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Sommario/riassunto	From about 1830 to 1849, Bent's Old Fort, located in present-day Colorado, was the largest trading post in the Southwest and the mountain-plains region. Although the raw enterprise and improvisation that characterized the American westward movement seem to have little to do with ritual, Douglas Comer argues that the fort grew and prospered because of ritual and that ritual shaped the subsequent history of the region to an astonishing extent.