



# Japan, Alcoholism, and Masculinity: Suffering Sobriety in Tokyo

*Paul A. Christensen*

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Depictions of an alcohol-saturated Japan populated by intoxicated *salarymen*, beer dispensing vending machines, and a generally tolerant approach to public drunkenness, typify domestic and international perceptions of Japanese drinking. Even the popular definitions of Japanese masculinity are interwoven with accounts of personal alcohol consumption in public settings; gender norms that exclude and marginalize the alcoholic. And yet the alcoholic also exists in Japan, and exists in a manner revealing of the dominant processes by which alcoholism and addiction are globally influenced, understood, and classified.

As such, this book examines the ways in which alcoholism is understood, accepted, and taken on as an influential and lived aspect of identity among Japanese men. At the most general level, it explores how a subjective idea comes to be regarded as an objective and unassailable fact. Here such a process concerns how the culturally and temporally specific treatment methodology of Alcoholics Anonymous, upon which much of Japan's other major sobriety association, Danshukai, is also based, has come to be *the* approach in Japan to diagnosing, treating, and structuring alcoholism as an aspect of individual identity. In particular, the gendered consequences, how this process transpires or is resisted by Japanese men, are considered, as they offer substantial insight into how categories of illness and disease are created, particularly the ramifications of dominant forms of such categorizations across increasingly porous cultural borders. Ramifications that become starkly obvious when Japan's persistent connection between notions of masculinity and alcohol consumption are considered from the perspective of the sober alcoholic and sobriety group member.

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