



CALMUN'25

Joint Crisis Committee

Power Strife over Tokyo

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1. Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Participants,

As the Secretary-General of Çağaloğlu Model United Nations, it is my distinct honor to welcome you all to the 7th edition of CALMUN, which will take place on May 16th, 17th, and 18th, 2025. It is with great pleasure that we present the study guide for the Joint Crisis Committee, which aims to equip you with the essential knowledge and context for the upcoming three days.

After months of preparation and dedicated effort, I am proud to say that we are now just one step away from CALMUN 2025. We hope that, by reading this guide, you will feel as ready and enthusiastic as we are.

Without a doubt, this conference would not be possible without the contributions of our remarkable academic team. I extend my gratitude to our Head of Academy, Özge Öztürk; our Co-Heads of Crisis, Meryem Sultan Çok and Akay Engin; our devoted and hardworking team members; and our motivated trainees. Their commitment and passion have brought this vision to life and elevated CALMUN's academic quality to its peak.

Furthermore, I would also like to extend my best wishes to all delegates participating in CALMUN 2025. Whether this is your first conference or you are a seasoned MUNer, I thank each of you for taking a step forward and joining us. We truly hope that CALMUN will be a special experience that you will remember warmly in the future. From my perspective, MUN is about motivation, enjoyment, meaningful discussion, and connection. I wish each delegate an inspiring, engaging, and memorable experience.

Warm regards,

Ceylin Gürsoy

Secretary-General



2. Introduction to the Committee

In the 1990s, Tokyo became the center of gang wars in Japan. Its large population made the city the country's largest drug market, and it was also the area where gambling was most common. For the Yakuza syndicates in Japan, Tokyo was a unique cake that could not be shared. Especially since the establishment of Yamaguchi-Gumi, Japan's largest yakuza syndicate, it had its eyes on Tokyo. In 1990, Yamaguchi-gumi declared war on all Tokyo gangs to take over Tokyo completely. The war, in which hundreds of gang members died, lasted for months. Gunfire was fired every day on the streets of the capital, and the people lived in terror, but the political connections of the yakuza gangs protected them from police intervention. This situation was shameful for Japan, which is known for its low crime rates worldwide. The war was bloody, but it ended with a close victory for the Tokyo gangs. The people of Tokyo thought that the war period was over, but they were wrong. The two largest gangs in Tokyo, the Sumiyoshi-kai and Inagawa-kai, decided to engage in another round of gang warfare for control of the entire Tokyo yakuza syndicate, which had been weakened by the war. The two gangs had been feuding for years but had never gotten beyond minor skirmishes to avoid attracting the attention of the police. However, the 1990 gang war presented an opportunity that may never come again for sole control of all of Tokyo. The only obstacle standing in the way of the two gangs was each other. The police had been following the developments closely and had increased the police force in Tokyo with reinforcements that would have been sufficient to quell any possible gang war, but with the political support of the yakuza gangs, it was impossible to intervene without a war breaking out. Gang members on both sides had begun to arm themselves, and the machine guns, pistols, and grenades that had been brought to Tokyo for the 1990 war had been brought out of storage to be used once again. The eyes of the Tokyo public, the press, politicians, and the police were focused on this war in Tokyo, and the calm before the storm was felt in the depths of 1991 Tokyo.

3. Background

3.1. Yakuza and its History

"Yakuza" is a name given by the Japanese to criminal organizations with deep-rooted cult-like structures that are 400 years old. Yakuza gangs have attracted the attention of researchers from all over the world due to their national and international activities and their structure which is not seen in other criminal organizations in the world. These "folk heroes" with ritualistic structures are also known for having many traditions and customs. How yakuza gangs came to power in Japan is a complicated question with a long answer.



3.1.1. Early History

Yakuza, the general name for organized crime organizations in Japan, has a history of over 300 years. To go over the first examples of criminal organizations, we need to sail through the feudal history of Japan. The date is 1612 when ordinary citizens of feudal Japan began to see bandits of samurai origin on the streets. These people, whose hair, clothing, and behavior were far from usual in social standards, were called “*kabuki-mono*”, the crazy ones.

Kabuki monos were people who were ostracized by the public because of their threatening and armed images and their frightening customs, such as testing their newly acquired swords on innocent people. The term kabuki-mono was used as a concept that encompassed legendary gangs, and these gangs called themselves the “*All-God Gang*”.

In 1604, the shogunate began with the Tokugawa era. This era brought an end to the civil war that had lasted for centuries in Japan and ensured political unity on the entire island under the shogun Tokugawa. He also led Japan into a 200-year isolation and peace period. In Japan, which had stabilized after many years, there was a group that was not happy with this development: the *samurai*. With the peace that Shogun brought to the island, approximately 500,000 samurai became unemployed. Although some of these samurai found new jobs in the changing world, most were unsuccessful in this regard and made a living by terrorizing, robbing, and breaking various laws, so the shogun's former assistants were nicknamed Kabuki-mono by the people. You may think that the origins of modern yakuza are based on these masterless mad samurai, but the truth is the opposite. In response to the cruel and disturbing actions of Kabuki-mono, a group called Machi-Yakko was formed, consisting of other masterless samurai, construction workers, and clergymen. The people supported and loved the Machi-Yakko group, and in a short time, folk heroes emerged from this group. Today's yakuza often trace their ancestry to the machi-yakko, seeing themselves as honorable vigilantes, but historical information suggests that the two groups disintegrated during the 17th century. For example, in 1686 the shogun executed 300 members and leaders of the All-God Gang.

3.1.2. Robin Hood Rhetoric

To understand why the yakuza take the machi-yakko as an example, it is very important to examine the rhetoric of the machi-Yakko in Japanese history because the yakuza's characteristic features have largely been passed down from this community. Although the machi-Yakko have found a place in Japanese history through legends and stories rather than documented sources, according to the general picture drawn by these stories, the machi-Yakko are people who defend the public's interests and will sacrifice their lives for the locals of their town when necessary, but they often break the law and do



things that do not comply with general ethics. To understand this picture better, let's examine the story of Chobei, the leader of the machi-Yakko in Tokyo:

Chobei is an employer who employs workers to repair the stone walls of the Shogun Palace. Unlike other employers, he engages in gambling in his field of business; gambling was against the law at the time, and thus he takes back the wages he gave from some of the workers. There are many stories about Chobei's aid to the public. After the Kabuki-mono terrorizes Tokyo, he becomes the leader of the macho-yakko with his courage and fights against the wild samurai. One day, Mizuno, the leader of the Kabuki-mono in Tokyo, invites Chobei to dinner. Chobei's followers warn Chobei about this obvious trap, but Chobei goes to dinner because he doesn't want to be a coward. After sitting at the dinner table, a maid spills sake, Japanese raki, on him, and Chobei is taken to the bathroom by 5 servants to clean him up. After Chobei drops all his weapons and undresses, it is revealed that the 5 servants are samurai, and these samurai attack Chobei, but Chobei kills them all. Mizuno is horrified when he finds out that Chobei is still alive. Then Chobei shouts to Mizuno that he is not afraid of death and that if he is a man, he should kill him. Mizuno, despite his great hesitation, kills Chobei and says of Chobei, "He was too good to be killed."

This play symbolizes the distorted understanding of courage and bravery in Japanese culture, which the yakuza will later inherit, and Chobei's lawless business practices will play an important role in the functioning of the yakuza. The yakuza see Chobei as one of their own.

3.1.3. Outcasts, Peddlers and Gamblers

When we come to the 18th century, we start to see the historical ancestors of the yakuza. Bakuto, the gamblers, and Tekiya, the peddlers. Although it may seem difficult to understand the relationship between these two groups at first, these two groups have much more in common than it seems. These two groups, which emerged during the period when caste was dominant in Japan, are largely the members of the lowest class, in other words, the class seen as outcasts by the public. People in this class are not given daughters-in-law; they cannot work in respectable jobs and can never adapt to society, and the vast majority of them are made up of people without families. These two gangs have a system of operation unique to Japanese culture; this system is called the "*oyabun (father)-kobun (child)*" relationship. While the oyabun represents the highest-ranking person in the gang, the kobuns represent the lowest-ranking new members. According to the system, when the time comes, a koban must give his life to the gang or take responsibility for a crime committed by the oyabun. In other words, the kobuns must be loyal to the oyabun until death. In addition, a special ritual is performed when a new member is taken into the gang. According to this ritual, those who will be kobun sit at the same table as the oyabun. Sake is poured into a bowl for everyone at the table, and equal amounts of sake are poured for gang members of equal rank, with 10 cloves of sake poured into the oyabun and 6



cloves of sake poured into the koban. Then the kobuns sip the sake from the oyabun's bowl, and the oyabun does the same. As a consequence of this ritual, the kobun must now do whatever the oyabun says, and the gang is now more important than his own family. Gang members like to describe the oyabun-koban relationship as follows: "If the oyabun tells you crows are white, then crows are white."

Tekiya: For reasons that we cannot fully determine, street peddlers came together and organized in the mid-1700s. The peddlers, who became a kind of gang, monopolized the market by controlling important areas for trade and also used public areas such as temples as warehouses. These street peddlers were known for their poor-quality goods and persuasive trading skills. These peddlers also have an important sales trick that has become ingrained in Japanese culture, and this trick has been used by tekiya members for generations: The street peddler first attracts the attention of the customer by staggering and imitating a drunk, then pretends not to know what he is doing and acts as if he is selling a very valuable item cheaply, thus selling idols that have no origin at much higher prices than their real value.

Tekiyas are organized into 5 different ranks: boss or oyabun, sub-boss, officers, members, and apprentices. The gang boss, the oyabun, has his house as the gang's HQ, where apprentices learn and train in their trade. Street peddlers who have completed their apprenticeships are promoted to the rank of member and start selling some of the boss's goods all over Japan. However, street peddlers who are successful at selling these goods are promoted to the rank of officer, which is a full-status membership. Other than that, all members must abide by the three rules of tekiya gangs:

- It is forbidden to have relationships with other members' wives. This rule was deemed necessary because tekiya members had to work for days away from their homes to make sales.
- It is forbidden to tell the police about the events that happen inside the tekiya.
- The oyabun-kobun relationship must be maintained no matter what.

In the tekiya gang, the oyabun did not only control the kobuns but also some important sales areas and some goods. They would receive rent and protection money from the street peddlers. It is a tradition that continues to this day that street peddlers who want to make sales pay the tekiya bosses. Those who refused to pay the fee had their goods stolen, could not find customers, and were sometimes beaten by gang members. Tekiya thus gained a monopoly in street trade. However, since there was more than one tekiya gang, these gangs often fought with each other. Despite everything, unlike their cousins, the gamblers, the tekiya largely engaged in legal business. They were officially recognized by the government in 1740 and were elevated to the "supervisor" rank in Japan, which was governed by a caste system at the time. This gave tekiya gangs the right to carry two swords and have a surname, symbolizing that tekiya gangs had reached a social prestige close to the samurai.



Despite legal recognition, tekiya gangs never compromised on their illegal side. They often worked with notorious criminals and engaged in bloody fights among themselves. The reason for this change in Tekiya's illegal attitude is the place of Tekiya members in the Japanese caste system. Most tekiya members belong to the burakumin, the lowest class of Japanese. The burakumin class consists of people who do "dirty work.". These dirty jobs include leatherwork, jobs for dead animals, and illegal jobs. The Japanese people call these people eta (very dirty) and hinin (non-human). Just as the samurai have the right to oppress the locals, the locals also have the right to oppress the burakumin. The majority of the tekiya and their cousins, the gamblers, come from this class, and this legal discrimination by society has had a great impact on their organization. In 1866, there were 400,000 burakumin in Japan, which had a population of 33 million, and most of them were outlaws. Although this legal discrimination and caste system was legally abolished in 1871, the Japanese people still maintain this culture of discrimination.

