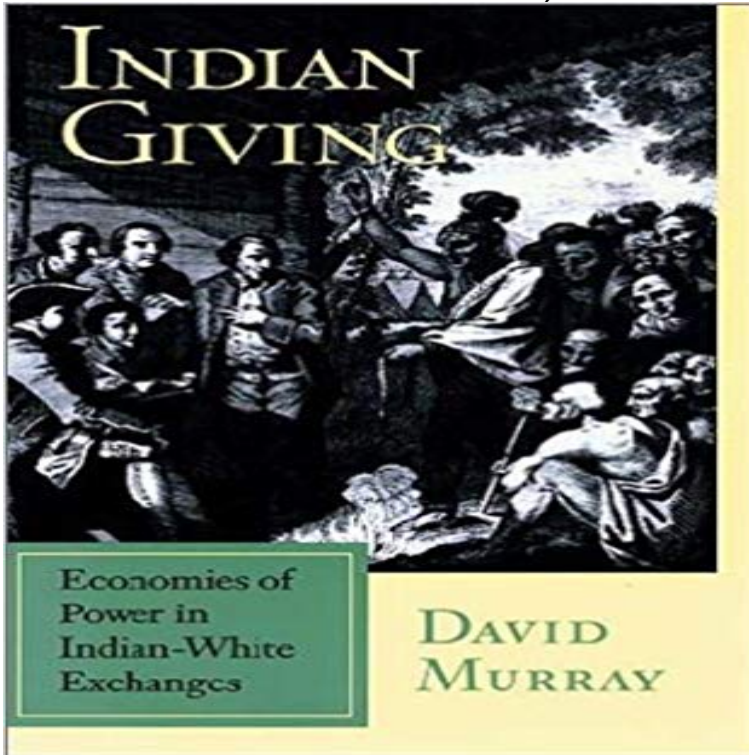


Indian Giving: Economies of Power in Indian-White Exchanges (Native Americans of the Northeast)



Whether they involved goods, words, or ideas, acts of giving and trading were fundamental in early Indian-white contacts. But how did these transactions function across the two cultures, and what did they mean to each? In this book, David Murray explores a range of early exchanges between Europeans and Indians, showing how they operated within a set of interlocking economies—linguistic, religious, as well as material. Murray begins by examining the crucial role of gift-giving. Like the double function of the key, which both locks and unlocks, the gift—with its simultaneous action of offering something and demanding a return—expressed the paradoxical nature of early Indian-white encounters. Because the power to give was associated with ideas of sovereignty, both sides often preferred to represent exchanges as gift-giving rather than trading or selling. To illustrate the complexities of these cross-cultural transactions, the author looks closely at the work of linguist, trader, and missionary Roger Williams, whose *A Key into the Language of America* at once serves the purposes of translation, conversion, and trade. Murray also examines the changing meaning and representation of wampum, the quintessential medium of exchange in the early colonial period, as well as the multiple processes of conversion taking place as Christian ideas were incorporated into Indian cultures. According to the author, only by recognizing the ways in which objects and ideas circulated and took on value in interrelated economies can we understand the contested middle ground between Europeans and Indians of the colonial Northeast.

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