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"Matsusaka Striped Cotton" as a Medium: Creating Spaces Where Social and Historical Practices Intertwine

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Abstract

Media is not merely a conduit for transmitting messages from sender to receiver; rather, it is an open space where diverse practices surrounding that medium intersect within configurations of people, objects, and machinery. Within this space, meaning and value are collectively produced, reinterpreted and retold, and continually adjusted.

This paper examines "Matsusaka Striped Cotton," a fabric widely produced and processed in the Matsusaka region of central Japan, then sold nationwide through Edo stores by wealthy merchants from Matsusaka. It begins with a historical overview of the activities surrounding Matsusaka striped cotton, followed by an ethnographic description of a women weavers' group currently engaged in restoring and transmitting its hand-weaving skills. Through this, it explores how "Matsusaka Striped Cotton" has socially and historically created spaces for practice, and as a medium connecting what to what, or who to whom, it has sustained and structured people's activities.

Introduction

When we hear the word "media," we tend to think of mass media-that is, newspapers, radio, television, and other outlets that convey information and messages to people. However, as suggested by the etymology of "media"-from the Latin medium (meaning "middle") and its derivative mediation (denoting mediation, arbitration, or intermediation)-the concept originally encompassed material, psychological, and religious mediations that included the dimension of mediating between God and humans, spirit and the world, or ideas and objects. From the 19th century onward, amid the developments of information technologies, the concept of media as a mediator or arbitrator of the spiritual world receded into the background. Instead, the idea of media primarily as a means (a technical medium) for transmitting messages from sender to receiver gained widespread acceptance. However, by the mid-20th century, movements to restore the mediating and arbitrating function to the concept of media became active again (Yoshimi 2004) [1].

According to Yoshimi [1], Walter Benjamin [2] states, using language as an archetypal medium, that "media are not so vehicles for conveying some external meaning as they are topoi (sites of expression) that constitute meaning themselves" (p.6). Benjamin [2] does not view media as merely the technical prerequisite for communication, but rather takes a groundbreaking approach, seeing it as a space where meaning is constituted and mediated within the relationships between various people, artifacts, and machinery. Moreover, what is realized within this media space is not the transmission of meaning (a message) from one sender to another, but rather the weaving, retelling, re-reading, and rewriting of meaning among the people, artifacts, and machinery involved in that medium. Within this "space" of media, texts-complexities of signs open to others-are produced, scrutinized, and received. Extending Benjamin's [2] thinking, media becomes "a social space where diverse practices intersect, contend, and interweave" (p.11).

Media, in the sense of spaces where diverse practices intersect and texts are produced and received, can be found in numerous places within our daily lives. This paper examines "Matsusaka cotton," a fabric widely produced and processed in the Matsusaka region of central Japan, which became known throughout Japan when sold at Edo (the capital of Japan in Tokugawa period from 17 to 19 century) stores by wealthy merchants from Matsusaka. First, it provides a historical overview of the activities surrounding Matsusaka cotton. Next, it ethnographically describes the activities of a women weavers' group currently engaged in the practice of restoring and passing down its hand-weaving skills. Through this, it is explored how "Matsusaka striped cotton" has socially and historically created spaces for practice, and as a medium connecting what to what, or who to whom, it has sustained and structured people's activities. In other words, this paper describes how "Matsusaka striped cotton" as a medium has been constructed and maintained amidst intersecting social practices, and what texts and narratives are woven into it.

"Matsusaka striped cotton" constructed as a medium within multiple socio-historical contexts

Cotton and Japanese daily life: It is said that Japanese clothing shifted from hemp to cotton in the early Edo period. Consequently, by this time, cotton cultivation had spread widely in Japan, and the production and distribution systems for commercial cotton textiles were established. The anthology "Shichibu-shū," compiled around the beginning of the Genroku era (early 17th century), contains many poems capturing the charm of cotton. Folklorist Kunio Yanagida [3], while referencing these verses, cites two factors for cotton's acceptance and explosive spread from the Warring States period to the early Edo period. First was cotton's texture. For men and women working in fields and mountains, its softness and pleasant friction surpassed that of hemp. Second, cotton was easy to dye, allowing it to be dyed in any vivid color pattern according to preference. Moreover, weaving it was simpler than hemp; people could weave it by making only minor adjustments to the handlooms (tebata) they had been using. It was this comfort, combined with the ease of dyeing and weaving, that led to cotton's rapid acceptance by the people.

