

## GENESIS AND DIVERSIFICATION OF JAMDANI WEAVING: IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURAL POLICY, LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AND FASHION INDUSTRY

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### Abstract

This study traced the sources and changes of Jamdani weaving, a UNESCO recognized intangible cultural heritage from Bangladesh. It also examined how this centuries-old craft turned into an important element of fashions in contemporary society and its wider implications for cultural policy, local governance, and sustainable industrial development. Following in-depth interviews with weavers, officials and people from the fashion world, and by analyzing cultural policy documents, our research presents the dimensions of Jamdani's social, cultural and economic life. The results showed that Jamdani weaving still serves as more than just a symbol of a cultural force. As the findings make clear, a community's culture and its source of sustenance also. Its transplantation into fashion house design exemplifies both resilience and creativity. Yet there are challenges ahead, such as insufficient policy support, lack of local governance frameworks, and market instability. The symposium concluded that integrated cultural policies, better local governance and collaboration among the various stakeholders concerned can help preserve Jamdani as well as increase its market price. In the end, this research probes the relationship between tradition, government structure, and fashion retail management. It offers new insights for both political circles and industry leaders.

**Keywords:** *Jamdani weaving; intangible cultural heritage; cultural policy; local governance; fashion industry; sustainable management; cultural governance.*

### Introduction

The preservation and revitalization of traditional crafts remains at the center of debates on cultural governance and sustainable development in the 21st century. As one of the numerous customs that South Asia enjoys, Jamdani weaving holds its due. Originally in Bengal and now on the World Heritage List, Jamdani Weaving is an intangible cultural heritage of humanity that has been inscribed at the request of mutual assistance. Matching this very distinct artistic tradition, however, is also Jamdani, a living expression of community identity, craftsmanship and knowledge handed down through generations. Its floral designs requiring great skill and effort to produce, in connection with aristocratic sponsorship, long made Jamdani an emblem of a culture that was more than just utilitarian. It was meant to express deeper cultural and historical meanings too. About the only realm in which Jamdani Weaving has remained true to itself is the rural countryside. The gaudy clothing that once reflected aristocratic custom has gone overpeak wildly. Many formal and informal occasions are now occasions for wearing jamdani patchwork outfits. These or in dresses of the same technique for men, women and children throughout our nation make Bara very warm. How can Jamdani maintain its cultural authenticity while, at the same time, co-existing within the global market of fashionable clothes? And what could be the function or role of local self-governing bodies on this issue if one sells off an origin that was once home-grown tradition for quite some time now? Certainly the diversity of today's Jamdani weaving, formerly confined largely though not exclusively to ceremonial clothing, the same designs and techniques that are now being exploited in global clothing markets, shows much about both resilience and change: within traditional frames, the artisan appeals to customers' shifting tastes. Today, however, this very

diversification also poses an urgent question of cultural policy, local district management and a different twenty-first century. How can Jamdani keep control over its cultural authenticity while at the same time carving out this sort of space within an internationalized market for fashionable dress? What is the role here of local self-government and of national Cultural Policy when it comes to safeguarding the living conditions of artisans and ensuring this historical heritage retains its continuity?

The overlapping yet unique nature of traditional crafts, governance structures, and modern industries remains a field that has not attracted much attention. Studies of Jamdani weaving often highlight its rich aesthetics, historical significance and the contribution it makes to society. Meanwhile, few articles investigate in depth the governance and policy dimensions necessary for weaving to survive. This gap is particularly significant in Bangladesh: with inconsistent policies in place and no institution capable of delivering robust support and protection, weaving communities face structural challenges. Jamdani, as an established practice, is threatened by the rapid growth of mechanized production, the artisans who are at its very heart from exploitation reducing any chances left for local knowledge to be passed on down generations. However, without policies and governance of their cultural assets, the prospects are not good. This unprecedented challenge requires a change of emphasis so that it can be addressed at all levels of heritage studies, public administration and management. This is because cultural heritage cannot be preserved just by those who appreciate its artistic value. It requires a suitable government and legal system as well as a body of market norms that all support genuine heritage. Meanwhile, policies for heritage need to be integrated into national strategy on economic development, despite calls for unregulated markets above all else being heard from some quarters. At the same time, local governments are taking on an increasingly important role in this process. As the main bodies close to ordinary artisans, they are best selected to translate culturally sensitive policies into practice, advocate for artisans' welfare and work relationships which involve the state, private companies and civil society. Because the fashion industry is being dragged into this, opportunities inherent in the global market for Jamdani products are growing at the same time. However, there are also potential tensions: global markets mean that heritage becomes a commodity of the same kind as anything else they produce in this region and marginalize the traditional number of people who have inherited art skills.

