Cultural Preservation of Traditional Textiles on Fais Island in Micronesia: Problems and Paradoxes

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Cultural preservation projects frequently encounter a central paradox: the process of preservation basically alters the cultural objects being preserved.[1] Objects become recontextualized within a changing field of social relations and cultural values. This paper discusses some of the problems and paradoxes in one such cultural preservation project, the recent effort to revive the production of the sacred *machi* textile from Fais Island in Micronesia.

Fais Island and the Yap Outer Islands region

Fais is a small raised coral island at the western edge of the great Caroline Islands archipelago of Micronesia, which stretches nearly 3,000 miles from the Palau Islands in the west to the island of Kosrae in the east. Only about three-quarters of a square mile in area, Fais is home to about 500 islanders; about 300 of them reside on the home island and another 150-200 live in Yap, a mountainous island complex 130 miles to the west with a population of about 8,000 people. Fais residents still largely follow a subsistence lifestyle, cultivating mainly sweet potatoes, dry-land taro and breadfruit, and fishing on the fringing reef and in the deep ocean waters surrounding the island.

Traditional chieftainship, inherited through family lines, still plays an important role in the political affairs of the Yap State, although Yap today is one of four states within the democratic nation of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM, which also includes the states of Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae), with elected representative government at state and national levels. Yap State is the only one of the four FSM states to have officially recognized and empowered its traditional indigenous chiefs as a fourth branch of government under its State Constitution.[2]

The state capital of Colonia, on the Yap main island, is a typical small Pacific port town containing the state government offices, an airport, the district's only hospital, and a few small retail stores. While Fais Island's ranking chief and other traditional chiefs reside on Fais Island, most of the better-educated wage-earning Fais Islanders reside in Yap. This division of the population—between the more tradition-oriented and subsistence-based home community of Fais Island, and the more urbanized and wage-earning community of educated Fais Islanders in Yap—is important in understanding how the *machi* cultural preservation project developed, as will be seen below.

The Caroline Islands demarcate the easternmost extension of the great Southeast Asian tradition of loom-weaving, and in earlier times different varieties of loom-woven cloth were produced in different island groups of the Caroline Islands. Southeast Asian loom technology likely spread into western Oceania through Carolinian long-distance voyages, which involved occasional contacts with the Philippines and eastern Indonesia.[3] Today, the Yap Outer Islands are the only area of Micronesia to have sustained this practice of loom technology and style of loom-woven traditional dress, and Yap prides itself on being the most "traditional" of the four FSM states. Women from other

Micronesian island areas—in Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae—ceased loom-weaving and traditional dress style in the 19th and early 20th century, under pressure from Protestant missionaries and with the increasing availability of commercial cloth.[4]

Cultural Significance of Textiles on Fais

On Fais Island and other Yap Outer Islands today, customary dress for women continues to be the loom-woven "lavalava" wrap-around skirt, although Outer Island women have mostly substituted commercial multi-colored cotton or polyester thread for the banana fiber used in the past. Proper dress for both men and women on Fais requires that the upper part of the body is left uncovered. Although Fais women and men may wear t-shirts as sun protection while working in their gardens in the interior of the island, and men may also wear t-shirts when out fishing, it is considered immodest and disrespectful to sport t-shirts within the village, and especially so for a woman to wear a shirt in the presence of men. Nor would a proper Fais woman dare provoke her relatives' disapproval by wearing long pants or shorts in lieu of a lavalava around the house on Fais. In the westernized environment of Yap, on the other hand, Fais women regularly wear western clothes both in town and at home, particularly the younger Fais women who have grown up in Yap or have lived and worked there for many years.

For island women growing up on Fais, knowledge of loom weaving is an intrinsic aspect of female identity. Girls on Fais begin learning to weave when they are only three or four years old, using toy looms that have been set up for them by their mothers or an older sister. Young girls also learn weaving seated on their mother's lap while the mother sits at the backstrap loom and guides the girl in the loom movements. In the past,

Fais women would sing a magical chant to ensure their daughter's dexterity and speed at weaving.[5] Small girls on Fais wear grass skirts until they reach puberty, at which time girls mark their sexual maturity by beginning to wear a loom-woven lavalava. By this age virtually all Fais young women have mastered the basics of loom-weaving.