Bakuto: The famous Japanese traveling gamblers, the bokuto gangs. The gangs first originated in the construction workers' wages, as Chobei did, so that employers could gamble with their employees and win. In Japanese culture, gambling was a valuable asset, and some people considered it a skill rather than luck. As these gamblers began to attract the attention of middle-class citizens who were not assimilated into society, they cut off their ties with their employers and adopted their gang model, and thus the bokuto gangs were born. Unlike their cousins, the tekiya gangs, the gangs had some iconic traditions, such as cutting off fingers or calling themselves "yakuza.".

According to the laws of the Tokugawa government, all the administrators of the state were required to meet in Tokyo once a year, and their families had to stay in Tokyo. This legal obligation created a serious traffic of politicians, nobles, and rich people on the roads connected to Tokyo. The Bokuta gangs were also concentrated at rest stops on these roads, earning money by gambling with visitors or by having them gamble with each other. In addition, the bakuto gangs that developed here began to use the name "yakuza" for the first time. This name initially represented the worst card combination in Hanafuda, a Japanese card game played by gamblers, 8-9-3, or ya-ku-sa. This name, which was initially used by gamblers to describe useless things, was eventually adopted by the gamblers, and members of the Bakuto gangs began to call themselves yakuza. This name was interpreted as a symbol of their position in the caste system and the gamblers' fates, which were always lost in the end. Along with the use of this name by the Bakuto gangs, the Tekiya, and other organized crime organizations also adopted this name because they all shared a common social status.

The Bakuto gangs had some unique customs and ways of functioning. The bakuto gangs, like the tekiyas, were based on a deadly devotion to the oyabun-kobun relationship. Although not classified within gangs, there were different status classes, and it was possible to move up in the gang. Promotions were given according to the member's fighting ability in gang warfare, gambling ability,



and loyalty to the oyabun. If a low-level kobun wanted to be promoted, he had to do things like making dice, cleaning the oyabun's house, and babysitting. The gangs also had certain rules. The biggest taboos were revealing the gang's secrets, rape, and stealing from the poor, and the gang member who broke these were either killed or expelled. After a gang member was expelled, the name of the expelled person was given to the enemy gangs, and the expelled person could not join any gang again. This custom continues among today's yakuza.

For gang members who did not break these major taboos but still broke some rules, there was a special bakuto method of apology, finger-cutting. The custom worked as follows: The gang member who committed a mistake would cut off the upper joint of the pinky finger of the hand he was holding the gun with his own hand and give it to the oyabun. If the same person makes another mistake, the other joints and the joints on the other fingers are cut in turn. One joint is cut for each mistake. The philosophy behind this custom is as follows: each cut joint reduces the strength of the person's weapon-holding hand, and the member whose self-defense power decreases is forced to remain loyal to the gang to survive and does not want to risk making another mistake. This custom has been passed on to today's yakuza.

One of the traditions of the Bakuto gangs is tattoos. Tattoos became incredibly popular in Japan in the 18th century. Tattoos usually depict Japanese gods and legendary warriors. They were especially popular among people who worked with their bodies uncovered, prostitutes, construction workers, and gamblers. Since the traditional tattoo method was a painful process, such as hitting the skin with a sharp bamboo for hundreds of hours repeatedly, it was adopted by the Bakuto gangs as a symbol of courage. Yakuza are usually distinguished from society by these giant tattoos that extend from their necks to their tailbones. In addition, since gambling is played half-naked in Japanese culture, tattoos have become an important accessory. This tattooing quickly spread to Tekiya gangs and other criminal organizations, and people with tattoos were banned from entering Japanese bathhouses. This ban continues to this day.

Bakuto gangs also infiltrated and collaborated with state authorities to become stronger, just as the Tekiya gangs did.

3.1.4. Philosophy of Yakuza

It should be noted that the yakuza were simple criminals. Yakuza, who saw crime as a reaction to the society that excluded them, had some ethical codes that distinguished them from other criminals. The most important of these was bushido, the way of the warrior. According to this code, yakuza were required to prove their bravery by resisting pain, imprisonment, and hunger. However, the yakuza expanded this samurai code and blended it with two concepts important in Japanese ethics, “*Giri*” and



“*ninjo*”. Unfortunately, there is no successful translation of these two terms. *Giri* more or less represents a sense of responsibility and a strong commitment to work ethic, loyalty, and moral debt. *Giri* can also be interpreted as a social costume that brings all Japanese together. *Giri* places the Japanese family structure and the oyabun-kobun relationship at the center of society. This comprehensive moral code has been adopted by the yakuza. On the other hand, *ninjo* means "feeling.". The basis that *Ninjo* advocates is to empathize with other people and support the weak. Although it is still a matter of debate whether these values have been passed on to modern yakuza, according to statements made by some yakuza oyabun, yakuza should stand by the people and the weak and portray a patriotic image. The philosophy that yakuza, gamblers, and Japanese gangsters are based on is based on the story of Jirocho, one of Japan's greatest outlaws.

Jirocho is the third son of a sailor. According to legend, Jirocho was born on the first day of the year 1820, on New Year's Eve. However, there is a superstition in Jirocho's village that babies born on New Year's Eve will either be terrible villains or great geniuses. Jirocho's father does not want to gamble and to be on the safe side, he gives his son to a wealthy relative in the city of Shimizu. Although Jirocho was a naughty child in his childhood, he learned his stepfather's business by the age of 16 and became a respected rice merchant. After his father's death, he took over his business. He continued this life until he was 20, and then one day a monk came to his door and told Jirocho that he would die at the age of 26. Jirocho took this prediction very seriously and decided that his life was very boring considering how short his life span was. Wanting to add some color to his boring life, Jirocho joined the bandits' gang in Shimizu, and one day, after getting involved in a drunken brawl, he decided to leave his children and wife and travel around Japan for 3 years. During these three years, he fought well and made a name for himself as a leader in Japan, and when he finally returned to Shimizu, he decided to form his gambling gang. He soon formed a gang that included the city's masterless samurai, construction workers, and street thugs. According to one source, at its peak, Jirocho controlled a large gang of 600 gamblers and provided order to his gang that the corrupt police officers could not provide, preventing the chaos of other gangs. Towards the mid-1800s, the Shogunate began to collapse, and reactions began to rise against the isolation policy from the public. As a result, a civil war broke out between a conservative shogunate and the revolutionary empire. In the civil war, Jirocho, like other yakuza, was forced to choose his side and made his choice to support the imperial side. There was no political reason behind this choice; Jirochu, as a gambler, simply gambled. Jirochu won his gamble and became an important figure in the city of Shimizu. He used his newly gained authority to develop the city and even opened the first English schools in Japan. During this time, Japan experienced a great industrial revolution, and Jiracho died in 1893. Jirocho's lifestyle is an important lesson for many yakuza.



3.1.5. Ultranationalist Gangs in Japan

The chain of events that caused Japan to shift to the extreme right dates back to the 1880s. The region where ultra-nationalist views first emerged was Kyushu, the largest of Japan's western islands.

Kyushu was a poor region at the time and a mining region where nothing was done except fishing and coal mining. Apart from these, Kyushu was an exile region where many people who opposed the new government's regime were exiled, and it had a population that was more or less composed of people who were critical of the new regime and had traditionalist views. Thanks to all these factors, this region became the birthplace of radical patriotic views. Fukuoka, a city in this region, was particularly affected by these factors.

No one would expect a leader who would radically change Japan's political stance and the structure of criminal organizations from a deprived exile place like Fukuoka. Mitsuru Toyama was born as the third child of a family that used to be samurai, and although information about his early life is very limited, it is known that he spent his childhood as a street urchin, living in poverty and as a potato vendor. He also grew up in samurai culture. In his twenties, he took part in a samurai uprising as the first step in his political life and was sentenced to 3 years in prison by the Meiji government—the revolutionary empire. As soon as he was released from prison, he joined a nationalist group called Kyoshisha and began to gather followers. He took to the streets, gathered and organized vagrants, and gained a considerable workforce and a reliable fighting force to suppress strikes in the region. Toyama's generosity and use of violence for his political views quickly became notorious in the region, and the people of the region called him "Emperor of the Slums".

Toyama's domestic political success was crowned with the establishment of a secret society, the Genyosha, or Black Ocean Society, in 1881. Genyosha was an organization formed by Japan's nationalist groups and pioneered secret organizations in Japan. The main purpose of the organization was to ensure that Japan crossed the ocean and conquered China and Korea. Toyama's expansionist views were first put into practice with this organization. With the authority and reputation he already had, Toyama formed a paramilitary group, organized a series of blackmail and assassinations, and gained significant influence, especially over the security forces. Genyosha's members consisted of guards and relatives of important people in the state and people who worked in some physical jobs. This time, Japan's yakuza saw themselves as following a nationalist and patriotic motivation at the top of society, not at the bottom. After Genyosha increased its influence over the state, it moved on to the second step of its plans. Genyosha opened a group of agent training schools and sent the agents they trained all over China, Korea, and Japan. These agents took on the task of suppressing strikes all over the country and eliminating anyone who opposed the organization's goal. They also pioneered Japanese intelligence in World War II. Toyama used these powers to eliminate people in the



government who did not agree with his views, organized a bomb attack on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stabbed a liberal politician, and killed an important diplomat.

Toyama's rising influence over Japan and his army of agents had reached a level that state officials could no longer ignore. Thereupon, the Minister of War made an interesting offer to Toyama. According to the offer, Toyama would use his agents to start a great fire in Korea, and Japan would invade Korea, which was weakened by this fire. Toyama gladly accepted this offer, which was in line with his ideology, and even had the queen of Korea assassinated. The plans were successful, and Japan controlled Korea for 50 years.

After a certain point, the ultranationalist movement that Toyama started began to be supported by most of the yakuza. This action was not so much an ideological reason as it was the fact that the yakuza did not like liberal and innovative policies, and the yakuza gangs were quite traditional. Toyama took advantage of this similarity with the gangsters and established Japan's first national gangster federation. This patriotically motivated paramilitary gangster gang called Dai Nippon Kokusui-kai was used to suppress strikes all over the country and to attack groups that opposed the right-wing view. The yakuza, who entered politics, slowly began to gain power in the parliament. This development would not end well for the future of Japan.

In the 1930s, Toyama became a symbol of extreme nationalism, and democratic, liberal, and progressive views in the country were almost eradicated. With the rise of fascists and ultranationalists in Germany and Italy, these ideas reached their peak in Japan, and militarism began to rise tremendously. Japan became a country ruled by a fascist, ultranationalist, and militarist empire. Many Japanese call this period the Dark Valley. Toyama and his followers began to take active action to realize the dream of an Asia under Japanese control. The first step for this was the government's use of yakuza gangs to sell drugs in China. The aim was to weaken the local Chinese people by making them addicted to drugs, just like the British did at the time. Some yakuza chose to work with the government and made huge profits from the drug business in China; of course, these operations also made a profit for the state. The Japanese Empire, which made 300 million dollars in profits annually from these operations, directed all this money towards military investments.

With these military investments, a lot of money came into Japan, and the economic value of ports and coastal cities in particular increased tremendously. Thereupon, yakuza gangs in some coastal cities began to enter into conflicts to monopolize the city to grow, but the most prominent of these cities was the port city of Kobe. There was a tremendous yakuza density in Kobe, and Kobe promised a greater share of the economic growth in Japan compared to other port cities. Thereupon, yakuza gangs entered into wars over the dominance of Kobe. The victor of these gangs was the Yamaguchi-gumi gang under the leadership of Kazuo Taoka. Kazuo Taoka would turn this gang into the largest



syndicate in Japan within 25 years. This crime syndicate would grow so much that it would have over 13 thousand members at its peak. Thus, the first yakuza crime syndicate was born.

