



Japan: A Reinterpretation

Patrick Smith

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The Japanese are in the process of re-creating themselves--an endeavor they have undertaken at intervals throughout history, always prompted by a combination of domestic and global forces. In this landmark book, Patrick Smith asserts that a variety of forces--the achievement of material affluence, the Cold War's end, and the death of Emperor Hirohito--are now spurring Japan once again toward a fundamental redefinition of itself.

As Smith argues, this requires of the West an equally thorough reevaluation of the picture we have held of Japan over the past half-century. He reveals how economic overdevelopment conceals profound political, social, and psychological under-development. And by refocusing on "internal history" and the Japanese character, Smith offers a new framework for understanding Japan and the Japanese as they really are. The Japanese, he says, are now seeking to alter the very thing we believe distinguishes them: the relationship between the individual and society.

Timely, measured, and authoritative, this book illuminates a new Japan, a nation preparing to drop the mask it holds up to the West and to steer a course of its own in the world.

Jacket image: The Great Wave of Kanagawa, from 36 Views of Mount Fuji (detail) by Katsushika Hokusai. Private collection.

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