Yanagida [3] further speculates that cotton may have profoundly altered the wearer's form-both body and spirit. Wearing cotton "freed the entire body to stretch and contract freely, making one's movements manifest outwardly more clearly than before. This heightened the wearer's skin's sensitivity while also bringing about inner change. At the same time, colors like red, green, and purple-previously seen only as decorative-became closer to nature and belonged to individuals. Emotional states were immediately reflected in outward form; whether singing or crying, people became more beautiful than before. The adoption of cotton had, unknowingly, made the nuances of daily life more refined (pp. 14-15)". By the first half of the 17th century, cotton had established its position as the primary material for everyday clothing, replacing hemp. As Yanagida vividly described, this shift from hemp to cotton enriched people's living culture and brought significant changes to the lives of the Japanese people.

On the other hand, economist Keiji Nagahara [4] examines the process leading to the popularization of cotton from the perspective of Japan's economic history. According to Nagahara, cotton readily enabled division of labor throughout its entire production cycle-cultivation, spinning, and weaving-and possessed developmental characteristics in terms of commodity production and distribution. By the first half of the 17th century, "a rapid expansion of social division of labor emerged among cotton cultivation (raw cotton production), ginning, carding, reeling, spinning, weaving, and bleaching processes" (p.184). This commercial economic character of cotton spurred the development of indigo cultivation and the indigo industry, which provided dye for cloth, and propelled dried sardines (hoshika), used as fertilizer for raw cotton production, into a major commodity. Furthermore, it generated ripple effects in the development of the commercial economy, such as the growth of the shipping industry that transported goods. Cotton as a commodity also brought significant changes to peasant livelihoods. During the day, farmers cultivated crops yielding higher income, while at night and during the off-season, men engaged in straw work and women in cotton weaving as secondary occupations. In cotton-growing regions like Ise and Matsusaka, it is believed that from the early Edo period, women in nearly every village were involved in cotton weaving as a secondary occupation. In this way, cotton transformed Japanese daily life and brought about major changes in socio-economic activities.

Matsusaka cotton woven from cotton, indigo, and stripes: The distinctive feature of Matsusaka cotton lies in its rich variety of striped patterns. The weavers, women from farming families, would organize not only the scraps from their own woven cloth but also those from neighbors' weaving. They would paste these scraps onto recycled paper to create "scrapbooks of striped pattern" for preservation. The surviving "Striped Pattern Book" (1857) contains hundreds of small samples of different stripe patterns.

It is thought that Matsusaka cotton was traded as a premium product in the Edo market compared to cotton from other regions due to the novelty of its design: vertical stripes woven into an indigo-colored base. The "Matsusaka Cotton Chronicles," compiled by a cotton wholesaler as notes passed down from previous generations contains passages suggesting that merchants dealing in Matsusaka cotton designed stripes and color schemes considering consumer preferences and best-selling items, then placed orders with weavers in farming households specifying weaving methods. The creation of "Matsusaka striped cotton" as a high-quality cotton fabric resulted from the convergence of several factors: the business acumen of Ise and Matsusaka merchants who were early to establish themselves in Edo, primarily trading Matsusaka cotton; the weavers of the Matsusaka region who responded to these demands by producing a rich variety of striped patterns; the traditional weaving techniques and dyeing skills that supported these weavers; and, furthermore, the aesthetic sensibilities fostered among the Japanese by cotton

clothing. Indeed, fabrics are born from the climate and natural environment of each place; they are the condensed essence of that "place," its soil and air [5].

The wealthy merchants of Edo who traded Matsusaka cotton: Approximately 120 merchants who established shops in central Edo from the early to mid-Edo period, were from Matsusaka. Many of these Matsusaka merchants set up shops (called Edo stores) in areas like Nihonbashi in Edo, trading in cotton and kimono fabrics [6]. Many merchant families whose names endure today include Echigoya (Mitsui family: cotton and kimono merchant and money changer), Tanbaya (Hasegawa family: cotton wholesaler), Ozuya (Ozu family: paper and cotton merchant), and the Kokubun family (which transitioned from kimono merchant to soy sauce merchant). The Mitsui family's Echigoya later became the Mitsukoshi department store, and then connected to the pre-war Mitsui financial, one of Japan's major conglomerates.