In 1944, at the age of 89, Toyama met his death. The last image the old man saw was a Japanese empire that had established great authority over Asia. But in 1945, when the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Japan and the Russians took over the Japanese-occupied territories, Japan lost everything it had gained in the war and more. Miserable times had just begun for the Japanese.

3.1.6. Class A War Criminals and Occupied Japan

Japan was occupied by a foreign country for the first time in its history after the war. There was nothing left in the country but destruction. There was no local authority, and the empire had fallen, and American occupation forces had taken its place. America saw Japan as a valuable region in Asia that had the potential to be a satellite state for itself. Especially after the establishment of the communist government in China, Japan became an important region against the communist forces. When the Americans first set foot on Japanese soil, they had 3 main goals: to bring a democratic system to Japan and make the state functional, to establish anti-communist structures within the country, and to make sure that a political environment that would cause war would not arise again. However, the Americans were quite unfamiliar with the nature and rules of these foreign lands. The first structure they encountered and were unfamiliar with was the yakuza gangs. These gangs were so accustomed to the state that they were treated as respected people, not criminal organizations. Although the occupying forces had initially decided that these criminal organizations should be eliminated, they reversed their decision when they realized the anti-communist nature of the gangs. But they did eliminate the series of secret societies that Toyama had started. By 1948, the Americans' stance against the gangs had completely ended.

Instead, the occupying forces decided to cooperate with the gangs, monopolizing food aid from America—access to food in Japan was very limited at that time due to the war—and allowing some gangs to gain power through the black market. These gangs also offered America another benefit, muscle power. Japan was devastated by the war—about 1 million of the 1.65 million buildings in Tokyo had been destroyed—and bids were being put out everywhere to repopulate the nation. Most of these bids went to yakuza gangs, which allowed the gangs to access large amounts of money and grow. In addition to these developments, the Americans placed the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) in the Japanese government in 1945 and appointed General Douglas MacArthur as head of the government.

However, there was also an American force besides SCAP: American intelligence, or G-2, headed by General Charles A. Willoughby. These two authorities sometimes disagreed on their decisions



regarding Japan. While SCAP tried to cleanse the yakuza gangs, G-2 thought that these gangs were valuable for fighting communism, so they supported the gangs. Thus, the first relationship between American intelligence and the yakuza was established. This support also included a large portion of the food support that was supposed to go to the Japanese people, so a black market in food resources soon emerged, controlled by yakuza gangs.

Meanwhile, the new order established by SCAP provided advantages to minority groups in Japan, as America did in many parts of the world. These minority groups were called sangokujin, people of the three countries. Sangokujin, consisting of Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese groups, included approximately 2.6 million people. With the Americans standing behind them, these minority groups organized to take revenge on the Japanese who had occupied their country in the past. Many of them found a place for themselves in the black market, but their increasing influence in the black market began to irritate local Japanese black market traders. In addition, SCAP began disarming the local police and expelling some right-wing groups within the police force. This gave the Sangokujin gangs a lot of freedom, but this freedom would not be good. In Kobe, a group of about 300 sangokojin took over the police station and took the police hostage. The city mayor then asked Taoka, the oyabun of the Yamaguchi-Gumi, the yakuza union of the region, to help quell the incident. The Yamaguchi-gumi yakuza used various weapons that the police did not have access to and dispersed the sangokujin gang. In this way, Taoka both solved the sangokujin problem and left the Americans in a moral debt, in other words, in a debt of Giri, which means moral debt in English.

The black market that the Americans had created after the war attracted the attention of a yakuza group specialized in this field, the modern tekiya. Tokyo's tekiya organization was organized under one man in particular, Kinosuke Ozu. Kinosuke Ozu originally only controlled a small part of Tokyo when he founded his gang, but when a Yakuza gang's oyabun near the areas he controlled was assassinated by the Sangokujin gangs, he incorporated the masterless Yakuza gang into his structure. He used the snowball effect of this power increase very well and quickly established a large Tekiya gang with thousands of street dealers under his control, and in a short time he took over the black market in Tokyo.

Meanwhile, the investments made by the Americans in the business sector to re-establish Japan gave rise to a third type of yakuza gang. These yakuza gangs, called Gurentai, were known for their lack of moral codes and culture compared to Tekiya and Bakuto gangs. In a very short time, the Gurentai gangs, which grew with the money they earned by controlling the business market, reached a power of 7,400 kobun and 181 oyabun in Tokyo, and 6,400 kobun and 82 oyabun in Kobe. However, since most of the gangs had an anti-communist view, the Americans turned a blind eye to these gang activities.



The Americans had great difficulties in trying to make Japan a member of the liberal alliance. Some of the liberal laws that the Americans wanted to adapt to Japan were not tolerated by the Japanese people, but there was sympathy for some leftist policies, such as workers' rights, in Japan. This demand, which was the leftist policies of the Japanese people, was called zaibatsu. This situation did not please the conservatives of America at all. To release the liberal politicians who were arrested before the war, the Americans released all the political prisoners who were arrested before the war. What the Americans did not realize was that the Japanese right-wing had put liberals and communists in the same category before the war and put them in prison. This amnesty granted by the Americans benefited the communist politicians even more, and the total membership of the country's labor unions suddenly increased to 5 million. Thereupon, in 1949, SCAP began to impose strict sanctions on leftists in Japan. However, these sanctions did not prevent the growth of the left, and in 1949, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) increased its membership one after the other. Thereupon, SCAP closed the JCP because it was too dangerous, and the sanctions on the leftists gradually increased.

It was trying to take some measures in the G-2 against the rise of communists and leftist views in Japan. These included various assassinations and train sabotages attributed to leftists. However, one initiative that G-2 focused on was noteworthy. In 1947, a group of Chinese Sangokujin gangs in Yokohama, a district of Tokyo, were engaging in activities that were disturbing the local Japanese population, but SCAP did not intervene because they were a minority group. Thereupon, Hisayuki Machii, a Japanese of Korean origin who had just started to establish the Tosei-kai, which would become a major yakuza gang in the future, decided to intervene in the incident. Machii, who did not tolerate the actions of his fellow Sangokujin Chinese, ordered his men to take their weapons and finish the job, thus ensuring peace. Machii's action caught the attention of G-2, and they made a move to make him one of America's agents inside. This was the first yakuza power that American intelligence had obtained.

With the American occupation of Japan in 1946, some important people who caused World War II were arrested. These criminals were classified according to their importance. Among these criminals was a person who would gain a very important position in the future, Class A War Criminal Yoshio Kodama. Kodama gained a very important circle in Sugamo Prison, where war criminals were held, and wrote 2 books. However, before examining Kodama's legend, it is necessary to understand how Kodama ended up in this prison.

Kodama was born in 1911 as the last child of a family of 5 children. When his father's business did not go well, he was forced to go to relatives in Korea. Although he was 8 years old when he went to Korea, he was forced to work very hard and suffered. Although this situation initially led Kodama to socialist views, Kodama decided that extreme nationalism was more appropriate for solving social problems. Kodama, who returned to Japan in the 1920s, quickly became a member of several extreme



right-wing organizations. He quickly rose through the ranks with his services among the right wing and even managed to come under the spotlight of Toyama's Black Ocean organization. He spent a total of 6 years in prison in the 1930s due to his many actions for the right wing. After his release from prison, he began to rise in the army through his right-wing connections. From 1939 to 1941, he organized various trips to China and East Asia, establishing a network of agents, and with these actions, he came under the spotlight of American intelligence for the first time. The day after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Kodama received a special contract from a state-sponsored government. According to the contract, Kodama was required to establish an organization under his own company that would provide resources for the Japanese Air Force. Thus, Kodama established the Kodama Kikan (Kodama Agency) as the first step of the operation, and then, using his agent network in China and the pressure of the Japanese Empire, he established a capital of 175 million dollars by spending very little money, convincing workers to work for nationalist ideals, and paying low wages. In the 1940s, Kodama Kikan had gained control of many resources important for the war economy in East Asia. He also engaged in heroin trading as a side business model. As a result of the American occupation that began with the Japanese withdrawal from the war in 1946, Kodama was considered a Class A war criminal and was imprisoned in Sugamo Prison. The G-2 intelligence report mentions that Kodama is an extremely dangerous individual, but that the company he founded and his connections could be very valuable for the reconstruction of Japan. Towards the end of 1948, Kodama was released from Sugamo Prison. The reason for this sudden decision from above is based on an agreement made between G-2 and Kodama. In this way, Kodama begins to work for American Intelligence.

As soon as Kodama is released, he begins to look for ways to regain his power from the pre-war period. First, Kodama has a lot of money left over from Kikan, and with this money, he begins to use yakuza gangs in the region, while American intelligence also promises good money to Kodama. As his first investment for the Americans, Kodama suppresses the strikes of the most radical miners' group in Japan using the yakuza. Thus, Kodama's relationship with the yakuza begins. In 1949, the CIA took over the Japanese intelligence operation from G-2. The CIA asks Kodama to use his agency to smuggle tungsten from China and pays 150 thousand dollars in advance. However, such an operation does not take place; Kodama keeps the money and informs the CIA that the ship has sunk. Despite this, the CIA will continue to work with Kodama for a long time. The reason for this, as Kodama explains, is that Americans are obsessed with anti-communism, and Kodama is one of the most important anti-communist figures in the country. With the help of Kodama, the Yakuza gained serious momentum during the American Occupation and will use the investments of this rise to enter politics in the future.



3.1.7. Gangsters in Politics

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which was the most important party in Japan from 1950 to 1955 and held power until 1993, was founded largely with Kodama's funding. This five-year period, which was the founding process of the party, was also the year when the American occupation was slowly leaving the country. The Americans leaving the country worried the right wing about the communists in the country. The idea that the communists would rise in particular bothered the Minister of Justice, Tokutaro Kimura. Nobuo Tsuji, who was aware of Kimura's concern, offered to establish an organization of 200,000 yakuza if the necessary money was provided—the police force and army could not be expanded due to the limits set by the Americans. Kimura accepted this offer, and as much money was provided, the Drawn Swords were established. However, since the financial resources allocated to the project were insufficient, it quickly collapsed and disbanded. The involvement of Japan's most important lawman in such an affair was an important indicator of how close the yakuza and the rightists were. In 1955, largely as a result of Kodama's efforts, the Japanese right and liberals united, and the LDP was founded. At the same time, Japan was also liberated from the American occupation, at least partially.

After the American occupation, some yakuza gangs and unions had grown significantly. There was a particular concentration of yakuza in Osaka/Kobe in the west and Tokyo/Yokohama in the east. In the Tokyo area, the Kinsei-kai, Tosei-kai, and Sumisyoshi-kai had grown to the point of being recognized by the local population. In Osaka, Kansai, and the port city of Kobe, the Yamaguchi-gumi had also become quite famous, followed by the Honka-kai. With the end of the occupation and the surplus value of food resources, the yakuza gangs began to invest in the entertainment industry. There was also a special drug market in Japan, amphetamines. The reason for this market was that many Japanese soldiers, especially those who went on suicide missions, used drugs to reduce their pain and hesitation, and it was also produced by the state. Yakuza gangs also seized the state's drug stocks and sold them to the Japanese people during the occupation, and with the addition of those who used drugs, a stable drug market emerged in Japan, and this market operated under the yakuza monopoly. Another sector that the yakuza entered was prostitution. Yakuza brothels, especially those working for American officials, created a sustainable market, and with the ban on prostitution in 1958, the market was completely left to yakuza gangs. Finally, the traditional service of the yakuza was gambling, but gambling became legal as a result of the government seeing gambling as a good source of taxation, and it was removed from the Bakuto monopoly. With this development, the bakuto yakuza began to make their investments in the service sector legally. Of course, the Bakuto gangs were not the only ones who thought of this, and the entertainment market also quickly fell into the hands of the yakuza with the initiative of the yakuza unions. The yakuza also took bribes from the entertainment industry ventures they owned, under the pretext of protection. While all this was happening, the government



was more interested in making alliances than in stopping the yakuza. The political match between right-wingers and gangsters was once again evident.

