using Steel's article as a point of departure this chapter explores how her engagement with *phulkaris* sheds light on the role of women as collectors and artists in British India.

Knowing and Collecting

The *Journal of Indian Art* was created to commemorate the Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in London in 1886, and accordingly the *Journal*'s inaugural issues featured a thorough report on the exhibition with an extensive catalogue of objects on display and a reiteration of the exhibition's themes of Indian objects as commodity.[201] Following in the footsteps of the well-known Great Exhibition of 1851 held in London's Hyde Park, and in particular responding to the immense popularity of the Indian objects on display, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 was held at a moment in time when India had officially become part of the British Empire and popular imperialism was on the rise in Britain.[202] Unlike the Great Exhibition, the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition signaled a strong turn towards commercialization that peaked during this period: objects were not merely on display, but were also for sale.[203]

Backed by the British Government in India (also known as the Raj), the *Journal* not only intended to respond to conversations about Indian objects occurring at the exhibitions in London, but also reiterated British interests on the subcontinent.[204] In addition to declaring British control

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[200] The *phulkaris* were given to the Central Museum in Lahore during John Lockwood Kipling's tenure as curator, 1875-1893. Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity: Being the Autobiography of Flora Annie Steel, 1847 - 1929* (London, 1929), 115-116.

[201] The first 16 issues of the *Journal of Indian Art* were devoted to "embracing the Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886." See *The Journal of Indian Art*, Volume 1 and 2, Numbers 1-16 (London, beginning in 1886).

[202] For more on the Great Exhibition of 1851 see Tim Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial project" in *Colonialism and the Object* (1998); and Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (2005), specifically the chapter "Colonial Gothic."

[203] The 1886 exhibition also highlighted craftsmanship and bodily work, and featured the display of live artists alongside depictions and the objects. This is in contrast to the emphasis at the Great Exhibition on industrialism and mechanical labor. See Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial project" and *Men at Work.*

[204] The *Journal* was one of several tools used by the Government to assert to readers at home and abroad that the British Empire was committed to the subcontinent and to ensuring the stability of the colonial government in India. Peter H. Hoffenberg, "Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad: 'Journal of Indian Art and Industry,' 1884-1917" in *Victorian Periodicals Review* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 192-213.

over India, articulated through the objects illustrated in the *Journal*, the editorial committee was also intent on foregrounding the commercial objectives of the new publication: urging that "contributors [to the *Journal*] should be sure to let readers know where art products could be purchased and at what price."[205]

The relatively short-run *Journal*, which produced only 17 volumes in just over three decades embodies much of late nineteenth-century British interests in Indian art: to know and to collect. This connoisseurial urge was partly fueled by an intellectual interest in Indian things, and a post-Enlightenment impulse to order, sort, catalogue, compare, and apply other taxonomic systems to make sense of a great diversity of objects and artistic practices. British desires to know and collect Indian objects (and in turn to classify objects as "art" or otherwise) also fulfilled larger, imperial interests to consume or capture resources, skills, designs, and products of the subcontinent - a necessity for power and a tool to more effective rule.

Steel's article on *phulkaris* in the 1888 volume is the first time that the *Journal*, and in fact any English-language publication, focuses extensively on this particular form of embroidery - a move that reveals an interest on the part of the *Journal* to feature regional artistic practice.[206] In this issue, the *Journal*'s emphasis on region not only begins to define arts and crafts of Punjab, but also begins to define Punjab itself.[207] Notably, all three contributing authors for this particular issue - H.C. Cookson, John Lockwood Kipling, and Flora Annie Steel - had spent a good deal of time in Punjab, and in British circles each were known for their knowledge of the region.[208] Steel lived in India for over 20 years while her husband, Henry William Steel served in the Indian Civil Service.[209] The couple traveled extensively throughout North India but remained primarily in Punjab, moving between smaller towns such as Kasur and Ludhiana and larger cities and colonial strong holds such as Lahore. Steel is perhaps best known by her many literary works - often fantastical accounts of life on the subcontinent and Orientalist interpretations of Indian

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[205] Hoffenberg, "Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad," 198.

[206] Notably, Steel's article on *phulkaris* is not the first time that embroidery was included in the pages of the *Journal*. An earlier issue from 1888 focused entirely on Indian embroidery with a broad survey of regional styles reprinted from John Forbes Watson's *Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the People of India* (1866) as well as a note about examples of Indian embroidery in the India Museum collection in London, a detailed explanation of stitches, and descriptive captions (for the several color illustrations included in the issue) written by B.A. Gupte, *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, No. 18 (London, 1888).

[207] Steel's article appears in Volume 2, Issue 24 of the *Journal,* which was devoted to showcasing arts of Punjab. The issue opens with the third and final series of John Kipling's ongoing article "The Industries of Punjab" and also features a detailed examination by H.C. Cookson on the region's silk industry. *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, No. 24 (London, 1888).

[208] John Lockwood Kipling, the author of "The Industries of the Punjab" and a figure who will be discussed later in the chapter, served as curator of the Central Museum, Lahore, Principal of the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, and Fellow of the University of Punjab. Likewise, H.C. Cookson, whose article "The Silk Industry of the Punjab" also appears in issue no. 24 of the *Journal* was a Civil Servant who spent much time in Punjab.

[209] Maskiell discusses Steel's life in Punjab and her engagement with *phulkaris* in "The Crafting of Rural Women's Roles in Sikh Heritage," in *Sikhism and Women* (2010).

history and folklore - which she published towards the end of her stay in India and soon after returning to England in 1899.[210]

Before focusing her efforts on creative writing, Steel pursued other interests. She was an ardent supporter of health care reform and women's education, using British systems as a model.[211] Armed with a library of medical texts and what she called "the amateur's pharmacopoeia," Steel set about providing health care to local women and children in the towns where she and her husband lived.[212] In response to the perceived need for English education in Kasur and neighboring regions, Steel established boys and girls' schools, and eventually the British Government in India appointed her Inspectress of Girls' Schools in Punjab in 1884.[213] Part of the curriculum that she established for girls' schools involved not only instruction in English grammar and literature, but also training in various income-generating activities deemed socially appropriate for women, such as embroidery.[214] Her close interaction with local women through her educational and health care initiatives as well as her own position as a self-described "needlewoman,"[215] allowed Steel to learn more about the local form of embroidery that she saw being made throughout Punjab: *phulkari*. Eventually Steel emerged in British circles as an expert on *phulkaris*, and in addition to writing in the *Journal*, she authored catalogue entries, exhibition reviews, and other short articles on the topic.

Steel's article on *phulkaris* for the *Journal* participates in late-nineteenth century discussions on Indian handicrafts that circulated in public forums in India and abroad through print media, international exhibitions, newly created art museums, and art school curricula. Notably conversations about crafts focused on male-dominated ("professional") crafts, not ("part-time") crafts made by women.[216] While Steel's article operates within a the larger discourse about

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[210] For an analysis of Steel's writing, see Nancy Paxton, "Complicity and Resistance in the Writings of Flora Annie Steel and Annie Besant," in *Western Women and Imperialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[211] Rebecca J. Sutcliffe points out the irony of Steel's interest in education reform in Punjab, for Steel herself had an unconventional and relatively unsatisfying education in Britain due to her low social status and family history. See Sutcliffe, *The Subject of Imperialism: The Rhetoric of Self in the Life and Work of Flora Annie Steel* (Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, August 1995), 82-84. For more on the "unconventional" nature of Steel's work in India see Margaret MacMillan, *Women of the Raj*.

[212] Violet Powell, *Flora Annie Steel* (London, 1981), 23.

[213] Sutcliffe, *The Subject of Imperialism*, 84-90.

[214] Steel's emphasis on embroidery was not unusual. The British Education Commission, established in 1882 to evaluate the "progress" of British-stye education in India, called for a separate education system for women, run in large part by English ladies and incorporating needlework into the curriculum. See Sutcliffe, *The Subject of Imperialism*, 89. See also Powell, *Flora Annie Steel*, 28-30.

[215] In addition to practicing embroidery before she left for India, Steel spent time studying lace-making while on vacation in Italy with her family. See Powell, *Flora Annie Steel* and Steel, *Garden of Fidelity*.

[216] See Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (New York, 2009), 16.

Indian crafts, she emerges, for better or for worse, as one of the few voices articulating the work of women.[217]

What is unusual about Steel's position on *phulkaris* is that it expresses competing, even contradictory, interests. On the one hand Steel appears to have altruistic concerns and admiration for the village women who make *phulkaris*, and by extension she is complimentary of the objects of their labor. On the other hand, Steel is brutally critical of formal and material adaptations made by embroiderers that move *phulkaris* away from traditional styles, and she goes so far as to criticize the women for being easily corrupted and influenced by foreign, particularly British, designs. In directing her readers about how to identify good quality *phulkaris*, Steel places value on pieces made in a traditional way for personal use. For Steel, a "true" *phulkari* was a "labour of love" produced by rural Punjabi women for themselves or for their families - different in both style and technique from "commercial" *phulkaris*, in some cases made by professional male tailors, which she deemed a cheap imitation.[218]

Simultaneous praise and admonition, and opinions about the artistic vs. economic intentions of Indian handicrafts that appears in Steel's article is, in fact, evident in much of the literature around Indian arts and crafts at this time. Emphasis on the emotional experience of the craftsperson was of particular interest (e.g. to not just be handmade, but *happily* handmade). The desire for a return to the art and *pleasure* of making things with one's hands echoes the work of William Morris, who - inspired by John Ruskin and Karl Marx - urged for a revival of handicrafts that encouraged happy workers designing and producing objects on their own terms.[219]

For Morris, the key to happily made handicrafts was to value and compensate artists for their work.[220] Steel similarly argues for a revaluation of *phulkaris* and attempts to describe for readers and potential buyers why *phulkaris* costs as much as they do, and why it is worth paying that price.

> The delusion that everything is to be had for a song in India requires to be exposed. The commonest *bagh* worked in true style will require about Rs 2 worth of silk, and the worker's remuneration, being one anna for every anna's worth of silk, increases the price

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[217] Steel's article has been hugely influential to subsequent scholars of *phulkaris*, and it is impossible to understand *phulkaris* now without considering the context within which Steel was writing.

[218] For more on the contradictions in Steel's position on *phulkaris* and the influence of her essay on nationalist writers see Gilmartin and Maskiell, "Appropriating the Punjabi Folk: Gender and Other Dichotomies in Colonial and Post-Colonial Folk Studies," in *Pakistan at the Millennium* (Oxford, 2003): 40-64." 46.

[219] Morris, "The Revival of Handicraft," 151. For Morris' interest in Indian design see Mahrukh Tarapor, "John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India," 71; and Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 221-251. See also John Ruskin, "The Nature of the Gothic," in *The Stones of Venice* Vol. 2 (1851-53); William Morris, "The Revival of Handicraft" (1888); and Ellen Gates Starr, "Art and Labor" (1895), all reproduced in Glenn Adamson, ed., *The Craft Reader* (Oxford, 2010).

[220] Morris, "The Revival of Handicraft," 148.

> to Rs 4... Then the cost of nine yards of *kadr* is about seven annas, which with dyeing, brings the whole to close on Rs 5. A really fine *bagh* from Hazara takes about Rs 10 worth of silk, and cannot be worked by one hand under two months, while it generally takes three. Intending purchasers, then, should remember that *phulkari* work is a true art, insomuch that it must be the outcome of love and leisure, not of haste and greed; and they should be prepared to pay for art. If not, the products of many a looms are at their disposal. It is also a difficult art, taking years to acquire, each pattern having its own formula, and the proficiency of the worker being tested by the number of patterns she knows.[221]

Significantly, for Steel, *phulkaris* are "a true art," quite different from a commercial product, such as a length of woven fabric, readily available in the market.[222] She places value on the process and duration of making *phulkaris* (by hand, taking several months), the skills required to learn the art form, the expense of the materials involved, and the mindset of the maker ("the outcome of love and leisure"). The latter quality - the mindset of the maker - is perhaps the most difficult to pin down, and something that echoes the idealism that emerges from the Arts and Crafts Movement: the notion that making "true" art is a virtuous act that speaks to the high moral character of the artist.[223]

What also emerges from Steel's article is a critique of taste: the reader is instructed to know the difference between beauty and ugliness, between good quality embroidery and embroidery that is the result of "bad taste." Such distinctions become increasingly potent when *phulkaris* circulated in the market, and buyers and collectors were faced with identifying and distinguishing between "good" and "bad" styles. To aid her fellow British collectors, Steel describes in some detail the influence of textiles from Manchester, which were readily available in India and, which according to Steel, began to negatively influence the types of stitches, patterns, and base cloths used in *phulkaris*. "Atrocities" such as the *Jubilee Bagh* (Figure 3.4), which Steel purchased at a shop in Lahore, represents the corrupting influence of English design on work that should remain traditional and distinctly Indian.[224] While the darning stitches used in the *Jubilee Bagh* are uneven and loosely spaced, for Steel its more offensive features are the departure in color and ornament from the "true" Jat *phulkaris*. The combination of teal- and red-colored threads on the dark background are dramatically different from the modern piece from Rohtak that Steel admires (Figure 3.1), which maintains a traditional palette of gold-colored threads on a base

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[221] Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab," 72.

[222] Steel's rather dismissive comment about the "products of many a loom" does not take into consideration the process, duration, expense, or degree of training and expertise required for commercial weaving. Furthermore, she fails to consider the variations of weaving itself which require different degrees of artistic mastery, e.g. the required skill, expense of materials, and amount of time to make a Benares brocade vs. plain-woven muslin.

[223] I am thinking in particular of John Ruskin's often cited phrase "all great art is praise" or "all true art is praise" from *The Art of Old England* (1889), also quoted in *The Works of John Ruskin*, edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1904), 352.

[224] Steel, "Phulkari Work in the Punjab." The corrupting influence of the West is a theme that emerges in much of Steel's written work on Indian arts and crafts. See Steel, *India*, 1905.

cloth dyed red with madder. Furthermore, the zig-zag pattern that dominates the border of the *Jubliee Bagh* appears as a truncated reproduction of the intricate geometric motifs that characterize *baghs*, such as the "excellent specimen" from Hazara in Steel's collection (Figure 3.2).

Steel's delight in traditional forms of *phulkaris,* and critique of hybrid embroidery such as the *Manchester Bagh* and the *Jubilee Bagh,* is a sentiment shared by other advocates of Indian handicrafts such as John Lockwood Kipling, with whom Steel was acquainted, and Sir George Birdwood. Both Kipling and Birdwood contributed at various times to the *Journal* and, while often at odds in their approach of how best to advocate for Indian handicrafts, they both were passionate supporters of indigenous design and art-making techniques.[225] Kipling, Birdwood, and several officials of the British Raj began to fear that Indian design would disappear in the wake of shifting global markets and the exchange of new ideas in bazaars and craft workshops. As Abigail McGowan has shown, British officials began to "sound the alarm about the pernicious influence of foreign designs on Indian manufactures" and instead emphasized the importance of indigenous design.[226] Accordingly, the government created the *Journal* with the aim of preserving and encouraging Indian handicrafts, and directly supporting art schools, exhibitions, museums, commercial trade, and institutions of the Raj.[227]

While the Raj's interest in Indian handicrafts was emphatically commercial, by contrast, Kipling and Birdwood's positions reveal artistic interests. Kipling, who served as principal of the Mayo School of Art and curator of the Central Museum in Lahore from 1875 to 1893, opposed Raj policies that aimed to wholly commercialize Indian handicrafts. Instead he sought to preserve and support indigenous forms of art making, evident in the curricula at the Mayo School and his collecting practices at the Central Museum.[228] While Birdwood was critical of any imposition of European methods on Indian art making (including Kipling's work in Lahore), he shared a very

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[225] Peter Hoffenberg calls Birdwood, Kipling's "nemesis," and explains that "the two dueled within and outside of the leather covers of the *Journal*" (192). See Hoffenberg, "Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad: 'Journal of Indian Art and Industry,' 1884-1917." Birdwood and Kipling were the predecessors to later arts and crafts advocates whose interests bisected growing nationalist movements on the subcontinent. These figures included E.B. Havell, who modeled his own curriculum at the government-run art school in Madras on Kipling's work in Lahore, as well as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and his friend Charles Ashbee.

[226] McGowan, "'All that is Rare, Characteristic or Beautiful': Design and the Defense of Tradition in Colonial India, 1851-1903," in *Journal of Material Culture* 10 (2005), 278.

[227] Hoffenberg, "Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad: 'Journal of Indian Art and Industry,' 1884-1917" in *Victorian Periodicals Review* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 192-213.

[228] Kipling's approach to art pedagogy was unique amongst art schools on the subcontinent. Government attempts to revive declining native arts by hiring English teachers to run Indian art schools and imposing European methods of art pedagogy, were for the most part a complete failure. In contrast to Kipling's indigenous workshop model that encouraged local methods of art making and student interaction with native craftspeople. See Mahrukh Tarapor, "John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India" in *Victorian Studies* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Autumn, 1980): 53-81; and Tarapor, "John Lockwood Kipling and the Arts and Crafts Movement in India," in *AA Files*, No. 3 (January 1983). See also Deepali Dewan, "The Body at Work: Colonial Art Education and the Figure of the 'Native Craftsman'" in *Confronting the Body*, ed. by James H. Mills and Satadru Sen (London: Anthem Press, 2004): 118-134.

real concern for the future of Indian design and as a result romanticized traditions of Indian art making as timeless and sacrosanct.[229] Throughout these many voices, what is clear is that arguments for maintaining the "traditional" quality of Indian goods, particularly with regard to ornament and color, was a way of reaffirming racial difference, maintaining social identities, and reiterating Orientalist views of indigeneity.

While Steel may be participating in the discourse around handicraft that is occurring through the Arts and Crafts Movement, both in England and in India, her advocacy and collecting of *phulkaris* as a gendered craft practice offers a new perspective. As Ernst Gombrich argues, the Arts and Crafts thinkers, in their lament about the demise of handicraft, failed to see the needlewomen "under their noses," the thriving craftswomen who worked each day in their homes producing embroidery.[230] Seen in this light, Steel's discussion of *phulkaris* in the pages of the *Journal* is not merely a way of advocating for indigenous arts and crafts, but also operates as a forum for the author to express her knowledge of and support for Indian women. *Phulkaris* emerge as an extension of Steel's education and healthcare work: to buy *phulkaris* was an altruistic move that directly connected to social and economic development of the women of Punjab. In the end, however, Steel's relationship with Punjabi women is markedly Orientalist: in her mind, these women needed her help, as they were unable to help themselves.

Even Steel's motivation as a collector is colored by her interest in social development for women and a strong sense of nostalgia for "traditional" *phulkari* designs. She began to collect *phulkaris*, picking up local examples of the art form whenever she visited a new village, partly as souvenirs but also as a way of amassing a kind of pattern book to be used by local women to create new *phulkaris* that mimicked older styles. She even proposed to establish a "Phulkari school" in Gujranwala, potentially an income-generation activity for local women, where students would use Steel's *phulkari* collection as templates for new work. [231] This proposed school was one way for Steel to combat the growing trend of producing new *phulkaris* with Anglicized patterns and other "atrocities" of embroidery that catered to foreign tastes.

Steel's practice of collecting *phulkaris* was not unusual for British residents in India who began acquiring objects almost as soon as they arrived on the subcontinent.[232] East India Company officials in particular collected everything from fragments of Hindu temples to photographs to

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[229] See Mahrukh Tarapor, "John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India" in *Victorian Studies* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Autumn, 1980): 53-81; and Tarapor, "John Lockwood Kipling and the Arts and Crafts Movement in India," in *AA Files*, No. 3 (January 1983): 12-21; Hoffenberg, "Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad: 'Journal of Indian Art and Industry,' 1884-1917" in *Victorian Periodicals Review* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 192-213; and Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*.

[230] Gombrich, *Sense of Order* (New York, 1979), 63.

[231] *Report on the Punjab Exhibition, 1881-82* (Lahore, 1883), 66. Steel never did create the proposed *phulkari* school, and later in life spoke with regret about her inability to "do something more" with *phulkaris* when she lived in Punjab. Steel, *Garden of Fidelity*.

[232] See in particular Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 80; and Ray Desmond, *The India Museum 1801-1879* (London, 1982); and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories* (New York, 2004).

miniature paintings to textiles, many of which eventually entered museum collections in London. Significantly, from the mid-nineteenth century on, the collections procured by the British in India began to increasingly focus on Indian handicrafts and textiles.[233] These collections, many of which were put on display in museums and at large exhibitions in India and abroad, reveal the Raj's interest in the commercial potential of Indian objects as such displays operated as defacto catalogues from which potential buyers could view sample goods.[234] Amassing large collections may also have been a way for foreign visitors to contend with the fears and desires they experienced while being in India, away from their homes and often their loved ones. As Ting Chang has shown, for some European visitors to Asia, the turn to collecting objects was a way to assuage anxiety about being in new and unusual locales - to "reaffirm the threatened self" by focusing on something familiar: the act of buying things.[235]

Phulkaris were also circulating in international exhibitions during this period. While it is possible that *phulkaris* appeared on display in the Great Exhibition of 1851, there is no concrete evidence to suggest their inclusion. Instead, we do know that numerous *phulkaris* appeared in the 1886 exhibition in London, and were sourced by Caspar Purdon Clarke in 1881 and 1882 from Amritsar, Sialkot, Rawal Pindi, Firozpur, Hazara, Bannu, Hissar, Lahore, Karnal, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, and Rohtak amongst other locations.[236] Earlier exhibitions of *phulkaris* during the nineteenth century also include the Provincial Exhibition of 1863 held in Lahore, the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883-84,[237]and the Punjab Exhibition of 1881- 82 held in Lahore, the catalogue for which includes a thorough discussion of *phulkaris* written by Steel and Alice Kipling.[238] The *phulkari* pieces purchased by Clarke for the 1886 exhibition in London were diverse in style and provenance - including a *sheeshadar phulkari* from Rohtak that featured small mirrors in the *pallu* (end) borders (Figure 3.5), a *phulkari* from Amritsar with small floral motifs in a variety of colors (Figure 3.6), and a piece from Hazara with intricately embroidered wheat motifs covering the body of the cloth (Figure 3.7) - each representing the diversity of *phulkari* embroidery.

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[233] Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, 99.

[234] Tim Barringer speaks at length about the way in which the early years of the South Kensington Museum as well as exhibitions such as the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 served as catalogues. See Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the colonial project" in *Colonialism and the Object* (1998); "Colonial Gothic" in *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (2005). For a related discussion of the British Empire and the formation of museums see Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (London, 2007).

[235] Ting Chang, "Disorienting Orient," in *The Invisible Flâneuse* edited by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (New York, 2006), 67. It is worth noting that many of the early British collectors in India were not necessarily buying objects; many times objects were stolen from sites or collected as booty following a British victory in battle.

[236] See *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors, Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*. London: William Clowes and Sons, 1886. p.256.

[237] See *Official Report of the Calcutta International Exhibition, 1883-84*. Compiled under the orders of the Executive Committee. Volume 1. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1885.

[238] The *Report on the Punjab Exhibition, 1881-82*. Lahore: Punjab Government Secretariat Press, 1883.

It is perhaps most useful to consider Steel's impulse to collect *phulkaris* as operating on multiple levels: to document and preserve "traditional" forms of embroidery; as potential didactic aids to assist in *phulkari* revival efforts and the establishment of a *phulkari* school; to connect with something familiar to her own life (embroidery) in a place that was otherwise new and unfamiliar; and to mark her own experience of moving throughout Punjab with individual *phulkaris* serving as souvenirs or personal memories of specific towns where she lived, places she passed through, or even individual women with whom she met.[239]

Cropping and Framing

Despite Steel's interest in helping the women of Punjab and by extension purchasing and advocating for *phulkaris*, the images included in her article render invisible those female actors. These illustrations of *phulkaris* are not complete textiles, draped on bodies or beds, or hung on walls to reveal their use by women or their overall composition or formal logic. Instead what Steel's article presents are bits and pieces of *phulkaris*, cropped to focus on a particular motif or pattern. While these detailed views accentuate the quality of the stitches and the artists' handling of the thread, this method of cropping ignores so much of what Steel's text focuses on: the women who embroidered these large cloths.

The artist responsible for creating the images in Steel's article was William Griggs, a London-based photographer and printer, who illustrated nearly all issues of the *Journal*.[240] Griggs specialized in reproducing images and objects using a combination of lithography and photography, which entailed a multi-step process that resulted in several objects: the original textile, a photograph / photographic negative, lithographic plate(s), and the resulting print that appears in the *Journal*.[241] In the translation of actual textile to photolithographic print, there is much about *phulkaris* that gets lost or obscured. In some cases Griggs' prints change the scale of a motif and remove complimentary border patterning that helps unify the composition of a *phulkari*. These prints also flatten and smooth individual threads, making it appear as if motifs were stamped or printed, rather than embroidered onto a base cloth. While some of Griggs' images reveal the warp and weft of the *khaddar*, what is very often lost in the *phulkari* images are the variations of the embroidered silk threads.

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[239] For an expanded discussion on the role of souvenirs and the psychology of collecting see Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library" in *Illuminations*, 59-68; Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections* (Washington DC, 1992); Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham, 1993); and John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, eds., *The Cultures of Collecting,* (London, 1994).

[240] From the 1860s on, Griggs was responsible for providing illustrations for all publications produced by the British Government in India. According to a small promotional brochure published in 1882, Griggs considered himself to be "Photo- and Chromo-Lithographer to the Indian Government; Science and Art Department, South Kensington; and most of the Learned Societies." W. Griggs, *Illustrated Pamphlet of Photo-Chromo-Lithography* (London: Elm House, Hanover Street, Rye Lane, Peckham, 1882).

[241] For more on the process of photo-lithography see Gordon Baldwin, *Looking at Photographs* (Los Angeles, 1991), 68-9.

Phulkaris were made over long periods of time - several months, sometimes years - and very often women would purchase small amounts of silk floss to fit their needs and budgets.[242] The result being that almost all *phulkaris* incorporate silk floss from various dye lots and sometimes diverse sources. While a woman would be consistent with the general hue of floss (e.g. golden-colored un-plied silk), there were always variations in tint or shade. Comparing the images of Steel's *baghs* from Hazara (Figure 3.2) with an actual *bagh* from the same region (Figure 3.8), what is noticeable is the uniformity of color of the embroidery threads in the print in comparison to those used in the actual textile. Such uniformity of the print is consistent with Griggs' process - a single lithographic plate devoted to depicting gold color. However, the variations of thread evident in the actual cloth reveal much more than a diversity of silk sources or dye lots; the inconsistencies of hue in the silk floss show the hand of the woman or women responsible for making the *phulkari*, and mark the duration or time in which she spent embroidering. The images of *phulkaris* in Steel's article, then, quite literally render invisible the women embroiderers and their act of making, obscuring the details of the women's work.