Loom-weaving is an integral part of Fais Island culture. Until the early 20th century, both men's and women's garments were made from loom-woven cloth patterned similarly with alternating light and dark warp stripes. Men wore the cloth as a g-string or loincloth, folded and wrapped around the waist and tucked between the legs, while women wore theirs as a wraparound lavalava or skirt, secured with a shell belt or a string. When cotton cloth became available during the German colonial era of the early 1900s, men were quick to adopt the softer, more comfortable material, which didn't chafe between their legs as did the banana fiber cloth. Women continued wearing the simple warp-striped lavalava as everyday dress, and on more festive occasions, they wore a style of loom-woven cloth with bands of supplementary weft at the two ends (called *peig*, literally "side"). As multi-colored commercial thread became available during the colonial era, a new style of lavalava appeared, called *flahk* (literally, "flag," probably derived from the German *flagge*), displaying warp stripes of different colors.

Loom-woven cloth on Fais also serves as a basic form of currency for ceremonial payment and gift exchange. At weddings, funerals, departures from the island, and customary penalties levied for social infractions, loom-woven cloth plays a central role. For example, one customary divorce payment that occurred in 1976 on Fais, when a young husband left his wife to marry another women, involved payment of 27 new

lavalava in addition to other local and imported goods, including 60 yards of store-bought cloth, and over a dozen store-bought blankets and sheets.

Funerals on Fais, especially those of senior men, involve massive collection and redistribution of loom-woven lavalavas. At the funeral, the entire island community gathers at the home of the deceased, bringing with them cloth gifts, both loom-woven lavalavas and store-bought blankets and sheets, as well as other funeral goods such as bundles of turmeric, sennit rope, and pandanus mats. Several categories of cloth gifts are presented to the family of the deceased by neighbors and relatives, and these fabric gifts serve to symbolize and publicly express kinship relations, especially any past land exchanges that marked marital ties between members of the deceased's family and the gift-giving families. The ceremonial exchange of cloth goods at funerals thus renews and reemphasizes the fabric of social relations that bound the deceased to a community of kin.[6]

The Sacred *Machi* Textile of Fais Island

Within Fais Island culture, the *machi* holds a unique place, as the only textile which is never worn as everyday dress, but serves exclusively ceremonial functions, and has a special relationship to traditional island chieftainship. The *machi* is produced on the same type of warping table and backstrap loom as all other Fais textiles, but unlike Fais textiles woven for everyday wear and patterned with alternating light and dark warp stripes, the *machi* decorations consist entirely of bands of supplementary weft patterns at the two ends of the textile. Also unlike other Fais textiles that are basically identical to those produced on the neighboring islands of the Yap Outer Islands, the *machi* is

considered uniquely a cultural product of Fais Island, and knowledge of *machi* designs is restricted to Fais women, except for a small number of women from the neighboring island of Ulithi, who were believed to have learned the design from Fais relatives in the past.

The special relationship of the *machi* to traditional island chieftainship is conveyed in the phrase *bwalungal tamol*, literally "perquisites of the chief," that refers to a small category of things, which by Fais custom are considered rightfully to belong to the island's paramount chief. This category of objects includes several species of marine animals such as sea turtles, whales, and dolphins, which when caught or beached on Fais are treated as the chief's property, and may not be consumed or redistributed without the permission of the chief. Valuable objects such as glass buoys or bottles or foreign ships that drift onto the island's beaches or reefs are likewise considered as the chief's property. The *machi* is the only locally-produced object that falls into this special category of chiefly objects.

The *Machi* in Relationship to Changing Traditional Chieftainship

In the past, the relationship between the *machi* and traditional chieftainship was expressed primarily in the use of machi as tribute offering to chiefs. Prior to imposed colonial government in the early 20th century, a system of trade and tribute linked all the Yap Outer Islands with Gagil, a high-ranking region of northern Yap.[7] Every two or three years, a flotilla of large, sea-going outrigger canoes of Outer Islanders, starting out 500 miles up the chain of outer islands from Yap, would sail west to Yap to pay respects and offer tribute to the Gagil chiefs. Tribute took the form mainly of fabric and textile

goods, including loom-woven cloth, sennit rope, and pandanus sails and mats, in addition to several consumable items such as coconut candy, coconut oil, and tobacco. The *machi* was considered the single most valuable item of tribute within this system. In order to maintain a supply of *machi* for the periodic tribute offerings to the Yap chiefs, the Fais Island chief required certain house compounds with chiefly title on Fais to produce one *machi* each year as an obligatory contribution to the island chief. During the German and Japanese colonial eras from 1898 to 1945, long-distancing voyaging among the Yap Outer Islands was discouraged and eventually prohibited by colonial authorities, and by the 1930s the *machi* had ceased to function as a periodic and required item of tribute to the Fais paramount chief and the Yapese chiefs in Gagil.