Various anecdotes recount how Matsusaka merchants constantly devised and implemented new business practices. Their relentless development and application of these new methods are also fascinating when considering the process by which "Matsusaka striped cotton" was established as a medium. Matsusaka merchants spared no effort, ingenuity, or wisdom to connect the emerging consumer base-townspeople and farmers gaining economic power-with cotton, the new fabric of the era. Among cottons, they focused on Matsusaka striped cotton, prized for its "superior quality, rich variety of stripe patterns, and stylish colors." Consider the example of Echigoya (the Mitsui family). Echigoya pioneered "front-store sales", a rare practice for large wholesalers, meaning they began retail sales. They adopted "cash-only sales with fixed prices," meaning they refused deferred payments but offered lower prices than competitors. They sold bolts of cloth by the yard and provided immediate tailoring for urgent orders. This allowed commoners, previously unable to afford kimono fabrics, to purchase them. This groundbreaking business model became a huge sensation throughout Edo, making Echigoya immensely popular. Echigoya distributed flyers throughout the city to advertise its goods and, when it rained, lent out large traditional Japanese umbrellas prominently marked "Echigoya," demonstrating ingenuity in its PR efforts. Many Edo-period senryū poems (humorous or ironical haiku) feature Echigoya as their subject. These poems vividly evoke how Edo's common folk found Echigoya's business practices amusing and enjoyed shopping there [7].

Matsusaka cotton captured the hearts of Edo's common people through the wisdom, effort, and ingenuity of these Matsusaka merchants, solidifying its status as a premium cotton brand. Records indicate that the production area, Matsusaka, shipped over 500,000 bolts of cotton annually. The text of "Matsusaka striped cotton," "When it comes to cotton, choose Matsusaka's stripes" emerged within the social and historical context woven by cotton, indigo, and striped patterns [6]. It was forged through the encounter between Matsusaka merchants trading cotton as a commodity and the newly emerging common people of Edo as consumers. Furthermore, through the clever business practices of the Matsusaka merchants, it connected Edo consumers with the women farmers weaving striped cotton around Matsusaka. Even today, kabuki actors say they "wear Matsusaka" when putting on striped kimonos. "Matsusaka striped cotton" was constructed as a medium within multiple social and historical contexts.

"Matsusaka striped cotton" as a medium for restoring activities

Following the nationwide introduction of mechanized spinning after 1868, handwoven cotton textiles rapidly declined in Japan. Furthermore, because domestically produced cotton, with its thick and short fibers, was deemed unsuitable for machine spinning, large quantities of cotton yarn and raw cotton-previously major income sources for farmers-began to be imported from abroad. Thus, the social, economic, and cultural context of Japanese cotton weaving was fundamentally overturned and vanished. Matsusaka striped cotton also lost its marketability in the 1880s and faded into obscurity.

In the 1980s, efforts to restore and pass down the hand-weaving skills of Matsusaka striped cotton began locally in Matsusaka for the first time in roughly 100 years. As a medium, "Matsusaka striped cotton" would once again form a "social space where diverse practices intersect, and texts are produced and received" for the first time in 100 years since its disappearance from the market. Appearing in this "space" were the Matsusaka City History and Folklore Museum, and the Matsusaka Cotton-Life LLC working to preserve Matsusaka cotton by re-establishing it on a commercial basis. Also, present were the Matsusaka region's sole remaining factory for cotton weaving and indigo dyeing, the Miito Textile Factory and the Yuzuru Party, a women weavers group dedicated to preserving the handweaving skills in producing Matsusaka striped cotton. The Yuzuru party emerged amidst the intersecting practices of the various participants appearing in this "space." While maintaining mutual relationships with these practices, the Yuzuru party continues its steadfast activities to this day as the direct bearer of the restoration and transmission of the handweaving skills for Matsusaka striped cotton.

