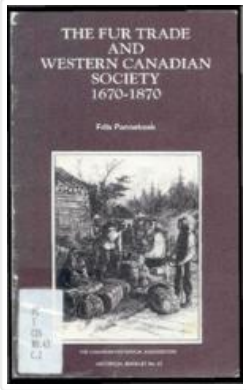


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IV

The fur trade and Western Canadian society, 1670-1870



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Abstract

The political, economic, and social history of present day Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, was, for the first two hundred years of European contact, a product of the fur trade. At various posts along the region's principal rivers and lakes, traders would exchange such manufactured goods as blankets, beads, guns, tobacco, and axes for native supplies of beaver, marten, and muskrat pelts. In fact, beaver was so abundant that it came to be treated as a currency throughout the Canadian North West. This trading system was highly complex, involving not only the French, Scottish, and Canadian traders who came from the St. Lawrence Valley, and the British traders who came from Hudson Bay with their financial base in England, but the various native groups as well. And the history of the fur trade is not only the story of the actual trade itself, but also that of the new society created by the intermingling of fur traders and natives in the Western interior.

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