In addition to its role as chiefly tribute, the *machi* was ritually linked to chieftainship during the installation ceremony of the Fais paramount chief, when the *machi* was used as an inaugural mantle to symbolize the high office that the incoming chief was assuming. During the ceremony, the incoming chief kneeled upon sacred ground beside the chief's meeting house, while a secondary chief laid the *machi* on the shoulders of the new chief, and recited a chant that called upon the island's spirit deities to safeguard the new chief, and admonished the new chief to rule wisely[8]. Shortly after World War II, Fais and the neighboring outer islands of Yap were missionized by the Roman Catholic Church, and ceremonies invoking the old gods and spirits were abandoned, including the inaugural ceremony for the island chief. The Fais Island paramount chief I met in 1972 on my first visit to the island—a man then in his early 70s—was the last chief to have participated in the traditional inaugural ceremony utilizing a *machi* and the invocation of the island's pre-Christian deities.

Another traditional ceremonial function of the *machi* —also now abandoned— was at the coming-of-age initiation of adolescent boys. The procedure involved several days of seclusion, instruction and prayers with an older male relative who served as ritual "sponsor" for the initiate. During this period, the boy would be decorated as if for a dance performance, and would wear a *machi,* symbolizing his entrance in male adulthood. This ceremony also disappeared around the time of the introduction of Christianity to Fais after World War II.

Contemporary Function and Significance of the Fais *Machi*

Although no longer used as regular chiefly tribute, nor at the inauguration of the island chief or the coming-of-age ceremony for young men, the Fais *machi* today retains two important cultural functions, as a burial shroud for senior men, and as the highest form of gift. Both of these functions rest on the preeminent status of the *machi* as the most valuable object of local manufacture.

At the funeral of a senior man, his closest female relatives each provide a fine *machi*, which is wrapped over the body and buried with the deceased. Fais women will keep a fine *machi* in reserve for use as a burial shroud, especially if the woman has a close male relative whose death is anticipated in the near future. In past times, the most elaborate and finely-woven *machi* were not supposed to leave the island, but were reserved for the burial of close male relatives. Of the scores of loom-woven and other fabric goods presented to the family of the deceased and buried with the body, the *machi* occupies a crowning place of honor and symbolizes the special devotion of the man's sister or wife or daughter. By the same token, when given as a gift, the *machi* expresses

the high regard, love, or special friendship that binds the giver and the receiver. In former times, Fais men leaving the island on sailing trips would be given a *machi* by a female relative, in the expectation that the *machi* would serve as a sort protective valuable: if the man got into trouble in Yap or elsewhere, he could present the *machi* to a Yapese chief or local official and thereby secure the chief's protection. For Fais Islanders, the *machi* was equated to the value of a man's life. As one young man from Fais told me, "If I were to accidentally kill someone, then I would give a *machi* to their family and that would make it OK."

In addition to the significance derived from its role as an important item of chiefly tribute and wealth, funerary prestation, and high-status gift, the *machi* also holds cultural significance because its design is symbolically associated with the island's socio-spatial order and the centrality of chieftainship. The repertoire of individual patterns that make up the *machi* design includes about 30 named motifs, and while weavers have some freedom in choosing and arranging the individual motifs, both these component motifs and the overall design are highly formalized and fixed.[9] No two *machi* are precisely identical, yet all *machi* conform to a standardized symmetry, one which underlies other Fais cultural arts, architectural structures, and basic concepts of order.