Thus, with the encouragement of the LDP, the yakuza began to get involved in politics. This would later create a parallel state authority that the Japanese would call kuromaku (eng: black curtain, tr: deep state).

Kuromaku was also an adjective given to those who had authority in the parallel state. At that time, there were three people most worthy of being kuromaku in Japan: Yoshio Kodama, Ryoichi Sasakawa, and Nobusuke Kishi. The biggest commonality of these three individuals was that they were all Class A war criminals who were imprisoned during the American occupation; in other words, they were friends from prison. Among these, Kodama in particular had very valuable connections; his acquaintances ranged from yakuza bosses to Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama. Kodama secured Hatayoma's presidency in 1954, and he also made some private investments during the occupation. He bought a baseball team to keep a low profile and a shipping line to match his agency's work. In addition to these ordinary investments, he became a partner in the Ginza nightclub chain, which was controlled by another American agent, Hisayuki Machii. After these investments, he returned to his spy activities and began working for the CIA, sometimes requiring him to suppress strikes, thus deepening his relationship with yakuza gangs. Kodama was heavily involved in political fundraising from the 1950s to the late 1960s, and these activities helped Kodama with some of his operations.

Sasakawa was perhaps the most legal man among this dark trio. After Sasakawa was released from prison, he quickly started a casino business. This business would not only make Sasakawa rich, but within 30 years, this company would become Japan's largest gambling empire and reach a revenue of 7.4 billion in the 1980s (to call these figures gigantic would be an understatement at the time). Sasakawa would channel the money he earned from gambling into different channels to gain political power. However, he did not do this through bribery like his partners; instead, he funded almost every political group that defended the right-wing view from all over Japan, big and small. Thanks to this, Sasakawa became the authority on a political organization that represented 8 million Japanese citizens, as he boasted. This gave Sasakawa great authority over the ruling party, the LDP.

The last of the trio was Nobusuke Kishi. Kishi was a pure-blooded politician who was involved in politics before and after the war, but he was not a clean politician. Although he was banned from politics by the Americans 3 years after his release from prison due to his extreme right-wing policies, his ban was lifted, and with Kodama's political support, he would become the deputy prime minister in 1955, but he had to resign due to health reasons. He returned to the field again in 1957 and became prime minister with an election campaign financed by Kodama with all his might. In this way, this trio completely took over Japanese politics.



Sometimes, no matter how well you plan, things don't go the way you want them to, and that's what was about to happen to Kishi. Between 1959 and 1960, the date for the renewal of the peace treaty that Japan signed with America in 1951 was approaching. This treaty was an agreement that the Americans forced the Japanese to sign after the war, and the Japanese people wanted this treaty to be reorganized, but the Americans were against this idea and did not want to give the Japanese any extra rights. Of course, when America was against it, some important names from the LDP and those who were pulling the strings—it should be remembered that Kodama had connections with the American intelligence—did not look favorably on this demand of the people, but this time things were not going to go according to plan. Japan's leftists and centrists quickly organized and formed a protest army that would center on the students; they aimed to impose a decision to change the treaty on the government. In a short time, student protests began to rise in droves all over Japan. The first reaction came from the right-wing yakuza, but it was not enough. On May 16, 1960, as the date for the re-ratification of the treaty approached, the riots began to intensify, and there was still no force other than the local police and yakuza to confront the students.

Thereupon, the LDP government was convinced that the police forces would not be enough, and they decided to play a card they had played in the past. Just like they had done in *Drawn Swords*, they would organize the yakuza and use them against the students. Kodama provided communication between the LDP and the yakuza for this. In a short time, three major gang leaders were gathered: Kinosuke Ozu, the leader of the Tekiya gang; Kakuji Inagawa, the oyabun of the Great Kinsei-kai yakuza crime syndicate; and Yoshimitsu Sekigami, the oyabun of the Sumiyoshi-kai—the second largest yakuza syndicate. These big names agreed to help with the operation. This operation cost the LDP \$2.3 million. All these preparations were to ensure that the American president would not be attacked when he arrived, but the student protesters grew so large that Kishi called the American president and postponed the meeting. Negotiations were held with the president, and the peace treaty was improved a little more in Japan's favor, but the protesters were not satisfied with this development. Kishi resigned as a last resort. Thus, the protests stagnated.

3.1.8. Peak Yakuza

At the end of all these chaotic events, perhaps there was only one group that rose collectively, the Yakuza. Of course, the Yakuza gangs had not only risen; they had changed. The Gurentai gangs had gradually weakened the moral codes of the Yakuza; now the Yakuza were also attacking ordinary citizens. News of robberies and extortions caused by the Yakuza came from all over the country. With the American occupation, the Yakuza gangs had grown. In the pre-war period, the Yakuza gangs consisted of 1 Oyabun and 50 Kobun, but now there could be hundreds or even thousands of men under the command of a single Oyabun. The appearance of the Yakuza had also changed; they had taken after the mafias in American movies. Now the Kobun wore black suits, black shirts, and white



ties; they never left their sunglasses on, and expensive jewelry had become important. In addition, most Kobun had large American sedans, which were vehicles preferred only by the Yakuza in Japan at that time. According to the reports of the Japanese police department in 1963, there were 183 thousand yakuza in the country. This number was more than the number of soldiers in the Japanese army at that time.

During this period of rise in yakuza, one yakuza gang in particular was very different from the others; it was superior to all of them. This gang was Yamaguchi-gumi. Yamaguchi-Gumi, which had grown a lot during the Occupation period like other gangs, was initially only a small port gang in the city of Kobe; like many gangs, they adopted the bakuto traditions but also adopted the violent methods of a new type, gurentai. By the end of the occupation period, Yamaguchi-gumi controlled all of Osaka and continued to grow rapidly. This success of Yamaguchi-gumi is partly due to their famous boss Kazuo Taoka.

Taoka was born in a small village in Shikoku and lost his family as soon as she arrived. Taoka, who was orphaned at an early age, was sent to the city of Kano to work at the port. At the age of 14, he joined a small port gang founded by Noburu Yamaguchi. Taoka, who was an apprentice for the next 9 years, worked steadily to climb the ranks. He participated in many fights on behalf of the gang and gained a reputation for gouging out the eyes of his opponents in the fights he participated in; his friends gave him the name Kuma, "Bear.". In 1936, he was released from his apprenticeship and became an official member of the gang. Later that year, he served 6 years in prison for killing a man on behalf of the gang. When he was released from prison in 1943, his gang was in shambles, and Oyabun died of old age shortly thereafter. Upon his release from prison, the young Oyabun took over the gang, which at the time had only 25 kobun. Taoka was determined to fix the gang and had his methods. First, he established a legitimate company on behalf of the gang and started earning money from the port business, and then he expanded his gang by adding gambling rings and some illegal businesses to his business model. In the 1940s, he allied with the Honda-kai, the largest bokuto gang in the Kobe region, and later, when his own gang's power surpassed that of the Honda-kai, he incorporated the Honda-kai into his gang. He went on to destroy a Korean gang that controlled Osaka and took over their territory. Taoka's tactics overpowered the other gangs, making him the ruler of Osaka in no time. In addition, Taoka expanded the gang's legitimate business; by 1965, 80% of the cargo on the coast of Kano was carried by the Yamaguchi-gumi company. The company had become a good source of investment, sometimes growing by tens of millions of dollars. At this point, the Yamaguchi-gumi controlled 343 yakuza gangs. Taoka had grown his gang from 25 kobun to over 10,000 kobun. Taoka was undoubtedly one of the most powerful individuals in the country at the time.

While Taoka was rising in Kobe, a rival oyabun was rising in Tokyo, named Kakuji Inagawa. He began his gangster career as a gang member controlling the small resort area of Atami. After the



American occupation, Inagawa formed a branch gang under his gang to suppress the terror caused by the sangokujin. This gang was more aggressive and expansionist in nature and soon became more powerful than the main gang. At this point, Inagawa merged the two gangs to form the infamous Inagawa-kai. The gang grew rapidly and became one of the largest gangs in Tokyo. During the Anpo uprising of the 1960s, he strengthened his ties with Kodama and the government by providing support to the yakuza army that was established. After the uprisings ended, he joined the Tokyo yakuza gang coalition that Kodama established. The purpose of this coalition was to prevent the Yamaguchi-gumi from expanding into Tokyo. Taoka started a gang war in Yokohama, one of the areas controlled by the Inagawa-kai, to provoke the Tokyo coalition, and then launched a national campaign against the drug trade, which was a major source of income for the Inagawa-kai. This led to a gang war between the Inagawa-kai and the Yamaguchi-gumi. In 1963, the police arrested Inagawa to prevent the gang war from escalating, and Inagawa served 6 years in prison. Inagawa was released from prison in 1969, and the first thing he did was to reorganize his disbanded gang. However, things had changed while Inagawa was in prison; the Yamaguchi-gumi was now much stronger, and it was impossible for the Inagawa-kai to survive alone in Tokyo. So Inagawa swallowed his pride and visited Taoka. The visit resulted in an alliance between the Yamaguchi-gumi and the Inagawa-kai. This alliance continued into the 1990s, and thanks to the Yamaguchi-gumi's support, the Inagawa-kai once again became one of the dominant gangs in Tokyo.

3.1.9. New Era of Japanese Crime

In 1976, an interesting flow of money was caught in the Japanese government's network and journalists' lenses. According to the documents, 12.6 million dollars of undocumented money entered the US through Lockheed Aircraft Company, and this money was sent to important politicians and officials and, most importantly, to agents working for US intelligence in Japan. The news that such a funding operation was carried out by the US in Japan hit a nerve with both the right and the left. This time, the Japanese people and the media decided that this level of corruption was unacceptable. So how did things come to this point? At the center of the events lies a businessman we know very well, Kodama. The beginning of the events goes back to Kodama's fellow prisoners during the Occupation and his past with US intelligence. In 1958, he first contacted Lockheed through a friend from Sugamo Prison. What Kodama wanted was to establish a company that would allow the CIA to easily transfer funds from Japan and to grow the company's revenues to such an extent that the money sent by the CIA would not attract attention. Thus, with Kodama's help, Lockheed's aviation company made a major expansion into Japan. Kodama took many measures necessary for Lockheed's growth. He used his connections in the LDP to block Lockheed's tax investigations and other legal protection mechanisms, and when there was a tender regarding aircraft, he made sure that the tender went to Lockheed. Of course, Kodama did not make all this effort just because the Americans wanted it. He



received millions of dollars in payments every year in return for his contributions to Lockheed's operations.

While all these events were happening, the party leaders of the LDP changed over the years, and there was a special obstacle in Kodama's way: Deputy Prime Minister Oba. Oba is an individual known in financial circles as one of the most successful businessmen of the century. Another characteristic of Oba is that he is the head of a Japanese aircraft company that is Lockheed's biggest rival. Of course, Kodama is not happy with this situation, and he organizes a series of conspiracies against Oba. Kodama, who revealed that Oba received a billion dollars worth of illegal loans through Yakuza connections, marketed this information to the media using all his connections. Finally, when Oba, who could not stand the harassment of the media, resigned, Kodama ensured that a vice president who would not stand in his way was placed in the seat. However, everything was going too well for Lockheed to be possible in a natural market; this flawless pattern of good progress attracted the attention of some journalists, and investigations began. In 1974, the press first informed the public about Lockheed's illegal money flow, but they were not even aware of the truths they would encounter as they dug into Lockheed. The series of truths revealed by the press continued for two years, and the public could not believe what they heard. Almost every person respected by the Japanese right wing, from the head of the LDP to Kodama, had received millions of dollars in payments through this company.

