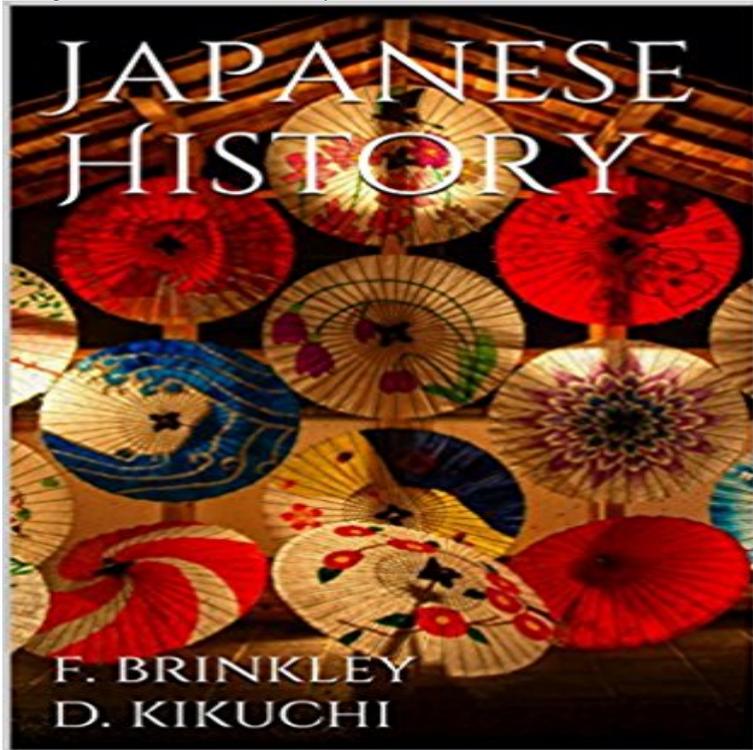


Japanese History



It is trite to remark that if you wish to know really any people, it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of their history, including their mythology, legends and folk-lore: customs, habits and traits of character, which to a superficial observer of a different nationality or race may seem odd and strange, sometimes even utterly subversive of ordinary ideas of morality, but which can be explained and will appear quite reasonable when they are traced back to their origin. The sudden rise of the Japanese nation from an insignificant position to a foremost rank in the comity of nations has startled the world. Except in the case of very few who had studied us intimately, we were a people but little raised above barbarism trying to imitate Western civilisation without any capacity for really assimilating or adapting it. At first, it was supposed that we had somehow undergone a sudden transformation, but it was gradually perceived that such could not be and was not the case; and a crop of books on Japan and the Japanese, deep and superficial, serious and fantastic, interesting and otherwise, has been put forth for the benefit of those who were curious to know the reason of this strange phenomenon. But among so many books, there has not yet been, so far as I know, a history of Japan, although a study of its history was most essential for the proper understanding of many of the problems relating to the Japanese people, such as the relation of the Imperial dynasty to the people, the family system, the position of Buddhism, the influence of the Chinese philosophy, etc.

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