This symmetry becomes evident when examining the rows of supplementary weft bands (*tob*) that adorn the two ends of the *machi*. The ground weave of the *machi* is constructed of undyed banana fiber, while the supplementary weft is constructed of hibiscus fiber yarns dyed red or blue with natural mineral and vegetable pigment. The blue-dyed central band (*yiligitob*, literally 'mother band' or 'main band') is the most prominent and complex of the supplementary weft bands, and is flanked by distinctive

blue-and-red-dyed bands on either side. The entire design formed by supplementary weft bands is symmetric around the central band. The weaver can make the design more or less elaborate by adding additional rows of supplementary weft bands on either side of the central band, but the two sides remain mirror images of each other. The main band marks the center of the design and two other bands, similar to the central band, mark the mid-point of each opposing half.

The *machi* exhibits a similar symmetry along the warp axis. The weaver positions figural motifs along the supplementary weft bands, with one figure occupying the midpoint of the band, flanked by identical figures on either side, evenly spaced along the weft band. The simplest *machi* design displays three figures, one in the middle of the band and one at either end of the band. The weaver can add figures at the mid-point of each half, for a total of five, and again at the mid-point of each quarter, for a total of nine.

In this way the *machi* design illustrates a widely-used system of measurement in the Yap Outer Islands that is applied to house architecture, canoe construction, and numerous other crafts and constructions.[10] The system involves finding the midpoint of a particular distance to be measured, and then through a process of successive bifurcations, finding the midpoint of each half, and the midpoint of each quarter. This process of successive bifurcations results in a nine-band pattern, with a central band marking the mid-point, and four bands on either side marking the quarter-points in the measurement.

The nine-band pattern is a recurrent motif in traditional island arts. Fais women traditionally wore shell belts with their loom-woven lavalava, and a woman's belt was a key accoutrement for her to be properly dressed. Fais women's shell belts are composed of nine strands of black and white shells, with a distinctive central strand, flanked

symmetrically by four strands on either side. Like the *machi*, the shell belt displays center-symmetry along both axes: each strand is divided into nine sections, with a distinctive section in the center, flanked by four sections on either side. Traditional tattoo designs on a man's chest display the same nine-band pattern, with a distinctive central band running along the sternum, flanked by four bands on either side of the chest. The process of successive bifurcation is coded into several art forms through the color or linguistic terms that distinguish the various bands. One style of women's lavalavas, called *peig* (literally 'side') contains three warp bands, marking the center and the two edges. More elaborate lavalavas, called *flahk* ('flag') contain nine warp bands of different colors, one color distinguishing the main central band and the edge bands, another color distinguishing the two bands marking the quarter-points, and another color distinguishing the four bands marking the eighth-points. One style of Fais fish trap—an immense, carefully-measured cage-like construction of bent saplings and bamboo lashed together with sennit rope—rests on nine support beams, and the linguistic terms for the beams distinguish three sets: one term names the central beam and the two edges, another term names the two beams at the quarter-points, and a third term names the four beams at the eighth-points.

The center-symmetry of the *machi* and of other traditional arts of Fais Island is also visible in the spatial arrangement of the island's three villages, which lie along the southeast coast in a cluster of houses. The chief's village is situated in the center, and is flanked by one village on either side. The chief, who may be referred to as "the mother of the island," occupies a socio-spatial central position analogous to the "mother band" of the *machi*, which is likewise flanked by one similar band on either side.

The *machi* is thus embedded and partially bounded within a system of cultural practices and symbols that establish its cultural value but restrict the possibilities for changes in its circulation and production. As an article of chiefly status and wealth, with aspects of inalienability from the island chief's purview and power, the *machi* cannot freely enter the marketplace of handicraft commodities.[11] And because the highly formalized motifs and overall symmetry of the *machi* are "intrinsically functional"[12] and must conform closely to a cultural design structure, individual weavers have little space for innovation. Fais women share a clear conception of what constitutes a "correct" *machi*, and deviations from this standard are considered errors, rather than artistic innovations.[13] The traditional aspects that give the *machi* its cultural significance have, paradoxically, made preservation efforts problematic, as I discuss in the concluding sections.

Cultural Preservation: Re-contextualizing the *Machi*

Over the course of the 20th century the traditional contexts of the Fais *machi* had largely disappeared, with the cessation of inter-island chiefly tribute voyages to Yap, and the abandonment of pre-Christian rituals involving *machi* in inaugural ceremonies for the island chief and initiation ceremonies for the young men of Fais. There had been a concurrent decrease in production of *machi*, and a loss of *machi* weaving skills among the Fais women. By the turn of the century in 2000, fewer than twenty-five Fais women retained the knowledge and skill to weave *machi*, and these were mostly women in their forties or older. No Fais woman below the age of thirty could weave *machi*, and very few had much knowledge or interest in the unique significance of the *machi* in traditional

Fais culture. For the younger generation of women, the *machi* seemed to belong to an earlier era, prior to the mid-20th century advent of schools, Christianity, and cash economy. For the older generation, the loss of *machi* knowledge seemed part of the inexorable march of modernization and the erosion of much indigenous knowledge and technologies.

