Generally speaking, this book will be most suited to people who are being introduced to the areas of offender rehabilitation, for example social work, criminal justice and law students and of course to a wide range of practitioners who are involved in legal and welfare work with offenders as well as serving prisoners and ex-offenders. On the one hand, there is a great deal for us to learn from the ex-offenders’ self-narratives. On the other hand, we should not only show an appreciation of those who make efforts to go straight but also continue to look for better ways to address the fundamental structural issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality which have an impact of people’s criminal careers.

References


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Works on Japanese law and society in general either assume or suggest, according to a leading authority in the field (Johnson, 2000), that Japan possesses a unique legal (and police) culture, which is extraordinary in its effect. Graig Parker, Jr. is to be congratulated for producing a remarkable textbook on the Japanese Police system, a distinctive system in the world po-
lice scene, which is, however, gradually changing. The book divides into
delved into twelve chapters. In the first chapter the author provides an overview of crime
in Japan and the United States, serving as an integrated introduction. Here
Parker focuses on the issues of safety, public reporting of criminal activities,
the compilation of statistical data on crime, and specific offences such as
homicide, and gun possession and use.

In chapter two the focus is on the historical and legal framework. Parker
identifies the tendency of the Japanese towards “ethical resolutions” of dis-
putes, and describes the historical trends having influenced the formation,
structure, and features of the modern Japanese police force/service. The next
chapter, which is rather descriptive, provides an overview of the Japanese po-
lice force/service. Apart from its structure, useful information and insightful
details are given about entrance in the police academy, standards, training as
well as salaries.

In chapter four the Kōban system of policing is highlighted. The Kōban,
the mini police stations in various areas of urban centers, constitute the meet-
ing point between the police and the community, and a place where the public
input in crime prevention and detection is offered. Although, the Kōban poli-
cing system has been considered as one of the most important elements of
crime prevention in the country (Mawby, 1990), things appear to be changing.
Mistrust against the Kōban system is growing, and as a Kōban officer put it:
“. . .today some people are tempted to abolish the Kōban system because of
the decreased level of cooperation” (p. 57).

In chapter five the author is concerned with the issue of Japanese police
officers’ attitudes towards their work, police crimes, and future prospects.
The Japanese police officers have had the same source of interest for policing
as their western world counterparts, most notably investigating serious crime
and chasing criminals. Although they do not find Kōban policing, which op-
poses the hardcore police work, as a glamorous part of their profession, they
“seem to find fulfillment in what they do” (p. 89), including the interaction
with the public.

Chapter six constitutes an extensive presentation of the Hokkaido and
Okayama prefectural police forces with specific reference to the Chuzaisho,
the rural version of the Kōban. This presentation is very successfully backed
up by the author’s narration of his visits in the Chuzaisho, as well as the
conversations he had with the Chuzaisan, the community policing officers
in these rural areas. Moreover, Parker provides pictures, figures, and crime
prevention cartoons, which are one of the most popular methods of approach-
ing young people when it comes to the prevention of specific offences in
Okayama.