Griggs' cropped prints of *phulkaris* are consistent with British interests in elements of Indian design - in color and ornament - and subsequent disinterest in the forms that Indian objects took.[243] The cropping of textiles in Steel's article, which makes soft cloth appear as frozen scientific specimens, is not surprising given this reigning interest in Indian handicrafts at the time: emphasizing ornament and color, and not form or shape. Accordingly there was a strong desire amongst the Raj that these handicrafts should take the form of popular European objects (e.g. an English chair decorated with Indian motifs).[244] The close cropping of *phulkaris* in Steel's article, aligns with this emphasis on color and ornament, for the viewer is never able to see what a complete *phulkari* looks like or how it is worn and used. Instead these images take on a didactic character, appearing as lessons on patterning and ornament void of context.

Other illustrated books from this period reveal a similar emphasis on color and ornament, and concomitant de-emphasis on form and context. An early, well-known example is Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), which recreates ornamental motifs from a particular region and classifies them according to ethnic or chronological markers. Jones drew inspiration from design elements on everything from architecture to tombstones to books to textiles. For the pages on Indian design he pulled most of the motifs from *huqqas* and carpets, recreated them into small tiles, each with a corresponding number, and arranged them in precise grids (Figure 3.9).[245] These ornamental specimens appear to the viewer as easily consumable samples of Indian art:

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[242] While there was always some cultivation of silk in Punjab, and an increasing amount produced under British rule, very often women embroidering *phulkari* would purchase silk floss from traveling merchants who would import it from various locations including Bengal and Afghanistan.

[243] McGowan, "'All that is Rare, Characteristic or Beautiful,'" 267.

[244] Birdwood, in particular, was highly critical of this position and this is one of the areas in which he and Kipling has a difference of opinion. Kipling's work with the Darbar Room at Osborne House reveals that, for him, Indian handicrafts could take several forms - the important feature being the design and process of making.

[245] Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*, 78-9.

the viewer need not engage with or contend with problems of interpreting unfamiliar, Indian objects (like *huqqas*), but can instead enjoy their pleasing patterns and harmonious colors.

Translating Indian objects into their favorable qualities of design occurs in other works by Griggs, who in addition to the images of *phulkaris* in the *Journal*, produced numerous illustrated books depicting Indian textiles, including a series of albums published by John Forbes Watson and a catalogue for the South Kensington Museum.[246] The latter volume, *Illustrations of the Textile Manufactures of India*, is notable for its absence of texts and the scientific manner in which Griggs has cropped and presented the textiles: small sections of turban fabric or decorative waist sashes (*patkas*) appear like specimens, as if pressed under glass, accompanied only by the textiles' overall dimensions, weight, price in pound sterling, and an ambiguous reference to a place of origin (Figure 3.10). Nearly all of the images present the most decorative section of the textile, usually a corner that reveals a portion of the body of the cloth as well as a small piece of the side border or a segment of the more ornate end piece (*pallu)*.

What is lost in these cropped images is not only the form and context of a textile, but also much of what is so wonderful about Indian textiles in the first place: the way they feel in the hand and on the body. Griggs' textile specimens belie the diaphanous quality of *chandheri* ("Chundaree") weaves (Figure 3.11), the slightly puckered and pinched texture of *bandhani* tie and dye motifs (Figure 3.12), and the way in which the metallic threads woven into a Benares brocade feel heavy, thick, and cool to the touch (Figure 3.13). Replicating these textiles creates a facsimile that doesn't reproduce any of these tactile and appealing qualities. Furthermore, when seen in conjunction with captions that emphasize dimension, weight, and price, these "specimens" are objects on display for British consumers, as if in a catalogue; revealing commercial intentions veiled beneath an interest in taxonomy and knowledge.

Women Working: Labor In and Out of the Home

Quite different from the illustrations in her article, Steel's text places emphasis on the women responsible for making *phulkaris*, and creates a romantic image of rural women producing *phulkaris* during their "free time" after household chores and agricultural work concludes.[247] According to Steel these women are constantly working, either in the fields or in producing embroidery. Even their hours of so-called leisure are filled with the activity of making. Accordingly *phulkari* production becomes deeply connected to a specific image of femininity: patient, quiet, busy wives, mothers, and daughters whose *leisure is productive*. For them resting and recreating is not "down time" but rather the making of something that has material and symbolic value for the family.

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[246] J. Forbes Watson, *Collection of specimens and illustrations of the textile manufactures of India*. London: India Museum, 1873-1877. For an analysis of Forbes Watson's volumes see Felix Driver and Sonia Ashmore, "The Mobile Museum: Collecting and Circulating Indian Textiles in Victorian Britain," *Victorian Studies*, Volume 52, Number 3 (Spring 2010): 353-385; and Deborah Swallow, "The India Museum and the British-Indian textile trade in the late nineteenth century," in *Textile History*, 30, No. 1 (1999): 29-45.

[247] Steel, "The Phulkari Work of the Punjab," 71.

Designating the activity of making *phulkari* as "free time" or "leisure" obscures the labor of women and suggests a different kind of valuing of women's time and the end products of their work.[248] In agrarian communities such as Rohtak, Jat women were incredibly valuable to a family both for the physical labor that they did as well as the amount of money they brought to a household through their dowries.[249] The 1880 *Rohtak District Gazetteer* describes rural Jat women as working "as hard as the men if not harder" - cooking and cleaning in the home, attending to crops in the fields, and "when there is nothing else to do, [filling] up the time by tasks with the spinning wheel." [250] Very often a woman's day began before sunrise with the preparation of tea and food for the family, and ended around nine o'clock at night, after completing a range of activities including washing clothes, grinding spices, hauling fuel, cooking, cleaning, sewing, and weaving.[251] Textile labor, then, is one of many forms of work under the purview of women.[252]

As the 1880 *Gazetteer* suggests, not only were Jat women hard workers, but by extension men in these communities were seen as less productive, even lazy - perhaps a justification for the need of a paternalistic Raj to rule over the Indian population, perceived by contrast as largely feminized.[253] Laziness extended beyond rural men to urban women as well in Steel's privileging of village women and their work over those living in cities - an overall preference for and emphasis on rurality that Steel espouses.[254] According to Steel, women in rural locations "do a

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[248] There has been much written about the theory and history of leisure particularly within the disciplines of Anthropology and Sociology. Feminist scholars working in the field of leisure studies argue that the concept of leisure is a gendered one, positioned in direct opposition to normative forms of labor (paid, done by males). For more see Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-60* (Manchester, UK, 2000). See also Clare M. Wilkinson-Weber, "Skill, Dependency, and Differentiation: Artisans and Agents in the Lucknow Embroidery Industry," *Ethnology*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Winter, 1997): 49-65 for an analysis on the roles of leisure and embroidery in a South Asian context.

[249] Prem Chowdhry "Customs in a Peasant Economy: Women in Colonial Haryana" in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990): 302-325. See also Sandra Constance Murray, *All in the Family*, Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, UC San Diego, 1984; and Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981).

[250] W. E. Purser and H.C. Fanshawe writing in 1880 from *Rohtak District Gazetteer*, 1910, quoted in Chowdhry "Customs in a Peasant Economy," 306-7.

[251] For more on the social roles of Jat women see Sandra Constance Murray, *All in the Family* (Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, UC San Diego, 1984), 21-23; and Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981).

[252] See also Maskiell excellent essay "Honor, Desire, and Fashion" for more on Punjabi women's engagement with textile labor.

[253] I am grateful to Melia Belli for her thoughts on this.

[254] In Steel's own description of the Punjab Exhibition she criticizes all examples of *phulkari* from larger urban centers such as Amritsar and Lahore, and along with an another author of the *Report*, Alice Kipling, privileges embroidery that comes from smaller towns and villages. See *Report on the Punjab Exhibition, 1881-82* (Lahore, 1883), 63-67.

lion's share of outdoor work" (read: in comparison to men) and have a number of social responsibilities, in contrast to urban women who she describes as quarrelsome, petty, and idle.[255]

The "hardworking" rural women who produced *phulkaris* in their homes for their personal use, were, for Steel, responsible for making the "truest" form of the art, and stood in stark contrast to *phulkari* producers in urban centers who catered to British tastes or professional male tailors who turned the cloth into curtains and hangings.[256] Despite the insistence of some that producing *phulkaris* was exclusively a "domestic art," the byproduct of "the leisure of busy housewives" and never intended for sale in India or abroad,[257] in fact the production and circulation of *phulkaris* in the nineteenth century was diverse, and involved a variety of female and male actors in rural/urban/domestic/commercial settings. In some regions in Punjab *phulkaris* circulated outside of the home, and were sold in local markets alongside commercially produced cloth. According to Maskiell, *phulkaris* were "commissioned by large landowners" and "Punjabi women across a wide spectrum of social positions in the 19th century stitched, wore, exchanged, purchased, inherited and hoarded *phulkaris*."[258] The *Official Punjab Gazetteer* describes merchants in the Amritsar district who "have pushed the *phulkari* to such good purpose that it has become a profitable industry,"[259] and even Steel acknowledges the variations in scope and aim of *phulkari* production, explaining that "while in Rohtak at the present day the Jat woman works for herself, in Hazara and the neighbouring districts the fine work is all done to rich orders, and most big houses keep dependents constantly embroidering."[260] Even George Watt in his catalogue for the 1903 exhibition in Delhi describes "several bales of *phulkaris*" that he encountered in Amritsar en route to the United States by commission of a European trader.[261]

Amidst the contradictory claims about the extent to which *phulkaris* were or were not a "domestic art," it is useful to consider that the contours and features of domesticity itself were

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[255] Steel, *India* (London, November 1905), 162-166.

[256] Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity*, 115-116. Similarly, Alice Kipling, reporting on the embroidery display at the Punjab exhibition of 1881-82 in Lahore notes that the best examples of *phulkari* are the ones made by women for their own uses, particularly those that come from the "unsophisticated" regions of Hissar, Rohtak, Sialkot and Hazara. *Report on the Punjab Exhibition, 1881-82* (Lahore, 1883), 64.

[257] *Gazetteer of the Hazara District 1883-4*. Compiled and published under the authority of the Punjab Government. (Reprinted Lahore, 1990), 115 and 143. See also *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits (Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886) by The Government of India and Private Exhibitors* (London, 1886), 257.

[258] See Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past" and "Honor, Desire, and Fashion"; also cited in Shehnaz Ismail, "A Stitch Travels."

[259] From J.L. Kipling, "The Industries of the Punjab" (Reprinted from the Official "Punjab Gazetteer") in *The Journal of Indian Art*, Vol.2 , No. 20 (October 1888): 34. Kipling argues that the growth of this industry may be the result of the extension of the railway.

[260] Steel, "The Phulkari Work of the Punjab," 72. Even in the case of the commercial production of *phulkari*, such as a style from Amritsar that was produced by embroidering silk floss on top of cloth block-printed with ink patterns, the catalogue notes that this was a "profitable occupation" taken up by entrepreneurial women or by young girls enrolled in missionary and private schools. *Empire of India,* 256.

[261] George Watt, *India Art at Delhi 1903: Being the Official Catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition 1902-1903* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1903).

diverse. Forms of labor in rural and urban Punjabi households of the nineteenth century varied between small, single family homes and large, multi-generational or joint family households. Wealthy families - both British and Indian - would employ several servants for cleaning, cooking, attending to family members and guests, and generally maintaining the household.[262] Female servants, as in the "dependents" that Steel references, could also pick up the task of embroidering cloth for their employers, the wealthy women and men of a household.[263] In this case embroidery becomes yet another kind of domestic labor, akin to washing clothes or making meals. For married Jat women, particularly those living in rural settings, the practice of *ghunghat* or veiling restricted their movements in the public sphere and required that much of their work was done at home.[264] Ultimately the labor that produced *phulkaris* and the nature of domesticity at times overlapped and intersected with exchange of capital, the movement of goods in and out of markets, and the circulation of cloth across broad spectrums of society.[265] In addition to gender, the work behind *phulkaris* was encoded by hierarchies of class, caste, and ultimately power.

Significantly, *phulkaris* emerged in the nineteenth century not just as a form of creative labor done predominantly by women, but instead as a feminized practice, a symbol of ideal femininity.[266] While women may have always made *phulkaris*, Steel's article signals the transformation of *phulkaris* as a gendered practice. A similar phenomenon was occurring concurrently in Victorian England where craft advocates' attempts to validate women's embroidery as "art" ultimately reinforced rigid sexual categorizations for creative work, and redefined embroidery not as art, but instead as an expression of femininity.[267] Steel, perhaps familiar with such conversations, similarly reframes making *phulkaris* as a feminized practice, not just a practice carried out by females.

Picturing Textile Labor

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[262] For an overview of domestic labor in Anglo-Indian households during this time see Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook: Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House, and the Practical Recipes for Cooking in all its Branches by Two Twenty Years' Residents* (Edinburgh, 1890). For detailed description of joint families in rural Punjab see Sandra Constance Murray, *All in the Family* (Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, UC San Diego, 1984).

[263] Steel and Gardner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*.

[264] For more on *ghunghat* amongst rural Jat communities, see Prem Chowdhry "Customs in a Peasant Economy: Women in Colonial Haryana"; Chowdhry, *Political Economy of Production and Reproduction: Caste, Custom and Community in North India* (New Delhi, 2011); Sandra Constance Murray, *All in the Family*, Ph.D. dissertation, Anthropology, UC San Diego, 1984; Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981); and Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion."

[265] For more about these contexts of exchange and valuation see Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion."

[266] Steel's role in the gendering of *phulkari* is eloquently discussed in Maskiell and Gilmartin, "Appropriating the Punjabi Folk." See also Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past."

[267] See Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*.

A significant challenge for understanding the role of women embroiderers during the nineteenth century is the fact that the majority of colonial documentation on textile production overlooks "part- time" crafts, that is crafts made - often by women - during a respite from other kinds of labor (e.g. embroidering *phulkaris* during a break from household duties or agricultural work).[268] Instead we can glean something of the role of women in textile production specifically, and craft labor more generally, by turning to "typology" photographs and paintings made by Indian artists for British patrons.[269] A group of images from the second half of the nineteenth century compiled in the *Album of Drawings of Punjab (Rulers, Monuments, Occupations),* now in the Royal Ontario Museum, is particularly illustrative.

Take for example, the painting *Jolaha* ("weaver"),[270] which depicts a male figure seated at a pit loom in the process of passing a shuttle through stretched warp threads (Figure 3.14). The loom appears as an extension of his body and his arms bend in a gesture of movement as if he has been caught in the act of weaving. To his right is a depiction of a female figure, perhaps his wife, seated next to a spinning wheel or *charkha*, her right hand turning the wheel (to move the spindle) and her left hand busy pulling the newly-created threads off the tip of the spindle. While the female figure appears prominently in the image, balancing the composition and creating narrative for the process of textile production that the painting references (e.g. spinning to create threads, then weaving threads to create cloth), what is notable is that the caption places emphasis on the male figure's labor - on weaving - with no mention of the female spinner. Rebecca Brown has argued that images such as these showcase textile technology - types of spinning wheels and looms, methods for warping thread - as well as reference the manner in which these forms of labor were gendered: women were responsible for spinning and stretching yarn, men worked as weavers and cloth merchants. As Brown points out, late nineteenth-century depictions of textile labor presented individuals in isolation from the larger process of textile production, a move that turn these individuals into metonymic devices: the spinner and the weaver not only stand in for the process of producing cloth, but they also operate as metonyms for understanding craft and village life associated with these activities.[271]

A similar imbalance between caption text and painted image appear in *Dhunia* ("cotton carder"),[272]which depicts two figures engaged in the act of prepping fibers - the male on the left using a carding bow to remove impurities from the cotton fluff and the female on the right gathering the fluff into neat round balls (Figure 3.15). While these activities are generally linked

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[268] See McGowan, *Crafting the Nation*.

[269] For more on so-called Company Paintings, see Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library* (London, 1972); Stuart Cary Welch, *Room for Wonder: Indian Painting during the British Period 1760-1880* (New York, 1978); and Archer, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period* (London, 1992).

[270] *Jolaha* or *Julaha* (जुलाहा) is the Hindi word for weaver. A masculine noun, much of the weaving done in India, even today, is done by men.

[271] Brown, "Spinning Without Touching the Wheel."

[272] *Dhunia* or *Dhuniya* (धुनिया) is the Hindi word for "cotton carder," also a masculine noun.

and both instrumental in preparing cotton fibers for eventual spinning and weaving, the caption places emphasis on the male laborer, the "cotton carder" of the title. These images suggest that female labor was subsumed by male labor: for example, a weaver's work included the spinning of threads as well as the weaving of threads into cloth, a cotton carder's work included all the steps involved in turning dirty cotton fluff into neat and clean balls of fluff ready to be spun and woven. These images also reveal that a woman's labor may not have been recorded in official surveys and censuses, her, potentially part-time work supportive of her husband's full-time "professional" occupation.[273] These paintings depict "appropriate" forms of female craft labor, as assistive to male craft labor, and when paired with images of laboring men, suggest that ideal femininity determined not just how a woman worked but with whom (e.g. with her husband or another male in an assistive role).

Professional embroidery was the purview of male *rafugaris* ("darners")[274] who produced a variety of products for sale using both straight needles and a hooked tool called an *ari*.[275] *Rafugaris* were a professional occupation in nineteenth-century India and could be found in Punjab and nearby regions. For example, an image from an 1895 album of occupation and caste "types" in Srinagar show men seated together embroidering fabric using long needles (Figures 3.16) as well as figures embellishing cloth with embroidery made with an *ari,* specifically creating crewel work, a form of free (not "counted") embroidery particularly popular amongst the British (Figure 3.17).[276] Another image of a male embroiderer from 1863 created by the photographic team Shepherd and Robertson and displayed as part of the multi-volume *People of India* project (Figure 3.18) uses the figure metonymically - as in so many typology paintings - to represent a "type" of occupation, to stand-in for all professional (male) Indian embroiderers.[277] Such photographs developed alongside racial sciences that were embedded within the growing disciplines of anthropology and ethnology, such as phrenology, theories of physiognomy, and

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[273] There are images that depict only women working such as *Kashmiran pasham katni wali ("Kashmiri women spinning wool"),* which appears in the ROM Punjab album and depict two women working together to gather fibers and spin yarn. There also exist images in other albums and collections that show a single female at work. See Rebecca Brown, "Spinning Without Touching the Wheel." What is interesting for our purposes, however, is the way in which female labor seems to go unnoticed or unmarked in the caption when seen in conjunction with male labor.

[274] Other words for embroiderer include *karai karnewala,* कढ़ाईकरनेवाला or sometimes *darji,* दरजी meaning tailor.

[275] The ari is adapted from a shoe maker's larger awl and reminiscent of a crochet hook used in Western Europe and the United States. For more on embroidery stitches and technology in India see Anne Morrell, *Indian Embroidery Techniques at the Calico Museum of Textiles: A Working Guide*, Volume 7.1 (Ahmedabad, 2003).

[276] This album was compiled by Clive Elgin in 1897 while living in Simla and included sixty-one albumen prints. Almost all of the images were portraits depicting various men, women, and children from northern India, particularly those inhabiting the cities of Srinagar and Delhi. These studies of "Indian types" as the British Library—the album's current owners—describe them as depictions of laborers: salt makers, potters, and figures engaged in writing/copying paper manuscripts. They also include photographic portraits of figures identified with a particular community or caste: Rajputs, Tibetan Women, and Brahmin pandits.

[277] *The People of India* collection produced by John Forbes Watson from 1868 to 1873. For more on this project see John Falconer, "'A Pure Labour of Love': A Publishing History of The People of India" in *Colonialist Photography: Imagining Race and Place*, edited by Eleanor Hight and Gary Sampson (London: Routledge, 2002), 51-83.

eugenics.[278] Motivated in part by British fear of "disappearing races" in the face of "modern" Western civilization, these typology images were as much about defining and classifying labor as about preservation.[279] Photographic "types" ran the gamut from scientific record to *carte de visites*, and even commercial photographers such as Shepherd and Robertson participated in the pseudo-scientific practice of making typology portraits. By reproducing images such as these which depict male embroiderers, even if these photographic images were staged or composed,[280] the professional practice of embroidery in colonial India became directly linked with male, not female, labor.

Conclusion

For Steel, *phulkaris* represent much more than a particular style of embroidery. They are the agrarian Punjabi landscape and the work of laboring female bodies made tangible through cotton and silk. She sees the fields, threshing floors, heaps of golden grain, red-brown soil, and rural women who stitch this "ruddy cloth" as intimately linked and inseparable. Indeed subsequent authors have tried to trace the rural Punjabi landscape within the visual vocabulary of *phulkaris*, noting the ways in which embroidered motifs appear as abstracted grains of wheat, rendered golden yellow against the sun setting in a deep red afternoon sky. By writing about and collecting *phulkaris*, and reproducing bits and pieces of her textiles as photo-lithographs in the *Journal* article, Steel was able to extract something of Punjab, to keep a small part of the land and the women whom she encountered. Once the *Journal* circulated to its 2000+ readers, Steel emerged as a connoisseur of embroidery and an expert on Indian women.

Steel's article, however, says more about what Steel thought *phulkaris* should be than what they actually were. As Peter Hoffenberg says of other *Journal* contributors and articles, "the search for authenticity often led Birdwood, Kipling, and others back to themselves, as they defined, organized, and legitimated what became known as 'traditional' Indian art."[281] Steel's impulse to collect *phulkaris* hinged on her perception of the threatening influence of foreign design on Indian embroiderers and the subsequent "total disappearance of the *phulkari* stitch." Her emphasis on decline and absence of "true" or "authentic" form of *phulkaris* that appears throughout her article, reads as a cautionary warning to her readers about what to look for ("traditional" styles) and what to avoid ("English bad taste") when purchasing embroidery. And yet, the "true" form of *phulkaris* - dominated by "counted" darning stitches, employing a limited palette of gold-colored threads on a base cloth dyed a deep red hue - appears in numerous later examples of the art form that exist today in public and private collections around the world.

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[278] Furthermore, as James Ryan argues even using the term "types" likens the practice of photographing racial otherness to a [pseudo] scientific process, like daguerrotype, calotype. James Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 146-147.

[279] Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 140.

[280] The wet plate process used during this time required long exposure times, and as a result portraits were often staged. Furthermore, as Ryan explains, European photographers very often encountered resistance from natives, requiring the photographers to create portraits using paid subjects rather than actual workers. Ryan, 142-3.

[281] Hoffenberg, 193.

Some of these textiles are from the early 20th century, others made as recently as 2013, suggesting that *phulkaris* have retained many of the stylistic and technical features that captivated nineteenth-century collectors like Steel.

What is also striking about Steel's article on *phulkaris*, and the subsequent English-language publications that it inspired on the subject, is the way in which it defines late nineteenth-century notions of collecting. British authors like Steel and Kipling defined "commercial" *phulkaris* through their engagement with a British market for the textiles. *Phulkaris* were commercial if they were intended to serve British consumers and British tastes. These texts on *phulkaris* largely ignore local circulation and exchange: the gifting of cloth between generations of women in a family, the commissioning of embroidery by larger Punjabi households for special occasions, the many economies of exchange that existed amongst the diverse population of Punjabis who made and used these cloths.[282] This limited view of the commercial life of *phulkaris* affects the aesthetic judgments that Steel puts forth in her text ("good" vs. "bad" *phulkaris*) and serves to fix valuation of *phulkaris*, and Indian handicrafts more broadly, along fairly limited parameters ("traditional," "domestic"). What this also does is squarely define collecting within the bounds of British or European practices of acquisition; collecting then is circumscribed by British notions of art, valuation, and functionality as *phulkaris* operate less as head coverings or wall hangings for ceremonial uses and more as aesthetic or fetish objects that represent something distinctly Indian.

Ultimately by collecting *phulkaris*, Steel was not only able to fulfill imperial desires for India and Indian objects, but was also able to assuage any anxiety she may have felt about the adverse affects of British influence on indigenous art-making practices. Her acquisitions, then, were made in the name of preserving some aspect of this embroidery and the women who made them. In the end, however, Steel's advocacy for women and the objects of their labor cannot be extracted from the larger mechanism of imperialism, which operated in contradictory and multi-faceted ways.

What Steel's article gives us is not merely a focus on women's work, but on work itself,[283] that is, on hand labor. Interest in hand labor and craftsmanship was at a peak during the second half of the nineteenth century. India offered British consumers a source for handmade goods at a time when the machine of the Industrial Revolution was threatening to subsume hand craftsmanship in Britain. *Phulkaris* were hand labor par excellence. While Indian handlooms churned out meters of cloth, and professional male tailors in urban centers made embroidery to order, *phulkaris* produced by rural Punjabi women was viewed by Steel and others to be one of the last vestiges of a truly "authentic" handmade. For despite the *Journal*'s aim in showcasing the commercial potential of Indian crafts, Steel's article emphasizes the "true art" and "beauty" of a

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[282] For more on these various contexts of exchange see Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion."

[283] Roszika Parker offers a useful way of theorizing the nature of work, particularly women's work, by arguing that embroidery has traditionally been called "work" - a term that implies service, labor done for others, functionality, and by extension "craft" (not art). Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 6.

phulkari embroidered by the wearer for herself, not to be sold in the market. It was only the lucky collector, like Steel, who was able to capture that waning tradition, to collect not just the darning stitches or the patterns on cloth, but to acquire the activity of embroidery itself, the art of the handmade.

CHAPTER FOUR

Embroidery for the New Nation: Collecting and Exhibiting *Phulkaris* in India after 1947

Kusum Chopra was seven years old when Punjab was partitioned in August 1947, the eastern regions relegated to the new nation of India and the western portions going to the new nation of Pakistan.[284] She lived in Lahore with her mother and four siblings in a small house that her father had purchased before he fell ill and died from cancer a few years prior. Kusum's early childhood was filled with conflict and fear. She remembers the sound of helicopters flying over her home during World War II and her father tuning the radio to hear Hitler's latest address. The conflict of WWII was soon replaced by fighting in the streets around her house as communal agitations grew in anticipation of the end of British rule on the subcontinent. Kusum developed a huge anxiety disorder as a result, and would hide in the bathroom for hours to escape the sounds of shouting, gun shots, breaking glass, and fires erupting around her.