The idea of reviving the knowledge and production of *machi* was initially promoted by a single individual from Fais, and in the early stages the project was very much a one-man effort.[14] Among the western-educated Fais community leaders who work and reside in Yap, informal discussions and occasional village meetings had taken place over the years, to address the perceived loss of cultural knowledge and skills. The *machi* revival project arose in that context, and the principal motivation from the beginning was to prevent the loss of this unique traditional textile, which represented a source of pride and cultural continuity for the island community. The project organizer, Mr. Sophiano Limol, is one of the very few Fais Islanders to have obtained a four-year college degree, at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. With his additional work experience in business development and tourism management for the Yap State government, and with a reputation for effective community leadership and persistence, Mr. Limol was uniquely suited to the task.

The initial obstacles to the project were both bureaucratic and cultural in nature. In order to request funds from granting agencies, Mr. Limol needed to establish a legitimate bureaucratic entity. The Fais community had no such formal structure. In early 2001, Mr. Limol registered the generic-sounding "Yap State Grant Research Firm" (YSGRF) as an umbrella organization seeking funding for a variety of cultural projects,

the *machi* revival project being the primary one. While providing bureaucratic access to funding agencies, this also led to problems down the line, when the guidelines and requirements of granting agencies were not consistent with the priorities and concerns of the Fais community. For example, when Limol sought funding to pay salaries to several Fais master weavers who would teach traditional *machi* weaving to younger Fais women, one agency—the office of the Yap State Workforce Investment Act (WIA)—offered support, but because this agency's mandate was state-wide, its guidelines required that the instruction be available to all women from islands throughout Yap State. The Fais Island community considers knowledge of *machi* weaving to be traditionally restricted to Fais, and passing the knowledge to women of other island communities is viewed as a violation of the proprietary rights of the Fais community. Hence there was an inherent paradox: in preserving knowledge of the *machi*, the Fais community risked losing their traditional exclusive control of that knowledge.

During the early stages of planning for the *machi* revival project, Mr. Limol's main task was to persuade the Fais community, especially the senior women and elderly paramount chief, that the project was valuable and viable. Although the senior women took great pride in their *machi* weaving skill, and they recalled with keen nostalgia having learned these skills as young teens, they seemed resigned to the gradual disappearance of this traditional textile among the generation of their own daughters and grand-daughters. During the first year of planning the *machi* revival project, Mr. Limol, who works and resides in Yap, made numerous trip to Fais, to meet with the island's women and to encourage their support and leadership in the project. The plan that the women agreed upon was to build a traditional thatched shelter as a *machi* "school" beside

the Fais Island elementary school, where several senior women would instruct a small class of apprentices, over a nine-month period. Achieving consensus among the women was a slow process, because the concept of a *machi* "school" conflicted with traditional modes of instruction, in which young women would learn *machi* weaving at home, from their mother. M*achi* knowledge traditionally was transmitted and preserved within a close kinship context, and re-contextualizing this learning process to an island-wide "school" was a foreign concept.

At the time that the *machi* revival planning was underway, the paramount chief of Fais was man of nearly eighty years, who had come of age during the pre-Christian era prior to World War II, and had grown up hearing his elders and predecessor chiefs talk of tribute voyages to Yap. For him, the Fais *machi* was still a living symbol, and in discussions with Mr. Limol, the chief emphasized that the *machi* be treated as an object of sacred value and cultural pride. The ranking chief, expressing a view shared by the island's traditional leaders, was concerned specifically that the finished products of the *machi* school not be put up for sale.

