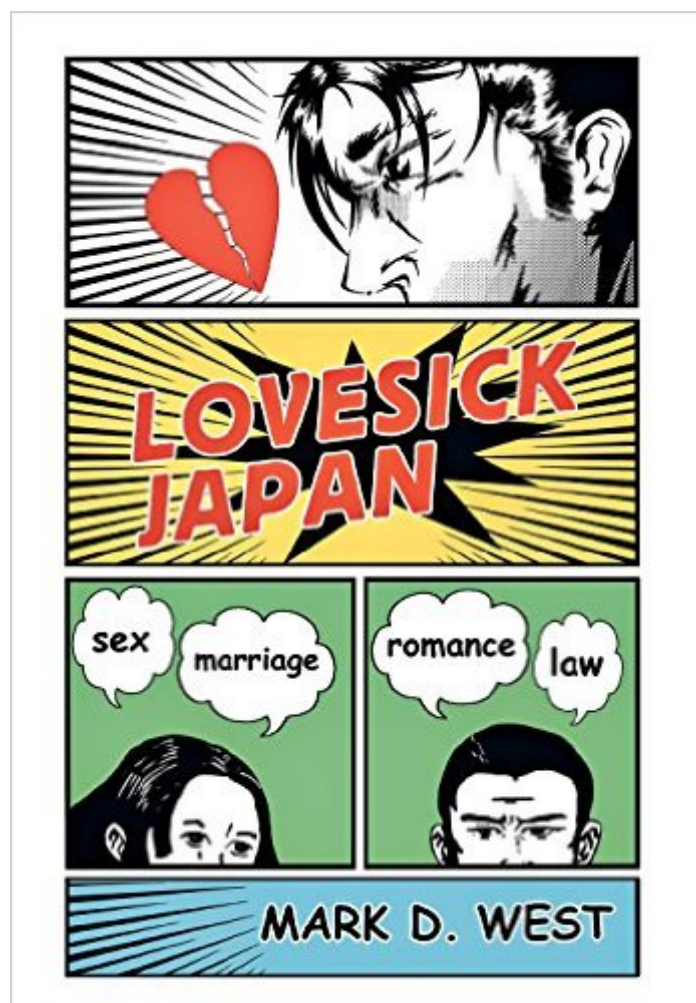


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Lovesick Japan: Sex * Marriage * Romance * Law



Synopsis

In *Lovesick Japan*, Mark D. West explores an official vision of love, sex, and marriage in contemporary Japan. A comprehensive body of evidence—2,700 court opinions—describes a society characterized by a presupposed absence of physical and emotional intimacy, affection, and personal connections. In compelling, poignant, and sometimes horrifying court cases, West finds that Japanese judges frequently opine on whether a person is in love, what other emotions a person is feeling, and whether those emotions are appropriate for the situation. Sometimes judges' views about love, sex, and marriage emerge from their presentation of the facts of cases. Among the recurring elements are abortions forced by men, compensated dating, late-life divorces, termination fees to end affairs, sexless couples, Valentine's Day heartbreak, "soapland" bath-brothels, and home-wrecking hostesses. Sometimes the judges' analysis, decisions, and commentary are as revealing as the facts. Sex in the cases is a choice among private "normal" sex, which is male-dominated, conservative, dispassionate, or nonexistent; commercial sex, which caters to every fetish but is said to lead to rape, murder, and general social depravity; and a hybrid of the two, which commodifies private sexual relationships. Marriage is contractual; judges express the ideal of love in marriage and proclaim its importance, but virtually no one in the court cases achieves it. Love usually appears as a tragic, overwhelming emotion associated with jealousy, suffering, heartache, and death.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I must confess: my original interest in Japanese law was not this book, but rather Yukio Mishima's

"Runaway Horses." The book's main character is a young judge in Osaka. While the book does not delve into the intricacies of Japanese legal practice and hierarchy, it did spark an interest. That interest is what led me to Professor West's book. Now, is this book full of legal terms, explanations, and long quotations from court decisions? Yes, indeed it is. That is the entire point of the book: deciphering what love, sex, and marriage mean to the Japanese through legal decisions and practices. I'm a law student, and so I'll admit I'm biased towards works that take the legal route in explaining something. I also happen to think Japanese culture as a whole is quite fascinating, being that it is in many ways the polar opposite of American culture. Here, Professor West is using Japanese judges as the looking glass through which we peer into the depths of Japanese relationships; sometimes cooky, sometimes sad, and always thought provoking. For someone who is unfamiliar with law or is uninterested in reading legal opinions, this book might not be the best choice. While it is a strength of the book that it focuses so heavily on judicial opinions, it does make it less accessible to a wider audience. But, for anyone who is mildly interested in either the law or Japan (or Japanese law), this book is a must-read. Plus, at a paltry 272 pages, it is hardly a legal tome. I look forward to reading Professor West's other books about Japanese law.

Visiting Tokyo, I read a very positive review about this book in Japan Times and subsequently purchased it upon returning to the States. I became worn out with the legal mumbo jumbo and lost interest quickly. I recommend this book only if you are interested in all things Japan.

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