Kusum's aunt - who was a judge in a circuit court in Lahore - often came to visit Kusum's mother, urging her to leave Lahore, to flee to the east as Partition was an inevitability. Her aunt knew that she would be taken care of and able to leave Lahore if need be because she worked for the government, but that Kusum's mother and her children, who had very little money, were in danger. Finally, in April of 1947 Kusum and her family fled to Dalhousie where Kusum's maternal grandparents had a house. A few years later, after the Partition borders had been drawn, the family moved to Jullunder. She later moved to the United States to complete her Ph.D. in Economics, and then took up a teaching position at JNU in New Delhi where she worked for 27 years before retiring. She now lives in the housing development known as East of Kailash.

During a recent visit to her home in Delhi, Kusum showed me a *phulkari lengha* (long skirt) which she purchased from a shop in Jullunder in 1956 (Figure 4.1). It is a spectacular textile, almost eight feet long with bold floral motifs embroidered in bright magenta and orange on a crisp, black-colored length of *khaddar*. Kusum never stitched the fabric into a *lengha* as it was clearly intended to be worn, but instead has treasured it as an example of *phulkari*, something that reminds her of her home.

Kusum's neighbor, Dr. Maini, who is also from Lahore, remembers that growing up her mother had an *almirah* (cabinet) as tall as the ceiling filled with *phulkaris* and *baghs*, many of which her mother had made for her wedding dowry. "I once selected a *bagh* from my mother's cupboard and asked her if I could stitch a coat from it," explains Dr. Maini. Her mother refused, saying that that *bagh* was reserved for her future wedding. Her mother later gave her a simpler *phulkari* to stitch a coat, which she adored. When Dr. Maini was 17 years old, she and her family fled Lahore, leaving behind all of the *phulkaris*, *baghs*, and her treasured coat. A few years later she

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[284] The following narrative is based on my conversations with Dr. Kusum Chopra at her home in New Delhi, February 2015.

returned to Lahore and found her family home intact, just as they had left it, except the entire contents had been looted.

There are hundreds if not thousands of stories like these and numerous women with whom I have met talk about the *phulkaris* that they used to have in their families before Partition, textiles that they had to leave behind. The social, cultural, and political upheaval of the partitioning of Punjab in 1947 at the close of British colonial rule on the subcontinent is well known. The events leading up to and immediately following August 15, 1947 were, to say the least, dramatic in the region, and the emotional residue and physical repercussions of Partition are still felt today amongst many in Punjabi Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities, both in South Asia and in the diaspora. Perhaps not surprisingly, the geo-political partitioning of Punjab had enormous effects on the production, circulation, and display of *phulkaris*.[285] And in fact scholars and activists have noted that the situation for many crafts and craftspeople during this time was "abysmal" as "the movement of refugees...completely disrupted the village economy" and even impacted artists who were not from the areas directly affected by Partition.[286]

During Partition, refugees fled to newly-created India from the western regions of Punjab (now Pakistan) to cities and towns across the subcontinent, typically going to places inhabited by friends or family members. Many Punjabis settled in and around New Delhi, and refugee camps were established in the large plots of uninhabited land in the southern and western outskirts of the city. Once the basic needs (housing, food, clothing) of the refugees were addressed, there was a push from social activists such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya to attend to the refugees' long-term needs, their livelihoods and futures. Chattopadhyaya joined forces with Lakshmi Chand Jain, a Master's student and leading activist at Delhi University, to create the Indian Cooperative Union (ICU), the "mother-cooperative" which went on to form several other cooperatives working directly with refugees in settlements in Chattarpur and Fardiabad, the areas south and west of Delhi.[287] Part of the focus of the ICU was to support the production of handicrafts in the settlements and create retail outlets for these handicrafts, outlets which eventually became the Government of India's Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE).[288]

Under Chattopadhyaya's mentorship, activists such as Rajesh Nandini, herself a refugee and former Professor of History from Islamia College, Lahore, and Mrs. Vir Singh, a war widow, worked hard to bring some "normalcy to the life of the women" in the refugee camps. A key component of that "normalcy" was to encourage the refugee women to embroider. As Gulshan

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[285] Michelle Maskiell discusses the role *phulkari* played in nationalism in the newly-created nation of Pakistan. See Maskiell, "Embroidering the Past."

[286] Gulshan Nanda, "Kamaladevi's Vision of Handicraft Cooperatives: A Personal Narrative," published following a talk by Gulshan Nanda as part of the programme, 'To Remember Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay,' on 13 April 2013, *IIC Occasional Publication* 51 (New Delhi: India International Centre, 2013).

[287] Nanda, "Kamaladevi's Vision of Handicraft Cooperatives," 2-3.

[288] Based on my conversation with Gulshan Nanda in February 2015 in New Delhi. See also Nanda, "Kamaladevi's Vision of Handicraft Cooperatives" (2013); Jasleen Dhamija's *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay,* 74; and Chattopadhyaya's *Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1986), 318-320.

Nanda explains, “Back in the Punjab, women spent time with each other in social activities. They would sit together, embroider, cook, and sing songs as a community. In their current life as refugees all they could do was share their miseries and horrifying experiences.”[289] Nandini and Singh commissioned the women to sew *salwaar kameezes* and embroider mats, tablecloths, cushions, and bedcovers which were initially sold at Pandit Brothers, a shop on Connaught Place, and then later at a dedicated store called Refugee Handicrafts, which opened in 1952 and was administered by the ICU.[290]

The Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE) was opened in 1948 and run by the Ministry of Commerce, with the express goal of selling handicrafts made by displaced craftspeople after Partition. However, the CCIE was not managed well and did not enjoy the same successes as the ICU’s shop, Refugee Handicrafts. When Jawaharlal Nehru visited the Chattarpur settlement with Chattopadhyaya he was impressed with the quality of crafts being produced there, which he deemed far superior to the dismal displays at the CCIE.[291] Given the ICU’s success, and at Nehru’s urging, the ICU and the CCIE were eventually joined together, with Chattopadhyaya at the helm and Singh as the manager of the new venture.[292]

Following her experience working with Punjabi refugees in these settlements and her subsequent appointment by Nehru to the All India Handicrafts and Handlooms Board (AIHHB), inspired in large part by the work she was doing at the refugee settlement camps, Chattopadhyaya began to initiate craft revivals throughout the country, doing the kind of work she is perhaps most famous for today: traveling to various villages and remote locations in India, seeking out extant craftspeople, encouraging them to continue to produce their crafts, and finding new marketing outlets for their work in the CCIE.[293] The AIHHB was officially established in 1952, four years after the founding of the CCIE, and it was in these early years, in the early 1950s, when the AIHHB was just beginning to function, that *phulkari* revival work began,[294] in many ways an extension of the embroidery being done in the Punjabi refugee camps.

Alongside the revival of *phulkaris* in India following Partition, there emerged several new museums on the subcontinent, each of which in their own ways aimed to define, preserve, and showcase a diverse collection of objects deemed to be the material legacy of the new nation. *Phulkaris* were featured amongst many of them. This chapter examines the circulation and exhibition of *phulkaris* in India during the decades following Partition by looking at the

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[289] Nanda, 4.

[290] Nanda, 5 and based on my conversation with Gulshan Nanda in February 2015 in New Delhi and my conversation with Jasleen Dhamija, February 13, 2015, at her home in New Delhi.

[291] For more on the establishment of the CCIE see Jasleen Dhamija's *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay,* 74.

[292] Chattopadhyaya’s *Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces*. New Delhi: Navrang, 1986. 318-320; and Nanda, 5-6.

[293] Chattopadhyaya’s *Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces*. New Delhi: Navrang, 1986, 331; and Jasleen Dhamija's *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay,* 72-73. Also, Nanda, “Kamaladevi’s Vision for Handicraft Cooperatives.”

[294] As per my conversation with Jasleen Dhamija, February 13, 2015 at her home in New Delhi.

formation of key collections of *phulkaris* and a series of museum exhibitions that frame *phulkaris* as important material objects within the geographical and cultural contours of the new Indian nation.

The embroidery revivals that began in the refugee settlements in many ways formed the foundation for subsequent craft documentation and revival that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, and helped shape the content and rhetoric connected to textiles and crafts in museum collections and displays in India. Much has been written about the nationalist impulse to define art objects for the Indian nation and the particular urgency with which this project took hold in the post-1947 moment.[295] Some of the first places where *phulkaris* circulated following 1947 were in the major national museums established in urban centers, particularly in and around the capital New Delhi. In these spaces *phulkaris* were put on display and framed in particular ways, almost always in nationalistic terms.

Phulkaris at the National Museum, New Delhi

The National Museum opened its doors first as the Central National Museum of Art, Archaeology, and Anthropology in 1946 under British colonial rule, though its conception was decades earlier when the British moved their colonial capital to Delhi from Calcutta in 1912. It was later "passed off" to the new Indian government and reconstituted as the National Museum of India after 1947.[296] As Kristina Phillips argues, "the National Museum was created not as a repository or place of imperial study, but rather as a heraldic monument dedicated to the encyclopedic vision that already served to define and organize the lived environment of the country, which was produced in the colonial mind as a living museum."[297] Much of the initial collection of the National Museum was the result of an exhibition held in London immediately following independence, but organized during British colonial rule.[298]

The exhibition in London, *The Art of India and Pakistan*, which opened on November 29, 1947 and was on display until February 29, 1948, was the first major international exhibition of art from South Asia immediately following India and Pakistan's independence from British colonial rule and the subsequent partitioning of the Punjab regions in both countries. Held at the Royal Academy of Art (RA), the exhibition was a continuation of the institution's "great civilizations of the world" exhibitions[299] and was intended by the curator Basil Gray to mark the culmination of shifting perceptions and growing appreciation of South Asian art in England over the previous

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[295] See in particular Tapati Guha-Thakurta and Partha Mitter.

[296] Kristina Kate Phillips, *A Museum for the Nation: Publics and Politics at the National Museum of India* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2006), 25-31, 40-42. It was not until 1960 that the National Museum was moved to its current location on Janpath. See Phillips, 56-59.

[297] Phillips, *A Museum for the Nation,* 38.

[298] See Guha-Thakurta.

[299] For example the RA held exhibitions of Persian art in 1931 and Chinese art in 1935.

few decades.[300] The display of objects in *The Art of India and Pakistan* was organized by materials: sculpture and bronze, paintings, and the "minor arts," which included several textiles and objects considered to be crafts or folk art. Gallery 5 of the exhibition was devoted to the minor arts and featured *kantha* embroideries, *sarees* from various regions of India, shawls from Lahore, and garments and textile pieces originally from Western India lent by the Indian Museum in Calcutta.[301]

Phulkari textiles were not included amongst the many folk art objects displayed. And yet, while physically absent from the display in London, *phulkaris* were discussed at length in the exhibition's catalogue. Published a couple years later as a more scholarly accompaniment to the rather barebones official catalogue published alongside the exhibition, *phulkaris* appear in a prominent position, standing in as a "quintessential form of peasant embroidery" as discussed by one of the catalogue authors, John Irwin, well-known Indian textile expert and Keeper of Indian Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum.[302] In his chapter "Textiles and the Minor Arts," Irwin includes a category called "Peasant Embroideries" in which he writes at length about *phulkaris*:

> The textiles so far discussed have been mainly market-town products. In the villages of India, the outstanding art has always been women's embroidery. In this field, styles are strictly local and can be classified on a regional basis. The most truly traditional are the darn-stitch *phulkari* embroideries of the Punjab, which preserve some of the geometric patterns characteristic of Ajanta. The colours are yellow, white, and green, on a ground of madder-brown; and it is significant that the materials traditionally used were cotton, with the exception apparently of the yellow which was floss silk. In Hissar, wool was sometimes used. Floral motives appear in many nineteenth-century examples, but it has long been an axiom that in so far as the patterns depart from geometrical forms they represent deviations from tradition. Again, in the earliest examples, especially associated with the Jats, the ground itself is woven with geometric patterns, so that the embroidered motifs have the appearance of being one with the madder-brown fabric itself. The *bagh* or garden design, in which the diapering is so close that the madder-brown ground

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[300] Turning point in popular assumptions about Indian art was Bridwood's lecture in 1910 to the Royal Society of Arts (disparaging Indian arts vs. its superior crafts) - Havell and AKC came to Indian arts' defense + since then "appreciation has been steadily growing" (ix). *Notes from Catalogue of the Exhibition of Art Chiefly from the Dominions of India and Pakistan, 2400 B.C. to 1947 A.D.* Patrons: Their Majesties the King and Queen, Her Majesty Queen Mary. Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1947-48. (Second Edition)

[301] *Notes from Catalogue of the Exhibition of Art Chiefly from the Dominions of India and Pakistan, 2400 B.C. to 1947 A.D,* xii-xiii and 280-315. See also the plates accompanying this catalogue, *Notes from Catalogue of the Exhibition of Art Chiefly from the Dominions of India and Pakistan*. Royal Academy of Arts, London 1947-48. London: Country Life Limited, 2-10 Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

[302] Sir Leigh Ashton, ed. *The Art of India and Pakistan: A commemorative catalogue of the exhibition held at The Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1947-48*. New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1949. Authors include: K. de B. Codrington, sculpture; John Irwin, bronzes and textiles; and Basil Gray, Painting.

> is visible only as an outline to the embroidered motifs, is local to areas which came under strong Muhammedan influence.[303]

Irwin's attention to *phulkaris* is not surprising given his extensive knowledge of and interest in Indian textiles, though his move to include *phulkaris* and "peasant embroideries" alongside other textiles in the catalogue suggest his desire to present a more comprehensive view of textile arts from the region than the original exhibition intended. A few years after publishing this catalogue Irwin founded the *Journal of Indian Textiles*, and went on to write extensively about Indian textiles for the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad including a text on embroidery published in 1973 that features several *phulkaris*.

The exhibition *The Arts of India and Pakistan* traveled from London to New Delhi where it was renamed *Exhibition of Indian Art*, and remained on display from November 6 to December 31, 1948 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Significantly, in the New Delhi exhibition, a single *phulkari* was included amongst the displays. Appearing in the North Drawing Room alongside arms and armor, Deccani paintings, manuscripts, and other textiles, the *phulkari* was from the early nineteenth century and lent by the Central Asian Antiquities Museum, New Delhi, a collection under the auspices of the Archaeological Survey of India.[304] In fact the Central Asian Antiquities Museum lent several objects for the exhibition including a number of textiles, Gandharan and Gupta sculpture, Rajput and Mughal paintings, and the majority of the objects from the Indus Valley Civilization that appeared in the show.[305] Following this exhibition all of the items from the Central Asian Antiquities Museum alongside a number of other objects on display remained together, forming the core of the National Museum collection.[306]

The National Museum remained at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in the Government House gallery, until 1960 when it moved to its current location, a new building on Janpath. During the late 1940s and 1950s the museum employed "ad hoc" collecting practices, quite different from the systematic collecting and formalist and chronological display strategies employed following 1960 by the museum's newly-appointed American director, Grace Morley.[307] As the piece in the 1948 exhibition confirms, *phulkari* textiles were part of the museum's collection from the

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[303] Sir Leigh Ashton, ed. *The Art of India and Pakistan*, 209-210.

[304] The *phulkari* in question is listed as #727 in the exhibition's catalogue. See *Catalogue for Exhibition of Indian Art, held at the Government House, November 6 - December 31, 1948* (New Delhi: Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Education, 1948).

[305] See *Catalogue for Exhibition of Indian Art, held at the Government House, November 6 - December 31, 1948*. New Delhi: Department of Archaeology (Ministry of Education), 1948.

[306] Guha-Thakurta; and Phillips, *A Museum for the Nation,* 46-47.

[307] See Phillips, Ch. 1; 156-168.

beginning - additional *phulkaris* were acquired in 1951 and then again in 1961 -[308] and all *phulkaris* were housed in either the Anthropology Department (previously the Ethnic Arts Department) or the Decorative Arts Department. Both of these departments had galleries on the second (or top) floor of the museum's building on Janpath, which were initially the least visited galleries in the museum and opened to the public in 1961, a year after the primary, ground and first floor, galleries opened in 1960. Morley and senior curators prioritized ancient art, sculpture, and miniature painting in the museum's collection, and relegated *phulkaris* and other textiles to the "Miscellaneous" galleries that initially formed the Decorative Arts and Anthropology displays, a holdover from the Rashtrapati Bhavan days.[309]

While the museum has had *phulkaris* in its collection since 1948, and some were on display in 1961 in the Decorative Arts gallery, it was not until decades later - until 1996 - that a separate Textiles and Costumes Gallery was created from the Decorative Arts gallery, under the leadership of Dr. Anamika Pathak.[310] In 1994 the entire Decorative Arts display was dismantled and then two years later redone by Pathak who included the display of *phulkaris* in a section devoted to embroidery (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) as well as in a separate feature case (Figure 4.4) in the gallery's anteroom, as they appear today. In the embroidered textile display in the Textiles and Costumes Gallery, the *phulkari* that appears is a *bagh*, folded into a small-sized square and flanked on its left by a *rumal* from Himachal Pradesh and on its right by an embroidered cover from Gujarat (Figure 4.3). In this context the *bagh phulkari* on display is intended to represent - as the wall text describes - one of several "important styles of embroidery" from India, fulfilling the gallery's aim to illustrate "the vast and vivid traditions of Indian textiles" according to process and technique.[311]

The anteroom display of *phulkaris* doesn't follow the same organizational logic, and in fact the reason behind the selection of objects in this room is not made clear to the viewer. The *phulkari* case appears directly opposite a large diorama display of a *darbar* room, complete with a throne cushion (*gaddi*), a hookah, and arrangement of tent hangings (*qanats*) that create the sense of being inside an Indian ruler's private audience hall (Figure 4.5). Mounted to the wall across from the *darbar* scene is the *phulkari* display, again flanked on either side by embroidered hangings from Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. The visual connections proposed by situating *phulkaris* adjacent to embroidery from Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh suggests a geographical arrangement for these textiles that imagines the viewer taking a hypothetical tour of India passing along a

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[308] Following 1961, *phulkaris* were collected regularly by the museum until 1994, when Curator Krishna Lal decided that the museum had enough *phulkaris* for the collection. After the National Museum refused a large acquisition of *phulkaris* in 1994, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts became the beneficiary. Based on my conversation with Mrs. Krishna Lal in February 2015 in New Delhi, and correspondence with Dr. Anamika Pathak, current Curator of Decorative Arts, in February and March 2015.

[309] Philips, 170

[310] Based on my conversation with Mrs. Krishna Lal and Dr. Anamika Pathak in Februrary 2015 in New Delhi. A separate gallery for jewelry and furnishings were created on the ground floor in 1984 as part of the Decorative Arts Department, but nothing dedicated to textiles emerged until 1996.

[311] Quoted from introductory wall text, Textiles Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015.

northern (and clockwise) route starting in the state of Gujarat, continuing to Punjab, and then on to Himachal Pradesh. The *phulkaris* in this special display case seem to be in conversation with the *bagh* in the main gallery, and when considered as a group illustrate the diversity of *phulkaris*: from a densely embroidered and geometric *bagh* to a piece with typical *phul* motifs to a figurative *darshan dwar* (Figure 4.6). The text accompanying this display - written in both Hindi and English - reiterates much of what is well-known about *phulkaris*, namely their origins in Punjab and their use of handspun cotton *khaddar* and unplied silk threads.

Likewise, in the earliest display of a *phulkari* in the 1948 exhibition, the piece appears alongside numerous other textiles, all of which intended to illustrate to viewers India's 2000 year old legacy of textile arts and its "undisputed supremacy" in this area until the eighteenth century.[312] The narrative for the textile section of the exhibition frames the textiles on display as part of longer history with origins in the Indus Valley Civilization, the *RgVeda*, and the *Mahabharata*. The section is divided by process and material: beginning with important weaves such as muslins, patolas, and brocades, continuing with tie-dye and block-printing techniques, and concluding with embroidery. Significantly, the focus on Indian embroidery highlights particular regions of the northern part of India - Kashmir, Punjab, Chamba (Himachal Pradesh), Lucknow, Cutch and Kathiawar (Rajasthan and Gujarat) - and emphasizes their role in representing "indigenous needlework."[313] The 1996 display of *phulkaris* continues a similar narrative, again emphasizing technique and geography: the viewer approaches each of the objects in the gallery as examples of different processes of making textiles indigenous to India, and within those technical displays the objects appear metonymically as pieces of individual states and as snapshots of the entire nation-state of India.

More recently, in 2014, the Anthropology Department redesigned their gallery to include an exhibition *Tradition, Art, and Continuity*, which not only includes the display of *phulkaris*, but also features a detail of a *sainchi phulkari* as part of its promotional material (Figure 4.7). The exhibition focuses on objects the museum defines as "craft" and displays them, for the most part, by material. The *phulkaris* in this gallery appear alongside other textiles and garments, namely two *kanthas* from Bengal, a mirrored shawl from Gujarat, a Toda shawl from Tamil Nadu, and an embroidered shawl from Orissa (Figure 4.8). What is striking is that out of the eleven objects in the display, three of them are *phulkaris*, suggesting that these textiles hold a privileged place within the department's collection, not just in the exhibition. A *chope* appears folded at the base of the display case (Figure 4.9), above which hangs a magenta- and white-colored *thirma bagh* (Figure 4.10), and a *sainchi phulkari* depicting a variety of animals including an elephant (Figure 4.11). While the text accompanying these objects is minimal and includes no direct mention of *phulkaris*, their physical placement in the gallery (at the center of a circular arrangement of objects) and their comparatively large numbers, suggests their importance in this exhibition of

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[312] *Catalogue for Exhibition of Indian Art, held at the Government House, November 6 - December 31, 1948*. New Delhi: Department of Archaeology (Ministry of Education), 1948. xxi.

[313] *Catalogue for Exhibition of Indian Art, held at the Government House, November 6 - December 31, 1948*. New Delhi: Department of Archaeology (Ministry of Education), 1948. xxi - xxv.

"craft" objects from the museum. Surprisingly, the *sainchi phulkari* on display is not the same textile that appears in the promotional material for the gallery, suggesting that *phulkaris* are being deployed in this context as a kind of icon for "tradition," "continuity," and craft-based artistic practice in India.

Phulkaris at the Crafts Museum, New Delhi

Perhaps the most prominent display of *phulkaris* in New Delhi appears in a location more typically associated with crafts, the National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum (aka Crafts Museum). The Crafts Museum was established in 1956 by the All India Handicrafts and Handlooms Board as a resource center, and was designed to appear as a village complex with a series of hut-like structures surrounded by courtyards.[314] The museum offers visitors the opportunity to view examples of Indian crafts inside the galleries and to see actual crafts being made in the live demonstration area of the museum, ultimately fulfilling its goal of supporting craftspeople and increasing their livelihood.[315] The Crafts Museum has played a central role in defining Indian crafts - its materials, forms, and places of origin - since its inception in the 1950s, and not surprisingly has helped fashion the identity and value of craft objects, craft culture, and craftspeople through a nationalist lens.[316]

Phulkari textiles have been part of the museum since before its official opening to the public in 1956,[317] and the way in which the museum frames these textiles provides insight into ideas about *phulkaris* and how actual *phulkaris* circulated in the post-independence period. The textiles here are diverse in style, use, and processes though each linked together by geography. Following the initial acquisition of *phulkari* textiles in 1953, the museum acquired *phulkaris* - ranging in

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[314] Jyotindra Jain and Aarti Aggarwala, *National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum, New Delhi* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990).

[315] Paul Greenough, "Nation, Economy, and Tradition Displayed: The Indian Crafts Museum, New Delhi" in Carol Appadurai Breckenridge, ed., *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

[316] See Claire McGowan for more on role of crafts within nationalist movements and the relationship between nationalistic rhetoric and colonial rhetoric in writing the history of craft in India. For more on the history of the Craft and Folk Art Museum in New Delhi, see Greenough.

[317] According to acquisition records, the first *phulkaris* came to the collection in 1953 from Miss R.P. Paul, Pusa Institute, New Delhi, who sold several *baghs* to the museum for prices ranging rs.30 to rs.120. *Phulkaris* were then added to the collection in 1954, 1955, and again in 1956 with the official opening of the museum. Unpublished Acquisition Records, National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum, New Delhi (consulted by author in October 2012).

design, age, provenance, and price - consistently until 2002.[318] Several of the *phulkaris* that entered the museum in the early years are currently on display in the museum's textile gallery.[319]

Most significantly for this study is the way in which *phulkaris* appear in this gallery - an enormous space divided into several smaller niches and organized by contemporary Indian states, specifically states defined after 1966 and the dismantling of the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU).[320] Walking through the textile gallery the visitor takes a geographical tour of the newly-created nation state of India, and is able to examine the incredible diversity of textile practices organized loosely by technique, but explicitly by region. Just prior to reaching the *phulkaris* display, the viewer is confronted with *kanthas* from Bengal, *sujnis* from Bihar, embroidered Kashmiri shawls, and *rumals* from Himachal Pradesh. Immediately following the *phulkaris* display are embroideries from Rajasthan and Gujarat. As if circumambulating the nation in a counter-clockwise formation, the viewer reaches Punjab and Haryana, home of the *phulkaris*.

The wall panel text that introduces the *phulkaris* function to link broad embroidery practices from pre-1947 Punjab with the contemporary Indian states of Punjab and Haryana. The text itself mentions places where "the most traditional and earliest" *phulkaris* were once made - Rohtak, Hissar, Delhi, Gurgaon, and Karnal - noticeably all locations that fall within the boundaries of India, and interestingly within the present states of Haryana and the NCT of Delhi, not the state of Punjab. It also references Hindu Jat women as the primary makers of *phulkaris*, and cites a British scholar, George Watt, who identifies four "main" types of *phulkaris*: cloth with sparsely embroidered motifs for daily use, *baghs* with dense embroidery for special occasions, wedding *phulkaris* with embroidery along the edges, and a form of *phulkari* created for American export at the beginning of the twentieth century.[321] No mention of a broader pre-1947 Punjab, or the Muslim and Sikh women who also created *phulkaris* - surprising given that several of the *phulkaris* on display very likely were made within the boundaries of what is now Pakistan. At the Crafts Museum the narrative about *phulkaris* center on an Indian history and practice and reinforces the popular "unity in diversity" slogan championed by the national government: these embroideries are from *the states* of Punjab and Haryana, are distinct from those from neighboring states, and yet still all part of the legacy of *Indian* textiles.

