

*The World Hunt: An Environmental History of the Commodification of Animals.* John F. Richards. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780520282537

This publication is an interesting selection for the California World History series. The four chapters included in the book were originally published in a large, synthetic environmental world history titled *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World*. [1] This book was Richard's last but, as J.R. McNeill explains in the introduction, the final section on the world hunt was most influential in the field of environmental history because of its focus on animals, the impact of climate change, and the ecological consequences of the extinction of key species in the early modern period. McNeill points out that Richard's focus on animals and climate change reveals his forward thinking analysis as environmental historians currently debate about the historical agency of animals and often utilize interdisciplinary approaches to determine the role of climate change in the early modern world. More importantly, because Richards wrote *The World Hunt* as a synthesis (combining the secondary sources of other historians to reveal global interactions as opposed to primary source or archival analysis), the citations provide sources for further inquiry into the vast geographic scope of his work. Although the majority of his analysis is based on secondary sources, he also includes large block quotes from primary sources to describe historical processes that could provide interesting primary source analysis exercises in world history courses.

The organization of the book is based around animals and geographic scope. The first chapter discusses the fur trade in North America with very detailed sections on the connection between indigenous political relationships and indigenous participation in the world market through the fur trade. Richards continues the argument first put forth by environmental historians such as William Cronon [2] by suggesting that the lifeways of indigenous tribes altered as they

became incorporated into the world market. Dependence on trade goods, particularly alcohol and guns, created an unbalanced trading relationship between tribes and colonial posts. But Richards argues, just as Cronon did several decades earlier, that indigenous tribes did not live in a state of harmony with nature but altered their environment, which later led to overhunting and finally the extinction of key species such as the beaver. Obviously this section is the largest since the secondary material on the North American fur trade is extensive. His second chapter reveals interesting connections between the experience of indigenous tribes in North America and the native Siberian fur trade, brought by Russian expansion into Siberia. The most striking difference is also quite interesting. The Russian economy depended on the Siberian fur trade in order to fill their treasury. There were no mines or exports to provide capital so they relied entirely on natural resource extraction. Both chapters three and four also had the similar theme of abundant species hunted or fished to decline based solely on economic gain. Chapter three discusses the cod fish market (fish and fishery histories being a growing field of interest to environmental historians particularly in the American Northwest), and chapter four focuses on the commercial hunting of whales and walrus. Both chapters provide interesting discussions of how climate change altered the breeding habits and location of fish and animals, which then altered the success of commerce in these regions.

Each chapter provided scientific statistics which would be useful for students researching environmental history but also for teachers tackling this subject. Furthermore, this study provides a successful example of synthetic research and the usefulness of such studies when writing a global history. Interdisciplinary sources are central to this book and provided Richards with the evidence to make broad connections but also to reveal the importance of learning about the environmental consequences of extinction and climate change.

Carey McCormack, Washington State University, Vancouver

[1] John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[2] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).