This resistance by the island chiefs to the commoditization of the *machi* was a long-standing position. In the mid-1970s, the Council of Outer Islands chiefs developed a suggested price list for island handicraft such as bundles of sennit rope, carved wooden figures, miniature model canoes, and the different varieties of loom-woven cloth. The chiefs intended the price list to stimulate local handicraft production and ensure that the craftspeople obtain fair payment for their work. As the chiefs assigned prices to the various styles of loom-woven cloth, the question arose of also setting prices for *machi*. At that time the chiefs intentionally omitted *machi* from the list, reasoning that *machi*

traditionally are chiefly textiles and the sale of *machi* as common commodities would be an insult to the status of the chiefs.[15] This policy has remained in effect, and *machi* are never displayed for sale alongside other handicraft in Yap stores (although they may be sold privately to friends or visitors). This policy has produced another fundamental paradox for the *machi* preservation project. In the increasingly monetized island economy—where even the traditional chiefs are paid to attend regular meetings in Yap—the Fais weavers cannot easily gain financial reward for their work in reviving this unique traditional textile.

Outcome of the *Machi* Revival Project

Fais Island celebrated the graduation of the first class of six *machi* apprentices with a gala ceremony on March 12, 2004 that included several official visitors from Yap and Guam, and the entire assembled community of Fais. The initial success of the *machi* revival project was a testament to the leadership style of Mr. Limol, and to the cooperation and commitment of the elderly Fais paramount chief and the many individuals within the small island community, especially the senior women, who had embraced the project and worked hard on its behalf. The graduation ceremony honored and publicly foregrounded the Fais women in ways quite uncharacteristic for this traditionally male-dominated island society. One of the *machi* instructors read prepared remarks to the assembled island community, which was the first time in remembered Fais history that a woman had spoken officially as part of a public ceremony. The apprentices proudly showed off the two *machi* they had completed as part of their instruction.

Afterwards, the instructors and apprentices formed a reception line, and the entire island population filed by, shaking the young women's hands and congratulating them.

Two more classes of *machi* apprentices completed training over the next two years in 2005 and 2006, and celebrated with similar public festivities, speeches, and honors. The *machi* revival project has trained about two dozen apprentices and has thus doubled the total number of expert *machi* weavers on Fais, and has successfully transmitted this traditional textile skill to the younger generation of Fais women in their twenties and thirties. The project also has succeeded in rediscovering the indigenous technology for producing an intense and lasting red dye from local plant and mineral material, a technology that Fais women evidently had lost two generations earlier, after the introduction of chemical dyes during the German and Japanese colonial eras.

Since 2006 the Fais *machi* revival project has been inactive, and its future is uncertain. After funding ran out to pay salaries of the *machi* instructors, the project has been unable to sustain itself. A surplus of elaborate, high quality *machi* has accumulated, exceeding the local need for occasional burial shrouds or gifts, and the infrequent opportunities for sale of *machi.* Since *machi* cannot be publicly offered for sale in Yap, owing to traditional chiefs' restrictions, they can only be sold privately through Fais contacts with outsiders. At prices ranging from $500 to $1200, depending upon the quality and degree of elaboration, Fais *machi* appeal to a very limited clientele of affluent art collectors, textile aficionados, and museums with Asian-Pacific interests. Mr. Limol has offered Fais *machi* on the Internet auction site, eBay, so far without any success.

The Fais community's attempt to preserve the knowledge of this unique traditional textile has, paradoxically, begun to shift its cultural context. Despite the

injunctions of the elderly Fais chief, the *machi* revival project has cautiously sought to market *machi* as a high-end handicraft commodity, thereby undermining the textile's customary aspect of inalienability from traditional chieftainship. Although economic benefit for the women weavers was not the primary objective of the Fais *machi* revival project, the project has empowered the women to seek cash compensation for their investment of time and skill in learning *machi* weaving. For the families living on Fais Island, opportunities for obtaining cash income are much more limited than for those families living in urbanized Yap, and the sale of fine *machi* is increasingly seen as a source of money.

The revival of this traditional textile illustrates the Fais community's ability to creatively negotiate between tradition and modernity. At present however there is no indication that commoditization is pushing the *machi* in the direction of "tourist art" with simplified designs, reduced size, and poor quality. On the contrary, as the Fais women strive to publicly demonstrate their expertise and knowledge by weaving finely elaborate *machi* incorporating the full repertoire of possible patterns and using only local plant fibers and dyes, the textile takes on as aspect of "fine art" object. It is often treated as such by discerning collectors, when they display *machi* behind glass in an expensive frame, such as one *machi* that adorns the lobby of Yap's only luxury hotel. The Fais community's efforts have also shifted the *machi* from a private and domestic sphere into a public sphere, and the *machi* has acquired an aspect of "local symbol," emblematic of the Fais Island community vis-à-vis other islands of Yap State. As one of the elder women among the *machi* instructors stated, "Our knowledge of *machi* is doubly important: it both represents our identity and it gives guidance to the women of Fais."

