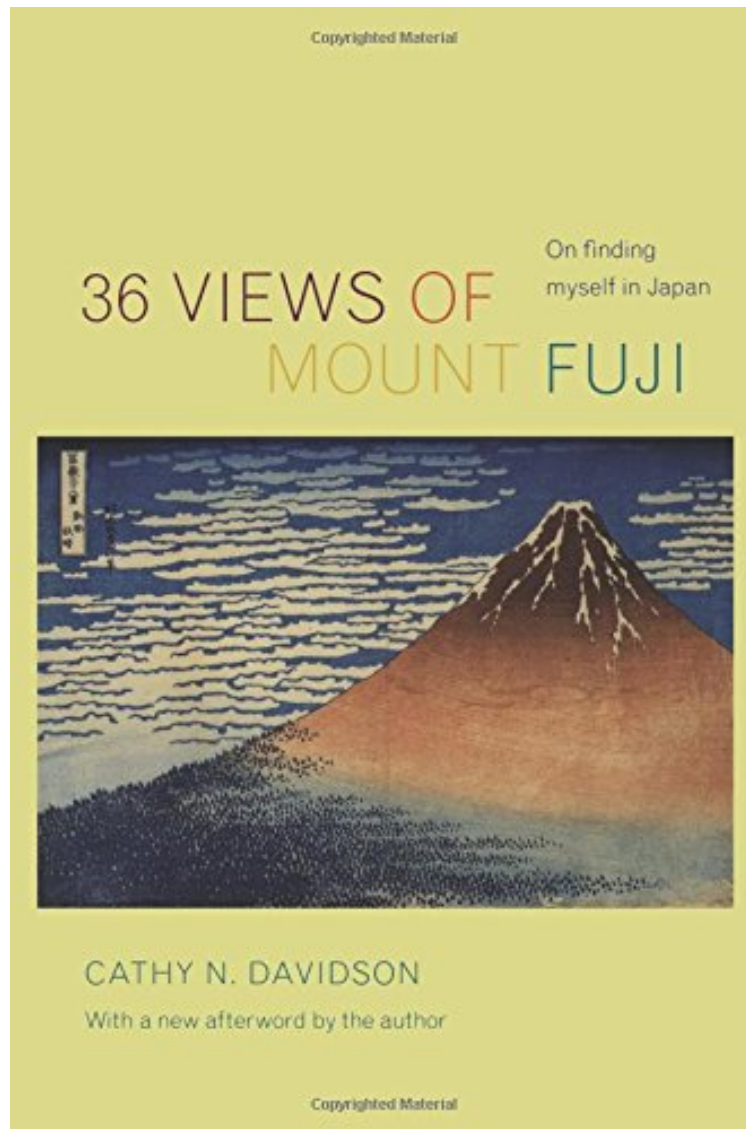


(Download pdf) 36 Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan

## 36 Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan

*Cathy N. Davidson*

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**Cathy N. Davidson : 36 Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 36 Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan:

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Must read for any Gaijin By Thomas B. Gross I have shared many of the sensations she describes in this book: the way the most mundane conversations can seem like a great accomplishment, because they have been conducted in Japanese, for example. The impulse to speak Japanese whenever you try to speak any foreign language. The feeling that you are "becoming Japanese." Ms. Davidson does not sugar-coat life in Japan whatsoever, and in fact a major theme of the book is explaining why she doesn't live there.

I would give it 5 stars except that for a short book, it is a little hard to get through. Some of the observations on life, death, marriage, and photography seem a little sophomoric or naive. But highly recommended nonetheless; it would be a great book to pack on an extended vacation in Japan. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By William A. Guenon advertised 5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Looking for Home in All the Best Places By Annag Chandler Davidson has written a wonderful book, more memoir than travelogue, on her trips to Japan both as a tourist and as a visiting professor. She has a real eye for the telling detail and the apt turn of phrase. Several of her vignettes (the Japanese lady in Paris, the futile attempt to learn Japanese in an intensive, formal course, the pilgrimage with her stepson) are small gems that linger in my memory. The heart of the book, though, is not so much what Davidson saw of Japan but what Japan did to Davidson, and what she learned of herself from her trips there, and from her longing to steep herself in many aspects of Japanese life that even she acknowledges are more a fantasy of Japan than the reality -- a reality that she and her husband confront when they consider transplanting themselves to Japan. This quandry -- I want to find my home, but where is it? -- is one that I think many of us will appreciate, and the solution that she and her husband reach is elegant and satisfying. Although much of the book revolves around "composite" characters and institutions, every situation rings true.

In 1980 Cathy N. Davidson traveled to Japan to teach English at a leading all-womens 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 lovers 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 liltingly sad, it is as intimate and irresistible as a long-awaited letter from a good friend.

From Publishers Weekly English professor Davidson recounts her travels in Japan in the 1980s; BOMC selection in cloth. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal One of America's most significant exports is the English language and the culture that accompanies it. Thousands of Americans have gone abroad to teach English, and hundreds of them have written books about their experiences. These books tend to reveal as much about their authors--and thus our shared American culture--as they do about the host culture in which they find themselves. A professor at Duke who has visited Japan four times, Davidson writes perceptively, frankly, and personally about her struggles to understand Japanese ways. She also attempts to reconcile those ways with her own life. Davidson has much to say about the role of women in both cultures and of the problems of trying to live in both worlds, but, unlike most authors of this genre, she is nonjudgmental and fair. This is one of the best "explanations" of Japanese culture, and our problems in understanding it, that has come along in years. Highly recommended. - Harold M. Otness, Southern Oregon State Coll. Lib., Ashland Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist In spiritual counterpoint to *Rising Sun* and the Japan-bashing currently in vogue comes a luminous, sincere book that offers another view. Named after a classic series of prints depicting a variety of points of view of Japan's sacred mountain, Davidson's essays do much the same thing for the entire nation. Drawing upon her range of experiences living and working in Japan off and on for 10 years, Davidson tries to understand the essence of the country. She finds it difficult to pin down, however, because each encounter with it reveals yet another layer of its society's inner workings. Sometimes frustrated, often unsure of protocol, Davidson remains open and sensitive to the Japanese way of life. Her love of the culture is clear, and as she and her husband struggle with whether to settle there, she begins to examine not only Japan but also her own life and values. Nuanced and passionate, her book achieves what many travel writers can only aspire to: the sense of being both inside and outside of a culture at the same time and the profound feeling that this journey has indeed led her to someplace she always wanted to go. Mary Ellen Sullivan