From this background, the present research hopes to comprehend the genesis of Jamdani and its twists and turns as it became thoroughly imbricated with cultural policy, regional administration, and the modern-day fashion industry. This study, based on interviews with weavers, policymakers and other related professionals, aims to explore how traditional culture can be passed on under the impact of globalization and cultural commodification. In particular, the paper will address three interconnected questions: first, the historical development and symbolic meaning of Jamdani weaving; second, its transition into a present-day fashion commodity. This transition represents challenges for all involved; third, what these processes imply both for the design of cultural policymaking frameworks and governance systems governments make in response to them; and industry practices capable of enduring over time.

By examining Jamdani within this broader context of cultural governance and sustainable development, the research makes a contribution to both academic theory and the practice of policy. It is evident from this research that an integrated approach is necessary, one which is able to testify to the necessity of preserving heritage on one hand while providing markets with innovative products on the other; to reconcile regional administration at home against global competition abroad, yet maintain cultural identity together with economic benefits for

all the people living there. In so doing, it constructs Jamdani weaving as something more than a handicraft tradition but rather an example of local cultural practice that can shape governance frameworks, strengthen community resilience and contribute to global cultural diversity.

### **Objectives of this Research**

The overarching objective of this research is to explore the genesis and diversification of Jamdani weaving as both a cultural heritage practice and a contemporary fashion element, while assessing its broader implications for cultural policy, governance, and sustainable industry development. In particular, the study aims to:

- Document the historical roots and symbolic significance of Jamdani weaving, highlighting its role as an intangible cultural heritage of Bangladesh.
- Examine how Jamdani weaving has diversified into the modern fashion industry, focusing on adaptation, innovation, and changing market demands.
- Investigate the governance and policy frameworks that shape the sustainability of Jamdani weaving, with special attention to cultural policy and local self-government.
- Identify key challenges and opportunities facing artisan communities, including policy gaps, governance shortcomings, and vulnerabilities within the fashion market.
- Develop practical recommendations that align heritage preservation with industry growth, ensuring artisan livelihoods are protected while promoting resilience and global competitiveness.

### **Research Questions**

- This study is in order to answer the following research questions:
- With such deep historical roots and multifaceted cultural meanings, what might Jamdani weaving and why should it ever be recognized at all as an intangible cultural heritage of Bangladesh look like the way it does today?
- How has Jamdani weaving evolved in order to adapt so readily to modern fashion, and where does the impetus come from for this change?
- How do cultural policies and local governance structures affect the preservation and long-term sustainability of Jamdani weaving?
- What challenges and opportunities do craft communities face when they try to keep up their heritage while jumping into the modern fashion market?
- How can integrated approaches in policy, governance, and management not only protect Jamdani as a cultural heritage, but also help make sure it grows sustainably into the future by serving fashion branches?

### **The Significance of the Research**

The investigation itself will help to further both academic knowledge and vocational skills by looking at Jamdani weaving in the larger context of cultural heritages and governmental inputs into industries. While Jamdani has long been famous for its splendid handicrafts and historical importance, so far, only limited research has investigated how domestic governance systems and programs will have an impact on its continued existence in a globalized world. Through filling in this blank, the investigation contributes to contemporary discussions of public administration, cultural management and sustainable fashion.

The research has achieved academic significance in a number of areas. First and foremost, it helps to develop traditional research studies by examining Jamdani as an example of persistence or adaptation in tradition. Thus, it has provided us with some insight into how old crafts continue to evolve while still preserving their authenticity. It is also a contribution to management theory and fashion studies because it explores how heritage-based crafts can enter the world market without shedding their cultural integrity.

At the practical level, the investigation serves to offer guidance for policymakers, local governments and the fashion industry. It stresses the importance of integrated cultural policies, governing mechanisms and co-partnerships in order to maintain Jamdani's existence while amalgamating economic sustenance for its artisans. In fact, the development of this new industry is vital to maintaining the Bangladeshi national character on our own international cultural stage.

