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After Santa Clara county in California was labeled “Silicon Valley” in the 1970s, it attained a mythical quality in the public imagination. Although much of the myth is surely hyperbole, the region has experienced and continues to experience forces that will shape the future elsewhere in the United States and around the world. The paramount producer of the information revolution, Silicon Valley has become the icon for a lifestyle saturated with digital devices.

Whereas most books on the region focus on its entrepreneurial reputation, this book is an anthropological expedition into the everyday lives of people living in and connected to Silicon Valley—software engineers around the water cooler, a mothers’ group at lunch, nannies in the park, rush-hour commuters—to get at the emerging texture of life. A specialized high-tech economy has drawn people from many countries, and the things that make Silicon Valley culture distinctive—technological saturation and cultural complexity—also define an emerging global culture, and in that context it operates as a natural experimental laboratory.

Based on ten years of anthropological research, the book is an ethnographic exploration of the impact of these momentous changes on a single region. Within schools, workplaces, and homes, identities emerge, erode, transform, and are recreated to coalesce into a larger community of communities, producing many different choices for its inhabitants. These choices determine how technology is used, work is done, and families are made. People juggle these choices, often informed by the same pragmatic, instrumental reasoning that characterizes high-tech workplaces. Saturated by information technology and struggling to manifest civic life from deeply diverse identity communities, the inhabitants of Silicon Valley illustrate in microcosm the social and cultural identities of the future.

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