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[318] Unpublished Acquisition Records, National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum, New Delhi (consulted by author in October 2012).

[319] Namely, accession #M/18/3 which entered the collection in 1953 with the initial group from Miss R.P. Paul; # 61/11 M7/2185, purchased by the museum on March 9, 1961; # 68/16 7/4586, purchased on May 27, 1968; # 68/29 7/4599 and # 7/4806 68/267, arrived on May 29, 1968; #69/42 7/4952, arrived on May 16, 1969; # 69/111 7/5021, arrived on November 29, 1969; # 72/37 7/5219 and # 72/38 7/5220, arrived on November 22, 1972; and # 73/76 7/5307, arrived on April 6, 1973. Unpublished Acquisition Records, National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum, New Delhi (consulted by author in October 2012).

[320] Following the partitioning of Punjab, the former princely states in the region formed PEPSU in 1948 (became official in 1950), which lasted until 1956 when PEPSU became part of the state of Punjab. The new states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab were created in 1966 along linguistic lines (Hindi, Pahari, and Punjabi respectively).

[321] From gallery wall label in Crafts Museum, New Delhi. Likely pulled from Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi 1903* (1903).

Elsewhere in Delhi *phulkaris* appear in smaller collections and institutions such as the National Institute for Fashion Technology, which began collecting *phulkaris* in the 1990s; the Sanskriti Foundation, established in 1979, which created a Museum of Textiles in 2009 under the guidance of Dr. Jyotindra Jain and houses several *phulkaris*; and the Srinivas Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts Museum, which has a little over a dozen *phulkaris* collected between 1958 and 1965 by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. The latter, also known simply as the Theatre Crafts Museum was established to showcase the various objects connected with performing arts and folk theater that Chattopadhyaya collected during her travels throughout the country.[322] Alongside Bharatnatyam and Kathakali costumes are a handful of textiles from Chattopadhyaya's personal collection, which include several saris and 15 *phulkaris*.[323] The Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) recently organized an exhibition and publication about *phulkaris* which pulled from their extensive collection: *Phulkari, from the Realm of Women's Creativity* on display from April 16 to May 3, 2013 (Figure 4.12). The excellent collection of *phulkaris* at the IGNCA came to the institution in 1994 after the National Museum resisted acquiring it.[324] Indeed, it seems that nearly every institution in Delhi has a museum or collection, and sometimes surprisingly many of them include *phulkaris*.

Phulkaris at the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad

One museum in India that opened immediately following 1947 and is dedicated to preserving the history of Indian textiles is the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad. *Phulkaris* are given prominent attention in museum publications and have a large, dedicated room in the museum where dozens of *phulkaris* are on display. Inspired by conversations between Gautam Sarabhai and Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the Calico Museum of Textiles was established in Ahmedabad in 1949 as a museum dedicated solely to the study and preservation of Indian textiles.[325] When Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the museum he declared that "the early beginnings of civilization are tied up with the manufacture of textiles, and history might well be written with this as the leading motif"[326] - conveying the sense that the museum itself was responsible for upholding a historical legacy. In 1983, following economic difficulties at the Calico Mills, the initial location of the museum, the Calico Museum moved to its current location at Shahibagh, the home of the Sarabhai Foundation, a non-profit established in 1959 by Mrs. Sarladevi

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[322] For more about the SMM Theatre Crafts Museum see *The Srinivas Malliah Memorial Theatre Crafts Museum* (New Delhi: Department of Culture, Government of India).

[323] I am grateful to Dr. Smita Singh for sharing her insight into the collection.

[324] Based on my conversation with former head of Decorative Arts at the National Museum and curator of the IGNCA exhibition, Krishna Lal, in February 2015.

[325] Martand Singh, "The Story of the Calico," *Treasures of Indian Textiles* (Calico Museum, Ahmedabad: Marg, 1980).

[326] Singh, "The Story of the Calico," 1980.

Sarabhai and Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai with the aim of promoting science, art and literature, and in particular in "preserving and interpreting the cultural heritage of India."[327]

The collection at the Calico Museum is extraordinary in its quality and extent, though notoriously difficult to access, even for scholars. The museum is open to the public only by prior appointment, and even then visitors are restricted to seeing the collection through two rigidly-timed tours each day, with little pause in between galleries to stop and admire the objects on display. I was graciously allowed extra time to view the *phulkari* textiles at the end of the morning tour, and to see the great number of objects in the collection. My attempts at gaining insight into the provenance of the *phulkaris*, however was not quite as successful. As best I can piece together, there were roughly two periods when *phulkaris* were collected and entered into the collection.[328] The first was in the early life of the museum, the initial objects collected by Gira and Gautam Sarabhai, out of which the *phulkaris* in the collection were published in a catalogue written by John Irwin and Margaret Hall in 1973. During this time the museum collection was under the auspices of the Calico Mills. That changed in 1983 following financial problems at the Mills and the shift of ownership of the Museum to the Sarabhai Foundation. The second period of collecting occurred between 1972 and 1981, and all of the *phulkaris* acquired at that time were done so by the Sarabhai Foundation.[329] The diversity of the Calico's *phulkari* collection is comparable to many institutions in India. There are *chopes*, *sainchis*, *baghs*, *darshan dwars*, and other kinds of *phulkaris* that don't fall neatly into these categories. There are also several garments from Punjab included in the gallery that use darning stitch embroidery. All of the *phulkaris* on display are in the same room as the *kanthas* from Bengal and the *rumals* from Himachal Pradesh, typically on large moveable panels attached to the wall, as in the Crafts Museum display. Here the narrative about *phulkaris* is one of technique and also region - again, familiar to so many displays of *phulkaris* in India.

The Many Lives of Objects: *Phulkaris* Circulating after 1947

The *phulkari* revivals that began in the settlement camps immediately following 1947 and the growth of museum collections of textiles in India helped create an environment in which *phulkaris* were increasingly viewed as collected commodities and important pieces of Indian textile history. According to Jasleen Dhamija, there were numerous small scale exhibitions in the 1950s and beyond that featured *phulkaris*,[330] though little documentation remains of such displays. Various ministries and departments of the newly minted Government of India were behind the collecting and exhibiting practices at the National Museum and the Crafts Museum,

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[327] See "About the Sarabhai Foundation": http://calicomuseum.org/?page_id=179

[328] Professor Anne Morrell kindly provided some insight into the collecting history of the museum with regards to its *phulkaris*. Based on email correspondence with Professor Morrell, April 2015.

[329] See Anne Morrell, *Indian Embroideries* Volume 2 (Ahmedabad: Calico Museum, 2013).

[330] Based on conversation with Jasleen Dhamija in February 2015 at her home in New Delhi.

and even helped to organize exhibitions devoted to *phulkaris*, such as the 1955 *phulkari* festival (*mela*) organized by the Ministry of Community Development.[331]

It was also during this time that *phulkaris* began to circulate more readily in the market, sold to dealers and traded by itinerant merchants. One resident in Chandigarh remembers that in the 1970s and 1980s women would go from door to door either selling old *phulkaris* or trading new steel utensils for old saris and textiles, including *phulkaris*. Similarly, Chhote Lal Bharany, a textile dealer in Delhi remembers that in the early 1960s lots of *phulkaris* were available in the market and refugees from Punjab would bring boxes of *phulkaris* to his shop/office in Sundar Nagar to sell to him.[332] These days, someone will come to Mr. Bharany with a single *phulkari* to sell, perhaps once every two or three months, but not in the quantity as he remembers in the 1960s.

Stories such as these are common, and numerous people describe different periods over the last several decades when *phulkaris* were circulated - sold and traded in a variety of official and unofficial venues.[333] Lucy Norris discusses one such practice in her analysis of the Waghris, a community of cloth / textile dealers originally from Punjab and Sindh who migrated to the Trans-Yamuna District of Delhi after Partition. Norris explains that the Waghris traded old / used clothing for a variety of other goods, particularly new stainless steel pots which were increasingly popular in middle-class Indian households.[334] *Phulkaris* too were circulating in this manner in the post-1947 period. Norris explains that,

> networks of petty traders still traverse the routes between villages and towns, quietly buying up pieces from respectable families who do not wish to sell their possessions on the open market. These traders sell them on to dealers, who offer pieces to museums and institutions, private collectors, and designers desiring original source material...The largest dealers, such as Bharany's in Sunder Nagar employ skilled restorers and deal directly with Indian aristocrats and collectors world-wide. Conversations with curators at the National Museum revealed that collections of older textiles are built up through relationships with traders who offer them pieces as they become available, as are the collections of the Crafts Museum.[335]

The National Institute of Fashion Technology's collection of *phulkaris* was built up in a similar way as other museums, pieces purchased by dealers as they became available. And nearly every collection I studied - both in and outside of South Asia - has *phulkaris* that arrived in the

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[331] See Kumari Rumpa Pal, *The Phulkari*.

[332] Based on conversation with Mr. Bharany in October 2012 at his shop/office in New Delhi.

[333] See Maskiell, "Honor, Desire, and Fashion."

[334] Lucy Norris, *Recycling Indian Clothing* (2010).

[335] Norris, *Recycling Indian Clothing*, 123.

collection via Mr. Bharany, likely the last stop in a long line of people from the women who made or used the *phulkaris* to itinerant merchants to established dealers to public or private collections.

Conclusion

After 1947 *phulkaris* circulated outside of India and in particular were included in several exhibitions at major museums in North America and Europe. One of the most significant exhibitions in the United States for introducing to an American audience the diversity of folk art objects from the Indian subcontinent was *Unknown India*, curated by renowned art historian Dr. Stella Kramrisch at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.[336] In this 1960 exhibition, a single *phulkari* was included amongst the displays, alongside previously unfamiliar objects from South Asia, that is, objects considered by Kramrisch to have folk or tribal origins which had not received their due scholarly or exhibitionary attention.[337] Katherine Hacker argues that this exhibition overshadowed other exhibitions in the United States of tribal and village art from South Asia and also influenced subsequent exhibitions of this previously "unknown" material, such as those created for the 1985 Festival of India in the United States.[338] The *phulkari* appeared alongside other "folk" art objects in the exhibition and photographs of rural locations in India, and is a vibrant *sainchi phulkari* full of figures, animals, and jewelry embroidered in brightly-colored threads on a deep black *khaddar* base (Figures 2.45 and 4.13).

Even earlier than the *Unknown India* show, and perhaps more significantly, a single *phulkari* appeared in the 1955 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York exhibition *Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India*, which traveled to a number of venues around the United States and was accompanied by a catalogue with essays by Pupul Jayakar and John Irwin.[339] The *phulkari* in question was a *sainchi phulkari* on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, though it was not labeled as a "phulkari" but instead identified as a nineteenth-century curtain (*purdah*) from Kangra or Chamba (Figure 4.14) - a title which has remained with the object to this day.[340] As with the *Unknown India* exhibition, the *phulkari* in the MoMA display appeared alongside other textiles and "village" objects from the subcontinent, including *kanthas*, saris, and a large Ramayana hanging (Figure 4.15). The installation of the exhibition was designed in large part by Alexander Girard, with contributions by Charles and Ray Eames, and was envisioned as

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[336] Stella Kramrisch, *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968).

[337] The *phulkari* in the exhibition was catalogue #191, listed as from Haryana, cotton cloth embroidered with silk floss, 7'9" x 4'8", ca. 1900, Philadelphia Museum of Art #67-211-11. See Kramrisch, *Unknown India*, 99.

[338] See Katherine Hacker, "Displaying a Tribal Imaginary: Known and *Unknown India*" in *Museum Anthropology* 23, 3 (Winter 2000): 5-25.

[339] Monroe Wheeler, ed. *Textiles and Ornaments of India.* New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956.

[340] According to the online database at the V&A, accessed in April 2015.

an “imaginary bazaar” with brightly-colored textiles hanging from the ceilings.[341] As Saloni Mathur argues in her discussion of the exhibition, Indian textiles and crafts were very much a part of American modernism that figures such as the Eames’ were championing: “the spirited cosmopolitanism of the summer of 1955 in NewYork, when a variety of modernist forms and expressions - in dance, music, cinema, and the visual arts, shaped by Indian artists and writers, and an international community of curators and scholars empathetic to this emerging vanguard - came together at MoMA, the citadel of modernism, in defiance of the hard separation between "craft" and "fine art" that was the dubious inheritance of colonial art institutions.”[342] Ray and Charles Eames in particular were familiar with *phulkaris*, and in addition to the appearance of a single piece in the MoMA show, they owned and displayed a more geometric / abstract *phulkari* at their home in California (Figure 4.16).[343]

Several years later *phulkaris* were evoked in, though physical absent from, an exhibition of textiles, *Master Weavers*, which was on display as part of the 1984/85 Festival of India in England and the United States. The inclusion of *phulkari* in the *Master Weavers* catalogue[344] and its exclusion in the *Master Weavers* exhibition is not surprising (reminiscent of the invisibility/ visibility of *phulkaris* in the RA display of 1948 and its accompanying catalogue). After all, despite its woven *khaddar* base *phulkaris* are more typically thought of as a form of embroidery, not weaving, the intended focus of the exhibition. According to one of the curators and author of the official catalogue, Jyotindra Jain, the discussion of *phulkaris* in the catalogue was due to the fact that the organizers of the exhibition wanted the catalogue to be more comprehensive than the theme of the exhibition allowed.[345]

In contrast to the displays of *phulkaris* in Indian museums, these exhibitions featured the art form as Indian objects (read: not Pakistani) and specifically as “folk” or “village” textiles. Significantly, the *phulkaris* participated in the various goals of each US exhibition: to highlight folk practice, to introduce “good” Indian design to an American public, or to fulfill political aims such as courting the nation of India in the post-World War II / Cold War period, during India’s economic liberalization and its concomitant rise as a global economy.[346] Once removed from museums in India, an emphasis on Punjab as a place of provenance (or a colonial stronghold as in earlier, nineteenth-century displays) was not as important as a more general marker of Indianness - not surprising for a foreign audience who may have not been fully aware of where

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[341] Saloni Mathur, “Charles and Ray Eames in India,” in *Art Journal* (January 31, 2014): 41.

[342] Mathur, “Charles and Ray Eames in India,” 42.

[343] Alexander Girard similarly had an interest in *phulkaris*, and acquired at least three pieces which are currently on display in the Girard Foundation galleries at the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe.

[344] *Master Weavers* catalogue, 78-79; Section on “Embroidered Textiles” includes a section on “Embroideries of Northwestern India” which not surprisingly begins with a description of phulkaris

[345] Based on email correspondence with Professor Jain, June 2014.

[346] Saloni Mathur speaks about the political framing of the 1955 MoMA exhibition in her essay “Charles and Ray Eames in India” (2014) while Rebecca Brown has researched and presented widely on the Festival of India in the United States - part of a larger book project, forthcoming.

Punjab fell within the Indian nation. As the next chapter will show, a shift occurred in the mid-1990s that began to reframe *phulkaris* in international exhibitions. No longer secular folk objects or symbols of Indian villages, instead *phulkaris* in these more recent displays were markers of religious identity, specifically the material heritage of Sikhs.

CHAPTER FIVE

(Re)Defining *Phulkaris* as "Sikh Art"

The Khalsa *Phulkari*

Tucked away in the basement of the Delhi home of the late Mr. S.S. Hitkari is an unusual *phulkari* textile (Figure 5.1). Hitkari was a commissioner in the Indian Revenue Service and an art collector who amassed a large collection of *phulkaris* over the course of his life. Just prior to his death in 2007, Hitkari converted his basement into a small private museum, a home for his diverse and extensive collection (Figure 5.2). Typical of other *phulkaris*, this textile incorporates darning stitches embroidered in silk floss (*pat)* onto rough handspun cotton cloth (*khaddar* or *khadi*). The whimsical arrangement of animal and floral forms is not unusual for figurative *phulkaris*, and the textile's palette of rich golden yellow, bright magenta, and cream-colored *pat* is also a familiar sight in other textiles of this genre. What is unusual, however, is the large *khalsa* crest or coat of arms (sometimes simply known as *khanda*) that appears at the center of the cloth (Figure 5.3): a depiction of a *khanda* or double-edged sword dominates the center of the coat of arms;[347] a *chakkar* or *chakkram* made from magenta-colored threads circles the *khanda* on all sides;[348] and two golden-colored *kirpans* appear at the base,[349] their hilts interlocking and surrounding both the *khanda* and the *chakkar*. Different from many other *khalsa* crests, this depiction also includes a bow, which lays across the center of the emblem and unifies the other four elements. The edges of the bow appear as the curved heads of small geese, their beaks pointing down towards flowers and other animals in the textile. Surrounding the *khalsa* is an inscription, embroidered onto the cloth (Figure 5.4a-f) that makes direct reference to key tenets of Sikhism. It reads:

> ਸੀ ਵਹਿ ਗੁਰੂਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤੇ, ਸੀ ਵਹਿ ਗੁਰੂਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਲਸਾ (*Sri waheguruji ki fateh, sri waheguruji ka khalsa)*
> Hail the Supreme Conquerer, Hail the Supreme Purifier[350] (Figure 5.4a+b)
>
> ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖ ਕਿ ? ਮੁਖਲਿਓ ਜਲਿ ਮਨਾ ਮੁਖਇ ਪਰਾਲੀ (*Guru Sikh ki mukhleo jali mana mukhkhi parali*)
> If you turn towards the Guru Sikh, your false self will burn like straw (Figure 5.4c-e)
>
> ਨਾਨਕ ਨਰਾਂਗਾਕਰੀ ਤੂਹਿ ਏ ਤੂਹਿ ਏ (*Nanak Narangakari Toohi hai, Toohi Hai*)

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[347] Within Sikhism, the *khanda*, a double-edged sword, is thought to be indicative of two swords or competing instincts fused together: *bhagti* (spiritual power) and *shakti* (temporal powers), the joining together of saint and soldier.

[348] The *chakkar* is a circular throwing weapon and a symbol of unity within Sikhism. For some, the chakkar also represents a cooking cauldron often used during *lungar*, the community meal served at a Sikh *gurudwara*.

[349] The two swords on the outside represent the *Miri - Piri* (*Bhagti* and *Shakti*) doctrine of Sikhism, revealed by Guru Nanak and put into practice by his sixth successor, Guru Hargobind. *Miri - Piri* is the integration of spiritual and temporal powers together; not treating them as two separate and distinct entities.

[350] This phrase is heard often at Sikh *gurudwaras*, and it often said when you start something or end something.

Nanak, follower of God, It is You It is You (Figure 5.4f)

ਅਓਜੀ ਜੀਅਐ ਨੂ ਅਇਜੀ (*Aao Ji, Ji Aayan Noon, Aayi Ji*)
Please come, you are most welcome (Figure 5.4f)

Not far from the *khanda*, surrounding the depiction of a horse, is another embroidered inscription that reads: ਸਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਫਰਾਸਾਦਾ (*Sab Guru Farishta*), All the Gurus are Messengers of God (Figure 5.5). In the far right hand corner of the cloth is an embroidered name, possibly a signature of the artist responsible for making this *phulkari*: Bibi Jagir Kaur (Figure 5.6).[351]

This *phulkari* is unusual for its strong religious content, made explicit through the embroidered inscription. Very rarely do *phulkaris* contain embroidered inscriptions, and when present they are usually limited to noting the name of the embroiderer or patron of the cloth. It is even more unusual for figurative *phulkaris* to make explicit reference, either in textual or pictorial form, to religious figures or ideas, as we see in this *khanda phulkari* from the Hitkari collection. Instead, as previous chapters have shown, figurative *phulkaris*, often depict floral and animal forms arranged concentrically around a central lotus motif, as in many *sainchi phulkaris* from various collections, including one that is hung just opposite the *khanda phulkari* in Hitkari's private museum (Figure 5.7). As Chapter Two discusses, many scholars argue that the depictions in these textiles reflect objects and figures from "everyday life" as experienced by the rural female embroiderers who made them. In rare cases we find figurative *phulkaris* that reference religious myths, such as the story of Shravana Kumar, or connect indirectly to religious architecture, as in so-called *darshan dwar phulkaris*, which feature doorways (*dwar*) thought to be entrances to a temple or to the divine itself.[352]

The *khanda phulkari* stands out as unusual because of the direct connections to Sikhism that appears embroidered on its surface, for *phulkari* has long been considered a genre that displayed very little if any religious content, and instead has been thought by scholars to be a form of folk art made by rural Punjabi women of all castes and creeds. Early English-language scholarship on *phulkaris*, published in the late 19th century, ignores embroidery by Sikh women altogether and instead argues that making *phulkaris* was the purview of Hindu Jats and occasionally Muslim women.[353] Later scholarship similarly emphasizes the role of both Hindu and Muslim embroiderers. It focuses on the one hand on the work of Hindu Jat women, particularly in towns and villages in Eastern Punjab, who created figurative *phulkaris* depicting a variety of human, animal, and vegetal forms; and on the other hand discusses the elaborate, geometric and highly

[351] Translation of Gurumukhi inscription my own. I am grateful to Professor Upkar Ubhi and Mr. Gurdip Singh Sethi for their assistance and feedback on my translation.

[352] Please see Chapter Two for further elaboration on depictions within *sainchi* and other figurative *phulkaris*.

[353] See in particular Flora Annie Steel, *Journal of Indian Art*, 1 (1880) and Chapter Three of this dissertation.

abstract *bagh phulkaris* made by Muslim women in Hazara and neighboring regions of Western Punjab.[354] No mention is made of the role of Sikh practitioners or patrons.

Phulkaris and Sikhism

Beginning in 1980 with a catalogue produced by Hitkari to document several items in his collection, we see a turn towards connecting *phulkaris* to Sikh identity.[355] Hitkari rejects 19th century texts that limits *phulkari* production to Hindu Jat women, and instead argues for a more inclusive understanding of the art form and a connection between *phulkaris* and Punjab itself, understood in his text as a center for the Sikh community.[356] For Hitkari, the origins of *phulkaris* lie with the folk, with communities of rural Punjabi women who embroidered shawls and coverings for their own uses or for their families. Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim women alike were involved with embroidering *phulkaris*, and for Hitkari, its stylistic idiom seems to say more about rural communities and life in Punjab than about religious affiliation or identity. And while Hitkari attributes *phulkaris* to rural women from various religious communities, he does make a particular effort to reinsert the work of Sikh women into the history of this art form; to "right" the colonial record and reverse the erasure that occurs in scholarship on *phulkaris* from the end of the nineteenth century and the first part of the 20th that ignores the contribution of Sikh embroiderers.

Following Hitkari's 1980 text, there emerges other scholarship, which further promotes a connection between Sikh embroiderers and *phulkari* production. For example, in 1991 Kushwant Singh not only asserts that *phulkaris* were produced by both Hindu and Sikh women, but that "the Sikhs dominated [*phulkari* production] and it played a more important part in their lives," with the art form reaching its peak during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the first half of the nineteenth century.[357] And yet, there is no evidence to suggest that Ranjit Singh particularly

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[354] For example, see Askari and Crill, 98 (1997); Jasleen Dhamija; and Valerie Bernstain. I argue that the assumption that geometric / abstract *phulkaris* and *baghs* were made exclusively by Muslim women holds little water, and is instead a contention developed in the colonial period by British residents and scholars attempting to better understand and "know" the great diversity of beliefs and peoples inhabiting the Indian subcontinent, and fixated on the aniconic reputation of Islam.

[355] Other texts that address textiles connected to Sikhism include: Rosemary Crill's chapter "Textiles in the Panjab" from Susan Stronge's catalogue *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* which discusses the regional importance of Kashmiri shawls and sashes, woven silk fabric, embroidered coverlets or *rumals*, and the famed *phulkari* ("flower work") from Punjab. Crill, "Textiles in the Panjab," The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms, 115-133. See also B.N. Goswamy, ed, *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*. New Delhi: National Museum, 2000, in which he discusses both *rumals* and *phulkaris*. Crill spends a good deal of the essay outlining the history of Kashmiri shawls, particularly when Kashmir was under Sikh rule, and notes the many ways that Maharaja Ranjit Singh patronized and used textiles. Frank Ames' book *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage* similarly takes up the history of the Kashmiri shawl under the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and traces its stylistic development over three centuries. Frank Ames, *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage: The Stylistic Development of the Kashmir Shawl under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839)* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 2010).

[356] Hitkari 1980, 16.

[357] Kushwant Singh, ed., *Warm and Rich and Fearless: A Brief Survey of Sikh Culture* (1991), 42.

cared for (or even knew about) *phulkaris*; they does not appear to be one of the many luxurious textiles that graced his palace or was collected in his *toshkhana* (storeroom).[358]

Exhibiting *Phulkaris*

Soon after Kushwant Singh's text, which appears as part of a catalogue of an exhibition of Sikh art that occurred in England in 1991 titled *Warm, Rich, and Fearless,* there emerge several shows at galleries and museums around the world, many of which include *phulkaris* amongst the different objects on display. In 1999, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London organized a large exhibition on Sikh art that traveled to San Francisco and Toronto.[359] The show, *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, focused in large part on work produced under the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[360] In the San Francisco venue several textiles, including *phulkaris* were on display alongside paintings, manuscripts, and metal work, a move that solidified *phulkaris'* place in popular imagination as a textile art unique to the Sikh community (Figure 5.8). In these exhibitions, objects were singled out as unique and rare: there were relatively few objects on display, each of which commanded its own lighting and framing devices - typical of museological and exhibitionary practices employed at large art museums. Even the *phulkaris* on display were treated as singular works of art: not draped on bodies or over pieces of furniture - as they would have been used originally - but instead hung flat against the wall, in a manner that showcased as much as possible the details of their decorative programs. However the narrative of the *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* exhibition catalogue shifts dramatically when addressing these textile objects. Elsewhere in the catalogue there is a strong move to connect visual and material culture to Ranjit Singh's court, while the chapter that includes *phulkaris* moves away from that political thread and instead speaks broadly about textiles from the larger Punjab region. It is as if textiles are not inherently political or religious, but instead inhabit a safe and unthreatening space within geography.

More recently, an exhibition organized at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in 2004, *Sikhs: The Legacy of the Punjab*, incorporated the display of *phulkaris* alongside other artwork and narrative content (Figure 5.9). The show traveled from Washington, D.C. in 2008 for a display at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and then in 2012 to the Fresno Museum of Art.[361] It was one of the initial projects of the Smithsonian's larger focus on Sikh heritage.[362]

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[358] Mulk Raj Anand, ed., *Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Patron of the Arts* (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1982); Susan Stronge, ed., *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2001).