Formation of the hand-weaving tradition group, Yuzuru party: The studio of the Yuzuru party is in a corner of the town where the history and culture of Matsusaka, which produced wealthy merchants during the Edo period, intersect. This area retains the former residences and mansions of Matsusaka merchants like the Mitsui family. Yuzuru party was founded in 1981. The late Yoshiho Tabata [7], a key figure in its founding and then-director of the Matsusaka City Museum of History and Folklore, featured Matsusaka striped cotton as a centerpiece of the museum's exhibits. Inspired by this, he organized hand-weaving workshops. These workshops drew participation from around 80 women, not only from the Matsusaka area but also from within and outside the prefecture, revealing a high level of interest in "Matsusaka striped cotton" and "hand-weaving skills." In 1980, a formal training program on the traditional weaving skills of Matsusaka striped cotton began, with 17 women who strongly desired to learn hand-weaving skills selected from the previous year's study group participants as the first cohort. Graduates of

this first training session formed the "Yuzuru party", which went on to instruct subsequent cohorts, laying the foundation for the restoration and preservation of Matsusaka cotton.

Moro [8] states that restoration is an activity that participates in the reconstruction of history. For example, restoring the East Pagoda of Yakushiji Temple (constructed in the Asuka era, early 8 century) means participating in the community of Asuka artisans-that is, participating in the restoration of an entire activity system, encompassing everything from reviving the materials and tools used in the Asuka period to reconstruct their production and distribution organizations. Viewed this way, restoring "Matsusaka striped cotton" means participating in the restoration of the Edo-period production and distribution network for Matsusaka handwoven cotton, encompassing the peasant women who wove cotton as supplementary income and the Matsusaka merchants who traded in Edo shops. In this context, the remnants of "Matsusaka striped cotton" preserved in the "scrapbooks of striped pattern" become a medium recording information for restoring these activities. The study of Matsusaka cotton's history and the restoration work on the scrap books of striped pattern conducted during the initial training sessions at Yuzuru Workshop can be seen as engaging trainees in reconstructing the history surrounding Matsusaka striped cotton. Mr. Tabata maintained his relationship with the Yuzuru party thereafter, and during study sessions and other gatherings, he would occasionally share stories with members about the footsteps of the Matsusaka merchants and the deep connection between the Matsusaka merchants and Matsusaka striped cotton.

Yuzuru party's 'doing community' practice

Yuzuru party will mark its 45th anniversary in 2026. Membership in Yuzuru party is limited to the graduates of six months training course on traditional Matsusaka cotton weaving skills. The group has consistently operated with 20 to 30 members. At its founding, most members were full-time homemakers, but in recent years, some participate while continuing part-time work. New member recruitment occurs irregularly, typically when membership reaches around 20 people. This section examines in detail the Yuzuru party's approximately 45-year effort to restore and pass on the hand-weaving skills of Matsusaka cotton. What mechanisms has the Yuzuru party created to sustain and structure its restoration and transmission activities? Furthermore, what kind of literacy has been generated and shared among members through their practice?

Developing the literacy to shape Yuzuru members' collaborative activities: First, let us review the circumstances when the Yuzuru party recruited new members for the first time in about nine years. Thirty-two applicants attended the information session. However, after explaining the annual activities and the considerable time commitment required for the group, only eleven applicants actually participated in the training. Training lasting approximately six months was conducted for these 11 women, aged 28 to 55, comprising the eighth graduating class. The training focused on practical sessions from warping (loom setup) through weaving, supplemented by hands-on activities such as planting indigo, sowing cotton seeds, dyeing with fresh indigo leaves, plant dyeing, and spinning thread. It also included lectures on the history and characteristics of Matsusaka striped cotton. The lectures on the history of Matsusaka cotton were given by the late Mr. Tabata. He also lectured on the history of Matsusaka cotton during the recruitment briefing, explaining how weaving has continued in Matsusaka for about 1,300 years and how Matsusaka merchants prospered through cotton during the Edo period.

Weaving instruction was handled by senior members. The 11 trainees were divided into three groups of 3-4 people, with two senior members assigned exclusively to instruct each group. The actual training process was divided into three stages. In the first stage, under the guidance of senior members, trainees completed the entire process: deciding on a pattern (design), calculating the yarn, setting up the loom, weaving the cloth, and finishing it into one roll of fabric. Regardless of individual trainees' understanding, ability, or skill level, all trainees completed the entire process in this stage. During the weaving stage, trainees divided the work to weave one roll of kimono cloth. In a group of three, each person wove approximately 4 meters 50 centimeters. In the second stage, two senior members instruct a group of two trainees. Similarly to the first stage, trainees complete the entire process from pattern selection to finished weaving, with the two trainees weaving one role of fabric together. Each trainee weaves one and a half roll (approximately 6-7m). Upon completing this stage, the association announces, "Those who wish to continue should weave one role," confirming whether trainees will proceed with their studies. For the eighth graduating class, two trainees withdrew at this stage, leaving nine to continue their training. In the third stage, trainees independently complete the entire process from pattern design to weaving one roll of kimono cloth. After successfully weaving one roll of kimono cloth alone, these nine trainees were formally recognized as members at the April general meeting.

