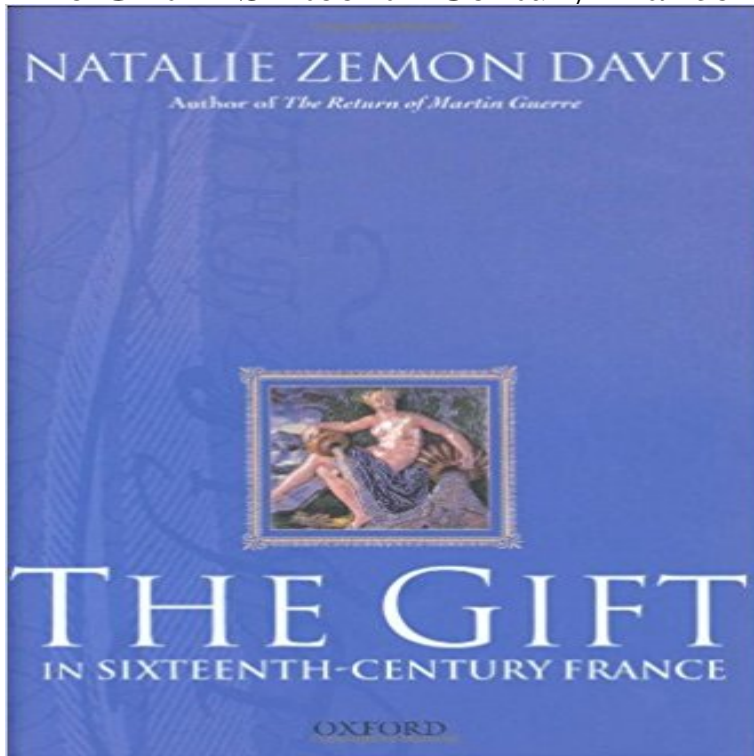


The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France



In this gem of a book, Natalie Zemon Davis explores the role of gifts in Renaissance France. From the Kings bounty to the beggars alms, from the lavish feasting and display of civic dignitaries to the humble tokens exchanged by peasant bride and groom, the giving and receiving of gifts - then, as now - held tremendous significance. Full of vignettes which illuminate life and belief in the sixteenth century, *The Gift* examines how the giving of presents functioned at all levels of society. As they do today, people evaluated gifts all the time - their own gifts and those of others - deciding what was at stake, and judging whether it was a good gift, a bad gift, or even a gift at all. Sometimes gifts brought peace and amity; sometimes they led to bitter quarrels and accusations of corruption. The Reformation and its liturgy were in part a quarrel between Protestants and Catholics about whether humans can give gifts to god, and what gifts we owe each other. Natalie Zemon Davis here deploys her own gift for the retelling of sometimes poignant personal stories to offer both telling cultural detail and a true historical perspective on the turbulent era of the Renaissance and Reformation.

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