

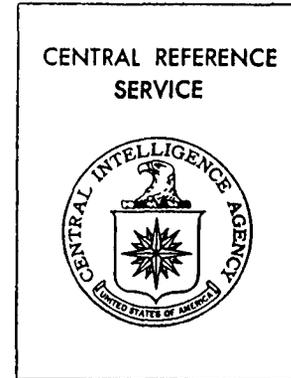
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JAPAN

Yoshio KODAMA

Rightist Leader

Yoshio Kodama, notorious since the 1920's for his connections with right-wing and underworld groups, is widely reported to have high-level connections in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He has been described by many sources as a powerful figure in behind-the-scenes political maneuvering and one of the real "strong men" in present-day Japan. Allegedly, he has been visited at his residence by cabinet ministers and even Prime Minister Sato. He was reported to have had a close relationship with the late Ichiro Kono, one-time LDP contender for the Prime Ministership, and former LDP vice president Bamboku Ono, both of whom had somewhat unsavory reputations.



An outspoken nationalist, Kodama believes Japan should erase the "shame" of being protected by another country, but he considers the Sato government incapable of removing the United States protection. In early 1968, in conversation with a business associate, Kodama made some predictions concerning the Japanese political scene. Following the extension of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1970, Kodama said that there will be anti-American demonstrations which will bring about the downfall of the Japanese government. A coalition government of the LDP and an unidentified second party will be formed under former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi on his promise to revise the security treaty immediately, Kodama predicted. This revision would attempt to make Japan an equal partner with the United States in a truly mutual defense pact. If these events do not occur, Kodama anticipates a civil war, probably in 1971, between leftist and rightist forces; the latter by then having had enough time to complete the job already begun by the Zengakuren (All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Government Associations) of training people and amassing arms and supplies. On another occasion Kodama speculated that Takeo Fukuda, the present Minister of Finance, would replace Sato in October 1968 and that Kishi would come to power in 1969. Presumably this prognostication was not an alteration of the one previously mentioned and may have been a surmise about the elections held in November 1968.

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Yoshio KODAMA (cont.)

A clue to Kodama's political opinions may be included in the book, A Bridge Linking Asia, published by the Japan Political Material Research Society, which contains a contribution by him. In it, he advocates the promotion of nationalistic feeling in **Japanese** youth, calls for an end to the "occupation policy" and the "Potsdam structure," revision of the **Constitution**, and a joint racial movement by at least Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. It is not clear if Kodama actually has been involved in the promotion of nationalism in Japanese youth movements. However, in articles in the Shukan Taishu of January 1968, he said that a Japan Youth Course had **been** established to help purify future politics by educating young Japanese. Current political activities disturb Kodama because of their "corruption." In the course, he apparently stresses Japan's past, including the Meiji Restoration, and the acquisition of knowledge from intellectuals of all ranks. The objective, according to Kodama, is to produce "campaigners" not influenced by any one political stand; he does not expect these "campaigners" to become rightists but true Japanese worthy of the name. No other information is available on the Japan Youth Course.

Yoshio Kodama was born 18 February 1911 in Fukushima prefecture to a family of Samurai rank. He received his primary schooling in Tokyo and in Seoul, Korea, where he resided for a time with a sister. For two years, while working in a factory in Korea, he attended the Zenrin Commercial School at night. This ended his formal education, but he continued private study on his own initiative and read widely in the social sciences. Greatly influenced by leading Japanese nationalist writers, he became active in Bin Akao's Kenkoku Kai (National Construction Society) which was formed in 1926 and was an ultrarightist nationalist group.

In 1929 he was arrested for presenting a petition to Emperor Hirohito for unemployment relief and protesting the formation of a leftist party. He was imprisoned until late 1930. On his release, he again became active in various nationalist and right-wing organizations and was arrested on several occasions during police roundups of rightists. Together with several other young ultranationalists, Kodama founded the Dokuritsu Seinen Sha (Independent Youth Society) in 1932. After the discovery of an alleged plot to assassinate various high-level politicians, however, he was again arrested in November 1932 and imprisoned until 1937.