This newcomer training program has four remarkable features. First, trainees are divided into three to four groups, and senior members gave instruction to each group. Second, regardless of whether the newcomers understand or not, or whether they can perform the tasks or not, the training proceeds without stopping the work, teaching the entire weaving process from start to finish. This is repeated three times, culminating in each trainee weaving one roll of cotton fabric to be used in making a kimono. Third, lectures on the history of Matsusaka cotton, the accounts on the women farmers who wove them, and the activities of Edo-period Matsusaka merchants are incorporated between practical sessions. Fourth, to "thoroughly explore all aspects of Matsusaka cotton," the program includes not only weaving but also practical training in cotton and indigo cultivation, spinning thread, and indigo dyeing. The trainees of the eighth graduating class shared various impressions about the training: "I was just copying others without understanding anything about thread calculations," "during the first manufacturing process, I was totally fumbling about in confusion. And yet, seniors were all the way through the work without consideration of our confusion!" "The training was so hard that I was deeply moved by myself when I finally completed to weave one roll of kimono cloth." One of the

senior members instructing the trainees commented: "We learned this way ourselves, so we don't know any other method. The training program was very hard for the trainees, I'm afraid. We got training in the same way, too. So, we didn't know any other way. Well, any training for a craft-person is something like this, isn't it? [9]".

The approach to technical training conducted by the Yuzuru party, while differing entirely in learning context, framework, and setting, incorporates elements that compensate for aspects often lacking in modern school education. For example, the final goal of weaving one roll of cotton cloth is clearly presented to learners from the outset. The entire weaving process and the nature of the work involved are repeated three times, enabling learners to clearly visualize their own learning process. Furthermore, a learning structure is created that is difficult to replicate in institutional educational settings: one where all members within a group, both those guiding and those being guided, are compelled to collaborate toward a common goal. Indeed, the effectiveness of this training approach is evident in the results: six months later, nine out of eleven trainees could weave one roll of cloth independently, with only two exceptions.

Furthermore, crucial to understanding the impact and uniqueness of this training are the lectures held between practical sessions. These covered the history of Matsusaka cotton, Edo-period scrapbooks of striped pattern and the women farmers who wove them, and the role of Matsusaka cotton and Edo-period Matsusaka merchants. As trainees often remarked, "I was moved by myself the first time I wove something," and "I wanted to praise myself when I finished weaving," the weaving training was quite demanding for those housewives who participated "because they wanted to do something" technically, timewise, and physically. What enabled them to persevere and take their first step as "bearers of the tradition of hand-weaving Matsusaka cotton" was likely the history of Matsusaka cotton, the surviving "scrapbooks of striped patterns made by women farmers," and the numerous anecdotes surrounding them. This isn't just true for trainees. One senior member remarked, "Late Mr. Tabata would tell us historical stories about Matsusaka cotton at every opportunity. While it was sometimes tedious, I now realize it was incredibly important because it gave us the foundation for why we weave." Another member said, "When I lose my enthusiasm to weave, I look over a scrapbook of striped patterns made by farmer-weavers in the 17th century. Then, I feel motivated to weave again [9]".

Constantly exposed to Mr. Tabata's [7] historical narratives, participating in quite demanding technical training sessions, consulting the old striped pattern records, and undertaking activities like weaving an entire roll of cloth alone-just as the peasant weavers did in Edo period-it can be seen that a certain 'literacy' [9,10] has formed among the members of the Yuzuru party. This literacy is essential for maintaining and structuring the restoration and transmission activities of Matsusaka cotton. This literacy refers to the ability, gained through participation in the practice of weaving Matsusaka cotton, to understand the meaning and significance of weaving "Matsusaka striped cotton," or the value and importance of the "scrapbook of old striped cotton," and to share this understanding with other participants.

