

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910790737703321
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Titolo	Japan's early experience of contract management in the treaty ports / / Yuki Allyson Honjo
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Abingdon, Oxon : , : Routledge, , 2013
ISBN	1-138-97355-6 1-315-07455-9 1-134-27981-7 1-134-27974-4
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (263 p.)
Collana	Meiji Japan Series ; ; 10
Classificazione	83.42
Disciplina	382.0952
Soggetti	Contracts - Japan Japan Commerce
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	First published 2003 by Japan Library.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Cover; Half Title; Title Page; Copyright Page; Dedication; Table of Contents; Acknowledgements; Introduction; 1. The Tokugawa Legacy; 2. Treaty Ports: Boundaries and Borders; 3. Reaching Agreement: The Mechanics of Promise and Payment; 4. Description of Cases; 5. The Avenues of Legal Redress; 6. In Pursuit of a Bargain; 7. Promise, Agreement and Contract: Ito Hachibei vs. Walsh, Hall & Co.; 8. Towards Implications and Theory; Conclusion: The Republic of Commerce; Notes; Select Bibliography; Index
Sommario/riassunto	This is the first in-depth study of the early trial-and-error experiences of contracting between Japanese and western merchants trading in the Japanese Treaty Ports in the eighteen year period immediately following the opening of the ports in 1859. Fundamental to the equation were the inevitable east-west cultural and legal ambiguities that impacted on the traders. The learning curve for both westerners and Japanese regarding the nature and application of western contracting law was predictably difficult, tortuous and open to constant misunderstanding. Nevertheless, it was within such a framew