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Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese

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Despite ours being the Asia-Pacific age and despite Japan being one of the most important countries of the region, there is, comparatively speaking, little scholarly attention paid to the Japanese legal system in Western jurisdictions. Other countries, such as China, tend to attract the most intellectual resources. There are, of course, exceptions to this general trend. In the English-speaking literature, a prominent one is Professor Hiroshi Oda's field-defining *Japanese Law*, published in 2021 in its fourth edition by Oxford University Press. In Continental Europe, a recent – and much-needed – addition to the literature on Japanese law is *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese*, published in 2021 by the internationally renowned Italian publisher G. Giappichelli Editore (Turin).

The artisan result of a collective effort, *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese*, features nineteen Chapters, plus an Introduction and a Glossary, and is written by leading experts in Japanese law based both in Japan and overseas. Specifically, the authors are (reflecting the appearance of their entries): Jun ASHIDA, Giorgio Fabio COLOMBO, Matteo DRAGONI, Marco GIORGI, Masao KOTANI, Giuliano LEMME, Takeshi MATSUDA, Andrea ORTOLANI, Michela RIMINUCCI, Masai SAKURAMOTO, Toshiyasu TAKAHASHI, and Keiko TANIMOTO.

The significance that the publication of a book such as the present one has for both the theory and practice of Japanese law can hardly be exaggerated: *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese* is a must-read for all theorists and practitioners working with or interested in Japan and its legal system. The book ought to be warmly praised for having achieved the difficult result of exploring the Japanese legal system's nature, dynamics, and nuances effectively, placing each branch of law it discusses within its proper historical and sociological context. Importantly, despite its broadness of scope and disciplinary variety, *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese* is an accessible book characterised by a pleasant prose.

In this sense, it is worth pointing out that *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese* has something to offer to everyone, covering topics ranging from Japanese legal culture to Japanese constitutional, private, criminal, banking, family, environmental, insolvency, and consumer law (to name but a few), and venturing on to civil and criminal procedure. This analytical variety ensures that the book has something for all readers. Importantly, despite their different trajectories of inquiry, chapters coherently refer to one another whenever this is required. This feature, too, points to the authors' ability to craft a volume that effectively combines the richness of a multi-dimensional appraisal of a given (i.e. Japanese) legal culture and its dynamics with the analytical sturdiness that characterises consistent intellectual endeavours. Readers will no doubt also appreciate that each chapter features a dedicated bibliography – an editorial decision which helps keep the discussion structured and easily accessible.

Among the chapters comprising the book, here it is perhaps best to draw the readers' attention to the opening and closing ones on the Japanese legal system's historical background and culture. It is indeed in these two chapters that readers – especially those approaching the subject for the first time – will find valuable information on both the contours and content of Japanese law, thereby revealing its highly intricate dimensions. Not only do these two chapters outline Japan's socio-legal past and recent development effectively, they also move the academic debate on the subject beyond conventional assumptions by also casting a comparative light on pivotal themes – particularly in relation to Japan's relationship with other countries and foreign powers, and in terms of the Japanese people's past and present-day understanding of, and approach to, law and legal matters broadly conceived (on the latter theme, see also the concluding remarks of the chapter on civil procedure and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms).

Worth mentioning is also the chapter on private law. In particular, the chapter effectively outlines the main tracts of this critical branch of law, one which, after more than twenty years of lively debate, has witnessed the reform of the law of obligations, with the new legislation coming into effect in April 2020. While officially being aimed at amending the whole of the law of obligations, the reform excluded the laws of tort and restitution. Thus, it is in effect a reform of the law of contract only. The chapter offers a systematic, non-dispersive, easy-to-grasp overview of Japanese private law's main provisions, while also pointing the reader to the salient principles underpinning the field (i.e. the consensual principle in contractual transactions).

Needless to say, all chapters are equally important. In fact, remarks similar to those offered above can be easily made in relation to all the chapters comprising *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese* (such as the chapter on

criminal procedure, which also covers the 2016 reform; or the chapter on legal education, covering the 2004 reform that brought a US-based model of legal education to Japan). Simply put, *Introduzione al Diritto Giapponese* is the book that was missing in Italian scholarship on Japanese law. In addition to its literary clarity and analytical solidity, it is its comparative breadth that makes it an invaluable tool for the exploration of Japanese law and Japanese legal culture.

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