Yuuzuru members' 'doing community' practice: The Yuuzuru party has held commemorative events every five years. For example, the 30th anniversary event featured the theme "Recreating Meiji-Period Stripes," displaying both collective works (Rokumeikan-style Western and Japanese attire made from Matsuzaka striped cotton) and individual member pieces. In addition to participating in the creation of the collective piece, each member produced and exhibited two individual works. One involved selecting and reproducing a stripe pattern from Meiji-era "Shimacho" (stripe pattern books), while the other involved designing an original stripe pattern for their piece. The Yuzuru party has established "Rules for Fabric Rolls" (8 items), and even when members design their own stripe patterns, they are not permitted to deviate from these rules. For example, since Matsusaka cotton is defined as 'fabric based on stripe patterns dyed with natural indigo,' the ratio of colored warp threads to indigo-dyed threads must be kept to 3 parts colored thread for every 7 parts indigo-dyed thread. Furthermore, the colored threads must be made from plant-dyed yarn that has undergone at least two layers of dyeing.

These agreements had long been an unspoken understanding among members, but they were formalized as the "Agreements for fabric production" due to the following circumstances. With each event held every five years by the Yuzuru party, the individual weaving skills of its members improved dramatically. As weaving skills advanced, it was only natural that members developed a desire to challenge themselves with various weaving techniques or to weave fabrics with more vibrant patterns. Consequently, members began weaving fabrics like plaid patterns using diverse colored threads. Meanwhile, the tradition of cotton weaving existed not only in Matsusaka but throughout Japan, with preservation and transmission activities for these traditional techniques underway in various regions. Within this context, members frequently discussed how to differentiate "Matsusaka striped cotton" from cotton weaves of other regions. Through these discussions, a category emerged defining Matsusaka cotton as "fabrics fundamentally based on stripe patterns dyed with natural indigo," distinct from "chemically dyed fabrics." Codes, or rules, were also established, such as "the ratio of colored warp threads to indigo-dyed threads must be kept within 30% of the indigo-dyed threads." These principles were formalized into a text comprising eight "Agreed items for fabric rolls."

In the Yuzuru studio, five weaving looms were set up. Three of these are used by members to create pieces for the Party's 30th anniversary cerebrations. In April 20xx, after a regular meeting, members split into Western-style clothing and traditional Japanese clothing groups. They gathered around their respective looms to examine the striped design found in the textiles that were used for kimono. By that time, each member had visited the studio at their convenience to create a 20-30cm trial section of their proposed pattern. Examining each trial piece, members critiqued the colored threads, patterns, and weaving techniques: "This is no good! This is chemical dyeing, isn't it?"; "Yeah, this is no more than a rehash of

chemical dyes"; It's ridiculous to use so many colored weeds! This is no longer our textile, because the basic element of Matsusaka striped cotton is a shade of indigo [9]".

Yuzuru members speak in the "code" like "Matsusaka cotton is fundamentally about the gradations of indigo." This practice constantly serves to recall and reaffirm their own approach to weaving. Furthermore, speaking in terms of categories like "Matsusaka cotton," "natural indigo," and "chemically dyed texture" is not merely labelling different types of cotton or dyeing methods. It can be seen as part of the practice of creating and maintaining a boundary between "Yuzuru members who weave cotton using color threads dyed with natural indigo" and "people who weave cotton using chemically dyed threads." Ueno [11] argues that participation in a community is realized through the process of making the community visible to the participants. Participants create boundaries between communities and make them visible each time they discuss codes or categories, and in doing so they become able to constitute their own participation in the community.

In applying this approach to the case of the Yuzuru party, it can be observed that the party was not a pre-existing community that the nine trainees joined upon completion of the training course. It does not mean that they are joining the Yuzuru party as an existing community. Rather, both new and senior members collaboratively constitute the Yuzuru party community of practice through their participation. Discussing the categories and codes mentioned above is also part of the practice. Through such practice, the boundaries between Yuzuru party and other communities become visible and constituted. Each member maintains and constitutes one's own "participation" while engaging in the Yuzuru party practice.

The weavers of Matsusaka cotton as narrators of the history of space: French historian and thinker Michel de Certeau [12] states that "space is the place where practices are enacted" (p. 243), and that space holds an inseparable history tied to the practices of the people who inhabit it. De Certeau [12] further discusses the close relationship between the constitution of space and 'narrating,' stating: The stories people tell combine the function of distributing the things and situations depicted in the plot with the function of narrating them. When both functions operate, the story creates space. Therefore, when the narrative disappears, the space also disappears. This is increasingly true in both cities and rural areas: as the telling fades, both the collective and the individual must endure the anxious, hopeless experience of living within a whole shrouded in a chaotic, formless darkness. Thus, in the organization of space, people's "narratives," including the act of telling, play a decisive role (ibid., p.253).