[359] The same year B.N. Goswamy organized the exhibition *Piety and Splendor* at the National Museum, New Delhi using objects from Indian collections.This was a last minute exhibition arranged in large part because several of the objects from the Victoria and Albert Museum were unable to travel to India.

[360] It is worth noting that this and other exhibitions were initiated and/or heavily funded by the Sikh Foundation in Palo Alto, CA and directly supported by its founder Dr. Narinder Kapany.

[361] There are plans for an upcoming display of the exhibition at a venue in Los Angeles.

[362] Paul Michael Taylor, "Sikh Heritage at the Smithsonian," *JPS* 11:2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Museum of Natural History): 221-236.

Different from the V&A exhibition that traveled in 1999, *Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab* began at a museum of natural history, the result being that the focus of the show was more about the cultural history of the Sikh people, rather than the aesthetics and history of so-called Sikh objects. Interestingly, the display of *phulkaris* appears much the same as in the art museum venues, suggesting an ambiguous placement of these objects within art historical and anthropological categories.

Another significant show that gave a prominent position to *phulkaris* was the 2006 exhibition *I See No Stranger: Sikh Art and Devotion*, on display at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York.[363] The aim of this show was to introduce to a wide American public the rich cultural and artistic contributions of the Sikh religion, in particular objects which reflected the key tenets of Sikhism: equality, humility, service, and universal access to God (Figure 5.10). According to the exhibition curators B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, the show at the Rubin was particularly set on creating a narrative about Sikh cultural and artistic contributions in response to the misinformation and xenophobia that circulated about Sikhs following the attacks of September 11th. The exhibition also was successful in framing Sikhism through the lens of "great works of art": objects were placed on pedestals (Figure 5.11), displayed in glass cases (Figure 5.12), and dramatically lit (Figure 5.13). With the exception of the display of the Granth Sahib (Figure 5.14), which provided viewers with textiles used in situ, all of the *phulkaris* featured in the exhibition were installed in a way that highlighted their singularity and objectness.

Strikingly different from these exhibitions are early displays of *phulkaris* from the nineteenth century, none of which focus on religious connections to *phulkaris*, but instead define the textile as "Punjabi" or "Indian" broadly speaking. It is likely that *phulkaris* appeared at the India court for the Great Exhibition of 1851 held in the Crystal Palace in London. There were numerous objects on display in the India court - which was one of the exhibit's most popular galleries - and amongst the many objects were several regional textiles. Embroidery is mentioned as a celebrated part of East Indian Court, and the official exhibition catalogue cites several different styles of embroidery from Punjab on display including pieces from Ludhiana and Lahore. The fact that the name "phulkari" does not appear in the exhibition's catalogue is not surprising; the name "phulkari" did not circulate in English language texts until Steel and Kipling began writing about it in the second half of the 19th century.[364] Typical of Victorian display practices, objects were grouped by type, often on tables, hung on temporary walls, or strung from the rafters in a manner that maximized the visible display space. Most famously a howdah appeared as part of

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[363] For a discussion of *phulkaris* in this show see Maskiell, "The Crafting of Rural Women's Roles in Sikh Heritage."

[364] See Chapter Three of this dissertation for more details. See also *The Illustrated London News: Selections Relating to the Great Exhibition* (Marlborough, 2007), 563. Originally from June 14, 1851 edition; *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1851), 159; *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851 from the Originals Painted for His Royal Highness Prince Albert, by Messrs. Nash, Haghe, and Roberts, R.A. Published under the Express Sanction of H.R.H. Prince Albert, President of the Royal Commission, to whom the Work is, by Permission, Dedicated* (London: Dickinson Brothers, Her Majesty's Publishers, 1852); and *The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue: The Industry of All Nations, 1851* (London: G. Virtue, 1851).

the exhibit, shown on a stuffed elephant, adjacent to the so-called darbar hall, which featured the display of objects as one might find them in an Indian royal setting (Figure 5.15). At the Great Exhibition, as was typical of exhibitions of this period, Indian objects were highlighted for their superior elements of ornament, design, and craftsmanship, and ultimately operated as metonyms for the resources and products of British India.[365]

The first confirmed documentation we have of *phulkaris* on display at a large international exhibition was in 1886, when dozens of these textiles were included in London at the Royal Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Comprising part of the Punjab Court and appearing next to other objects from the region, the *phulkaris* at the 1886 London exhibition came from all over Punjab: from Amritsar and Lahore, from Rohtak and Hissar (in present-day Haryana), from Sialkot and Hazara, from Rawal Pindi and Dera Ismail Khan.[366] The objects were sent from craft-production centers in local jails,[367] private and princely collections, and (British) district officers stationed in Punjab who acquired works directly from craftspeople. The British artist and curator John Lockwood Kipling was particularly influential in bringing objects from Punjab to national and international exhibitions, including the 1886 exhibition in London. Kipling moved to Lahore in 1875 when he took up the position of curator of the Central Museum and principal of the Mayo School of Art.[368] His interest in indigenous practices of art-making and his active role in sending crafts from Punjab to several exhibitions worldwide signals a key moment when *phulkaris* began to circulate outside of local towns and villages, where the textiles were made and worn primarily by women for daily use or special occasions.[369]

Several *phulkaris* also appeared a couple years earlier as part of the Punjab Court of the Calcutta International Exhibition held between December 1883 and July 1884, organized by Kipling and B.H. Baden-Powell. *Phulkaris* were displayed inside glass cases along with other prized textiles such as gold lacework and Kashmiri shawls. The objects on display in the exhibition were also

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[365] For more on the popularity of Indian objects at the Great Exhibition, see Tim Barringer, *Men at Work*; Barringer, *Colonialism and the Object*; Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*; and Chapter Three of this dissertation.

[366] At this time, Punjab was a vast territory that encompassed Kashmir and Delhi and many places in between. *Empire of India: Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors, Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1886), 256-57.

[367] At this time, craft production, particularly the weaving of carpets, was a source of income generation and social development for inmates at local prisons.

[368] For more on Kipling, please see Chapter Three.

[369] Prior to the 1886 exhibition in London, over 100 examples of *phulkaris* were on display and for sale in the regional *Punjab Exhibition of 1881-82*, an exhibition organized in large part by Kipling. Kipling's wife, Alice, and British novelist and long-time resident of India, Flora Annie Steel, published remarks about the various examples of the embroidery on display at the exhibition, noting the superior workmanship and design of *phulkaris* from the "unsophisticated regions" of Hazara, Jhelum, Hissar, Bannu, Rohtak, and Sialkot. Other exhibitions where *phulkaris* were on display include the *Delhi Exhibition 1902-03*; *phulkaris* appear as part of Division 38 of the Main or Sale Gallery. See George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi 1903: Being the Official Catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1903), 372-78.

for sale[370] and several individual *phulkaris* received awards for fine craftsmanship and design.[371] As we can see from a photograph of the Punjab Court, every available space in the gallery was occupied by objects, and textiles in particular covered the walls and ceilings and appeared draped over the legs of display cases (Figure 5.16) - a far cry from the comparatively austere and edited displays of recent exhibitions, such as the 2006 show at the Rubin Museum or the 1999 exhibition at the Asian Art Museum San Francisco, in which museological conventions emphasize the visual and formal qualities of a single object. In nearly all examples of *phulkaris* on display in colonial exhibitions, these textiles signified several things: they served as metonyms for Indian textiles broadly defined, for the handmade (as a social statement and a general principle of art-making), for rural women who embroidered these elaborate cloths, and for the region of Punjab itself.

A Turn Towards Sikh Art

The tricentennial of the Khalsa in 1999 is certainly one explanation for the development of Sikh related art exhibitions at museums and the subsequent publishing of exhibition catalogues and associated scholarship. However, the more general emphasis on Sikh arts and culture in the 1980s and 90s, including the publication of Hitkari's book on *phulkaris* in 1980, may be linked to the dramatic political and social events that occurred within the Sikh community during this time both in South Asia and in the diaspora.

One possible explanation is the growing momentum in the 1970s and 80s of the Khalistan separatist movement, which under the leadership of Jagit Singh Chauhan made efforts to rally support amongst Sikhs living outside of South Asia.[372] Another turning point for the Sikh community was Operation Blue Star, a military maneuver launched by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in June 1984 to regain control over the Harmandir Sahib Complex (aka Golden Temple) in Amritsar from another Sikh political leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who vehemently opposed the Prime Minister's policies. Following this attack on the Golden Temple - considered one of the most holy Sikh temples or *gurudwaras* - Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh body guards, and bloody anti-Sikh riots (known by some as the Sikh Massacre) broke out in Delhi and surrounding regions killing thousands of people. Not surprisingly, these events further catalyzed the growing Khalistan Separatist Movement in India, North America, Australia, and Europe. The growing visibility and articulation of a Sikh and Punjabi identity distinct from an Indian identity supports the move to create a separate category of "Sikh art" - a move that serves to highlight and in many ways isolate a set group of cultural objects as belonging to a specific group of individuals.

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[370] Rs. 15,000 worth of objects were sold at the exhibition. *Official Report of the Calcutta International Exhibition, 1883-84*, Volume 1 (Calcutta, 1885).

[371] *Official Report of the Calcutta International Exhibition, 1883-84*, Volume 1 (Calcutta, 1885), 218 and 470-1.

[372] Notably, Chauhan placed an advertisement in *The New York Times* in 1971 promoting the Khalistan movement. See Haresh Pandya, "Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Sikh Militant Leader in India, Dies at 80". *The New York Times* (11 April 2007).

Concurrently, contemporary artists both in India and in the diaspora began to produce works that specifically addressed Sikh themes, including depictions of Sikh religious leaders and historical events. Take for example the paintings of Arpana Caur, whose career exploded in the 1980s and 1990s through numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world. Caur is well known for her depictions of the Sikh Guru Nanak (Figure 5.17) as well as paintings that responded directly to the anti-Sikh pogroms of 1984 (Figure 5.18).[373] Similarly, London born sisters, Amrit and Rabindra Singh, who paint collaboratively as the Singh Twins, gained popularity in the 1990s for their exquisitely detailed works, which recall Mughal miniature paintings and very often address Sikh themes, such as their controversial work *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Figure 5.19).[374] Caur and the Singh Twins are just two example of many artists whose work specifically addresses Sikh themes, which through collection and exhibition have helped contribute to the rise in the category of Sikh art.[375]

Conclusion: Situating *Phulkaris* as "Sikh Art"

The discipline of art history is in many ways still contending with the category of "Sikh art," and the debate continues about how, when, and where to place this very diverse group of objects and cultural practices within the art historical canon of South Asia. Some scholars pinpoint the origins of Sikh art to portraits of the ten Gurus that began appearing during the first half of the eighteenth century,[376] likely produced by artists that left dissolving Mughal ateliers looking for new forms of patronage. Others cite the immense artistic patronage by the Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a key moment within Sikh art, allowing for the production and celebration of everything from textiles and paintings to architecture and brassware.[377]

And yet, there is an overall sentiment that Sikh art is not easily defined or contained. Susan Stronge points out that artwork produced for Sikh patrons or with specific Sikh themes were sometimes made by Muslim or Hindu artists.[378] Similarly Goswamy and Smith discuss the shared themes found within both Sikh and Hindu art, and attest to the widespread reverence to Sikh Gurus and Sikh shrines by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike, calling into question what exactly we mean by "Sikh art" and hinting that the origins of the genre could very well predate

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[373] Arpana Caur personal website: www.arpanacaur.com

[374] The Singh Twins personal website: http://singhtwins.co.uk

[375] Dr. Narinder Kapany, a huge proponent of Sikh Art has numerous such contemporary works in his collection, including pieces by Arpana Caur.

[376] Goswamy and Smith, *I See No Stranger*, 29-31. Dr. N.S. Kapany and Kerry Brown identify an early surviving portrait of Guru Nanak from c.1770 likely made in Lucknow or Faizabad. See Brown and Kapany, *Sikh Art and Literature*, 11.

[377] *Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Patron of the Arts* ,1982. See also "phulkari reached its peak during Ranjit Singh's reign in the first half of the 19th century" (*Warm and Rich and Fearless* 42)

[378] Stronge, *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, 10.

early eighteenth century portraits.[379] In *New Insights into Sikh Art* (2003) Kavita Singh outlines some of the art historical biases that have plagued Sikh arts - long considered a "backwater in the fluid course of Indian art" - and instead calls for an opening up of the field.[380] Singh urges her readers to expand the range of materials to include both secular and religious objects; to consider equally both older and newer examples of artistic practice, particularly fitting for a relatively young religion; and to embrace various levels of patronage instead of privileging courtly arts over folk arts.

Perhaps this is how we can understand the emergence of *phulkaris* within this newly emergent category of Sikh art - as an attempt to expand the parameters of visual material associated with the cultural and artistic contributions of Sikh artists and patrons. It is also perhaps a way for scholars, curators, and collectors to culturally and historically situate *phulkaris*: folk art, particularly textiles, have only recent been collected by major museums and private individuals, and there is almost no written documentation of their history or information on the artists involved in their making. Defining *phulkaris* as "Sikh art" then allows this material to have a longer cultural and historical lineage, to be included alongside great miniature paintings and ornate sculptural works.

One can't help but wonder why the emphasis on religion - on Sikhism - is being leveraged as the defining feature of these diverse works of art, and particularly with the case of *phulkaris*. Colonial fascination with demarcating creeds and categorizing people along religious lines set the groundwork within the field of art history for defining artistic practice as inherently tied to religion. With the case of *phulkaris*, there is a marked shift that occurs in the narrative surrounding the art form over the 100 years between Steel's article on *phulkaris* and Hitkari's catalogue. For Steel, religious identity was an important part of being Indian, and an essential component of a *phulkari's* provenance. Hitkari's work, by contrast, shows a growing interest in stressing regionalism; in defining and celebrating *phulkaris* as a distinctly "Punjabi" art form.

Closer examination of actual practices, however, reveal that to define artwork as Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh, is at best quite limiting, at worst inaccurate, and ultimately does not acknowledge cross-cultural exchange between artists and patrons that characterize much art of South Asia. Architecture and painting made under Mughal rulers, for example, was very often produced by Hindu artists or incorporated stylistic idioms of indigenous Hindu and Jain structures along side motifs pulled from the larger Persianate world. Famously Emperor Akbar commissioned artists in his atelier to create elaborate paintings of the *Ramayana* - are we to consider this Hindu art? Muslim art? Or something altogether different? In the same way, the rulers of Vijayanagara, understood by many scholars to epitomize Hindu kingship, borrowed architectural styles, painting traditions, and ways of dressing from Muslim sultanate rulers of the north, in a cross-cultural exchange which has given the Vijayanagara kingdom the more recent appellation Islamicate, an indication of the prevailing centers of power and culture on the subcontinent

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[379] Goswamy and Smith, 32-33.

[380] Kavita Singh, *New Insights Into Sikh Art*, 11-14.

during the 15th century. In the same way, we would be remiss to fix the identity of portraits of the gurus, objects made under the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and even *phulkaris* as strictly objects of "Sikh art" without acknowledging the plurality of artistic voices and sources of patronage that brought these objects into being.

Few scholars address what is precisely "Sikh" about *phulkaris*, despite the fact that several use these vibrantly colored textiles as iconic images of artistic production associated with the religion: *phulkaris* appear on the cover of numerous books about Sikh art, even when the text inside says little if anything about *phulkaris*. Goswamy and Smith close their catalogue with several color plates of *phulkaris* and the catalogue for the exhibition *Piety and Splendour* held at the National Museum in New Delhi in 1999 similarly highlights *phulkaris* as important objects of Sikh cultural practice.[381] Kushwant Singh includes *phulkaris* as the only form of textile art in *Warm, Rich, and Fearless*.[382] Peculiarly, these texts make little mention of why *phulkaris* are included amongst the many objects of so-called Sikh art, nor do they speculate on what is particularly "Sikh" about *phulkaris*. Interestingly, *phulkaris* in these contexts seem to soften and feminize a community often perceived as aggressive and masculine.

In many ways what is operating in the move to reinscribe the history of *phulkaris* within the history of Sikhism is a tangible example of the complex biography of material things. As Igor Kopytoff (and Richard Davis after him) have shown, objects take on new meanings and associations as they move through the world - whether it be a new collection, museum, or owner - and in turn are changed and altered by those experiences.[383] Similarly, as Finbarr Barry Flood has argued, subsequent meanings given to objects - e.g. *phulkaris* as Sikh art - are just as legitimate, significant, and valuable as earlier meanings.[384] So, while art historians may continue to be skeptical (or even disparaging) of the category of "Sikh Art," what it reveals is a changing current in artistic patronage, the assertion of religious identities, and the growing capital / fiscal power of diasporic communities who find comfort and solidarity in visual objects.

This recent practice of reinscribing the history of *phulkaris* within the history of Sikhism is perhaps best illustrated by the display at the recently opened Khalsa Heritage Museum at Anandpur Sahib (Figure 5.20),[385] a site which garnered extensive funds from diasporic patrons and is located in a pilgrimage center sacred to many Sikhs. This grand architectural monument - steps away from several important *gurudwaras* including Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, the birth place of the Khalsa - is devoted to narrating the story of Sikhism, highlighting the lives of key

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[381] Goswamy and Smith, eds., *I See No Stranger* (2007); and Goswamy, ed. *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*. New Delhi: National Museum, 2000.

[382] Kushwant Singh, ed., *Warm and Rich and Fearless: A Brief Survey of Sikh Culture* (1991).

[383] See Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things* (1986); and Davis, *The Lives of Indian Images* (1997).

[384] See Flood, *Objects of Translation* (2009).

[385] This museum is discussed in Mathur and Singh, "Reincarnations of the Museum" (2007).

figures and teachers of the religion, and tracing its connection to the land of the five rivers. The museum itself has become a pilgrimage center in its own right, and swarms of visitors line up to take *darshan* not only of the architectural structure but also of the impressive, multi-media displays inside. The first gallery that greets visitors is an elaborate painted mural, nearly 100 feet high, that depicts scenes from typical Punjabi life in a brightly-colored and graphic style (Figure 5.21). The mural, which also incorporates a sound and light component, is a captivating entry to the larger museum, and its excellent galleries. Tellingly, the hallway that leads visitors to the multi-media mural is lined floor to ceiling with pieces of old *phulkaris*, which have been cut and stitched together to create a long tactile covering (Figure 5.22). There is nothing to explain to the visitor that what she sees is an old style of embroidery with a long history in the region, nor is there any description which talks about the rural women responsible for making these elaborate and richly-colored cloths. Instead, the viewer is assumed to know that these textiles are just as much Sikh as the narrative mural, the portraits of the gurus that will appear in subsequent galleries, or even the site itself, which has long been associated with the religion. The silence that accompanies the installation of *phulkaris* at the Khalsa Heritage Museum speaks volumes, and makes the unusual *phulkari* from Hitkari's collection appear a little less unusual, and instead as yet another example of *phulkaris*, the iconic textile of Punjab and by extension, Sikh art.

The resituating of *phulkaris* within the history of Sikhism is also evident in recent exhibitions and promotional material produced by the 1469 Workshop, a commercial entity named after the birth year of Guru Nanak that creates screen-printed t-shirts and other products with strong Sikh and Punjabi themes (Figure 5.23). Perhaps the most popular t-shirt produced by 1469 Workshop is one that features an image of Bhagat Singh, the renowned anti-colonial nationalist and revolutionary who was Sikh by heritage and killed by the British at the age of 23 in 1931. The 1469 Workshop has an active presence online and in social media, and has opened several retail locations in New Delhi, Chandigarh, and Amritsar. Significantly, *phulkaris* have emerged as an icon of Sikh- and Punjabi-ness for 1469 Workshop. Old *phulkaris* are featured prominently in the brand's retail spaces and its Facebook page (Figure 5.24) as well as in backdrops for advertisements selling other kinds of objects, such as a new collection of satirical coasters (Figure 5.25). They also sell old and new *phulkaris* and have produced a series of screen-printed garments that use images of old *phulkaris* and *baghs* as graphic patterns alongside Gurumukhi characters (Figure 5.26).

Interestingly, 1469 Workshop has also organized several *phulkari melas* (festivals) in recent years that fuse their commercial interests with academic scholarship. These *melas* bring together writers, curators, designers, and filmmakers for a series of discussions, performances, and displays that evoke and discuss various aspects of Punjabi arts and culture. The most recent *phulkari mela* organized by 1469 Workshop was held from April 1-8, 2015 at the India International Centre in New Delhi, a year after the first *mela* in 2014.[386] *Phulkaris* form an essential iconic element in these programs: lending their name for the *melas*' titles and promotional materials, referenced in visual form in many of the objects on display (Figure 5.27a-

[386] Held at the India International Centre in New Delhi, from April 13-24, 2014.

d), and evoked in discussions about Punjabi heritage. Ultimately, the 1469 Workshop programs operate in a way similar to Hitkari's collection and the exhibitions and scholarship it inspired: creating a seamless connection between the geographical state of Punjab in India with that of Sikhism, reinforcing an image of Punjabi identity as part-and-parcel with Sikh identity. *Phulkaris* then figure as metonyms in that equation, symbols of Punjab and Sikhism alike.

CONCLUSION

Memory, Loss, and Desire: Contemporary Circulation of *Phulkaris*

Traveling south from Patiala - passing fields of wheat and mustard flowers, enormous conical stacks of hay, and neatly piled patties of cow dung - one arrives in the small, but bustling town of Nabha, home to the Delhi-based non-profit The Nabha Foundation. Established in 2003 as an extension of the philanthropic activities of the Khemka family, the Nabha Foundation focuses on the development and preservation of the region of Nabha, Punjab. Amongst the numerous social and economic development initiatives started by the Nabha Foundation is their highly successful *phulkari* project, that currently works with over 120 women in a dozen small villages around Nabha. Started in 2006, women involved in the Nabha Foundation's self-help initiatives identified and selected *phulkari* embroidery as a "craft of preference to create long-term sustainable self-employment."[387] As a non-profit family foundation, the Nabha Foundation's interest in creating the *phulkari* project was as a vehicle for income generation for the women involved and general economic and social development of the *tehsil* of Nabha - it is not a commercial venture for the organization.[388]

I visited Nabha and traveled to some of the surrounding villages to meet with women who are currently involved in the *phulkari* project, with the aim of seeing the embroidery that they produce and talking with them about their experiences and interests in *phulkaris*. Amongst the embroiderers with whom I met in the village of Suhali was a young woman named Manpreet who began embroidering *phulkari* as part of the Nabha Foundation project and recently was awarded the prestigious *Kamaladevi Puraskar Award* in 2013 from the Crafts Council of India for her high quality stitching. Women of various ages are involved in the Nabha *phulkari* project, and the organization has helped facilitate large orders of cushion covers and stoles embroidered by the women using materials, techniques, and familiar *phulkari* motifs for retail stores such as Good Earth and Fabindia. For the lead designer of the project, Sunaina Suneja, it was essential that the Nabha *phulkari* project stay true to traditional techniques of embroidering *phulkaris*, namely counting warp-weft threads to create patterns using darning stitches as well as the exclusive use of silk *pat* (Figure 6.1) and loosely woven cotton *khadi* or linen. As discussed previously in this dissertation, not all *phulkaris* use the technique of counting threads, though this method does appear to have been used in many *baghs* and *phulkaris*, particularly to create repeat patterns and geometricized motifs such as the classic "phul" form. It is motifs such as these that have come to symbolize *phulkari* embroidery in the Nabha project, and as we shall see, other contemporary embroidery practices. The motifs used in the Nabha project recall older *phulkaris*, and the project's close attention to process and materials has resulted in very high quality *phulkari* products made by the women involved (Figure 6.2). It is interesting that none of the

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[387] According to information on the phulkari project on the Nabha Foundation's website: http://thenabhafoundation.org/phulkari/#

[388] This was emphasized to me in discussions with Director Maria Angelic Vargas, both in our initial meeting in October 2012 as well as in subsequent conversations in February and March 2015.

women involved in the project - regardless of their age - have any history of making *phulkari* nor do they have concrete memories of other women in their families making *phulkaris*. Embroidering *phulkaris*, for the women in the Nabha project, is a new art form, a source of income, and focus of local entrepreneurship.

Outside of the laudable Nabha *phulkari* project, there are numerous women with whom I met in and around Patiala and Chandigarh who embroider *dupattas*, suit material, and saris amongst other products incorporating iconic motifs of older *phulkaris*, most notably the four-petal *phul* form and the so-called *parantha* motif which is used to create newer *bagh phulkaris* (Figure 6.3). The *parantha* motif in particular is reminiscent of forms found in older *baghs* from the western regions of Punjab (now in Pakistan). These practices of embroidering *phulkaris* are primarily commercial, lead by a single entrepreneurial woman who commands a larger group of embroiderers working for her, and produces *phulkaris* of various styles and varying degrees of quality. Some of these women have a long history with making *phulkaris* - that is, they learned to embroider from their mothers or grandmothers - others have begun engaging with the art form only recently. Most significantly for this study is that these newer forms of *phulkaris* are the ones that circulate most readily in the market; they are actively produced, purchased, and worn by Punjabi women throughout India, and their increasing popularity speaks to the power of this art form as an icon of Punjabi identity and craft.

The artist Dayawanti, whose work was shown in the Chandigarh Museum,[389] learned to embroider from her maternal and paternal grandmothers, both of whom made *phulkaris* (Figure 6.4). According to Dayawanti, in her community it was mandatory to include *phulkaris* in a girl's dowry and they had a real function in the daily life of women.[390] *Phulkaris* were used as *bistre* (bedding) to cover *charpoys* (cots), and were particularly important to Jat families like hers. *Phulkaris* were also used to drape over dowry chests (Figure 6.5) and steel trunks, turning the trunks into makeshift seating for visiting guests. In her family, most of the *phulkaris* that the women embroidered were used for personal or family use, though some pieces were sold or given as gifts to the local *zamindar* (landowner) as a kind of *nazara* (in this context, payment). Dayawanti gave one *phulkari* to a *gurudwara* to bring good fortune to her when she started her business. She now makes and sells *phulkaris* professionally, embroidering some pieces herself, though primarily employing a few women in nearby villages to create *dupattas* and suit materials using *phulkari* stitches and motifs.

Another woman, Ramesh Kumari, currently a resident of Tripuri Town, Patiala, learned to embroider *phulkaris* out of necessity (Figure 6.6).[391] She was trained as a stenographer and around 1972 she became pregnant and could not take a long maternity leave, so she quit her job and was encouraged to learn to embroider *phulkaris* from her neighbors. She began producing

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[389] See Chapter One.

