

In 1980 Cathy N. Davidson traveled to Japan to teach English at a leading all-women's university. It was the first of many journeys and the beginning of a deep and abiding fascination. In this extraordinary book, Davidson depicts a series of intimate moments and small epiphanies that together make up a panoramic view of Japan. With wit, candor, and a lover's keen eye, she tells captivating stories—from that of a Buddhist funeral laden with ritual to an exhilarating evening spent touring the "Floating World," the sensual demimonde in which salaryman meets geisha and the normal rules are suspended. On a remote island inhabited by one of the last matriarchal societies in the world, a disconcertingly down-to-earth priestess leads her to the heart of a sacred grove. And she spends a few unforgettable weeks in a quasi-Victorian residence called the Practice House, where, until recently, Japanese women were taught American customs so that they would make proper wives for husbands who might be stationed abroad. In an afterword new to this edition, Davidson tells of a poignant trip back to Japan in 2005 to visit friends who had remade their lives after the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995, which had devastated the city of Kobe, as well as the small town where Davidson had lived and the university where she taught. 36 Views of Mount Fuji not only transforms our image of Japan, it offers a stirring look at the very nature of culture and identity. Often funny, sometimes lilyingly sad, it is as intimate and irresistible as a long-awaited letter from a good friend.

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