



Ca' Foscari
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The Identity of Japanese Law: A Journey with History, Orientalism and Technicalities

Conference by **Luke Nottage**,
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Tokyo and The University of
Sydney (Dual Appointment)



Friday, November 6, 2026
10:30-12:00 am

Sala delle Trifore,
San Sebastiano,
Dorsoduro 1686, Venice

Moderated by

Giorgio Fabio Colombo,

Professor of Comparative Law,
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Japanese law is one of the favourite playgrounds for comparative lawyers. This is partly due to historical reasons: the Japanese legal system is a product of the joint influence of Chinese imperial law (starting from the 7th century), continental European law (in the second half of the 19th century), and US law (after WWII). All these influences have been filtered by the local legal culture, and the resulting product is of unmistakable charm for any comparative law expert. However, the identity of Japanese law is still heatedly debated. Generations of scholars, both Japanese and foreign, have tried to demonstrate that Japanese law is completely unique or very similar to other European civil law systems; that the influence of the American system on Japan is of utmost importance or almost negligible; that laws are scrupulously observed or light-heartedly disregarded in favour of local customs and traditions. So what is the identity of Japanese law? Building on the vast corpus of available comparative research, the authors intend to deal with the most common representations of the Japanese legal system to critically assess their merits and shortcomings.