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Autore Lennard F

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Sommario/riassunto

Barkcloth or tapa, a cloth made from the inner bark of trees, was widely used in place of woven cloth in the Pacific islands until the 19th century. A ubiquitous material, it was integral to the lives of islanders and used for clothing, furnishings and ritual artefacts. Material Approaches to Polynesian Barkcloth takes a new approach to the study of the history of this region through its barkcloth heritage, focusing on the plants themselves and surviving objects in historic collections. This object-focused approach has filled gaps in our understanding of the production and use of this material through an investigation of this unique fabric's physical properties, transformation during manufacture and the regional history of its development in the 18th and 19th centuries. The book is the outcome of a research project which focused on three important collections of barkcloth at The Hunterian, University of Glasgow; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. It also looks more widely at the value of barkcloth artifacts in museum collections for enhancing both contemporary practice and a wider appreciation of this remarkable fabric. The contributors include academics, curators, conservators and makers of barkcloth from Oceania and beyond, in an interdisciplinary study which draws together insights from object-based and textual research, fieldwork and tapa making, and information on the plants used to make fibres and colourants. This book will be of interest to tapa makers, museum professionals including curators and conservators; academics and students in the fields of anthropology, museum studies and conservation; museum visitors and anyone interested in finding out more about barkcloth.