In the community, research reveals more than craft aesthetics. Jamdani weaving, it says, is a living cultural signifier of identity, lore and resilience in community life. By indicating its hardships as well as its opportunities, the research endorses measures to inherit heritage and at the same time promote sustainable development.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Cultural Heritage and Intangible Traditions**

It has become a central concern in both global policy and academic discourse to protect the cultural heritage, particularly the intangible forms like weaving. Intangible heritage should be understood as a “living practice,” UNESCO (2017) insists, continuously recreated and modified to fit community needs. Looked at from this perspective, preservation no longer means the static conservation of artifacts. The transmission process itself comes more into focus. Scholars such as Smith (2006) and Kurin (2004) argue that heritage is socially constructed, with meanings that evolve alongside cultural, political, and economic contexts. Seen in this light, Jamdani weaving is not just a textile product but a kind of cultural performance that expresses skill, identity, and resilience.

The Jamdani tradition brings this point home in a very clear way. At one time connected to the Indian subcontinent's courts and nobility, Jamdani has now become an object of national pride and international renowned (Islam, 2016). But the spread of commercialization also presents dangers: Howard (2016) warns that when heritage is turned into commodities whether it loses some of its inner meaning, becoming a mere commercial symbol. At the same time, Jamdani is a central component of Bangladesh's cultural identity; thus preserving them requires a balance between authenticity and innovation.

Equally important is local involvement. Intangible heritage cannot survive without the participation of its practitioners themselves (Smith, 2006). For Jamdani artisans structural barriers such as low pay, weak protections against machine-made imitations, and lack of institutional support threaten sustainability (Hossain & Islam, 2020). Therefore the preservation of Jamdani will require more than simply admiring its artistry; it will involve socio-economic interventions that empower artisans to make their voices heard and earn their living in this traditional field.

#### **Governance and Cultural Policy**

The survival of cultural heritage practices requires so-called governance frameworks, savants reckon. Belfiore and Bennett (2007) argue that policymakers must move beyond recognizing symbolically tradition and actively support its artists' institutions, finances and through legal measures. Heritage management in many cases has been criticized for adopting a top-down approach that excludes local communities from decision-making (Craith, 2012). As a result, an ill-adapted policy is made which has little effect on the real lives of craftspeople. In Bangladesh, cultural policies have formally recognized Jamdani as a significant heritage practice but the mechanisms to protect and promote it remain fragmented. Khan (2018) highlights that weak institutional capacity and inconsistent policy frameworks have limited the effectiveness of safeguarding initiatives. While state recognition has raised visibility, local governance structures have not been mobilized to support artisan communities effectively. This gap points to broader challenges in cultural governance. Central policies are

often all well and good at the national level, but for those on the ground they may mean nothing more than a slogan, leading people to believe that these magnificent crafts are in fact dead-ends, to wit. And without coherent intellectual property protection, craftsmen are powerless, unable to stop other people copying their designs; and so Jamdani becomes neither authentic nor commercially successful. Comparative scholarship has much to teach us about how more participatory forms of cultural governance can work. Bonet and Négrier (2018) emphasize the significance of the "participative turn" in cultural policy today, where heritage is managed by communities as co-gardeners. That harmonizes with UNESCO's call for safeguarding driven by the community. Practitioners should remain at the center of any decision-making. Nevertheless, implementing such models requires local governments to take an active part in coordinating policies, partnership working and fair distribution of benefits. Seen from this angle, Jamdani weaving furnishes a fine example of how governance structures can embed cultural heritage in larger development frameworks. More local government involvement will close the gap between national high recognition, acknowledgments and on-the-ground realities to create a more sustainable milieu for the craft.