[390] Based on interview with Dayawanti, Chamla Petrol Pump, Kharar Road near Sunny Enclave, Mohali, Chandigarh, October 2012.

[391] Based on interview with Ramesh Kumari, 543/6 Tripuri Town, Patiala, October 2012.

phulkaris as part of a commercial operation. She would get fabric from locals shops - almost always silk or synthetic georgette, for *salwaar* suits or *dupattas* - and she would embroider on the fabric. She used her own thread, made her own color selections and created a repertoire of designs. She purchased both unplied and plied thread; with the latter she would untwist the thread to get more strands. She chose any colors that were pleasing and available in the market. All the women in her neighborhood would sit together and embroider - which according to her was easy work while taking care of children. She embroidered for about 15 years, stopping when her eye sight began to fail. Ramesh Kumari shared several different *phulkari* designs / motifs that she liked to use in her work, each with its own name and style, including *choti dabbi, kanchan, parontha, bagh, gol dabbi,* and *mirch buti*.

Commercial operations for making *phulkaris*, like the one that Ramesh Kumari and Dayawanti engage in, are not atypical, and some women who embroidered *phulkaris* on commission several decades ago continue to do so today.[392] In fact much of Tripuri Town in Patiala is populated by women who embroider *phulkaris* as part of various commercial enterprises. Lakshmi, the proprietor of a small shop in Tripuri Town that specializes in *phulkari* products, explains that she has embroidered her entire life (Figure 6.7).[393] She was originally from Goanspur, near Rawalpindi (in present-day Pakistan), and came to Patiala when she was 2 or 3 years old. In fact, much of Tripuri Town is settled by refugees from Rawalpindi. Lakshmi has always embroidered *phulkaris* for other people, though she chooses her own colors and threads. Designs / motifs are worked out in consultation with the patron, though Lakshmi's work is dominated by *parantha* and *phul* motifs that recall *baghs* from Hazara (about 3 hours by car from Rawalpindi) and other locations in western Punjab (now Pakistan). Lakshmi employs several other women in town who embroidery *phulkaris* to order. They also supply *phulkari dupattas* and suit material to several of the shops in town that specialize in this material. Most intriguing about Lakshmi's *phulkaris* is that many of them are done by first printing a pattern using chalk onto the fabric to be used as a template or guide for embroiderers to insure a consistent, easily-repeatable motif (Figure 6.8). The use of blockprinted patterns is not uncommon and several other women employ this technique for ease of work and consistency.[394]

Another woman, Kanta Dogra, sells *phulkaris* out of her home in Chandigarh, and includes everything from cushion covers to *dupattas* to skirts as part of her repertoire of products, each made either by machine embroidery, hand embroidery following a blockprinted pattern, or hand embroidery created "the traditional way" by counting threads. Originally from Jullunder, Mrs. Dogra has been embroidering for several years in her home in Chandigarh, and has a formidable command of a variety of stitches, not limited to the darning stitch that dominates *phulkaris*. In

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[392] For a comprehensive study on contemporary *phulkari* embroiderers in Punjab see Anu Gupta's Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Punjab, Chandigarh. See also Anu Gupta and Shalina Mehta, "Patterns of Phulkari: Then and Now (November 2014).

[393] Based on interview with Lakshmi, Janki Phulkari, Tripuri Town, Patiala, October 2012.

[394] Dayawanti will give her employees fabric she has blockprinted with specific *phulkari* motifs and patterns to insure that each piece is completed to her specifications. Based on interview with Dayawanti, Mohali, Chandigarh, October 2012.

1985 and then again in 1991 Mrs. Dogra received a Punjab state award for her *phulkaris*, many of which she sold at local craft exhibitions. Largely due to a debilitating condition with her spine and the increased difficulty she was finding making embroidery herself, in 1995 Mrs. Dogra started training other women to embroider and began a small shop out of her home where she sells the work of anywhere between 200 and 300 women who live / work in villages around Jullunder. The *phulkaris* in her shop include inexpensive machine-made dress material on cotton as well as more expensive densely embroidered *bagh dupattas* on silk (Figure 6.9). She also has pieces that experiment with base cloths and color combinations, such as a hand-embroidered *dupatta* using shades of pink silk floss and turquoise *kota doria* - a cotton fabric from the city of Kota in Rajasthan renowned for its loose weave and light-weight drape (Figure 6.10). The increased demand for newer (and cheaper) *phulkaris* such as these is evident by their popularity in markets throughout Punjab and Delhi, and their use in films such as Yash Chopra's 2008 *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* in which lead actress and Shah Rukh Khan's love interest Anushka Sharma dons new style *phulkaris* throughout the film (Figure 6.11).

The *phul* motif on the *dupatta* worn by Sharma in *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* features prominently in many contemporary *phulkaris*, often to the exclusion of more traditional materials and processes. Machine embroidered and woven "phulkaris" appear throughout market places in Delhi and Punjab each that incorporate the iconic *phul* motif and make visual reference to *phulkaris* of the past. While many Punjabi women I met preferred the older style of *phulkaris* and some even disparaged the recent machine produced versions, what the robust presence of these textiles in commercial centers suggests is the prolonged interest in *phulkaris*, and appreciation for *phulkaris* as a symbol of something distinctly Punjabi and appropriate for special occasion and daily wear.

Phulkari as Icon

It is perhaps the idea of *phulkaris* that has the most potent and lasting effect: as something uniquely Punjabi and connected with women from this region. These ideas have permeated the collecting and exhibiting practices that center on this art form. Steel saw *phulkaris* connected with the landscape of Punjab and in particular the women who she encountered during her 20 years stay in the region. Midcentury museum displays of *phulkaris* frame them as inherently connected with regional identity, and specifically the Indian state of Punjab - a distinctive locale within the new Indian nation. Even *phulkaris'* recent redefining through Sikh Art is a way of appropriating the idea of *phulkaris*, positioning them as uniquely Punjabi, and concomitantly uniquely Sikh.

Taking the idea of *phulkari* as icon one step further, contemporary artist Gogi Saroj Pal created a watercolor series titled *Phulkari* in which she depicted otherwise nude female forms covered in flowers, grasses, and clouds. These figures incorporate Pal's use of bright, saturated colors and depictions of female figures that recall the *khamdenu* and *kinnari* forms - with their characteristically large heads, wide eyes, and full lips - that dominate Pal's work. Some of the figures in her *Phulkari* series are depicted with needle and thread in hand, their bodies covered in flowers as if they are caught in the act of embroidering directly onto their skins (Figure 6.12).

Indeed, Pal describes some of these images as pulling from the idea of *phulkari* textiles as a wrapper for the body, symbolically translated in her paintings as the body itself.[395] Other paintings in the series are more evocative of stories from Pal's life, such as her habit of collecting fireflies in a jar when she was a child - depicted in one painting as floating in jars around a figure who herself is covered in the bugs (Figure 6.14) - or accompanying her father on horseback on hunting trips while wearing red shoes (Figures 6.15).

Pal began her *Phulkari* series in 2001, though she was long aware of *phulkaris* before that time. She first learned of the art form from her mother, a Punjabi woman from Lahore, who had one *phulkari* that was given to her by her mother (Pal's maternal grandmother), and was an object she treasured and wore only for special occasions. Pal remembers when her family moved closer to the Punjab border (from the town in Himachal Pradesh where she was born and raised) and she came in contact with more women wearing and embroidering *phulkaris*, singing and telling stories as they worked. When Pal moved to Delhi in the late 1960s to become an artist, she came in contact with even more *phulkaris*, and in particular became friends with S.S. Hitkari, who used to provide Pal with income tax advice and show her some of the *phulkaris* in his personal collection. Pal also traveled to Pakistan twice to see *phulkaris* both in Lahore and Islamabad.

For Pal, the *idea* of *phulkaris* was what interested her, specifically what *phulkaris* had come to mean as a symbol. She never directly copied motifs found on *phulkari* textiles to incorporate into her paintings, and indeed there is little similarity between her images and the visual vocabulary on so many *phulkaris*. Instead, *phulkaris*, for her, represented memories - the idea of memories, the recalling of memories - and her own past and childhood. They were not just objects referencing women and embroidery, but instead used embroidery as a metaphor. When Pal speaks about these paintings, embroidery serves as a metaphor for self-exploration and creation: "the body is like a landscape, and [women] are like cloth... through memories [a woman] embroiders herself."[396] To accompany the paintings, Pal wrote a collection of short stories in Hindi titled "Phulkari" which similar recalls stories from her life, memories she has created and collected.

Phulkaris also serve as metaphors for memories in the recent work by another contemporary artist - Israeli-born, New York-based Ghiora Aharoni - who created a series of *phulkari* collages that were put on display in his solo exhibition *Missives* curated by Tasneem Zakari Mehta at the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai from September 8 to November 30, 2013 (Figure 6.16). Aharoni's work for the *Missives* exhibition was inspired by a trove of love letters written by his mother in the 1950s when she was an adolescent girl in Israel, and discovered by the artist after his mother's death. Aharoni explains that "the work explores universal notions of desire, ritual and courtship, as well as the experience of retroactive memory."[397] Amongst the richly-layered,

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[395] Based on conversations with Gogi Saroj Pal at her home in New Delhi in October 2012.

[396] Based on conversation with Gogi Saroj Pal at her home in New Delhi in October 2012.

[397] According to text written by the author as part of the exhibition and reproduced on his website: http://www.ghiora-aharoni.com/art/missives-0/#slide1

multi-media pieces that dominated the exhibition, Aharoni created several works using existing *phulkaris* and *baghs* as a material and a source of inspiration. These *phulkari* collages, as he describes them, incorporate his mother's letters (or fragments of their texts) and images produced by the artist that respond to the letters, all embroidered onto vintage *phulkaris* (Figure 6.17).

Aharoni first came across a *phulkari* about ten years ago in a market in Delhi, in a shop that sold a number of antique textiles. While he didn't know what it was, he had a visceral reaction to the *phulkari* and found that "everything about it was different... its craftsmanship and sensibility."[398] Aharoni was even more attracted to the textile when he learned more about its history and use, and in particular *phulkaris'* connection to dowries. He explains that "some of the young girls who made *phulkaris* were about the same age as my mother when she was writing those letters... I decided to add another layer to [the *phulkari*]... in my work. I love the idea of layered meanings."[399] The artist continued to collect *phulkaris* on subsequent trips to India, which eventually served as the basis for this body of work.

Aharoni worked with around 60 professional male embroiderers in Mumbai to create the pieces, which for him was a fascinating process that took over 8 months to complete. For Aharoni, it was important to be true to his mother's letters and even to accurately depict her handwriting in the textual fragments that were layered in embroidery on the *phulkaris*. Accordingly, he created large drawings of the letters' texts and images, which were placed on top of each of the *phulkaris* to be used as a template or stencil on which the professional embroiderers stitched, using both ari tools and straight needles. This process itself adds to the meaning of layers in the pieces. As Aharoni describes it: the *phulkaris* were originally embroidered by young women in anticipation of their marriage (layer one), then added to that the intervention of the artist, a "Jewish boy from New York," using imagery and text pulled from his mother's letters (layer two) to work with several professional, male embroiderers (all Muslim, all in their 50s - layer three), to create visually complex pieces.[400] Notably, Aharoni selected densely embroidered *baghs* with relatively simple color palettes as the *phulkaris* to manipulate. In this way the artist did not need to contend with strong contrasting colors or a diverse set of *phulkari* motifs that might otherwise compete with the layers of text and image that he added. From a distance some of the *baghs* appear as if "neutral" canvases to showcase the artist's work; it is only when the viewer gets close to these pieces that she sees the intricacy of darning stitches, the many layers of material and process and meaning attached to each.

One example of Aharoni's work depicts piles of dishes and plates, rendered in a linear style embroidered onto a *thirma phulkari* of magenta silk on a cream-colored *khaddar* base (Figure 6.18). Aharoni explains that his mother was very progressive and modern, for a young girl growing up in the 1950s. In one of her letters she talks about being afraid of domesticity - of

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[398] Based on Skype conversation with Ghiora Aharoni, March 2015.

[399] Based on Skype conversation with Ghiora Aharoni, March 2015.

[400] Based on Skype conversation with Ghiora Aharoni, March 2015.

getting married too young and being burdened by children. The piles of plates in Aharoni's drawing on the *thirma phulkari* reflect an excess of domesticity, a visual manifestation of getting stuck in the kitchen washing an endless pile of dishes, which are constantly multiplying.[401]

Aharoni's intervention on the *phulkaris* has received mixed responses from audiences in India - some of whom applaud his reuse of *phulkaris* and others who have strong opposition to it.[402] Aharoni is aware of the significance of drawing on top of a *phulkari*, and he didn't take the move lightly. As he says, "I didn't mean to offend anyone, but that is what we do as artists, we create conversations."[403] Aharoni also believes that by adding to the *phulkaris*, with his layers of text and image, he is also preserving them.

Phulkaris: Loss and Preservation

The idea of preservation and loss is at the heart of many histories of collecting and exhibiting *phulkaris*. But what exactly is being lost in these contexts? What is in need of preservation? Both the perceived and actual loss of textiles during the violent partitioning of Punjab in 1947 has inspired much of the interest in acquiring and displaying *phulkaris* over the last several decades. Acquisition in this context is about safe-keeping and preserving for posterity, while display is about memory and proof of a person/practice/place that once was but is no more. Even Steel's collection in the late 19th century was initiated in large part as a way to amass examples of "good" *phulkaris* - amidst her own anxiety about the loss of older styles in the face of foreign influence - from which women could pull to create new pieces that looked like old ones. Steel arrived in India ten years following the Mutiny of 1857 - when rule of the country shifted from the British East India Company to the British Crown (marking the beginning of official imperialism) - and almost twenty years after the end of the second Anglo-Sikh War, the defining battle that allowed the British to gain control over Punjab from local rulers.[404] Steel was living in Punjab during a period of increasing British control over a territory that was considered valuable and strategically important for the Empire. Colonial-era craft documentation, in which Steel participates in her essays on *phulkaris*, allowed the British to order, sort, define, and attempt to "know" the material and human resources of a region - in this case a region that was relatively new for the British, and therefore significant to understand.

The emphasis on *phulkaris* as part of Sikh art that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s is not surprising given the political climate in India and the growing Sikh separatist / Khalistan

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[401] Based on Skype conversation with Ghiora Aharoni, March 2015.

[402] Aharoni describes some of these mixed responses. In my conversations with in Delhi who had seen the work, some of them had a strong negative reaction to Aharoni's layers of embroidery on top of the *phulkari*, saying that he had ruined something that was otherwise very precious and rare. See also Zeenat Nagree, "The Memory Keeper," in *ArtIndia* Vol. XVIII No. 2 (2014): 26.

[403] Based on Skype conversation with Ghiora Aharoni, March 2015.

[404] Much of the territory was consolidated under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When he died in1839, his empire began to dismantle as smaller local chiefs vied for control of the region.

movement. Following the creation of a Punjabi-speaking and Sikh majority state of Punjab in the mid-1960s, several leaders of the Akali Dal political party (the party responsible in large part for the Punjabi Suba Movement that created the state of Punjab) demanded increasing autonomy from the central government. In the 1970s the idea of a separate Sikh state of Khalistan grew in popularity, funded in large part through donations from the Punjabi diaspora. In 1980 - the same year that S.S. Hitkari published his text on *phulkaris*, emphasizing their connection to Sikh makers and wearers - Jagjit Singh Chauhan met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi just before declaring the National Council of Khalistan. Currency and stamps were issued in Anandpur Sahib and Amritsar. Some of the pro-Khalistan leaders became militant in their opposition to the central government, leading to the notorious storming of the Golden Temple at Amritsar (Operation Blue Star) in June 1984, the subsequent assassination of Indira Gandhi in October of that same year by her two Sikh bodyguards, and the violent anti-Sikh riots that followed and were particularly vehement in Delhi. While the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa is the official explanation for many of the Sikh art exhibitions that began in 1997 and featured *phulkaris*, it is clear that there was a larger, growing interest in declaring Sikh identity earlier on in the twentieth century, and one that no doubt helped fuel the move to redefine *phulkaris* as part of Sikh material culture. The loss of human life during the riots, and the desire on the part of members of the Sikh community to emphasize their unique identity and history within South Asia has motivated the collection and exhibition of *phulkaris* in this vein. Significantly, non-profit, non-political organizations such as the Sikh Foundation (established in 1967) emphasize the importance of educating younger generations in the Punjabi diaspora about Sikh heritage - of which art and *phulkaris* are included - and have been key funders in the series of exhibitions and collections of Sikh art (and *phulkaris*) of the last few decades.

More recent discussions about loss surrounding *phulkaris* blame increased industrialization and prosperity in the region of Punjab, and changes in taste and fashion for more "modern" styles. Rumpa Pal, rather dramatically, calls for action to save *phulkari* "from being scorched by the drought of modern vulgarity, which is suffocating art and life."[405] Askari and Crill see the shifting patterns of *phulkari* production and patronage to be the result of radical changes in the dowry system itself in which factory-made clothing and household goods became increasingly desirable over hand-embroidered *phulkaris* which were seen as "coarse and unfashionable."[406] Certainly a shift has occurred - even if on a small scale - with regards to the fashionability of *phulkaris* - their popularity increasing alongside emphasis on local, handmade, and indigenous products. Even over the course of the three years that I have been researching *phulkaris* I have found an increasing number of *phulkari* production operations at work in Punjab and increased visibility for *phulkari* products in the market (again, not all exclusively handmade in the "traditional" way, but incorporating something characteristically "*phulkari*," typically a familiar motif). Perhaps the result of an ebb and flow of loss and regain for traditional crafts.

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[405] Pal, Foreword

[406] Askari and Crill, 98-101

The manner in which *phulkaris* appear in many private and public collections, and in almost every exhibition of the past 100 years, echoes this anxiety about the loss of *phulkaris* and the need to preserve them: they are flattened behind plexiglas and hung on walls or mounts that allow the viewer to study them - like precious specimens in a petri dish - to see each stitch, each thread, each motif, each blemish, each moment of experimental embroidery. They are almost never seen as the artists intended - wrapping the body, covering an object, folded, pulled, manipulated, and moving through space (Figure 6.19). Instead, the viewer sees these cloths as enormous compositions where each corner and edge is visible, and every shift in thread or fade in *khaddar* is up for scrutiny.

The contemporary display practices of most museums, which in turn have influenced smaller collections and venues for exhibiting objects, make a contemporary study of *phulkaris* an unusual experience. We see and study *phulkaris* as whole compositions, laid flat, with each edge and corner exposed. In the shift from original production and use (wrapped on bodies, e.g.) to newer use and display contexts (e.g. museums), what changes, most significantly, is our way of seeing.[407] For how are we to truly see and understand the application of narrativity or abstraction on a textile that was made over months or years, sometimes by multiple hands, and in the process of its making physically manipulated and folded to conceal or reveal different parts of the cloth? The presence of a *chaupar* board or a row of peacocks may not have any relationship to surrounding motifs, but could simply have been added, at the artist's whim, because there was space. A figurative corner motif on an otherwise highly geometric and abstract *phulkari* may reveal an artist's interest in experimenting with form or perhaps simply boredom, an embroidered doodle at the edge of an otherwise complete composition. While these new display contexts may be just as legitimate as the "original" use contexts - as Flood suggests - and indeed may be one moment in the object's larger biography - as Appadurai and Kopytoff would have use believe - it seems in many ways that the objects in these displays are something altogether different. The context of the archive - the museums and collections where *phulkaris* now reside - are themselves a new use context where *phulkaris* operate as symbols or metonyms of places outside the archives' walls, larger communities of people, and longer histories that are not possible to fully recover.

Studying *Phulkaris*: A Holistic Approach?

Returning to the question posed in Chapter One about the name "phulkari" and whether or not it makes sense to assign this term to the diverse group of embroideries that originated in the vast region of Punjab, it seems the answer lies within the nature of archives and the current practice of art historical research. I was only able to confirm the presence or mention of *phulkaris* when the term "phulkari" was used, in a text or acquisition file for example. The embroidered garments mentioned by Waris Shah or the reference to embroidery attributed to Guru Nanak use general language of embroidery, not specific mention of "phulkaris" that Steel cites and subsequently

[407] Svetlana Alpers addresses a similar phenomenon in her essay "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 25-32.

becomes the identifying term in later scholarship. Perhaps *phulkaris* were on display in the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, however without the term "phulkari" being attached to an object, their presence is purely conjecture, and scholars are left to sift through references to embroidery from various towns or areas within Punjab (e.g. the embroideries from Lahore and Ludhiana in the exhibition's catalogue) that may or may not have been "phulkaris." The types of objects collected in museums, for example, and the kinds of records kept by these institutions, which during earlier periods of collecting are very sparse indeed, are the only real archives that exist for a study like this one. Certainly there are key players in the circulating of *phulkaris*. When sifting through acquisition files in several museums in South Asia and beyond, Hitkari and Bharany are both listed as donors or dealers responsible for bringing many *phulkaris* to an institution. Otherwise, close scrutiny of the textiles themselves and conversations with people who remember something of *phulkaris*' history or circulation, are the best methodologies we can employ.

Perhaps the most productive way to understand *phulkaris* is by taking a nod from one of the most interesting and compelling scholars on the subject, Dr. Harjeet Singh Gill, of the University of Punjab, Patiala. Aside from his fascinating 1977 book *A Phulkari from Bhatinda*, which offers the viewer a series of visual and textual snapshots of figurative *sainchi phulkaris*, Dr. Gill's 1975 book *Folk Art of the Punjab: An Essay on the Courage, Voluptuous Celebration, and Demythologising Incision* is significant for the way it suggests we study material culture. For Gill, studying *phulkaris* alongside other kinds of embroideries or textiles from elsewhere in South Asia seems less important than considering the larger cultural tradition of the region of Punjab - its language and stories, its architecture and painted forms, its rituals and objects. He talks about themes that connect visual and material culture - symbols of nature, the meaning of death, conceptions of male and female - and frames these discussions alongside translations from important regional texts: the *Japuji* and *Sidh Gosht* of Guru Nank, Waris Shah's *Hir* (Heer-Ranjha), and the *Bachitr Natak* of Guru Gobind Singh. Finally he presents photographs taken by himself and his collaborators H.S. Sidhu and Surgeet Singh that "present a variety of artistic creations" intended to represent a kind of "collective consciousness" from the region,[408] and include images without description or caption of wall decorations (many of which recall *sanjhi* play), bridal *dhurries*, architectural facades, and a single depiction of a *phulkari*, being worn by a young woman as a shawl (Figure 6.20). Gill's text leads the viewer to make associations between the various forms depicted in the photographs - peacocks, wall niches, items of a woman's dowry - and a larger *zeitgeist* of folk art and life in Punjab. Kanwarjit Singh Kang authors a similar volume a decade later that attempts to draw visual, historical, and philosophical connections amongst various cultural products of Punjab.[409]

What these studies suggest is that a holistic approach is needed to understand a textile art like *phulkaris*: looking across mediums of visual production, thinking critically about texts and oral narratives, and developing an intimate knowledge and mastery of a particular community takes

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[408] Gill, *Folk Art of the Punjab* (1975), 45.

[409] Kanwarjit Singh Kang, *Punjab Art and Culture*. Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons, 1988.

perhaps a lifetime to fully attain. This current study attempts some of this holistic approach, and fuses it with methodologies of art history that have been prevalent since the birth of the discipline, namely the reading of existing texts, the close scrutiny of visual objects, and an examination of the manner in which objects circulate across space and time. The discrepancy between the holistic approach that Gill's work suggests and art historical methodologies that are available to the contemporary scholar lies in the limited availability and rapidly changing contexts of folk art and folk life. Women in Punjab do not wear *phulkaris* everyday, as they may have once done, and even fewer of them embroider on a regular basis. Young girls making clay and flower decorations on the walls of their village homes (as in *sanjhi* play) is also a rarefied sight.[410] Even the homes themselves are changing - fewer are made of mud, more of concrete. A study of folk art, then, hinges on objects available in museums and existing archives, on things deemed as "art" and collected, displayed, and written about as such. There are fewer and fewer women who remember *phulkaris* being made or used in the way that Steel discusses them. As a result, understanding these contemporary contexts - of collecting and displaying - becomes as much the history of an art form like *phulkari* as earlier studies that focus on village women and the romance of the handmade. For in the end, in a world that is constantly changing, and only recently has begun to appreciate and preserve folk art and culture, a holistic approach, is harder and harder to obtain. We must, again, return to the objects, to the extant textiles that exist in various collections, to attempt to decipher and interpret the forms that appear on these cloths, regardless of what we call them.

[410] Rajbala Phaugat, "Preserving Folk Art, the Sanjhi Way," *The Tribute India*, Features, September 22, 2001.