The worst part was that this money came from the Americans, the Japanese's natural rivals and no state mechanism could prevent this situation. Everything seemed like a very bad joke, but unfortunately, it was real. These revelations created great suspicion in the Japanese people, and the media also covered up this suspicion. The suspicion was: how intense was the corruption and crime in the country? As the people searched for the answer to the question, more traumatic information was revealed. This trial, which lasted until 1985 and was conducted by the people, caused countless people to resign and changed the perspective on crime in the country. It would no longer be acceptable for state officials to be corrupt and for yakuza unions to be tolerated by the authorities. While all these events were happening, perhaps the figure who fell most in the public's eyes was Kodama. The right-wingers, who were once behind him with full force, now wanted the head of the tycoon and even committed a few acts of assassination, but they were unsuccessful. During this process, Kodama, who was now old, could not handle the stress of the events and became bedridden. In 1984, he died of a heart attack, and in the eyes of the public, he was a traitor who had sold out his country for the money America gave him. Perhaps this was the worst possible ending for an ultranationalist. Thus, Japan's parallel state system collapsed, and a new era began in Japan, where the left was on the rise and crime was not tolerated.



3.2. Yakuza Culture

Yakuza gangs have traditional structures and many traditions. These customs are formed in yakuza gangs both to punish a crime committed within the gang and to hold a celebration within the gang. They also consist of some special practices that allow gang members to recognize each other.

3.2.1. Tattoos

Tattoos have a special place in Japan, especially in a bad way. In Japan, tattooing practices first started as a kind of fashion trend among groups that worked with their bodies exposed. It quickly became popular among prostitutes, construction workers, and gamblers. The fact that the Bakuto gangs were found half-naked while gambling caused them to join this trend. This custom, which spread to almost the entire underworld under the leadership of the Bakuto gangs, soon caused the development of a judgment among society that people with tattoos were criminals, and even people with tattoos were banned from entering bathhouses. There is another angle to the Yakuza gangs' adoption of the tattooing custom. Yakuza gangs have adopted a philosophy of life called bushido. According to this philosophy, a man should have a stoic expression against pain and hunger. Considering that during the period when tattooing was widespread among Yakuza gangs, tattoos were a sign of bravery among Yakuza gangs.

3.2.2. Finger Cutting

In the early days of the Yakuza gangs, punishments were very harsh. Disobedience to the chain of command or falsely performing a task for the gang resulted in death or being expelled from the gang altogether. Yakuza gangs invented a third method of punishment for this: cutting off fingers. Although Yakuza gangs still execute guilty gang members for serious crimes such as treason, the tradition of cutting off fingers was used to resolve most conflicts within the gang. The custom was as follows: a kobun or oyabun who had committed a crime would stand in front of his superior, take a knife, cut off the top joint of his pinky finger, then wrap the severed finger in a cloth and present it to the superior or oyabun. In this way, gang members would atone for their crimes. *This practice was so common that 70% of yakuza members arrested in the 1990s were missing at least one finger.* This tradition also made it easier for the police to identify yakuza members. In the 2000s, to avoid being caught by the police, many yakuza replaced their amputated fingers with prosthetics and wore gloves over them, but yakuza gangs largely did not bother to hide these injuries.

3.2.3. Meetings

Yakuza gang meetings are simpler and smaller than other customs. When an important event occurs, Yakuza gangs hold a meeting with the oyabun and their subordinates. During the meeting, they drink



sake, and while the problems the gang faces are discussed, everyone stands half-naked and displays giant tattoos from their necks to their tailbones. This ritual is important for increasing the family bond between yakuza gangs and displaying their masculinity. Sometimes Yakuza members wear kimonos during the meetings.

3.2.4. Sake

Sake has a very important place in yakuza culture. Yakuza members drink sake when they meet, they drink sake at celebrations, and when they make a promise, they strengthen it with sake. Sake is especially used in a welcoming ritual that symbolizes the bond between the new kobun and the oyabun. According to this ritual, the first 6 cloves of sake are put into the new kobun, and then 10 cloves of sake are put into the oyabun. The number of cloves in the sake determines the person's rank. After the sake is put in, the kobun and the oyabun take a sip from each other's sake cups, thus ending the ritual. This ritual indicates that the kobun has sworn an oath of loyalty to the oyabun, and now the gang is the kobun's new family.

4. Major Parties Involved in Japan

4.1. Inagawa-kai

The Inagawa-kai, headed by Kakuji Inagawa, is Tokyo's second-largest yakuza syndicate with 5,100 members. The Inagawa-kai is run by a pyramid scheme with the oyabun at the top and the kobun at the bottom. The oyabun's lieutenants run the larger gangs below the Inagawa-kai, but the oyabun always has the final say. The gang's structure is based on the culture of traditional bakuto gangs. The gang places great importance on respect for the oyabun and other yakuza traditions. The gang's main source of income is gambling casinos with illegal odds, but they also use many of the same illegal methods of generating revenue as the yakuza. Another method by which the Inagawa make money is through the amphetamine and methamphetamine trade. These valuable chemicals and casinos make up about 80% of the gang's income. The gang is also on very bad terms with other Tokyo gangs. This is because Inagawa once formed an alliance with Taoka. This situation made other yakuza gangs, who wanted to keep Yamaguchi away from Tokyo, natural enemies of Inagawa-kai for a long time. Some of Inagawa's characteristic features include their success in gang warfare. Inagawa-kai, which adopts an incredibly aggressive policy in gang warfare, does not hesitate to use heavy weapons such as machine guns and grenades in the capital of the country when it deems necessary, so much so that even in the golden age when yakuza completely controlled politics and the police force, Inagawa was imprisoned for 6 years due to his overly aggressive policy. Gang members have certain characteristic features that make it easy to identify gang members in society due to the gang's structure that is



attached to yakuza traditions. These features are large American and German sedan cars, which are almost exclusively used by yakuza, black suits, white ties and sunglasses, and a lapel pin on their collars indicating that they are members of Inagawa-kai. Inagawa-kai controls the Roppongi Akasaka district in Tokyo and other areas to the east.

4.2. Relationship of Yamaguchi-gumi and Inagawa-kai

The Yamaguchi-Gumi and Inagawa-kai have had a frictional relationship since the 1960s. One reason for this is that both gangs have expansionist policies in the areas they dominate and are likely to eventually invade each other's territory. Kodama's coalition of Tokyo yakuza gangs in the early 1970s helped reduce the Yamaguchi-gumi's efforts to expand into Tokyo and the tension between the two gangs, but the coalition quickly fell apart and the two gangs' relationship returned to normal. Yamaguchi-gumi members would sometimes appear in areas where the Inagawa-kai was dominant and start gang wars. However, when things got too heated, Kodama, a man respected by all yakuza, would mediate and resolve the situation. Kodama's peace-making policy worked until Yamaguchi-gumi funded an anti-drug political campaign targeting the Inagawa-kai. The success of the campaign angered Inagawa greatly, and an official gang war broke out between the two gangs, but as soon as the war began, the police, who had been following the tension between the two gangs from the beginning, sent Inagawa to prison for 6 years for various crimes. When Inagawa was released from prison, his gang was disbanded, but Inagawa quickly brought his gang back to its former glory thanks to his organizational skills and reputation. However, times had changed, and the Yamaguchi-gumi had become too big a gang to compete with. Inagawa then went to visit Toaka—the oyabun of the Yamaguchi-gumi. The purpose of this visit was to form an alliance with the Yamaguchi-gumi and turn his gang into the Tokyo branch of the Yamaguchi-gumi, and it was successful. After this, an Inagawa-kai-Yamaguchi-gumi alliance was formed that lasted for over 15 years. Although there were various conflicts within this alliance, Kodama saw this alliance as valuable, and the gangs respected this and maintained the alliance. Things changed in the 1990s; Kodama and Taoka were now buried, and Inagawa retired in 1986 and left the gang to his son—yet in the 1990s he had the final say in the gang's decisions. In addition to all these negative developments, the Yamaguchi-gumi was not satisfied with the Inagawa-kai's Tokyo authority and launched an expedition to seize Tokyo. This aggressive attitude led Inagawa to decide to break the alliance, and all the Tokyo gangs formed a coalition again and fought against the Yamaguchi-Gumi. At the end of this huge gang war, the Inagawa-kai and Yamaguchi relations returned to the pre-alliance period. Besides that, almost every yakuza gang in Tokyo is a rival to Inagawa-kai.



4.3. Sumiyoshi-kai

Sumiyoshi-kai has the title of being the largest yakuza gang in Tokyo with 6,200 members. Sumiyoshi-kai operates with a unique system that other yakuza gangs do not adopt. Most yakuza gangs have adopted a pyramid system with the oyabun at the top, but even though Sumiyoshi-kai still has an oyabun, this system does not work as tightly; Sumiyoshi-kai operates more like a federation of Tokyo's major gangs. Decisions in the gang are made by a board of directors, and a looser chain of command is preferred so that smaller gangs can make quick decisions. Thanks to this, Sumiyoshi-kai can easily keep thousands of gangsters under its roof.

Sumiyoshi-kai has several goals that set it apart from other gangs, and the gang maintains these goals no matter what. The first of these is to prevent Yamaguchi-gumi from entering Tokyo no matter what. This is very important for the existence of gangs in Tokyo because the total number of members of all gangs in Tokyo does not even come close to the more than 13 thousand members of Yamaguchi-Gumi. Sumiyoshi-kai gives priority to gangs in Tokyo at this point. This anti-Yamaguchi-gumi policy naturally makes Inagawa-kai the natural enemy of Sumiyoshi-kai. This enmity has been so long that even Inagawa breaking his alliance and defending Tokyo yakuza in the gang war between Yamaguchi-gumi and Tokyo yakuza in 1990 did not end this enmity.

Of course, the rivalry between the two gangs is not only related to Yamaguchi-gumi. These two gangs have been in fierce competition to take over all of Tokyo since their founding. Sumiyoshi-kai also earns most of its income from similar markets as Inagawa-kai, illegal gambling, and drug dealing. There is another point that distinguishes the yakuza gangs under the Sumiyoshi-kai from other yakuza, and that is that the Sumiyoshi-kai has a structure that prefers innovation rather than traditionalism. As a result, Sumiyoshi-kai members are more difficult to detect by the police, but severed fingers, tattoos, and foreign cars continue to exist and are widespread.

