



DRINKING BOMB AND SHOOTING METH: ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE IN JAPAN

BY JEFFREY W. ALEXANDER — ASIA SHORTS BOOK SERIES

SUGGESTED COURSES:

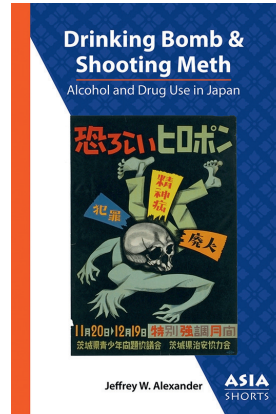
- Japanese History
- Anthropology

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS:

- Origins of Japan's beer, whisky, stimulant, and meth trades
- The start of Western-style brewing and distilling in Japan - Alcohol and drug production and use in Japan since 1860
- Meth use and abuse before and during the Second World War
- Post World War II economic and civic recovery in Japan
- Themes of women, tradition, and modernity in beer advertising
- Drug and alcohol dependency and its social impacts
- Growth and popularity of Western liquors vs. traditional ones
- Government campaigns to eliminate meth abuse in the 1950s
- Hangover drugs developed by Japanese pharma firms, 1950s-60s
- Niche marketing of beer and whisky in Japan in the 1970s-80s
- Modern anti-drug campaigns in Japan since the 1980s

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How were beer and whisky introduced to Japan, and why were they out of reach for the typical consumer before the 1920s?
2. What role did drugs and alcohol play during the difficult years after the Second World War?
3. How did beer advertising evolve between the 1870s and the 1970s? How did beer brewers market to different types of consumers?
4. How did Japan's drug companies prey on the fear of liver damage from alcohol and tobacco to sell their bogus hangover remedies?
5. How was methamphetamine initially marketed during the prewar era, and how was it abused during the war and postwar eras?
6. Why was Japan's anti-meth campaign of the 1950s so successful, and why have modern anti-drug campaigns fallen so flat since the 1980s?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED:

7. How did Japan's anti-drug crusades also serve to promote anti-foreigner sentiment during the postwar era?
8. What role did sushi restaurants play in the rise and gradual acceptance of Western whisky in more upscale bars and restaurants?
9. What role did women play in the growth of beer consumption during the 1950s and 60s?

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HANGOVER REMEDIES OF THE 1950S AND 1960S

4. DRUG PANIC: METH AND THE
SHOCK-HORROR CAMPAIGNS OF THE 1950S

“The history of intoxicants is rife with misperceptions and normative evaluations—or often simply ignored. Jeffrey Alexander’s engaging and readable study trains a discerning lens on this fraught subject, showing how the manufacture and marketing of stimulants that originated in the West was both a symptom and a byproduct of rising affluence in postwar Japan.”

— MIRIAM KINGSBERG KADIA, *Moral Nation: Modern Japan and Narcotics in Global History*

“Drinking Bomb and Shooting Meth is a masterful analysis of modern Japanese alcohol and drug culture. Alexander links shifting attitudes toward a century-old methamphetamine culture, and a post-WWII pink poisonous alcohol “bomb,” with anxieties over addiction and foreigners—a trajectory that could hardly differ more from that of the seemingly more fashionable whisky and beer, whose consumption is shown to have moved from shady alleyways to decidedly more positive venues. This is a must-read scholarly study, with details alternately humorous and horrific.”

— NORMAN SMITH, *Intoxicating Manchuria: Alcohol, Opium, and Culture in China’s Northeast*

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