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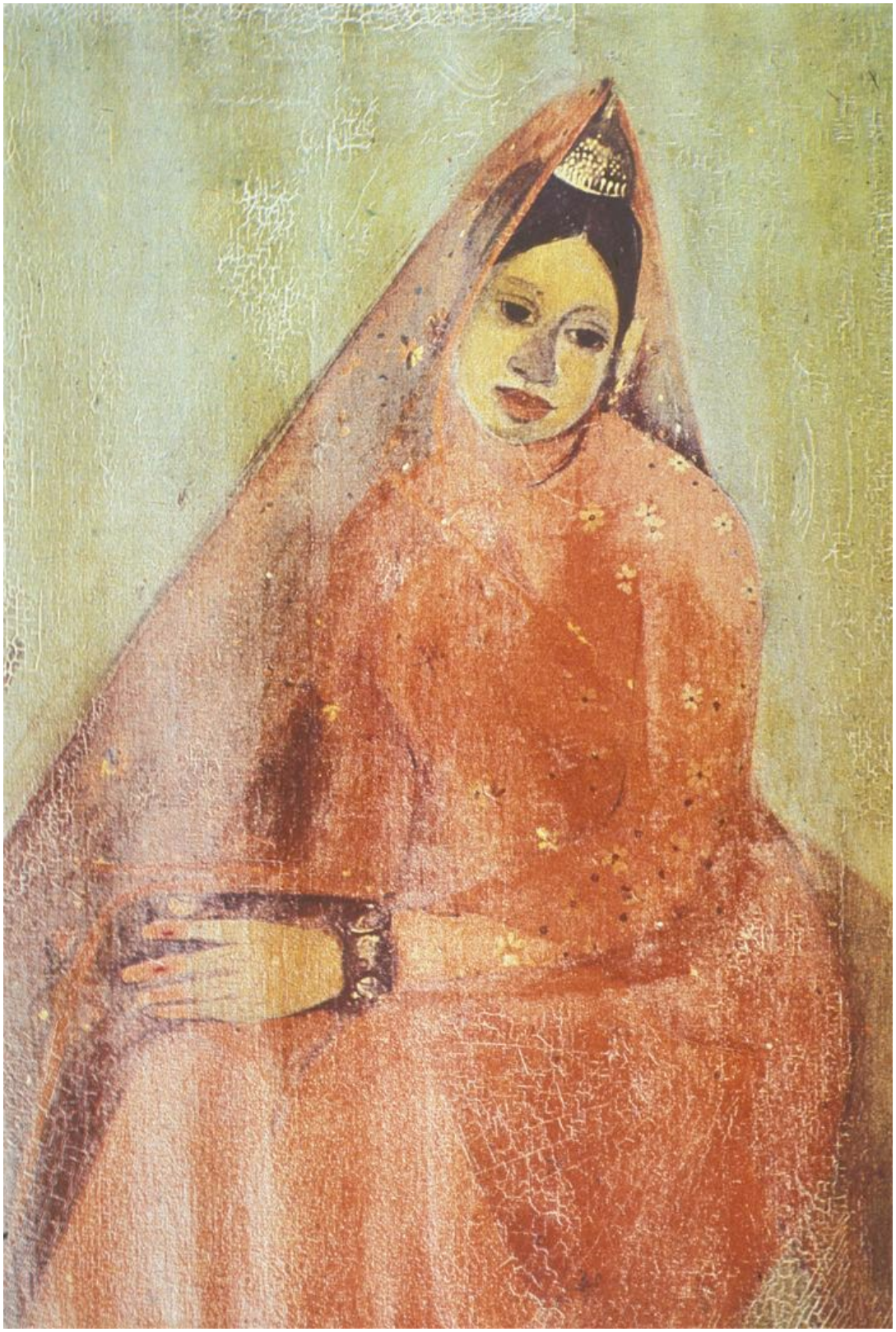

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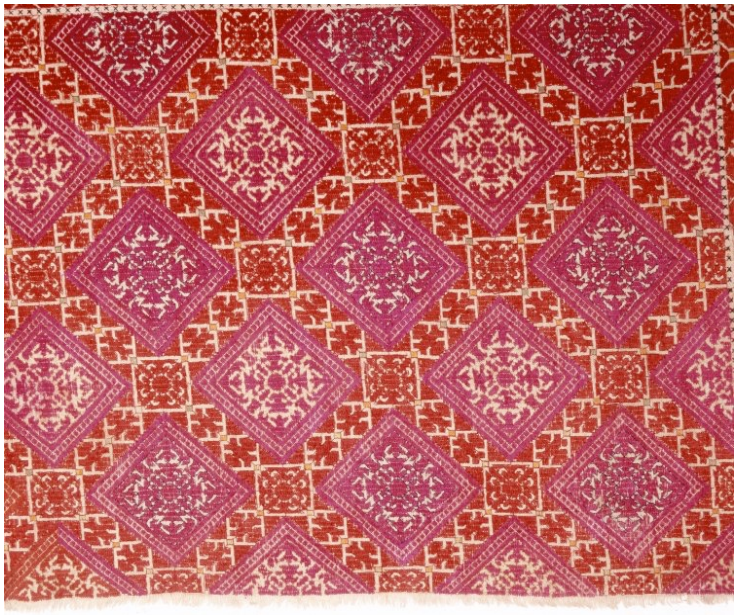

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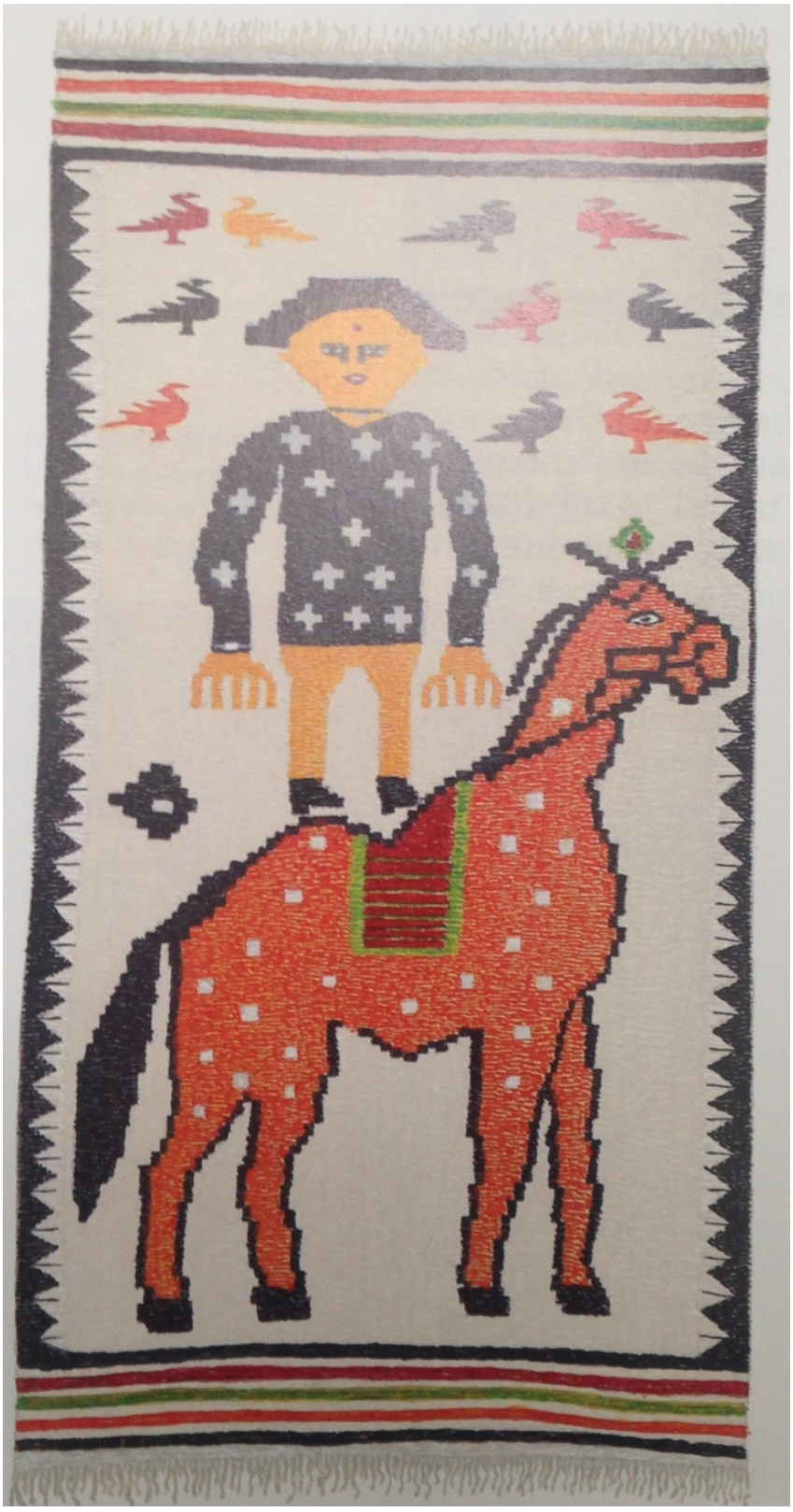

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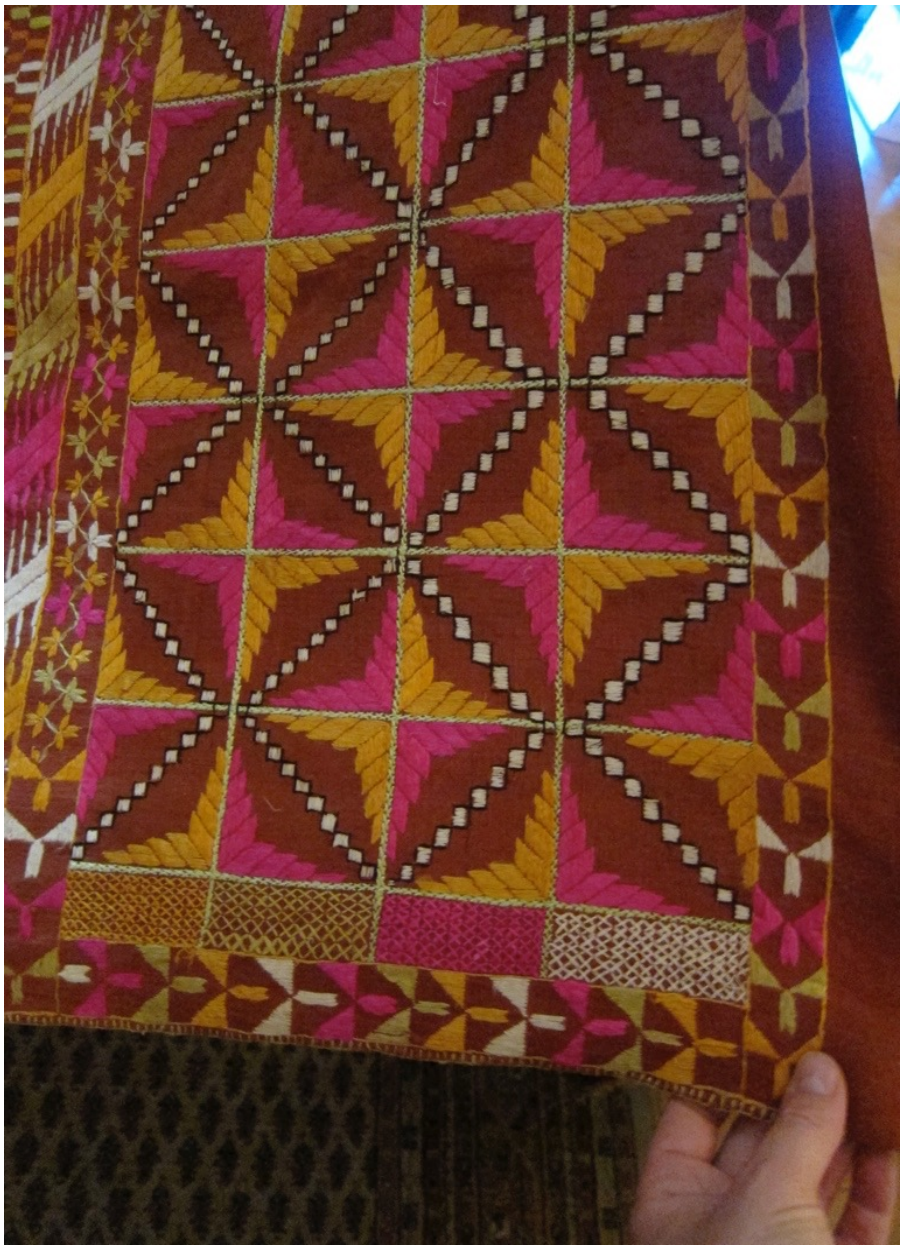

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a

b

c

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Figure 2.32a+b. *Puja* of Sanjhi *kota* on final days of Sanjhi Devi worship, Barsana village, outside Udaipur, Rajasthan, video still from *Sanjhi*, New Delhi: IGNCA.

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Figure 2.35 (with detail). Depiction of an old man and an old woman from the ninth day of Sanjhi Devi worship, Barsana village, outside Udaipur, Rajasthan, video still from *Sanjhi*, New Delhi: IGNCA.

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Figure 2.39. *Darshan Dwar Phulkari*, twentieth century, Punjab, India (Eastern Punjab). Philadelphia Museum of Art, 234-2012-5.

Figure 2.40. *Darshan Dwar Phulkari*, twentieth century, Punjab, India (Eastern Punjab). Handspun cotton plain weave (*khaddar*) with silk and cotton embroidery in darning, pattern darning, herringbone, cross, buttonhole, stem, Cretan, and double-line/zigzag stitches. 7 feet 9 1/2 inches × 4 feet 4 inches (237.5 × 132.1 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, 234-2012-1.

Figure 2.41. *Darshan Dwar Phulkari*, twentieth century, Punjab, India (Eastern Punjab). Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto. T00.45.52.

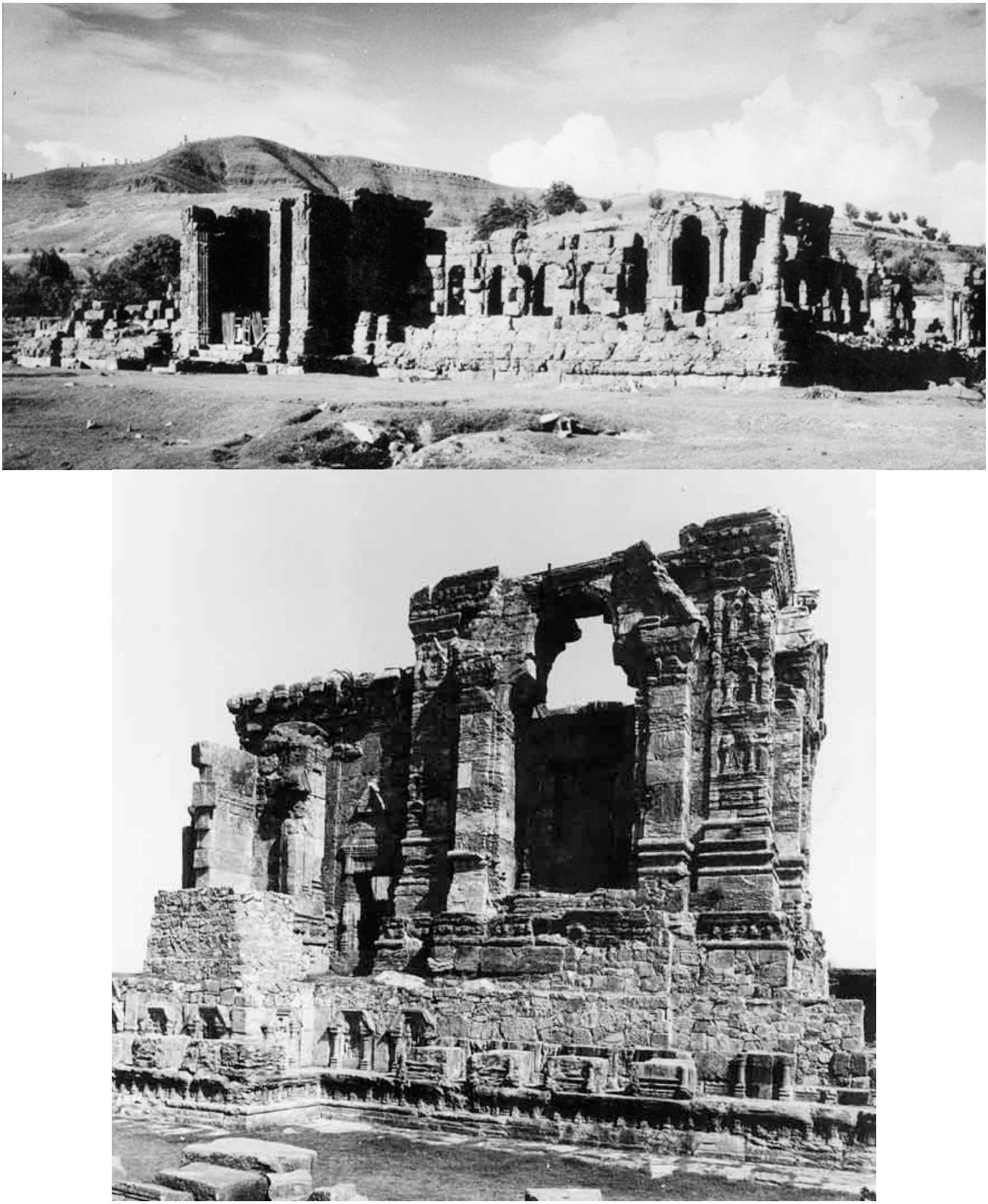

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Figure 2.44. Detail of gateway from *Darshan Dwar Phulkari*. Cotton and silk thread on cotton base cloth. Kapany Collection.

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Figure 2.48. Detail of *Leheria Bagh*. Silk thread on cotton base cloth. Bharany Collection.

Figure 2.49. *Bagh*. Silk thread on cotton base cloth. Bharany Collection.

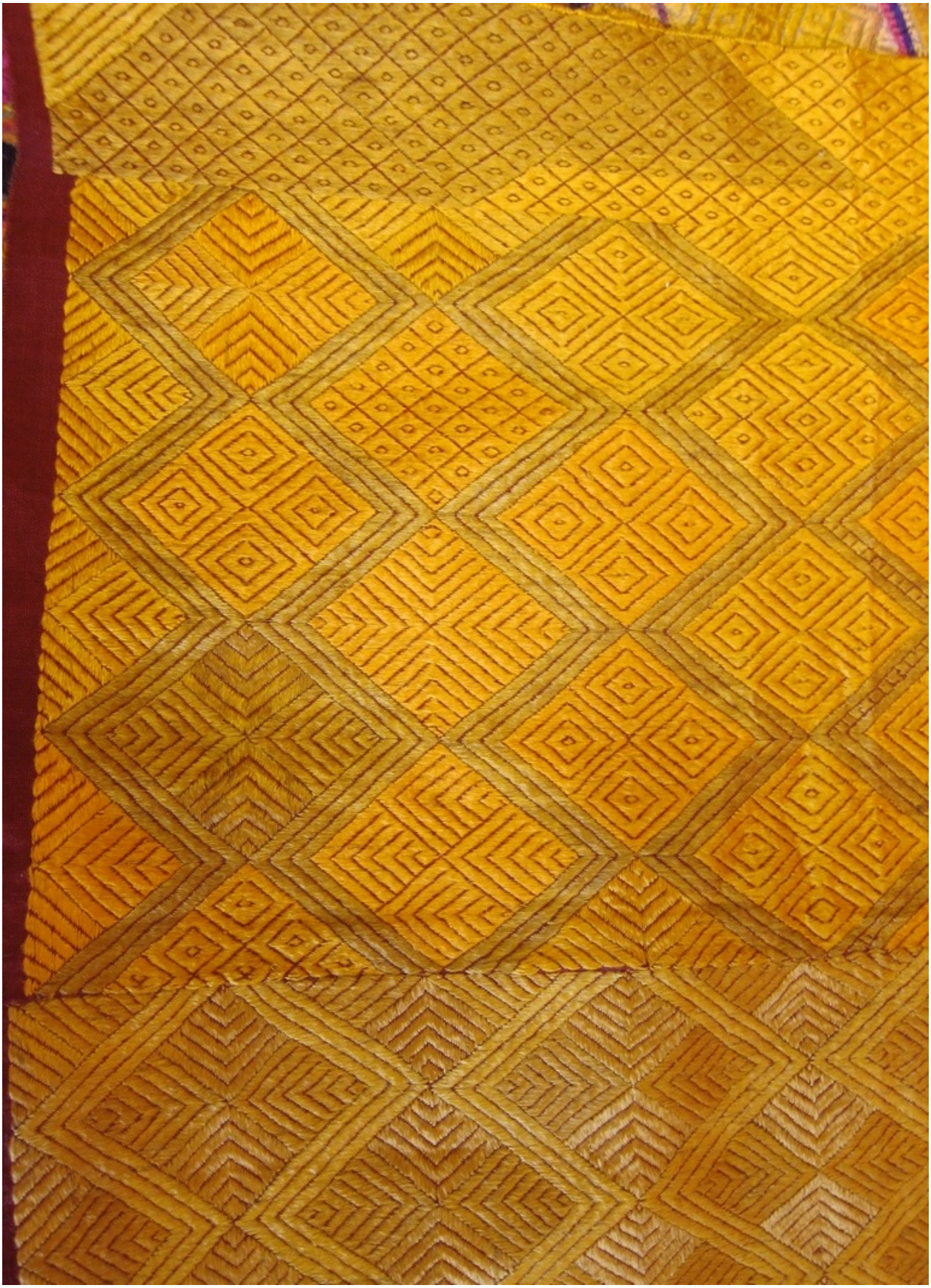

Figure 2.50. Detail of *Bagh*. Silk thread on cotton base cloth. Bharany Collection.

Figure 2.51. Detail of *Phulkari*. Silk thread on cotton base cloth. Kapany Collection.

Figure 3.1. Unknown, *Phulkari* from Rohtak described by Steel as "Modern, but unchanged" and "New pattern, but old methods." *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, 1888.

Figure 3.2. Unknown, *Baghs* from Hazara. *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, 1888.

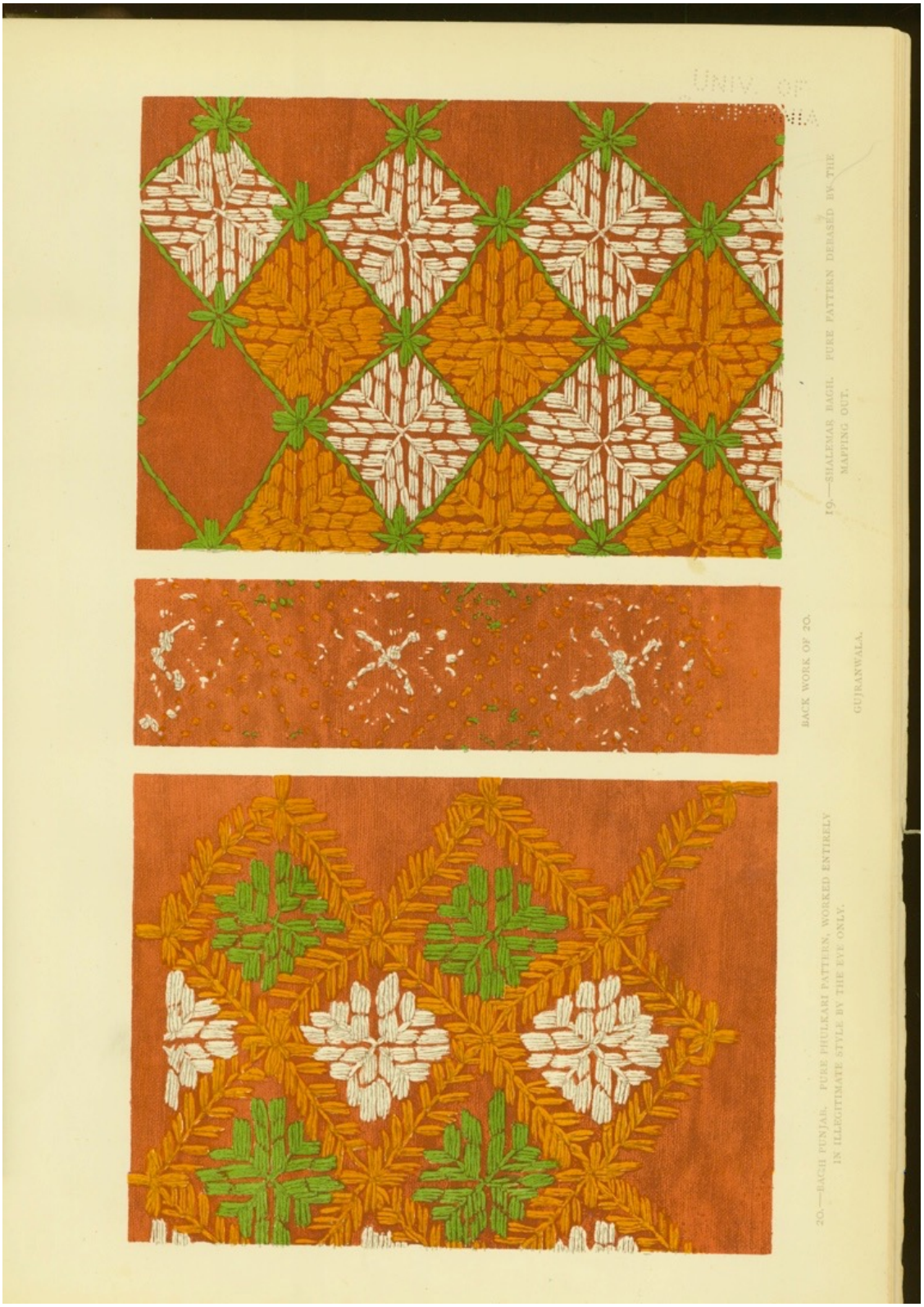

Figure 3.3. Unknown, *Baghs* from Gujranwala described by Steel as "Pure phulkari pattern, worked in illegitimate style by the eye only" and "Pure pattern, debased by the mapping out" (a reference to the green-colored thread used to trace the diamond pattern and operate as a template for the fill in gold- and white-colored thread). *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, 1888.

Figure 3.4. Unknown, *Manchester Bagh* and *Jubliee Bagh* described by Steel as "Specimens of the cause of phulkari deterioration. Result of native bad taste" and "Result of English bad taste." *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 2, 1888.

Figure 3.5. *Phulkari* overview and detail, Rohtak, ca. 1880. Cotton embroidered with silk threads and mirror. Bought for the Museum in India in 1882 by Caspar Purdon Clarke. Victoria and Albert Museum. IS. 1842-1883.

Figure 3.6. *Phulkari* detail, Amritsar, ca. 1881-1882. Cotton embroidered with silk threads. Bought for the Museum in India between 1881 -1882 by Caspar Purdon Clarke. Victoria and Albert Museum. IS. 476-1883.

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Length, 23 Yds. 13½ Ins.; Width, 10 Ins.; Weight, 5 oz. 13 dr. Price, £1 16s.

Figure 3.10. Unknown, Turbans. *Illustrations of the Textile Manufactures of India*, 1881.

Figure 3.11. Unknown, Man's Garment (*patka*), Chundaree. *Illustrations of the Textile Manufactures of India*, 1881.

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Figure 3.13. Unknown, Man's Garment (*patka*), Benares. *Illustrations of the Textile Manufactures of India*, 1881.

Figure 3.14. Unknown, *Jolaha* from *Album of Drawings of Punjab (Rulers, Monuments, Occupations)*, second half of 19th century. Gouache on paper. 21.6 x 28 cm. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

Figure 3.15. Unknown, *Dhania* from *Album of Drawings of Punjab (Rulers, Monuments, Occupations),* second half of 19th century. Gouache on paper. 21.6 x 28 cm. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

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Figure 3.18. Shepherd and Robertson, *Embroiderer*, Delhi, c.1863. Albumen print. 20.1 x 15.4 cm. British Library.

