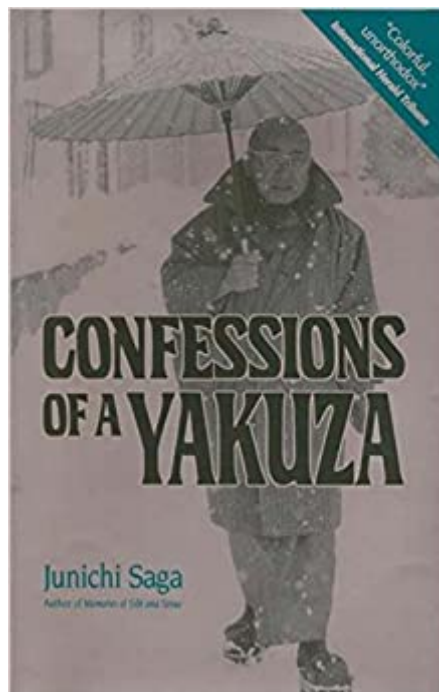


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# Confessions Of A Yakuza



## Synopsis

This is the true story, as told to the doctor who looked after him just before he died, of the life of one of the last traditional yakuza in Japan. It wasn't a "good" life, in either sense of the word, but it was an adventurous one; and the tale he has to tell presents an honest and oddly attractive picture of an insider in that separate, unofficial world. In his low, hoarse voice, he describes the random events that led the son of a prosperous country shopkeeper to become a member, and ultimately the leader, of a gang organizing illegal dice games in Tokyo's liveliest entertainment area. He talks about his first police raid, and the brutal interrogation and imprisonment that followed it. He remembers his first love affair, and the girl he ran away with, and the weeks they spent wandering about the countryside together. Briefly, and matter-of-factly, he describes how he cut off the little finger of his left hand as a ritual gesture of apology. He explains how the games were run and the profits spent; why the ties between members of "the brotherhood" were so important; and how he came to kill a man who worked for him. What emerges is a contradictory personality: tough but not unsentimental; stubborn yet willing to take life more or less as it comes; impulsive but careful to observe the rules of the business he had joined. And in the end, when his tale is finished, you feel you would probably have liked him if you'd met him in person. Fortunately, Dr. Saga's record of his long conversations with him provides a wonderful substitute for that meeting.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Vivid and accurate." —Los Angeles Times "A wonderful storyteller with a variety of unusual

experiences." *Washington Post Book World* "Packed with colorful details and insights, told straightforwardly without machismo or exaggeration... Important and entertaining."

*Manoa* "This is the kind of history that rarely gets recorded... Interesting, candid, and

honest." *Far Eastern Economic Review* "Memories of pain and pleasure... a witness to the past." *Le Monde* "Fascinating ... gang hierarchy, the relationship between the police

and the mob, the organization of gambling sessions and of prison life."

*Quadrant* "Compelling... big-hearted." *International Herald Tribune*

Dr. JUNICHI SAGA is a medical doctor with a general practice in Tsuchiura, Ibaraki Prefecture, on Lake Kasumigaura. He began taping his elderly patients' reminiscences about thirty years ago when he realized what a wealth of detail and information they contained. He has published numerous works of local history and ecology, two of which are available in English: *Memories of Wind and Waves* and *Memories of Silk and Straw*. In his spare time he does ink painting. JOHN BESTER, the translator, is one of the foremost translators of Japanese fiction. In 1990 he was given the first Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature, for his English version of a short-story collection by Yukio Mishima entitled *Acts of Worship*.

I enjoyed this read because it was a book of personal recollections of a real life Yakuza. Some of the stories were very charming. Even though main character Eiji was likely a bad guy, he came off like a good guy and I found myself rooting for him, hoping that the stories were accurate and true because I wanted to believe they actually happened. I would recommend this book to readers who want to hear stories from a gangster who actually lived the life of a Yakuza.

I decided to buy this book because I believe that Bob Dylan's "Love & Theft" is one of the finest musical albums I have the pleasure of listening to. After reading this book, I can see why it would have an influence on Bob Dylan. The story is about a man who gets caught up in a remarkable world during a time of great changes. There are pleasures he enjoys and hardships he endures, you can understand why this tale had to be told. Much like the Dylan album it harks back to a bygone era, both pieces tell tales of worlds separated by thousands of miles but now more distant from us by time than they are to one another. A fine read, regardless of what brought you to considering a purchase. I highly recommend the book. Don't expect this to be about a very seedy underworld, the Yakuza feel different, as if they were human, not some cold-blooded killing machines.

Stumbled into this book in one of the hostels in Kyoto, and found its style captured my curiosity. Seems to bring me to Old Japan, and also confirmed my long-suspected mis-portrayals of Yakuza in films. I was unable to finish this before I left the hostel, so I searched for a Kindle version -none seems available. Had to have it shipped to finish the story, wait for a week, and paid more for shipping than the actual item. I'd say this book is worth all that trouble.

The story told about this man's life is incredible. It is engaging, funny, and just REAL. As you read through it, you get a good mental image of everything this man went through in his life. I only wish to meet someone with half as many interesting experiences as this man had in my life so that I can have the honor of listening to their stories.

This book was a wonderful history lesson about the underworld in Japan for me. I've given several copies as gifts since I bought it.

If you are interested in Japanese culture and history from the point of view of a person, you will like this book.

I read this book in 2013 or 2014, after learning that Bob Dylan -- a life-time hero of mine and recent Nobel Laureate -- "sampled" ten or so of Mr. Saga's best lines into his (Dylan's), masterly "Love and Theft," after having read it during an overnight stop at Tokyo's Narita Airport. Upon discovery, some critics denounced Dylan's "theft." Dylan just noted that "Confessions" was a darn good book, and Mr. Saga was honored to have inspired the great Bob Dylan.

I knew nothing about the Yakuza so found this very interesting. Also insight into life in Japan before WWII.

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