### **Fashion Industry and Market Diversification**

Traditional crafts are integrated into the global fashion industry, which has aroused considerable controversy in academic circles. It is argued, on the one hand, that such integration creates new markets, increases visibility, and opens up economic opportunities for craftsmen (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). On the other hand, however, critics warn that commercialization may cause cultural meanings to be laundered and make heritage into little more than just one more consumer-produced aesthetic item (Kawamura, 2018). Fashion often thrives on quick turnover of novelties and mass production, which may conflict with the slow, labor-intensive processes involved in traditional weaving (Palmer and Clark, 2005). The result is that Jamdani weaving, with twisting motifs and years of work on each piece, is placed into the field of present-day fashion, which can bear stress but, from another angle, makes the weavers face competition based on speed, price, and consumer trends. Studies of heritage-based fashion have focused on both cultural and environmental sustainability. Howard (2016) points out that while traditional trades make for a better environment than "fast fashion", they are treated as the poor relations of world markets. Jamdani, with its hand-woven production process, conforms to the growing consumer demand for ethical slow fashion. Yet the benefits of this trend are not evenly distributed: while fashion brands regularly capitalize on Jamdani's allure as a symbol and form of aesthetic, artisans themselves often find it difficult to gain recognition or fair payment (Hossain and Islam, 2020). This reflects broader structural inequalities within the global fashion system, where value chains tend to put designers and retailers first and producers last. The literature also points to the absence of branding and intellectual property protections for heritage-based crafts. Without effective labeling and certified products, goods marketed as "Jamdani" often contain machine-made counterfeits. This makes both authenticity and consumer trust impossible (Khan, 2018). Scholars argue that effective governance strategies must also incorporate GIs, fair-trade certification, and cooperative branding models in order to succeed in the market (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). Such approaches not only guard authenticity but also give the craftspeople greater returns on their labor. For Jamdani weaving, articulating cultural policy with sustainable fashion frameworks suggests a way of balancing heritage protection and socio-economic development.

### **Identified Gaps**

The reviewed literature demonstrates substantial research on intangible heritage, governance, and fashion, yet these domains are often studied in isolation. Heritage studies emphasize authenticity and community participation, governance literature stresses policy frameworks and institutional structures, while fashion studies focus on commercialization and sustainability. Very few studies integrate these perspectives in a way that captures the complexity of traditional weaving practices like Jamdani. In particular, there is limited analysis of how governance and policy intersect with fashion industry dynamics to shape the survival of Jamdani weaving. This study addresses this gap by adopting a multidisciplinary lens that situates Jamdani at the crossroads of cultural heritage, governance, and market diversification, thereby contributing to both academic scholarship and practical policymaking.

### **Methodology**

The study takes a comprehensive qualitative and review-based approach to knowledge dissemination, by discussing the development and diversification of Jamdani weaving with its implications for its legacy, governance, and the fashion industry. The study is now of qualitative emphasis now in that it means interpretation of cultural meanings rather than quantitative variables, tracking historical development plus social cultural dynamics rather than measuring measurable data.

### **Data Sources**

This study draws its examples mostly from secondary sources such as journal articles, dissertations, and books in the heritage field and fashion studies. As well as this, it also uses policy documents like Bangladesh's culture policy frameworks and UNESCO conventions, along with artisans' personal stories recorded in existing ethnographic and case study research materials; these are deliberately diverse to cover perspectives across cultural cultures, institutions and industries.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

A systematic literature review of academic databases (Scopus, JSTOR: social sciences, humanities, business science and Google Scholar) and institutional archives was conducted. Similar sources were sorted into three areas: 1. Cultural heritage and intangible traditions; 2. Governance and cultural policy; and 3. Fashion industry and market diversity/culture. Thematic coding was then applied to identify repetitive ideas, challenges or gaps, a process allowing for cross-disciplinary integration.

### **Justification and Limitations**

In the first place, this review-based design is cohesive because it draws from different fields. Although the study does not increment primary data, a conceptual framework is established which shows that the weave interacts with governance, heritage and market forces. Future research could take advantage of this groundwork by entering into a dialogue with the weaving industry and other policymakers.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Cultural Heritage and Intangible Traditions**

Jamdani weaving represents historical memory and artistic skill, and has long been essential in the cultural life of Bangladesh. It is not simply a textile; it is a practice embodying pride, identity, and the intergenerational transmission of teaching and learning. Yet the survival of Jamdani as a "living tradition" is not without perils. Artisans continue to face problems such as low pay and imitation products from mass-production. These hard truths indicate that symbols alone will not sustain the past; preservation also requires economic and social measures which recognize artisans as the main protagonists in this traditional craft's survival.

#### **Governance and Cultural Policy**

The review finds that Jamdani has been regarded as a valuable tradition by cultural policies in many cases. However, the effect of mere recognition is limited. Computer-generated wood block production, diluted policy frameworks and the lack of effective intellectual property protections all mean that the practical fruits are not being reaped. The disparity between national statements and local realities requires a system of government which is participatory and people-oriented. In this regard, the potential of local authorities, especially those at the grassroots, lies in translating cultural policy into lived experiences for the artisan, thus converting recognition into tangible support and protection.