4.4. Sumiyoshi-kai's Relationship with Other Parties

There is one yakuza gang that the Sumiyoshi-kai has a particular enmity towards, the Yamaguchi-gumi. The rivalry between the Yamaguchi-Gumi and the Sumiyoshi-kai is a simple power struggle and also stems from the fact that they are located in two culturally hostile regions of Japan, Kansai and Kanto. The cultural rivalry between these two regions may seem like a simple problem at first glance, but in gang wars, these minor problems can become significant factors that escalate the war. The rivalry between the Sumiyoshi-kai and the Yamaguchi-gumi reached a new level when the Inagawa-kai joined the Yamaguchi-Gumi. This development was partly the first successful implementation of the Yamaguchi-gumi's expansion plans in Tokyo. This alliance turned these two gangs, who had been friends while fighting against the Yamaguchi-gumi for a long time, into bloody



enemies. The hostility between the Sumiyoshi-kai and the Inagawa-kai lasted until 1990. At this time, Yamaguchi-gumi declared war on all gangs in the region to gain sole control of Kanto and Tokyo. This war led to the long-standing enemies Inagawa-kai and Sumiyoshi-kai forming an alliance, which lasted until they were able to expel Yamaguchi-gumi from Tokyo. In 1991, the alliance ended when the Yamaguchi-gumi problem was over. Inagawa-kai no longer had the support of Yamaguchi-gumi, which put Sumiyoshi-kai and Inagawa-kai on equal footing. Although the threat of Yamaguchi-gumi was no longer there, the feud between the two gangs continued. This time, the issue was which gang would take absolute control of Tokyo. Similar to Inagawa-kai, the other gangs in Tokyo had not formed alliances with Sumiyoshi-kai, and many of them were hostile.¹¹

4.5. Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department

The Tokyo police force is physically quite weak compared to the yakuza gangs. This is due to the gun laws in Japan and the policies that have weakened the police force since the Occupation. However, the police force is not that weak; this is due to the cultural authority of the police among the criminals. The Japanese have long viewed organized crime groups as part of society rather than as enemies. The police's actions have also followed this line for a long time. For example, the police officers have often helped the yakuza, and the yakuza have repaid the *giri* that the police gave them by suppressing unorganized crime with violence that the police would not have been able to use. This has indeed reduced the rate of all unorganized crime in Japan, but there is another side to this trade-off. Yakuza gangs have grown and become more powerful as they have been pardoned by the police. As a result, as the yakuza gangs have grown, they have come to control the police bases and the politicians. After this point, the yakuza, who did not need the police's forgiveness, stopped helping with local crimes and even started committing crimes targeting the local people. With the yakuza gangs disturbing the public and their authority within the state being exposed to the Lockheed incidents, the public began to see the yakuza as a threat. In this way, with the public's demand, the police began to organize against the yakuza and arrest more yakuza members every year. With the law passed in 1992, which officially counted members of yakuza gangs as members of organized crime organizations, these arrest rates reached their peak, and the police arrested over 30,000 yakuza in one year. As you can see, although the police had remained silent in the past due to corruption and state authority, they became powerful enough to disrupt the yakuza's operations in the 1990s after the Lockheed incidents. The police aim to destroy all yakuza organizations in Tokyo, primarily the Inagawa-kai and Sumiyoshi-kai.



5. Committee Procedure

5.1. Control of Territories

The Yakuza's policies for controlling territory have followed very different methods compared to other organized crime organizations in the world. When the Yakuza control territory, this means the following: The Yakuza control the entertainment and service sectors in the region; the sets of large Yakuza gangs can operate here easily, and the Yakuza have eliminated political obstacles to seizing the territory. In a way, the Yakuza become the *legal* owners of the regions they control. In this way, the Yakuza's money laundering system becomes easier and creates a legal profit opportunity in addition to illegal activities. To explain the basics, when the Yakuza seizes a territory, a regional gang war first begins; this is the first condition, and the Yakuza have to be physically strong to take the territory from the rival gang. After clearing the territory, the Yakuza moved on to the second step: They started to take legal ownership of the entertainment and service businesses in the region; in this way, the Yakuza gained legitimacy in the region. Finally, the Yakuza ended the operation by inserting their political connections in order not to be harassed by the law while carrying out these activities.

- **Sets:** Sets are simply small yakuza gangs that operate regionally and are affiliated with large yakuza syndicates. These gangs are a symbol of the yakuza's military power in the region. Most of the illegal activities carried out by the yakuza are carried out through these gangs. Collecting protection fees, selling drugs, and protecting the area from attacks by enemy gangs are the highest priorities of the sets. There are several methods for taking over a set's territory. The most common of these methods is to purge some of the members of these regional gangs and have them leave the area, and due to the superior-subordinate relationships in Japanese gangs, buying a set's loyalty is an option, although it is rarely a working method. The amount of set control a yakuza gang has determines its power.
- **Financial Power:** The Yakuza had a different principle than other organized crime organizations in the world. The Yakuza placed great importance on establishing a legitimate presence approved by law in the region they took over. The basis of this principle stems from the fact that all major yakuza gangs existed as companies in an official capacity. In addition, the Yakuza became the cultural rulers of the regions they controlled, and they ensured this dominance with private property laws in the 1990s. When the Yakuza took over a region, they first became partners in the entertainment sectors, hotels, and large restaurants in that region. These properties served as the operational center of the set in the region. At the same time, money laundering mechanisms through these businesses were facilitated, and money obtained



through illegal methods was sent to the main gang. In addition, these businesses were very important for the Yakuza because 20% of the Yakuza's income came from the legal and taxed earnings of these businesses. Especially during the 1989 economic crisis, the legal earnings of the Yakuza became an important share of the Japanese economy, and some Yakuza even saw legal businesses as more profitable and completely transformed into companies. As can be understood, Yakuza gangs place great importance on investment and financial growth. Yakuza also used a special technique called sokaiya to take over companies in the area.

- **Political Support:** Since the 1960s, the yakuza and politics have been intertwined in Japan. The yakuza were opened up to politics to find a fundamental solution to police repression and to prevent prosecution of their crimes, and the politicians gave them what they wanted. There were many reasons why politicians cooperated with the yakuza. Since the early yakuza was a community with a tight chain of command, the decisions made by the oyabun were carried out without question by the koban, meaning that if a politician could convince the oyabun to vote for his candidate or party, he would gain thousands of votes, and of course, he had to offer something in return. Politicians gave the yakuza a lot of power to gain votes, and despite the gang wars in Tokyo reaching their peak in 1990 and the public suffering from the incidents, no one could touch the yakuza gangs because almost half of the ruling party and many important government officials were protecting the yakuza. In other words, yakuza gangs needed political support to protect themselves from police interference when taking over each other's gang territories; otherwise, the police would cause serious losses to both feuding gangs.

5.2. Yakuza and the State

Almost every organized crime organization has worked with the state. However, the situation of yakuza gangs is a bit different. Yakuza gangs have historically been paramilitary organizations that the state resorted to in difficult times. The separation of the yakuza gangs and the state dates back to the 1980s, but the cooperation between them continued partially until the 2000s. In the 1980s, with the renewal of a significant part of the police force, the yakuza gangs' control over the police weakened significantly. As a solution, yakuza gangs decided to approach the corrupt government. Yakuza gangs, who have established close ties with the ruling party, the LDP, have gotten away with many illegal actions in this way. As can be understood, the relationship established between the government and the state is extremely important for yakuza gangs. The competition between yakuza gangs can also be measured by their control over the parliament. The gang that controls more deputies for the ruling party has prevailed over the other gang, at least on a legal level. The most obvious example of this is



the arrest of Kakuji Inagawa, an oyabun of Inagawa-kai, shortly after the gang war between Yamaguchi-gumi and Inagawa-kai in the 1960s. In this case, although the party that started the war was Yamaguchi-gumi, the police targeted Inagawa-kai because Yamaguchi-gumi had more political power than Inagawa-kai.

The government's aid to yakuza gangs does not only reduce police oppression. Many services, such as turning a blind eye to tax evasion, covering up cases, and early release of arrested criminal gang members from prison, are provided by the state to yakuza gangs. The reason for providing these services is the cult-like structure of yakuza gangs. If an oyabun orders its gang to vote for the LDP, this means 3-4 thousand votes to the party. This situation possesses great importance because the support of yakuza gangs is important in electing the mayor who will govern Tokyo. For all these reasons, the government helps yakuza gangs in many ways.

5.3. Illegal Activities

Gunrunning: Although arms smuggling and trading is not one of the yakuza's main sources of income, it is one of their important side businesses. The first reason for this is that Japan's policies against arms are so strict that even some police forces in the country do not have access to arms. This makes the arms market a very expensive market. For example, a gun sold for \$250 in America in the 1990s could be worth up to \$4,000 in Japan. However, since it is very difficult to bring weapons into Japan and the market demand is low, yakuza gangs avoid making arms trafficking their main focus. In addition, weapons are among the illegal products that the state pays the most attention to, which puts arms trafficking in a very risky position. Yakuza generally prefer arms smuggling to provide resources for their gangs or to sell weapons to other yakuza gangs. The weapons are brought either from nearby Asian countries or America. Arms trafficking accounts for less than 8% of yakuza gangs' income.

Assassination: Assassinations have been a tool that yakuza gangs have used quite frequently throughout their history. Especially in pre-war Japan, one of the most common things the yakuza did was to eliminate rivals they thought were opposing them or ideologically opposed to them by assassination. Although assassinations are so common among yakuza gangs, they also indicate a major taboo. An assassination attempt against a high-ranking member of a yakuza gang is considered a direct declaration of war, and other gangs tend to side with the gang that declared war. The reason for this taboo is that assassinations among yakuza gangs disrupt the balance of power between yakuza gangs. For example, an assassination attempt was made on Taoka, a former oyabun of the Yamaguchi-gumi, by a kobun of a small gang in the Osaka region at a pool party. Although the assassination attempt failed, Taoka was shot in the neck, showing the entire yakuza community how easily even the biggest oyabun can die. Many minor gangs rebelled against the Yamaguchi-gumi until



Toaka was able to recover and establish authority. Despite all these taboos, assassination attempts are common, especially among feuding gangs.

Bid Rigging: Another job that yakuza do is to rig bids. This job has been the main source of income for many yakuza gangs, especially during the Occupation period, and has given rise to a new type of yakuza gang called gurentai, consisting of construction workers. Since most of the tenders opened by the state are about the construction sector, the sector that yakuza gangs dominate the most is the construction sector. Another reason for this is that construction workers were a group even in early yakuza gangs, meaning that yakuza gangs are culturally suitable for receiving bids. However, of course, no state institution wants to hand over a job to a group of criminals. Here, yakuza intervene by suppressing their bid rivals with threats and violence or by using their political connections to ensure that the bid falls to them. Some yakuza gangs With this tender domination that started with the Occupation period, some yakuza gangs turned into real construction companies in the 1990s. However, in large companies such as Sumiyoshi-kai, Yamaguchi-gumi, and Inagawa kai, revenues from tenders are less than 10% of total revenue.

Bookmaking: Yakuza, especially Bakuto gangs, are cultural gamblers and have undoubtedly preserved their culture well. A good portion of Yakuza gangs' income comes from non-institutionalized betting activities. Although Yakuza gangs' ties to gambling date back to the 1600s, after the occupation, with the legalization of gambling, Yakuza gangs tried two different ways to make money from gambling. One of these is the more localized bookmaking and the more systemic illegal odds casinos. Bookmaking activities are usually carried out by regional sets. There is a great demand for these local events, where almost everything is gambled on. What makes bookmaking activities special is not the absurdity of the odds given but the variety of events on which to gamble. A street fight, a local or national election, or perhaps a pair of animals fighting can be gambled on. The sets are responsible for organizing the gambling events and making sure the winning side collects the money. They receive a certain commission for these services. These activities, which seem small and irregular, actually make up 5% of the total income of Yakuza gangs.

Drug Trafficking: Drug dealing is one of the biggest sources of income for yakuza gangs, and drug consumption is a taboo. One of the reasons for this is that people who are addicted to drugs are not reliable dealers, and the other is that their overly aggressive behavior attracts attention. If a gang member uses drugs, he has to give the oyabun a finger. Since life is hard with 9 fingers, most yakuza members do not break this taboo. The drug distribution system works as follows: Amphetamine and methamphetamine are delivered to the gang from America and nearby Asian countries through various smuggling methods. Then, yakuza gangs deliver these products to the sets, and the sets are sold in small pieces. When selling, there must be no police forces in the area, and the customer must be sure that they are reliable because it is one of the crimes that the Japanese police pay great attention



to as a result of the anti-drug policies funded by the Yamaguchi-Gumi. In addition, drug dealing is a point where yakuza have a monopoly because there is no one else in the country who can sell drugs except yakuza gangs. Generally, secluded areas such as car parks are preferred when trading. The money earned from drugs is laundered by mixing it with the income of the yakuza's businesses in the area and sent to the main gang. The amphetamine used by soldiers during the Occupation and War periods created a very tight market after the Occupation period. In addition, since the market's customers are dependent, there is a stable demand pattern. Drug trafficking makes up 35% of the yakuza gangs' income and is also their largest source of income. The reason many yakuza gangs constantly fight to take over each other's territories is to have a larger market for drug trafficking. More sets mean more income.

