

The Fish Skin Road

Mapping Indigenous Knowledge from the Lower Amur River
to Sakhalin Island

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Editor's Foreword

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The Fish Skin Road contributes to the scholarly aims of Ca' Foscari University's Department of Asian and North African Studies, recognised for its research work in many different fields. The volume reflects the department's commitment to examining transcultural processes across Asia and Europe, with attention to environmental concerns, cultural inclusion and the role of minorities. By focusing on Circumpolar Indigenous fish skin practices, this study brings a material culture that has long remained at the margins of dominant narratives, while addressing questions of sustainability and cultural continuity.

The book finds a natural place within the *Marco Polo Studies in Global Europe-Asia Connections* series, which promotes research on exchanges across Eurasia over extended temporal and spatial scales, engaging with themes ranging from archaeology to environmental studies. *The Fish Skin Road* examines intercultural contact from the Lower Amur River to Sakhalin Island, situating material practices, local knowledge and historical encounters within wider transregional exchanges, associated with the Silk Roads and the journeys of Marco Polo. These routes emerge as channels for the circulation of goods, techniques, materials and visual cultures, within which fish skin garments can be read as part of broader histories of contact.

The study contributes to the history of dress by examining clothing as carriers of knowledge, identity and environmental adaptation, placing fish skin garments alongside textile traditions across Eurasia. Drawing on Elisa Palomino's background in fashion design, it brings a practice-based perspective to the analysis of making processes, highlighting the role of Indigenous communities within research in the history of art in the

Department of Asian Studies. It extends fashion studies by including forms of knowledge previously excluded from established narratives.

The monograph advances a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary investigation of fish skin material culture among Circumpolar Indigenous communities. It combines historical analysis with anthropological and ethnographic perspectives, together with detailed attention to materials and techniques. This approach situates fish skin artefacts within debates on sustainability and traditional knowledge grounded in long-standing ecological relationships. The study draws on archival sources, including travellers' accounts, missionary writings and records by Indigenous scholars and engages with museum collections and visual materials produced by historical observers. The integration of visual evidence, including *Ainu-e* and Qing court imagery, documents dress and maritime life, while showing how Indigenous communities were represented within wider networks of exchange. Their analysis strengthens the historical dimension of the study and raises questions about authorship, perspective and cultural interpretation.

The research demonstrates sensitivity to cultural values. Object-based analysis is combined with engagement with communities connected to this heritage. This approach supports cultural revitalisation and decolonial research practices. The attention to material sustainability links historical evidence and past practices with present concerns. By addressing fish skin technologies and their ecological and cultural dimensions, the book offers a model for future work that connects historical inquiry with present-day challenges. The volume will be of interest to scholars across a range of disciplines and provides a foundation for continued exploration of the interconnected histories across Eurasia.