The distinctive feature of the practice of Yuzuru party lies in restoring and narrating the spatial history woven by "Matsusaka striped cotton." In other words, through participating in the practice, Yuzuru members become 'weavers' while simultaneously becoming 'narrators' of the spatial history woven by the medium of Matsusaka striped cotton. As a medium where various practices intersect, "Matsusaka striped cotton" has given rise not only to the Yuzuru party's practice but also, as mentioned earlier, to the practices of the Matsusaka Cotton-life LLC and the Miito Textile Factory. Amidst the intersection of shared practices, the Yuzuru party's practice has grown into a symbolic presence that gives meaning and value to the other practices, sustaining and developing each one. This can be attributed to the Yuzuru members' practical choice to pass on the history woven into the space of "Matsusaka striped cotton" through the texture of the fabric itself.

The English words texture, textile, and text, which correspond to the Japanese term 'Orimono' (textile), all share the same etymological root, signifying weaving or woven (things or events woven, interlaced, or stitched together). It is said that in the past, the English term 'woven thing' was often used more in a spiritual sense than to denote a physical object. As the Japanese expression "cloth is a diary stitched with thread" suggests, handwoven textiles weave together the weaver's life, their connection to place, and the diverse sentiments of the era they lived in. The "striped pattern book" records from the Ansei and Meiji periods (the end of 18th-the beginning of 19th), preserved at the Matsusaka City Historical Museum and the Mitsui Library, contain over 500 types of striped patterned fabric scraps. The innovative nature of these indigo-based striped patterns never feels dated, even to modern eyes. As you turn the pages, you're struck by how dramatically the character of the weave changes-whether through the spacing between stripes, the combination of indigo gradations, or simply adding a touch of silk thread to the vertical stripes-shifting the mood to something festive, a sense of richness, or the bright, cheerful feel favored by townspeople. Did the peasant women who wove Matsusaka striped cotton once imagine the unseen streets of Edo (the capital city of Edo era, in the 17th-19th) and its townspeople as they worked? Gazing at the "striped pattern book," one feels as if the stories of the weavers' lives and the flow of time are whispering. Textiles are truly texts open to people.

Through their activities of restoring Matsusaka cotton and passing down hand-weaving skills, the members of the Yuzuru party revive the memory of the town of Matsusaka. They narrate the history of the spaces embedded within Matsusaka through the 'woven texture'. Through the members' narratives, the town of Matsusaka and its cotton tradition are being reconstituted in the present day.

In Conclusion: Cultural Restoration and Transmission as the Regeneration of a Town's Memory

As we have seen, the media space constituted by "Matsusaka striped cotton" is historically and spatially very thick and profound. Its history and tradition are not merely a detached past; the collective memory surrounding "Matsusaka cotton" serves as an opportunity not only for the Yuzuru party but also for the people of Matsusaka participating in various events related to Matsusaka cotton, to rethink their own existence and shape their identity. Recent "welfare geography" [13] argues that reconnecting with a region's history and restructuring one's lifestyle can become an opportunity for care in a broad sense, asserting that future care lies in connecting with local history.

As mentioned earlier, Michel de Certeau [12] (ibid.) observed that "When the narrative vanishes, space vanishes too. And as the narrative fades, both the collective and the individual must endure the anxious, hopeless experience of living within a whole shrouded in a chaotic, formless darkness." He suggests that sharing collective memory is necessary for people to reclaim their relationship with place. Furthermore, as the experiment in the French city of Partonne demonstrates, collective memory falls into disuse if left untended [14,15]. Within this contemporary context, the Yuzuru party, which undertakes the restoration and transmission of Matsusaka cotton, plays a significant role in facilitating dialogue between past, present, and future generations through the textile known as "Matsusaka striped cotton." It helps people share the collective memory necessary to reclaim their relationship with the Matsusaka region and its place. Furthermore, the act of "restoration"-a key part of their activities-is expressed in English as "restore." This word originates from the French "restaurant." A restaurant is a place that restores people's hearts and bodies; thus, restoration inherently implies activities of 'healing' and "care."

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