

Criminal statistics in Japan: The white paper on crime, hanzai hakusho and hanzai tokeisho

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Abstrak

This paper seeks to provide a brief introduction to three of the major sources of Japanese crime statistics. The focus is upon questions concerning the validity of the statistics, and the paper also seeks to provide a brief introduction to the definition of offences within the Japanese Penal Code. An almost uncritical acceptance of the validity of these statistics has been a feature of the majority of those English-language works that have dealt with the Japanese criminal justice system. However, the conclusion reached here is that the statistics are shaped by their legal context, by police recording practices, and by the form in which they are presented in the sourcebooks. Consequently, they must be deployed with caution and with due regard for their potential limitations and biases. Nevertheless, the Hanzai Tokeisho in particular are valuable in permitting a variety of analytical approaches that can both extend the understanding of crime and criminal justice in Japan and advance the debate surrounding Japanese 'uniqueness'.