Gambling: Gambling is an important part of a yakuza member's life. Culturally, the bakuto gangs, one of the three yakuza gangs, tekiya, gurentai, and bakuto, used gambling as their main source of income. This continued until the 1950s, but with Japan's defeat in the war and the American occupation, the Japanese government saw gambling as a good source of taxation and legalized it, and the gambling that the Bakuto gangs had been doing was replaced by large casinos. However, the bakuto gangs, who had been doing this for 400 years, would not end up like this. There were two major drawbacks to their state-approved casinos: the odds were not good due to government regulations, and taxes were deducted from the money earned. Therefore, the bakuto gangs opened illegal casinos, bringing an alternative to the market. These casinos were especially popular with the rich and addicts. High odds and earning tax-free money had become a very successful and attractive business model. Yakuza gangs earned money by charging a game-opening fee for each game played in the casino. These game opening fees could reach exorbitant prices. For example, some people claimed that opening a card game in one of the Inagawa-kai casinos cost \$174,000. The Yakuza gambled on almost everything. The most profitable form of gambling outside of casinos was horse racing. Gambling winnings accounted for 12% of the yakuza's total income.

Loan Sharking: Loan sharking is a business model that the yakuza adopted in the 1960s and also includes some violent services to help collect debts from other customers and resolve debt disputes. Loan sharking yakuza gangs are perhaps the most ruthless yakuza. They will do anything to collect their debts. The pressure they exert is so intense that one of the known causes of suicide in Japan is being indebted to a loan shark. Working at interest rates of up to 10% per day, these loan sharks are famous for making sure that the person they lend to pays their debts. They have sometimes resorted to processes such as selling the organs of customers who do not have money but owe money. Most of these loan sharks also deal with dispute resolution. The first reaction of a landlord who cannot evict a tenant is to cooperate with a yakuza gang rather than resort to the law. This is because Japan's legal



system is very slow in resolving disputes. The loan sharking activities of yakuza gangs account for 8% of the gangs' total income.

Money Laundering: Money laundering is one of the first systems that illegal organizations need to establish in order to be successful. In order for money earned through illegal activities to be converted into investment, the money must first be laundered. In this way, the money can be used through banks. This allows cash to be transferred within the gang without any transmission problems. Yakuza gangs generally prefer to launder money earned from a region by mixing it with the income streams of the businesses they own. After the money is laundered, it is sent to the main gang. The sets largely undertake the task of laundering money. Thanks to the private properties owned by Yakuza gangs, money laundering does not create a major problem in the Yakuza system. Laundering money is very important to avoid police surveillance and to transfer money.

Protection Racketeering: Protection fees are one of the income methods that the yakuza have used for centuries. When you pay a protection fee to a yakuza gang, the gang does not guarantee your protection; it guarantees that the gang will not attack you. The yakuza gangs that laid the foundations for this system are the Tekiyas. Since the Tekiya gangs are street vendors, they have organized themselves and taken over some sales areas. If you do not want to sell in these areas, you give money to the Tekiya gang; if you do not, you will be beaten and your products will be stolen. This system that the Tekiya gangs established has quickly become a business model used by all yakuza gangs. Especially in the 1960s, with the entry of yakuza gangs into the entertainment sector, the tradition of collecting protection fees from restaurants, clubs, and casinos has become established. If you do not pay your fee, you are likely to find your business riddled with bullets. Unfortunately, as police surveillance has developed, the income from protection fees has decreased. Therefore, this old business model, which is no longer the main source of income for yakuza gangs, constitutes 5% of the Yakuza's income.

Forced Labor: There is a business opportunity offered by Yakuza gangs to people who are financially bankrupt enough to work with Yakuza gangs or to people who have entered the country illegally and come to earn money. Turkish baths, which are mostly run by Yakuza gangs, represent a special type of bathhouse in Japan. Yakuza and people who have probably been in gangs are prohibited from entering normal bathhouses because of their tattoos. This is where Turkish baths come in. Turkish baths do not select customers, and they also offer some special services to their customers. However, these special Turkish baths controlled by Yakuza gangs have a huge ethical problem: employees have to do whatever their superiors say or face punishments such as harassment, violence, and being handed over to the police, many of whom are not Japanese citizens and have entered the country illegally. These jobs, which have irregular working hours and you have no say and you earn little, are also almost completely under the monopoly of Yakuza. Yakuza prefer women in these "forced labor" jobs,



probably because they are less likely to show physical resistance. These illegal businesses make up 7% of the Yakuza's total income.

Sokaiya: It is a method that is specific to yakuza gangs only. The method works as follows: first, gang members use the gang's money to buy enough shares to be considered shareholders, and then they enter the shareholders' meeting anonymously. During the meeting, gang members stop hiding their identities and start threatening other shareholders to sell their shares cheaply. If anyone opposes, they first threaten to kill their family and then the shareholder. If resistance continues, the shareholder with the most shares is executed. In this way, yakuza gangs spend little money and acquire a lot of businesses and property. This method is important for yakuza gangs to take over a region without spending a lot of money to take over businesses in the region. Yakuza gangs also apply the sokaiya method to companies they do not want to take over, but this time they are taking action to extort the company.

5.4. Where is The Police !?

When a gang war broke out in the middle of Tokyo in 1990, in which hundreds of people were killed, the same question crossed the minds of many Japanese citizens. The relationship between the police and the yakuza is not a simple corruption problem but a problem with cultural roots. In Japanese culture, the police and the yakuza have taken on a yin-yang role. The police arrest and imprison yakuza members for crimes they commit. This is not opposed by the yakuza members, and even a yakuza member who commits a crime such as murder will surrender himself to the police. For a very long time, yakuza gangs have defined the police not as their enemies but as their servants who do their job. Yakuza members cooperate with the police in crimes without causing them any trouble. They only avoid giving information about their own gangs, and the police are understanding in this regard. When the police are weak or cannot punish a certain crime due to their position, the yakuza step in and eliminate the problem. This constant "giri" trade between the police and the yakuza has turned the police and yakuza into business partners. The peak of this situation is when yakuza gangs come to the aid of the police who are weakened under the American occupation. For example, when the minorities in Japan rose up and disturbed the local people due to the privileges granted by the USA and even went a step further and blockaded the Kano Police Department, the Yamaguchi-gumi gang came to the aid of the police and saved the police. When we come to the 1960s, the relationship between the police and the yakuza has become a kind of business partnership with increasing corruption. The yakuza pay some of the money they earn as bribes to the police, and in return, the police turn a blind eye to the yakuza's actions. However, there are some taboo actions. For example, if there is a mass murder case, the police intervene and arrest the gang members who need to be arrested. Even if the gang members go to prison, they serve half the sentence of a normal citizen and get out of prison and continue their actions thanks to their political connections and police relations. This relationship



between the yakuza and the police continued without any problems until the 1970s. In 1976, when documents of corruption, including the relationship between the police and the yakuza, were revealed, there was a public backlash against the police forces. As a result of this backlash, police officers who were close to cooperating with the yakuza were replaced by police officers with stronger work ethics, and gradually the relationship between the police and the yakuza began to shift to a negative point. Along with the change in the police, the yakuza had also changed. Now, much more brutal gang wars were seen, and unlike in the past, the yakuza frequently engaged in criminal activities involving ordinary citizens. The gangs now refused to cooperate with the police, and gang members who gave information to the police were executed. The chain of events came to a halt in 1990. A major gang war between the Yamaguchi-gumi and the Tokyo yakuza gangs terrified people for months. The ineffectiveness of the police in the gang war drew public reaction, and despite the apocalypse that broke out in the capital, LDP members were also quite passive. The reflection of these reactions was seen with the passing of the first anti-yakuza law in 1992 and the change of government in 1993. Now the police and the yakuza were old friends and new enemies.

6. State of Tokyo at 1991

Tokyo has been the center of yakuza wars since the 1960s. The tension between Yamaguchi-gumi and Tokyo gangs still visits the city from time to time. The trauma of the gang war between Yamaguchi-gumi and Tokyo gangs in 1990 is still on the people. There is also a demand for change from the people who have digested all these traumatic events. Yakuza gangs were no longer respected by the people and the police, but the people and the police continued to protect them from yakuza gangs because of their military power. While all these gang incidents had just ended, another one was about to start. This time, it was thought that Inagawa-kai and Sumiyoshi-kai would go to war for the control of Tokyo. While Inagawa-kai's base in Roppongi was getting more and more crowded, the same situation was seen in Sumiyoshi-kai's Imperial Palace District. Now both the police and the people could more or less guess what was going to happen; war was about to break out. The police still did not have the right to arrest the yakuza until they took action because there was no law in the Japanese constitution that defined yakuza organizations as criminal organizations. Although the gangs were not at their peak in terms of number of members, they were at their peak in terms of military power and economy. With the bursting of Japan's bubble economy in 1989, the public experienced a great collapse. Japan felt the effects of this collapse throughout the 1990s. The vacuum and economic crisis created by this collapse increased the crime rate and facilitated yakuza activities. The yakuza took advantage of the power vacuum and expanded their financial sphere. After a certain point, the yakuza also became a capital in legal businesses. Of course, the LDP turned a blind eye to yakuza activities in order not to harm the already fragile economy. Under all these conditions, the start of a



yakuza war would be the worst-case scenario. Such incidents in the capital would both disgrace Japan in the international press and could also lead to the end of the LDP's power, but neither side had the power to prevent this war.

6.1. Public Option About Yakuza

The public's view of the yakuza has changed frequently over time. The yakuza's first appearance was formed by the machi-yakko alliances, which were a public reaction against unemployed samurai who were terrorizing them; in other words, the yakuza's origins are folk heroes. In the early periods of the yakuza gangs, they emerged with a kind of service philosophy towards the public. Although their actions were against the authorities, they also provided useful services for the public. Early yakuza gang leaders acted according to the ethical codes called giri and ninjo. The gangs they established were a reaction to the caste system's limitation of their economic class, and there was no anti-public criminal organization. Bakuto gangs started by gambling for the rich, and Tekiya gangs started by street vending. The emergence of yakuza gangs was only a reaction to the pressure that society put on them. Despite all this, yakuza gangs were structures that partially served the public in their early periods. In the stories told in the early periods of yakuza gangs, the organizations were structures that looked out for the benefit of society. Jirochi's legend is the most obvious example of these community services. For this reason, yakuza gangs were seen as respectable but corrupt people in the eyes of the public until the 20th century.

In the early 20th century, the yakuza became political with Toyama's interventions in the extreme nationalist movements that were rising in Japan. One of the reasons for this is that yakuza were extremely traditionalist structures. Liberal, socialist, and democratic policies were the same for yakuza gangs; they were evil ideologies that were trying to be imposed on the country by foreign powers in order to disrupt Japanese society. Apart from this, there were strikes all over the country as a result of the industrialization that started in the country with the collapse of the Shogunate power in the 1850s and the imperial regime that gave importance to industrialization and international relations. Extreme nationalists like Toyama saw these strikes as actions that harmed the country. They used yakuza gangs as a paramilitary group to suppress these actions, at which point yakuza gangs gained the love of the conservative segment of the population and became organizations recognized not only by the public but also by the upper echelons of the state.