Figure 4.1. *Phulkari lengha* overview and detail, owned by Dr. Kusum Chopra, New Delhi.

Figure 4.2. Embroidered textile display, Textiles and Costumes Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015.

Figure 4.3. Detail of *bagh phulkari* (acc # 96.429) as part of embroidered textile display, Textiles and Costumes Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015.

Figure 4.4. P*hulkari* display, Anteroom, Textiles and Costumes Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015.

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Figure 4.6. Detail of p*hulkari* display, Anteroom, Textiles and Costumes Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015.

Figure 4.7. Entry to *Tradition, Art, and Continuity* display, Ethnic Arts Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015.

Figure 4.8. Costumes and Textiles case, *Tradition, Art, and Continuity* display, Ethnic Arts Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015

Figure 4.9. Detail of *chope* (acc # 96.461) in Costumes and Textiles case, *Tradition, Art, and Continuity* display, Ethnic Arts Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015

Figure 4.10. Detail of *thirma bagh* (acc # 96.431) in Costumes and Textiles case, *Tradition, Art, and Continuity* display, Ethnic Arts Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015

Figure 4.11. Detail of *sainchi phulkari* (acc # 96.249) in Costumes and Textiles case, *Tradition, Art, and Continuity* display, Ethnic Arts Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi, 2015

Figure 4.12. Overview and detail gallery images of exhibition *Phulkari*: From the Realm of Women's Creativity at the Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, 2013. Photo courtesy Dr. Anamika Pathak.

Figure 4.13. Details of *sainchi phulkar*i included as part of Unknown India exhibition, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 67-211-11. See Figure 2.45 for an overview of the same *phulkari*.

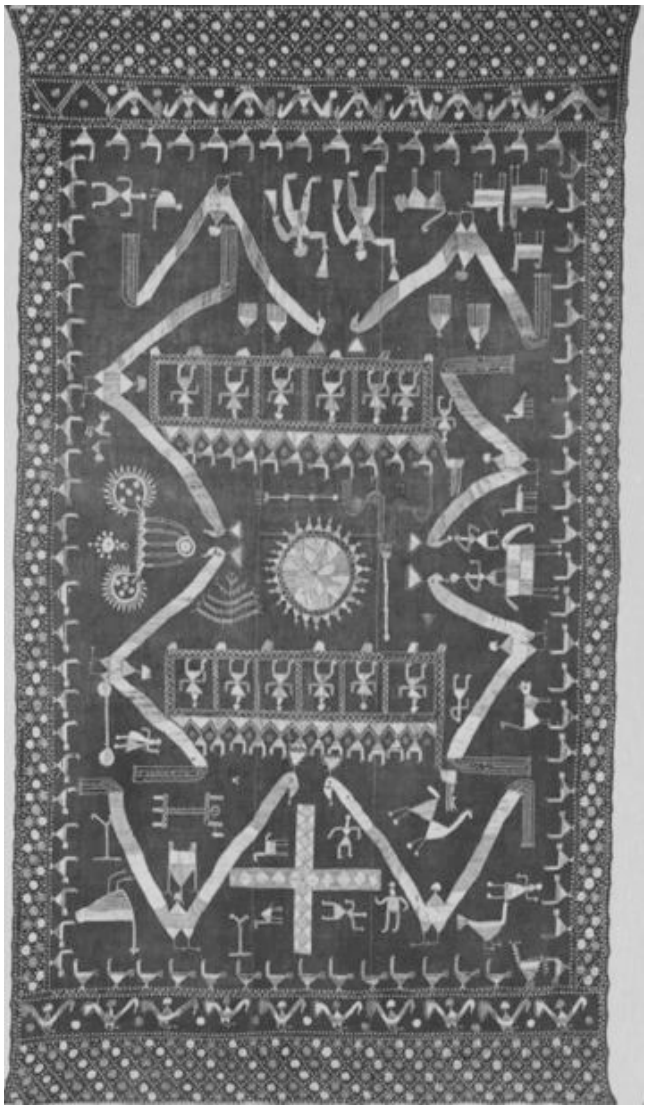

Figure 4.14. *Sainchi phulkari* included in the 1955 MoMA exhibition Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India, mislabeled as curtain (*purdah*) from Kangra or Chamba, 19th century. Embroidered cotton with silk floss and cotton thread. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. IM-73.1911.

Figure 4.15. Installation view of 1955 MoMA exhibition *Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India*, with display of *sainchi phulkari*. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 4.16. Timothy Street-Porter, *Eames House Interior, Los Angeles*, 1944. Photograph shows *phulkari* displayed over couch (left) in Charles and Ray Eames' home in Pacific Palisades, California. Eames Office LLC.

Figure 5.1. Khalsa Phulkari. S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

Figure 5.2. S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

Figure 5.3. Detail of Khalsa Phulkari. S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

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b

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d

e

f

Figure 5.4a-f. Detail of inscription on Khalsa Phulkari. S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

Figure 5.5. Detail of Khalsa Phulkari, horse inscription. S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

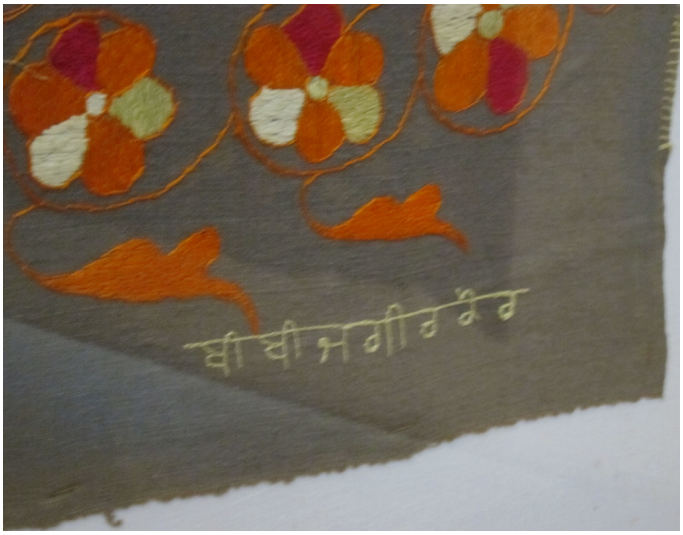

Figure 5.6. Detail of Khalsa Phulkari, artist signature. S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

Figure 5.7. Khalsa Phulkari and neighboring Sainchi Phulkari on display in S.S. Hitkari Museum of Phulkari, New Delhi.

Figure 5.8. Gallery views of *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco.

Figure 5.9. Gallery views of *Sikhs: The Legacy of the Punjab*, Smithsonian, Washington DC. Photos courtesy Sandeep Singh and the Sikh Foundation.

Figure 5.10. Gallery view of *I See No Stranger*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York. Photos courtesy Rubin Museum of Art.

Figure 5.11. Gallery view of *I See No Stranger*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York. Photos courtesy Rubin Museum of Art.

Figure 5.12. Gallery view of *I See No Stranger*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York. Photos courtesy Rubin Museum of Art.

Figure 5.13 Gallery view of *I See No Stranger*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York. Photos courtesy Rubin Museum of Art.

Figure 5.14. Gallery view of *I See No Stranger*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York. Photos courtesy Rubin Museum of Art.

Figure 5.15. Joseph Nash, Indian Court at the Great Exhibition of 1851, published by Dickinson Brothers, 1854, London. Color lithograph on paper. 44.4 x 59.8 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, 19536:11.

Figure 5.16. Shivshankar Narayan, Interior view of a pavilion showing the Punjab exhibit at the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883-84, India. Albumen silver print, 21.8 x 25.7 cm. Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal. PH1982:0432:011.

Figure 5.17. Arpana Caur, Nanak, 2010. Oil on canvas, 42 x 60 inches. Collection Nayantara Dhillon, Chandigarh.

Figure 5.18. Arpana Caur, After the Massacre, 1985. Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches. Photo courtesy Arpana Caur.

Figure 5.19. The Singh Twins, Nineteen Eighty-Four (The Storming of 'The Golden Temple'), 1998. Poster color, gouache and gold dust on mountboard, 75.5 x 101 cm. Photo courtesy Amrit and Rabindra K.D. Kaur Singh.

Figure 5.20. Khalsa Heritage Museum at Anandapur Sahib, 2012.

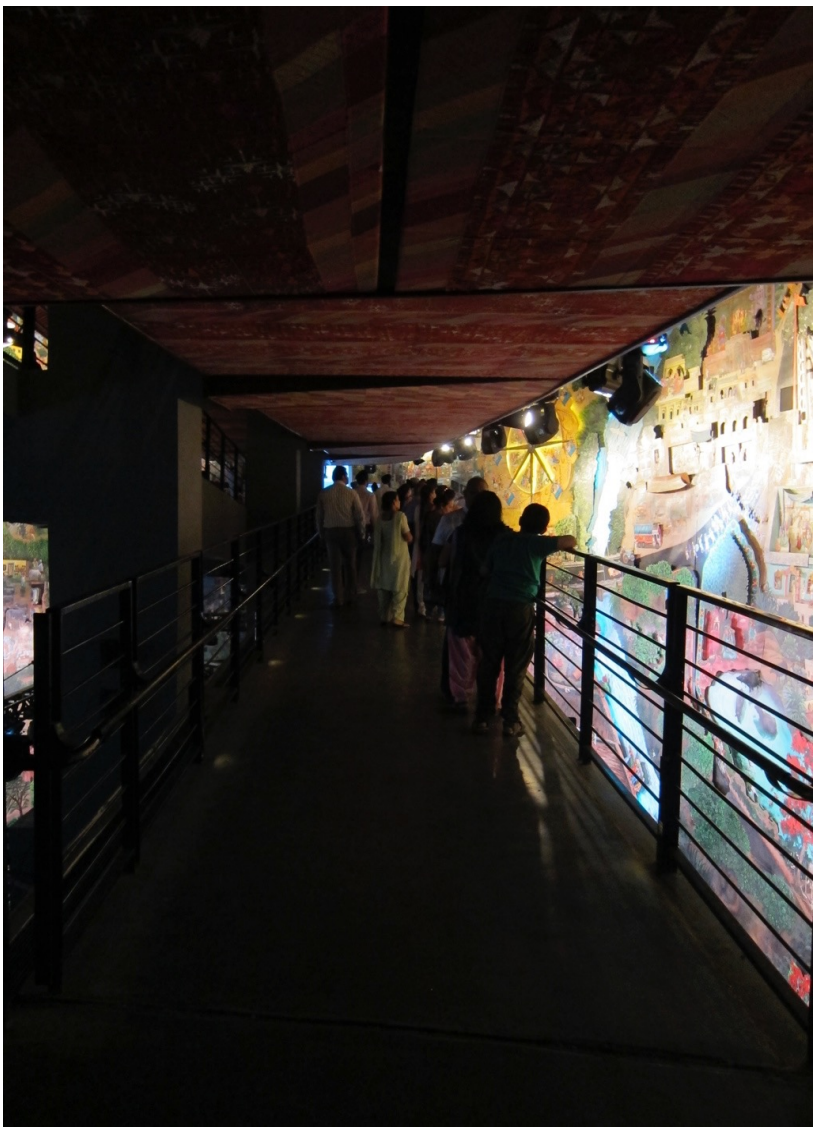

Figure 5.21. Entrance Gallery, Khalsa Heritage Museum at Anandapur Sahib, 2012.

Figure 5.22. Entrance Hall with *phulkari*, Khalsa Heritage Museum at Anandapur Sahib, 2012.

Figure 5.23. New products from 1469 Workshop, including a "Peter Pan" style necklace made from *phulkari* embroidery. http://1469workshop.com

Figure 5.24. *Phulkaris* featured prominently in 1469 Workshop's spaces and Facebook page. This image shows the main interior space of the first *Mela Phulkari* on display at IIC New Delhi in 2014. www.facebook.com/1469workshop

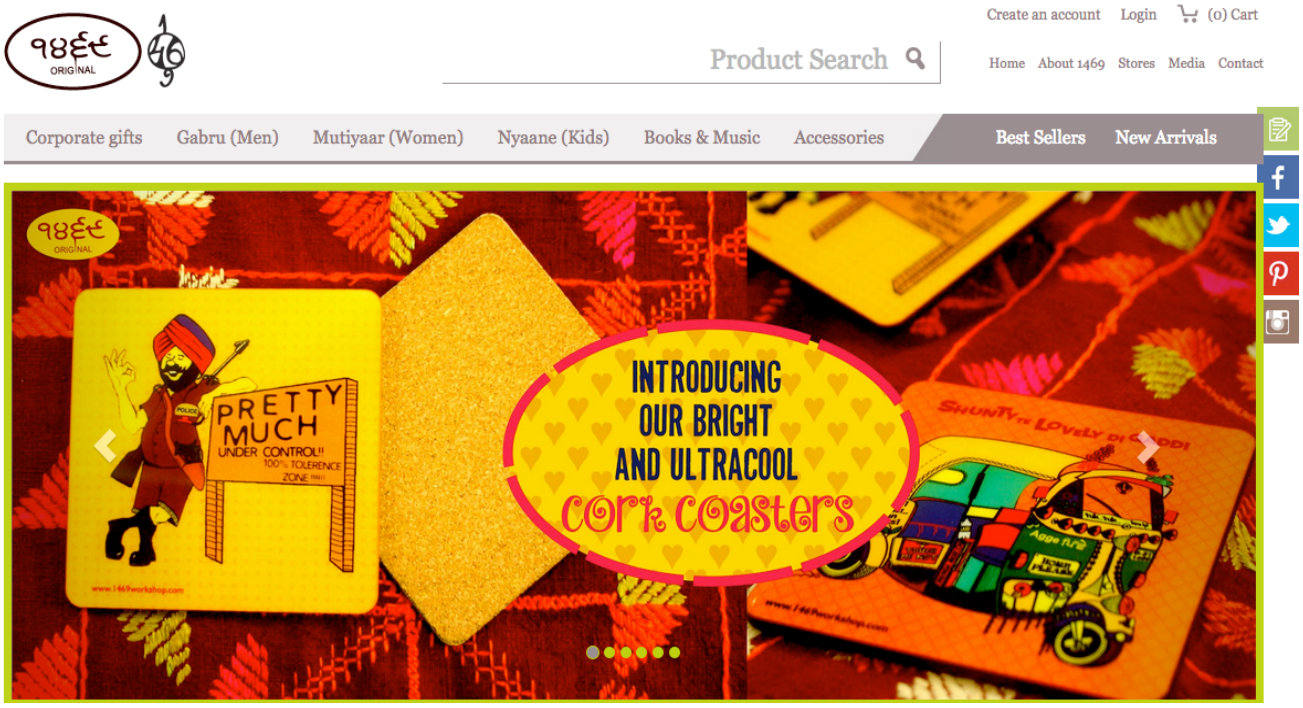

Figure 5.25. *Phulkaris* used in advertisement for coasters made by 1469 Workshop. http://1469workshop.com

Figure 5.26. Screen-printed crepe kurta incorporating old *phulkari* designs, made by 1469 Workshop. http://1469workshop.com

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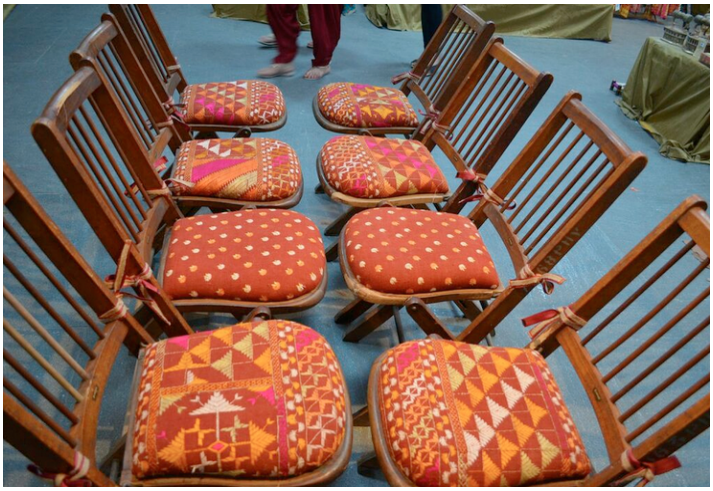

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Figure 5.27a-d. Various objects on display during the 1469 Workshop *phulkari mela*, April 1-8, 2015: a) older style *phulkaris* on view with descriptive labels, b) artist installation using *phulkaris*, c) chair cushion covers made from old *phulkaris*, and d) paper kites made from prints of old *phulkaris*. Photos courtesy of Bishakha Shome.

Figure 6.1. Silk threads (*pat*) currently available in the market and used by many women to embroider contemporary *phulkaris*. October 2012.

Figure 6.2. Example of *phulkari* embroidery made by women involved in the Nabha Foundation's *phulkari* project. March 2015.

Figure 6.3. Example of *parantha* motif in a newer *bagh phulkari* sold at a shop in Tripuri Town, Patiala, Punjab.

Figure 6.4. The artist Dayawanti showing a recently-made *sainchi phulkari* which she produced on commission, Mohali, Punjab. October 2012.

Figure 6.5. A collector in Chandigarh demonstrating different ways that her family used to drape *phulkaris* over a dowry chest, using an heirloom chest from the collector's natal village. October 2012.

Figure 6.6. Ramesh Kumari displaying a *phulkari dupatta* she made with *phul* and *mirchi* motifs. October 2012.

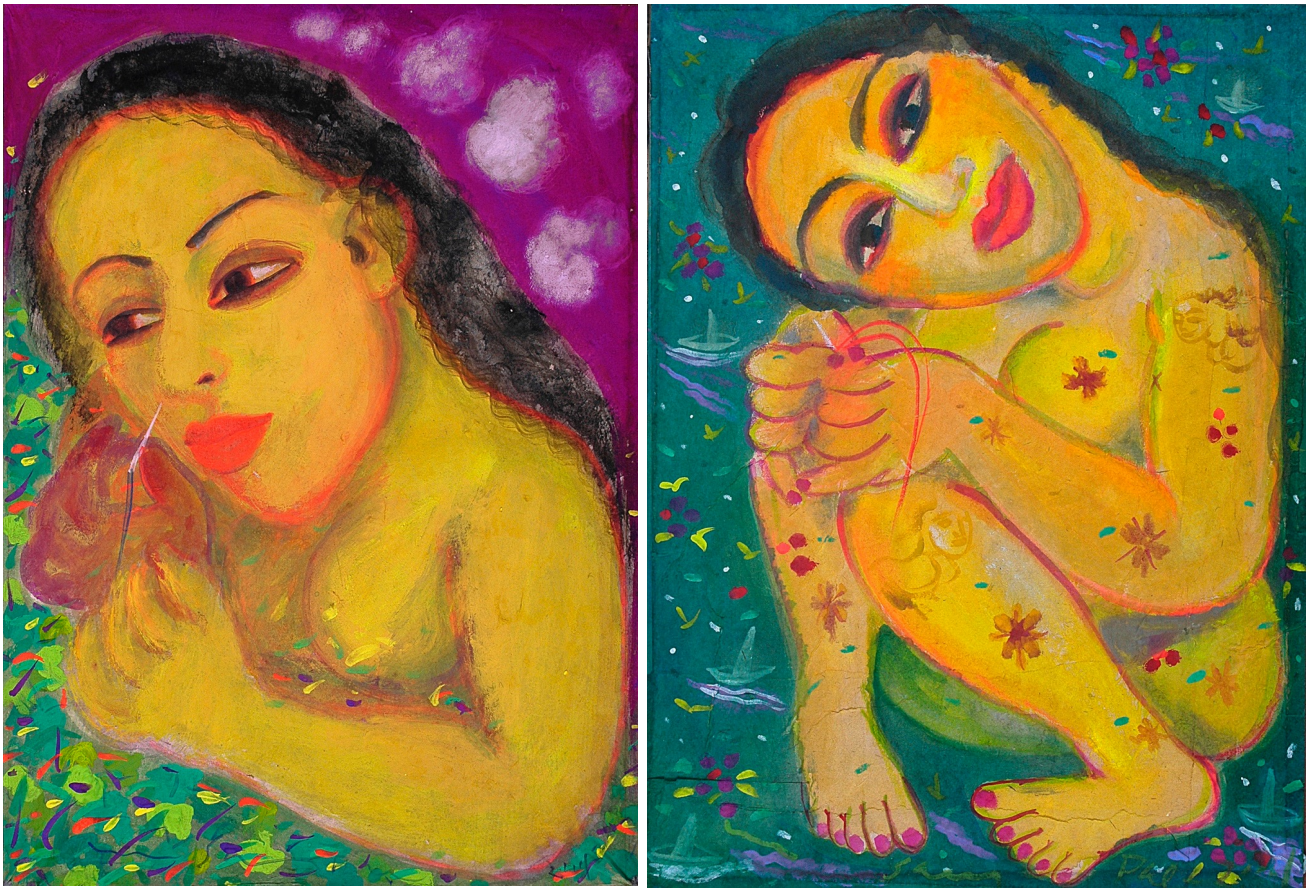
Figure 6.7. Laksmi displaying phulkaris and baghs that she produces and sells at her shop in Tripuri Town, Patiala, Punjab. October 2012.

Figure 6.8. Blocks used by Laksmi to create *phulkaris* on various base cloths without needing to count warp-weft threads. October 2012.

Figure 6.9. Kanta Dogra displaying several of the *phulkaris* that she produces and sells out of her home in Chandigarh. March 2015.

Figure 6.10. Example of *phulkari* done on *kota doria* base cloth. March 2015.

Figure 6.11. Still from Yash Chopra's film *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* in which lead actress Anushka Sharma wears a contemporary *phulkari dupatta*.



Figures 6.12 and 6.13. Gogi Saroj Pal, Untitled 1 and 2 from the *Phulkari* series. 2001.

Figure 6.14. Gogi Saroj Pal, Untitled 3 from the *Phulkari* series. 2001.

Figure 6.15. Gogi Saroj Pal, Untitled 4 and 5 from the *Phulkari* series. 2001.

Figure 6.16. Ghiora Aharoni installation in *Missives*, on display at Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai from September 8 to November 30, 2013

Figure 6.17. Ghiora Aharoni, *For You, I Declare* (overview and detail). Silk thread embroidery on vintage *phulkari*, steel grommets, 59 x 96 inches, 2013.

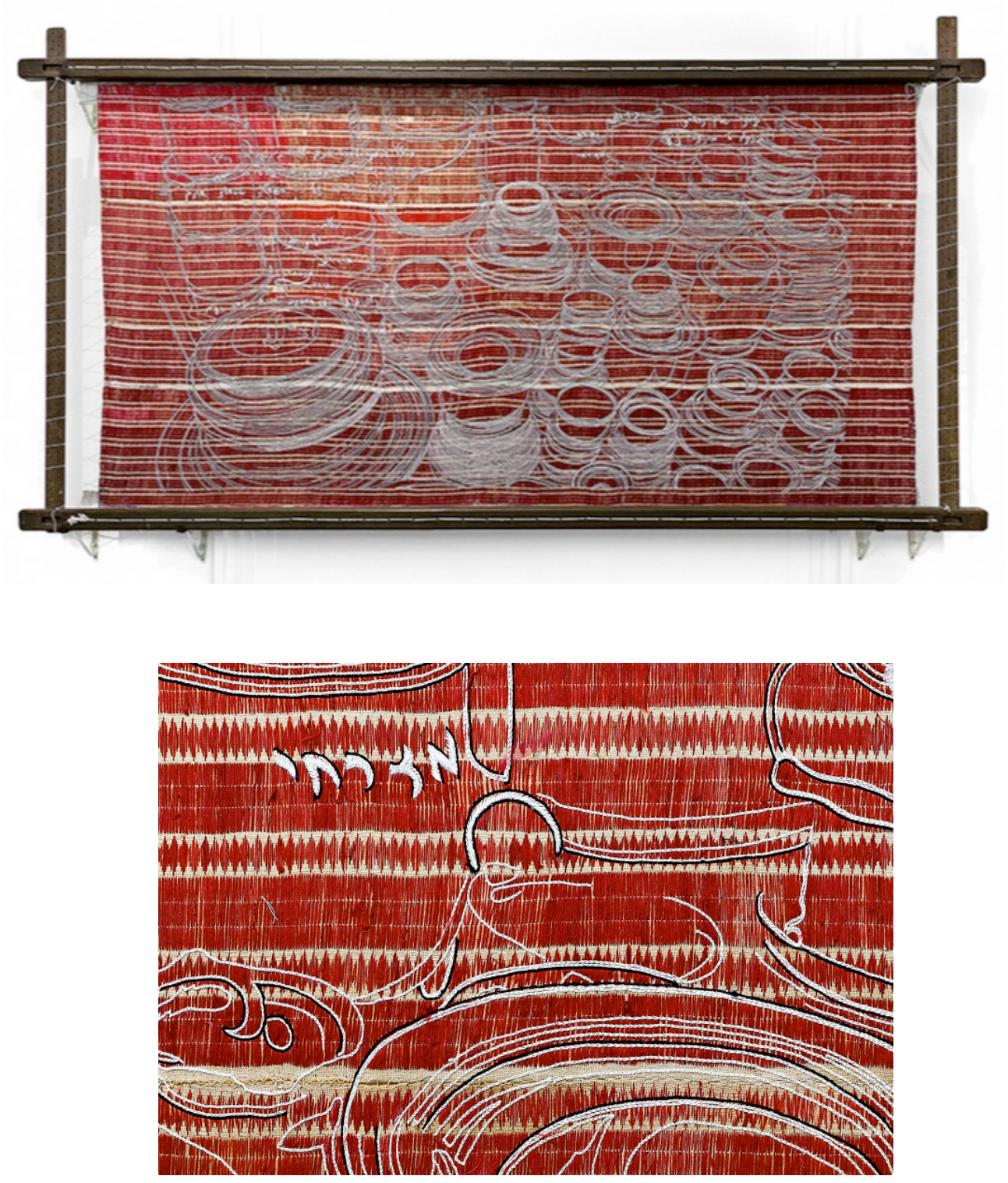


Figure 6.18. Ghiora Aharoni, *With You, I Make My Home* (overview and detail), silk thread embroidery on vintage *thirma phulkari*, 51 x 100 inches, 2013.

Figure 6.19. A collector wearing one of her *phulkaris* in a manner that she remembers seeing from her childhood - quite different from the display practices used in most collections and exhibitions today. September 2012.

Figure 6.20. Woman wearing a phulkari from H.S. Gill, *Folk Art of the Punjab* (1977).