



Unwrapping Christmas (Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology - Cultural Forms)

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In an age of secularization and the decline of ritual, Christmas has emerged as the most promising candidate for the first global festival. It is celebrated in the Christian West as well as in many countries with either a minority or no Christian population. How is it that Christmas is not merely surviving, but actually gaining in importance?

Unwrapping Christmas is the first comparative study of the Christmas phenomenon, based on direct observation of how the festival is actually celebrated in diverse social contexts. It begins by presenting general theories of Christmas and includes the first full English translation of "Father Christmas Executed" by Claude Levi-Strauss. The focus then turns to two controversial issues: the relationship between Christmas and materialism, and the debate over the place of the family in Christmas celebrations. Both of these issues are examined and interpreted in a variety of cultural contexts; including the USA, Japan, Britain, Sweden, and Trinidad.

Christmas is rapidly becoming the focus for a constellation of activities including gift-giving, the marking of the seasons, and the celebration of extended family networks. This collection, the first systematic analysis of Christmas, represents a fascinating and significant contribution to understanding how and why this holiday has developed into the global festival celebrated today.

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