During the American occupation period between 1945 and 1952, there were changes and growths in the structure of yakuza gangs. The Americans saw yakuza gangs as soldiers who could fight against communism rather than organized crime organizations that could pose a threat to society due to their anti-communist approach, and they frequently funded them. The biggest financial support was the tenders opened after Japan's reopening after the war and went to yakuza gangs. The reason for the



irregular dissolution of these tenders was the yakuza's attempt to rig the tenders, the cheap labor opportunities that yakuza gangs had, and the Americans' favoritism towards yakuza gangs. All of these led to the formation of a third yakuza gang: the gurentai. There was a very important nuance that distinguished the Gurentai gangs, which were mostly made up of construction workers, from other Yakuza gangs; Gurentai gangs did not have traditions and ethical codes. They did not practice the traditions that gave yakuza gangs a positive image, such as serving the public and respecting the police, and they were much more brutal than other gangs. During this period, yakuza gangs prevented the poor from accessing food by selling the resources they received from the Americans on the black market. The wars between yakuza gangs disrupted the peace of the local people, and the yakuza gangs cooperated with the occupying forces, which damaged the image of the yakuza gangs in the public eye. On the other hand, the fact that they fought against the gangs formed by minority groups that disturbed the public peace and that they fought local crime in the absence of police forces improved the position of the Yakuza gangs in the public eye. When the occupation years ended, a skeptical view of the Yakuza gangs emerged among the public.

The developments between 1955 and 1990 caused the Yakuza gangs to gain a bad reputation. The gang wars that broke out between the gangs in Tokyo and the Yamaguchi-gumi in the 1960s damaged public peace. Yakuza groups had now established a strong structure within the state, and thanks to this structure, they were able to continue their actions without caring about the law. This friendship between the yakuza gangs and the ruling party pushed the yakuza gangs to become more violent structures. The yakuza gangs stopped cooperating with the police and began to commit crimes that frequently targeted the local population. Especially after the Lockheed incidents in 1976, when the structure of the yakuza gangs within the state was revealed, a hatred towards the yakuza gangs began to form among the public. After the bloody war between the Yamaguchi-gumi and the Tokyo gangs in 1990, the yakuza gangs became public enemies. As a result of the gang war, street safety was in danger for months, and the local population was victimized, but the yakuza gangs got away with it without much punishment thanks to their connections with the state. This injustice angered the public, and the result of this anger showed its effect with the first anti-yakuza law passed in 1992.

6.2. Precautions of The State

Although yakuza gangs had infiltrated the state, politicians could turn a blind eye to yakuza activities to a certain extent. Sometimes, disagreements could arise between politicians and yakuza gangs. An example is a declaration given to LDP deputies by Inagawa-kai in 1963. This declaration included a threat that the events within the LDP were damaging the yakuza economy and that they should resolve their internal affairs quickly or bad things would happen to them. The LDP was disturbed by the yakuza gangs intervening in politics to this extent. As a result, Inagawa, the head of the Inagawa-kai



gang, who was already at odds with the Yamaguchi-gumi and frequently posed a threat to public peace, was sentenced to 6 years in prison. This reaction from politicians showed that yakuza gangs did not control politics and that there was a relationship of interest between politicians and yakuza.

The real measures taken by the state were developed as a result of the public reaction that emerged after the Lockheed incidents in 1976. As a result of the corruption that emerged, many resignations occurred in the government, and as a result of these resignations, many state officials who had no connection with the yakuza took office. The first development was the obvious increase in the number of arrests of yakuza members, even if it was not legal. Although yakuza gangs were able to maintain their power in the parliament to a certain extent by the mid-1980s, they had almost completely lost their structure in the police force. After the great war between the Yamaguchi-gumi and Tokyo gangs in 1990, public reaction was completely against the yakuza gangs. This reaction created a snowball effect and led to the passage of an anti-yakuza law by the parliament in 1992. This law was actually a strike order given to the Japanese police against yakuza gangs. The police quickly categorized the yakuza gangs, monitored them, and systematically arrested more than 30 thousand yakuza in one year. This number was half the number of yakuza members in the country at that time. The effects of the gang war in 1990 were so great that in 1993, the opposition parties, with an eight-party coalition, ousted the LDP, which had been in power for over 30 years. With this development, an unofficial hunt was declared for yakuza gangs in the state. Nevertheless, the yakuza gangs managed to maintain their political power until the 2000s because more than 40% of the seats in the parliament belonged to the LDP, and disagreements among the coalition were frequent, but things definitely did not go well for the yakuza.

6.3. Negative Effect of Yakuza

Yakuza gangs were relatively harmless organizations until the 1850s. Especially the changes that came with the imperial regime and the industrial revolution made yakuza gangs political. This politicization turned into a militaristic structure that attacked anyone who opposed their views under the leadership of leaders such as Toyama. Especially until the 1950s, it caused workers' rights, democracy, and liberal policies to develop much more slowly in Japan compared to the rest of the world. In the 1940s, yakuza gangs established drug trafficking networks in China with state support. The state even used this production chain on kamikaze soldiers. In the 1950s, yakuza gangs established close cooperation with the occupying Americans. As a result of this cooperation, the food aid provided by the Americans for Japanese citizens fell into the hands of yakuza gangs, and the gangs sold these food sources on the black market at extremely high prices. This monopoly established by yakuza gangs on quality food sources caused many low-income Japanese families to experience nutritional problems and starve. They also damaged the democracy that the Americans brought to the country by following their old political views. They prevented the Japanese Communist Party (JCP)



from adapting to the multi-party system with various attacks and helped people with intelligence connections like Kodama to bring the LDP to power. This intervention created a snowball effect in the future and led the LDP to a 41-year rule. In the 1960s, yakuza gangs attacked students who were protesting against the public uprisings, but they were unsuccessful. Also, during these dates, the Japanese saw for the first time what a war between large yakuza gangs could look like, but Inagawa was arrested and sentenced to 6 years in prison before the war could grow. In the 1970s, yakuza gangs established very good relations with politicians through figures with connections to politics like Kodama and began to work with the police force. As a result of this corruption in the state, yakuza gangs, whose legal pressure was lifted, began to target innocent people more in the crimes they committed. After the Lockheed incidents in 1976, the ties between the yakuza and the police began to break down, and as a result, arrests increased, but politicians still protected yakuza gangs. In the 1980s, many gangs experienced civil war, and the oyabun changed, and it was now common to see news of deaths related to gang wars in Japan. In 1990, the Yamaguchi-gumi entered into a major gang war with Tokyo gangs in order to conquer the Tokyo area. The gang war lasted for months and left the people of the capital in terror. In addition to all these negative effects, the yakuza has become a formation that has continuously harmed Japanese society, especially after the 1950s, by encouraging young people to get involved in crime, increasing illegal weapons in the country, increasing drug use and addiction, and committing various crimes

7. What Makes Yakuza Special ?

The biggest difference between yakuza gangs and the mafia and other organized crime organizations is the structure of yakuza gangs. Yakuza gangs are gangs with certain standards. For example, when they take over a region, they take care to have a legal say in the businesses in the region. They remain loyal to the oyabun-kobun system until the end. Kobun is always ready to die for the gang if his superior orders it. The fact that yakuza gangs operate in regions with low crime rates, such as Japan, also makes their actions different from other gangs. Since free armament is very limited in Japan, yakuza gangs only use weapons in gang wars. Yakuza gangs have also managed to establish a corruption network within the country that will work for their own benefit. In this way, they have become gangsters who have decision-making power in important positions in the state. When all these features are considered, it can be said that yakuza gangs are a special case in the field of organized crime.



7.1. Guns in Japan

Japan has one of the most restrictive gun policies in the world and is one of the countries with the harshest penalties for carrying an unlicensed gun. In addition, it is almost impossible to obtain a gun license as a civilian, and even some police officers in Japan do not carry guns. These restrictive laws cause the gun market in Japan to revolve largely around the black market. This market is more or less monopolized by the yakuza because the infrastructure to bring the guns from abroad and smuggle them across the border is only available in large yakuza syndicates, and other yakuza gangs also buy weapons from these large gangs. Yakuza gangs, like the rest of the country, are wary of using guns and carry out many of their operations with close combat weapons. One of the reasons why yakuza gangs are wary of using guns is that the police are very sensitive to guns. However, when there is a war between two yakuza gangs, using guns becomes a necessity. The fact that yakuza gangs are the only organizations in the country other than the army that have heavy weapons and equipment such as grenades is the biggest reason why people fear yakuza gangs and obey them.

7.2. Chain of Command

Whether they are governed by a pyramid system or a federation, yakuza gangs are organizations known for their chain of command. Kobun must obey orders from their superiors; otherwise, they either have to cut off one of their fingers and give it to their superiors or be killed. Every yakuza member is aware of this condition when they join the gang and avoids disobeying. Yakuza gangs are similar to sects in terms of their structure. The order of the oyabun is considered almost sacred by the kobun and is meticulously implemented. Even if this order is a suicide mission or the killing of a relative, the kobun must obey the orders. One of the structures accepted by yakuza gangs is the family structure. Once the kobun joins the gang and swears loyalty to the oyabun, it is considered that they have lost their old ties. From this point on, the kobun, who becomes the gang's property, does whatever is ordered to him and receives a small payment in return. As the kobun successfully carries out the orders, he rises in rank in the gang; each failure costs him a finger.

7.3. Modern Bakuto

Gambling has been a cultural business of yakuza gangs. Throughout Japanese history, people who gambled were known as yakuza, but with the legalization of gambling in the 1950s as a result of the American occupation, interest in illegal gambling by yakuza gangs decreased. Thereupon, some yakuza gangs decided to carry out gambling completely legally, while others decided to establish the first large casinos in yakuza history. These casinos were generally opened secretly in yakuza properties where it would be difficult for the police to find. Since yakuza gangs owned most of the



properties in the areas they held, it was easy to gamble without being caught. These illegal casinos, which especially targeted the rich and politicians, were known for their excessive cost and the incredibly high odds they offered. For example, in the 1970s, opening a card game at a casino in Inagawa-kai cost \$174,000. These casinos represent the reputation and culture of yakuza gangs, as well as being the source of a good portion of their revenue. The nuance that distinguishes Yakuza gang casinos from other organized crime organizations is that Yakuza gangs are abundant in every region they control. If you enter any Yakuza business, it is almost impossible not to find an area to gamble. In addition, casinos are generally relatively low on the police's priority list of criminal activities, which makes them a safe option.

7.4. Transportation

In Japan, the easiest way to spot a yakuza member is through the car they drive. Almost all yakuza gangs use Mercedes and Ford cars. Yakuza gangs are the only major customers of these cars in Japan. These cars also give yakuza gangs a kind of priority in traffic. If you see a white sedan with black window tints in Japan, the driver is likely to be a yakuza member. Yakuza gangs also use these cars in operations, but if their work needs to be secret, any Japanese-made car can be used. These cars also serve as a threat at some point. It is quite common to see these cars parked in front of businesses that have not paid their protection fees. Yakuza gangs use these types of cars to identify them as gang members, like lapel pins. These cars are also used in gang wars. Some gangs modify the car models they use in a special way. In this way, they are not confused with other gang members.



8. Links and Further Readings

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/yakuza>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/yakuza>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/the-town-that-took-on-the-yakuza-923490.html>
- <https://youtu.be/CWroeOt-d8I?si=VyqvDbuUzEZ1bEEe>
- https://youtu.be/5F8oyk_Wqyk?si=qKv7MldmaZULootv
- <https://youtu.be/3IdR86jVGm4?si=Y-tBeutpjazi20Nu>
- KAPLAN, D. E., & DUBRO, A. (2012). Yakuza: Japan's Criminal Underworld (1st ed.). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppxb2>