The *machi* revival project on Fais, despite problems and paradoxes, has served as a public demonstration of the continuing cultural significance of this traditional textile, and the strength of tradition within the Fais community.

[1] NOTES

. Krauss, Elizabeth L. 1992. “The Looking Glass of Historic Preservation in Micronesia: A Reflection of Modernization and Changing Values.” *Human Organization* 51(2): 197–201.

[2] . Although the role of traditional leaders in modern Yap State has been questioned and contested in recent state constitutional conventions, the prerogatives of the traditional leaders continue to be recognized by the state constitution. See Pinsker, Eve C. 1997. “Traditional Leaders Today in the Federated States of Micronesia.” In *Chiefs Today: Traditional Pacific Leadership and the Postcolonial State*, edited by Geoffrey M. White and Lamont Lindstrom, pp. 150–182. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

[3] . Nevermann, Hans. 1938. *Die Indo-Ozeanische Weberei*. Hamburg: Kommissionsverlag Friederichsen, De Gruyter & Co.

[4] . For a description of other forms of traditional textiles in Micronesia, see Rubinstein, Donald H. 1986. “Fabric Arts and Traditions.” In *The Art of Micronesia*, edited by Jerome Feldman and Donald H. Rubinstein, pp. 45–66. Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Art Gallery.

[5] . I recorded one such chant while conducting fieldwork on Fais Island in 1975. See Rubinstein, Donald H. 1979. An Ethnography of Micronesian Childhood: Contexts of Socialization on Fais Island. Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University Department of Anthropology, p. 189.

[6] . Cloth production and exchange play an important role in Pacific Islands societies, and have received renewed theoretical attention recently from anthropologists. See, for example: Weiner, Annette B. 1989. “Why Cloth? Wealth, Gender and Power in Oceania.” In *Cloth and Human Experience*, edited by Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider, pp. 33–72. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

[7] . Lessa, William A. 1950. “Ulithi and the Outer Island World.” *American Anthropologist* 52(1): 27–52.

[8] . This chant in the Fais language and in English translation is presented in Rubinstein, Donald H, and Sophiano Limol. 2007. “Reviving the Sacred Machi: A Chiefly Weaving from Fais Island, Micronesia.” In *Material Choices: Refashioning Bast and Leaf Fibers in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by Roy W. Hamilton and B. Lynn Milgram, p. 161. Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA.

[9] . The symmetry of the *machi* design and its relationship to other Fais Island art forms and social structures is described in detail in Rubinstein, Donald H. 1993. “The Social Fabric: Micronesian Design Patterns and Social Order.” In *Art in Small-Scale Societies: Contemporary Readings*, edited by Richard L. Anderson and Karen L. Field, pp. 70–83. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

[10] . Alkire, William H. 1970. “Systems of Measurement on Woleai Atoll, Caroline Islands. *Anthropos* 65: 1–73.

[11] . For a general discussion of the concept of “inalienable” objects in Pacific Islands societies, see Weiner, Annette B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[12] . Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, p. 78. Oxford: Clarendon

[13] . The fact that *machi* motifs and overall design symmetry appear virtually unchanged over the past two centuries is further evidence of the highly standardized patterning. The two oldest *machi* that I have examined—one at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, collected in 1803, and one at the University of Santo Tomas Museum in Manila, undocumented but appearing also to date from the 19th century—are both basically identical in motifs and general design to contemporary *machi*.

[14] . The Fais Island *machi* revival project is discussed in greater detail in Rubinstein, Donald H. and Sophiano Limol. 2007. “Reviving the Sacred Machi: A Chiefly Weaving from Fais Island, Micronesia.” In *Material Choices: Refashioning Bast and Leaf Fibers in Asia and the Pacific*, edited by Roy W. Hamilton and B. Lynn Milgram, p. 154–165. Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA.

[15] . This is a process Arjun Appadurai has recognized as “decommoditization from above.” See Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” p. 22. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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