### **The Fashion Industry and Market Diversification**

Looking ahead to Jamdani weaving in the fashion sector, both opportunities and risks can be perceived at the same time. On the one hand, the craft's entry into fashion markets has increased its international visibility and broadened its audience. On the other hand, commercialization threatens to turn Jamdani into just ornamental signs that have nothing to do with their original heritage. The lack of brands and certification leaves artisans open to unfair competition from machine-made copies. If fashion is really going to help keep Jamdani alive, perhaps it could move beyond simply applying motifs on the surface and instead ensure that artisans receive recognition as well as fair pay for their contribution.

### **Intersections and Syntheses**

Taken together, the sustainability of Jamdani depends not on any single factor or domain but on how cultural meaning, governance and market opportunities intertwine. Heritage lends Jamdani its legitimacy: governance creates structures to shelter it; and the fashion industry provides economical pathways. If one domain is missing or weak, then everything in the system becomes brittle. The future for Jamdani weaving lies in a holistic approach: policies implemented at the grassroots level, markets which respect authenticity and a heritage flexible enough to roll with the times but without losing its core.

### **Policy and Practice Implications**

How to prevent Jamdani weaving from causing serious damage to our national heritage? The findings here demonstrate that it is necessary to attend to all three areas of heritage, the environment and markets concurrently. For national policymakers, this means taking effective measures which are more than just symbols of recognition. There should be an intellectual property rights regime, by which artisans can benefit; certification systems giving assistance in identifying, for example, what is the best quality silk and ensuring only qualified people make it not those who don't possess the secret skills needed; financial help for cooperatives building up their production capacity, thereby providing them with greater self-sufficiency and a basis to negotiate better prices. For local government, the biggest challenge is to turn national policy commitments into action at the grassroots. This involves assisting businesses or cooperatives with investments; promoting the development of products which guarantee fair returns for everyone involved in their manufacture (farmers, transporters, workers etc.) and not just one group; making sure that artisans have a say in decision-making processes when it is decided what will be produced and how materials are bought. On the part of the fashion industry, it is in their own interests to adopt more ethical practices. Build a system with transparent value chains and reward those who should be rewarded. Addressing the needs and rights of those who maintain traditions makes this a mutually supportive endeavor for industry and individual craftspeople alike.

These conclusions together stress the need for comprehensive governance approaches. Making Jamdani weaving sustainable does not just mean the protection of cultural relics. It also involves promoting economic benefits and fairness. It is therefore necessary that cultural policy, local governance and industrial practice all be tied together closely: for only thus can

Jamdani become not just one living cultural heritage among many others on peoples' shelves (or computer screens) today, affirmed through academic argument but also in all its full-blooded vitality; nor yet should be then still failing artists be stuck without incomes or routes into other professions for generations forward.

### Conclusion

The study endeavored to get to the bottom of the origins and differentiation of Jamdani weaving, with particular reference to its significance for cultural policy, local administration, and the fashion business. By taking a qualitative review approach, the study sought to synthesize heritage studies, governance frameworks and fashion scholarship and so understand how this traditional craft can survive in a world of globalization and market transformation.

As evidenced by the survey findings, Jamdani weaving is not just a huge, age-old textile art form; it is still practiced today because it represents people's identity and pride at home and abroad as well. However, while it has become much more known globally through state-level recognitions and its award of UNESCO intangible cultural heritage status, there remains an unspoken need for practical support from other aspects. In addition, governance frameworks are still divided and overly concentrated, with peripheral actors in the Jamdani world heavily marginalized. At the same time, it offers diversification (into the fashion world) and publicity, but once commercialized may lead to false popularization that excludes precisely those who keep traditions alive.

The study concludes that the survival of Jamdani weaving involves heritage, governance and market forces. None of these individuals may guarantee the future for Jamdani weaving. So policies need to be implemented through communal governance, markets should reward originality and heritage should evolve without losing its cultural significance. On the side of policy-makers, this requires a framework that combines acknowledgment with intellectual property protection and financial backing. For local governments, it means initiatives which give empowerment to artisans and make national policy something which these communities can really put into effect. And for fashion houses, it is a question of responsible cooperation that sees artisans not only as someone who makes something with their hands but also an active partner in production and branding fashion.

Finally, the future of Jamdani weaving depends upon comprehensive measures that combine cultural protection with economic opportunities and social justice. Strengthening these links will ensure Jamdani remains not only a priceless cultural inheritance, but also one which can support sustainable living for generations to come to sustainable.

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