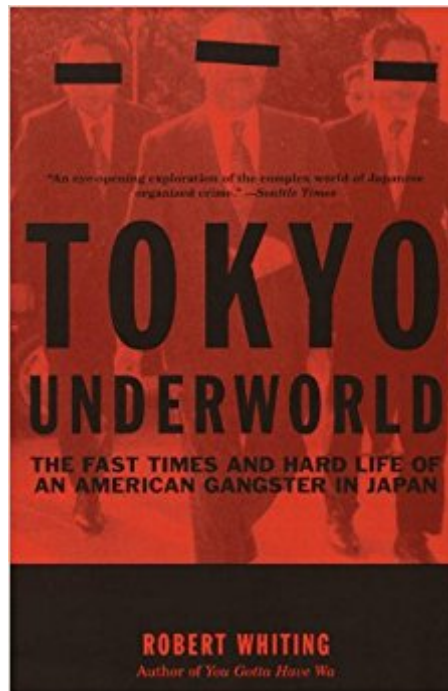


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Tokyo Underworld: The Fast Times And Hard Life Of An American Gangster In Japan



Synopsis

"A fascinating look at some fascinating people who show how democracy advances hand in hand with crime in Japan."--Mario Puzo In this unorthodox chronicle of the rise of Japan, Inc., Robert Whiting, author of *You Gotta Have Wa*, gives us a fresh perspective on the economic miracle and near disaster that is modern Japan. Through the eyes of Nick Zappetti, a former GI, former black marketer, failed professional wrestler, bungling diamond thief who turned himself into "the Mafia boss of Tokyo and the king of Rappongi," we meet the players and the losers in the high-stakes game of postwar finance, politics, and criminal corruption in which he thrived. Here's the story of the Imperial Hotel diamond robbers, who attempted (and may have accomplished) the biggest heist in Tokyo's history. Here is Rikidozan, the professional wrestler who almost single-handedly revived Japanese pride, but whose own ethnicity had to be kept secret. And here is the story of the intimate relationships shared by Japan's ruling party, its financial combines, its ruthless criminal gangs, the CIA, American Big Business, and perhaps at least one presidential relative. Here is the underside of postwar Japan, which is only now coming to light.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Nick Zappetti sounds like a proper name for a Mafia boss. What is unusual about this particular capo is his territory-the Roppongi district of Tokyo-as well as the time of his ascendancy-the fall of 1945, in occupied Japan. *Tokyo Underworld* is a half-century survey of the dark side of the Japanese economic miracle, the criminal empire born of the corruption which riddled the Marshall Plan. Part postwar history and part gangster movie, *Tokyo Underworld* is unfurled by its author with

a melodramatic flourish: It is an alternate, separate layer of reality, a shadowy universe of characters-gangsters, corrupt entrepreneurs, courtesans, seedy sports promoters, streetwise opportunists, intelligence agents, political fixers, and financial manipulators-who have perhaps done as much in their own right to influence U.S.-Japan affairs as their more refined and respected peers. Significantly, it has not always been easy to distinguish the latter from the former. Drawing on police and press reports as well as personal interviews (Zappetti himself was interviewed extensively for this book between 1989 and his death in 1992 at age seventy-one), Robert Whiting, one of the few western journalists to live and write regularly in Japan, depicts an awesome cancer of corruption metastasizing behind the rigid veneer of Japanese society.

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