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Yoshio KODAMA (cont.)

In October 1937 Kodama began a series of trips to northern China as a special staff official of the Foreign Ministry's Information Bureau. After his return from the first of these trips, he organized the Taishi Mondai Kaiketsu Kokumin Domei (China Problems Settlement National League), aimed at promoting Japanese activity in China. With unofficial backing from the Foreign Ministry, Kodama spent the next few years working with the Taishi Mondai Kaiketsu Kokumin Domei and other nationalist groups concerned with China, making frequent trips to Shanghai. In December 1941 he set up a purchasing agency in Shanghai for the Japanese Naval Air Force. This agency, later named the Kodama Kikan (Kodama Organ), involved considerable black market procurement, as well as alleged intelligence responsibilities, and reportedly enabled Kodama to amass a huge personal fortune through wartime trade with both the Nationalists and the Communists. His wartime activities also included an unsuccessful attempt at election to the Japanese Diet in 1942, management of the right-wing newspaper Yamato Shimbun in 1943, and the assumption of the presidency of the Nichinan Kogyo (Japan Southern Mining Company, Ltd.) and of several other mines in 1944. In August 1945 he was appointed a member of the Cabinet Advisory Council in the Higashikuni Cabinet, but he was arrested the following December and detained in Sugamo Prison as a Class A war criminal suspect. Released in December 1948, he remained in purge status until the end of the occupation in 1952.

Under the purge restrictions Kodama was prohibited from open participation in political activity, but he was rumored to be connected with a number of nationalist groups and involved in considerable behind-the-scenes political maneuvering. He reportedly maintained close connections with a variety of influential leaders, in particular with Liberal Party (LP) leader Ichiro Hatoyama, who was to become Prime Minister in 1954, and to Manoru Shigemitsu, wartime Foreign Minister who later occupied the same position under Hatoyama. Kodama's connection with Hatoyama and Shigemitsu began in Sugamo Prison, and he allegedly was a major source of funds to the LP through Hatoyama. He reportedly was able to exploit his access to top government officials and his inside information on government policy in various profitable financial transactions. By March 1953 Kodama was described as having regained the ground lost after the war and to be once again the undisputed leader of the Japanese right, a position which he still held according to various sources in 1963.

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Yoshio KODAMA (cont.)

Yoshio Kodama has been involved directly and indirectly with Japan-Republic of Korea economic matters since at least 1962. In February 1963 Kodama figured in rumors of scandals in the negotiations to normalize relations between Japan and South Korea. These rumors concerned the acceptance of large sums of money and participation in irregular business transactions on the part of LDP leaders, particularly on the part of Bamboku Ono, in return for their efforts to promote successful conclusions of the talks. The nature of Kodama's involvement in the Japan-South Korean negotiations has not been detailed, but according to several sources, he was close to the former South Korean intelligence chief, Kim Chong-p'il, and had been an important channel from Kim to the LDP and the Japanese government. A Japanese newspaper correspondent alleged that Kodama was responsible for arranging Bamboku Ono's December 1962 trip to South Korea and had persuaded Ono and Ichiro Kono to go along with the Japan-Republic of Korea agreement.

In addition to his associations with prominent LDP figures, Kodama reportedly has numerous underworld connections and has been closely associated with gambling and ganster groups such as the Matsuba Kai (Pine Leaves Society), the Kokusui Kai (Japan National Essence Association), and the Gijin Association (possibly Nippon Gijinto, the Japan Just Men's Party). In 1963 he reportedly was attempting to bring these and other gangster groups under the control of the Toa Doshikai, which he personally headed.

Kodama has been married twice. In 1935 he married his first wife. This marriage ended in a divorce. In 1940 he married for the second time. As of 1952 he had a son and a daughter, born in approximately 1943 and 1945, respectively, by his second marriage. He is thought to be fluent in some dialect of spoken Chinese. Kodama's autobiography, translated into English under the title I Was Defeated, has been a best seller in Japan. He enjoys fishing. His name may also appear as Sueo Kodama.

25 March 1969

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