

# The Establishment, Development and Trend of the Relationship between Yamaguchi-gumi and Japanese Government

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## ABSTRACT

Japan is the only country in the world that recognizes the legitimacy/legitimacy of triad. Yamaguchi Gumi is a typical representative of Japan's underworld. The Yamaguchi-Gumi is the largest yakuza organization in Japan, the oldest and the richest in the world. It has a lot to do with the attitude and position of the government in its early stage of establishment, development, prosperity after revival and decline under pressure. This paper will start with the development process of the Yamaguchi Gumi and analyze its relationship with the government in different development stages. It believes that this different relationship and its transformation reflect the distinctive characteristics of The Times and the changes of Japanese society, and also has a profound impact on the future direction of the Yamaguchi Gumi. With the development of the rule of law society, the Yakuza, including the Yakuza, will be doomed to extinction.

**Keywords:** *Japanese Yakuza, Yamaguchi-gumi, social transformation, political connection, criminal psychology*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a part of Japanese society, the Yakuza led by the Yamaguchi Gumi played an indispensable role in the modern history of Japan. During the Second World War, they developed vigorously. After the war, they went head-to-head with the government. In the contemporary era, when the legal system was gradually improved, they sought survival and development in a new way. Yakuza and other yakuza in their own unique way to demonstrate a way of survival in society. As the Chinese law does not allow the existence of such organizations, I am very interested in such rare groups around me. In the following paragraphs, I will try to study and analyze the various development processes of the Yamaguchi Formation in chronological order and forecast and speculate on its future development while analyzing the current situation.

## 2. INITIAL PERIOD: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YAMAGUCHI FORMATION WAS RELATIVELY INDEPENDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT (1915-1945)

After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan did not get a large number of reparations from the war, and its

economy became increasingly depressed. In 1906, the year after the Russo-Japanese War, many workers lost their jobs, including Haryoshi Yamaguchi, founder of the Yamaguchi Gumi. Born in the fishing industry, he left his hometown for the Port of Kobe as a small worker in the shipping industry. In 1912, he joined the harbor artificial supply industry "Big Island group" as the site supervision bodyguard, "watch the field", gradually respected. In 1915, Haryoshi Yamaguchi and 50 longshoremen founded the Yamaguchi Gumi, an offshoot of the Oshima Gumi, in Nishiide-cho, kobe's soldier district.

Yamaguchi used his business acumen to invest in a range of entertainment ventures, including nagushi and sumo wrestling. Soon, as these projects became popular, Yamaguchi Gumi made huge profits and began to consider other industries. During the period of unregulated competition, most gangs fought and clashed to determine the ultimate ownership of the industry, and the Yamaguchi Gumi was no exception. Due to the lack of restrictions and constraints, Yamaguchi Group openly opposed and competed with the former Toshima Group and obtained the loading and unloading rights of kobe Central Wholesale Market, port loading and unloading management rights and many other rights and interests. On this basis, the Yamaguchi Gumi were able to accumulate a lot of money, they were able to get enough

money from the industries they controlled to sustain their group, and the Yamaguchi Gumi became more and more members. However, in 1928, the Yamaguchi Gumi business was affected by the financial crisis and had to stop the "payment" to Oshima Gumi. Soon, Yamaguchi Gumi broke away from Oshima Gumi and established its own group. In 1925, the first generation of mu Yamaguchi Chunji quickly retreated, retired at the age of 40, his eldest son Yamaguchi Deng succeeded the group leader. I started my own group. It can be said that The Times make heroes.

During the Second World War, the Japanese government was busy with foreign wars and the internal order was chaotic, which had a huge impact on the domestic social stability. However, the social instability became a good opportunity for Yamaguchi to become a leader. With much of the fighting power of the police and army abroad, domestic police forces, especially those that maintain day-to-day order, have been severely weakened. During the war, the police did not have enough energy to limit the growth of gangs. The Yamaguchi Gumi, under the leadership of the second generation leader Yamaguchi, took advantage of this opportunity to occupy many public industries, investing in the mass entertainment industry, casinos and so on, from which they made profits. However, opportunities are always accompanied by risks. Freed from government regulations and constraints, competition between gangs became violent and impulsive, with frequent bloodshed. In August 1940, Yamaguchi Gumi second generation leader Yamaguchi Teng was seriously injured in a gang fire and died two years later. While Yamaguchi Group in leaderless state, the Pacific War broke out, many Yamaguchi group members on the front line, the organization of activities into a standstill. [1] The Power of the Yamaguchi group was greatly reduced.

Nevertheless, the Yamaguchi-Gumi, as a local underworld organization based in the port of Kobe, seized the weak point of government governance, accumulated a certain amount of wealth and opened up a small world of its own in the area, which laid a solid foundation for its subsequent development.

### **3. DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: THE YAMAGUCHI FORMATION EXPANDED GREATLY IN THE COOPERATION AND CONFLICT WITH THE GOVERNMENT (1945-1992)**

After World War II, social order in Japan was still chaotic. After Japan's surrender, some members of the Joseon Gang and the Taiwan Gang in Kobe collaborated with the local authorities to seize civilian supplies rationed after the war, control the underground food black market, rob, kill and rape women, and obtain huge profits. The citizens were in great fear. At this time the police

force is limited, unable to deal with, so take the initiative to seek the Yamaguchi group "help". Yamaguchi group disguised to obtain the right to enforce the law, and the North Korean gang in many occasions many conflicts. The Yamaguchi-Gumi also works with the U.S. military. After the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Kobe became an important material distribution center and supply base for the US army. The Yamaguchi Gumi took the initiative and actively cooperated with the US army to ensure the efficient operation of the port and wharf, which was praised by the US army. Moreover, Yamaguchi group also considered the interests of dock workers, and spared no effort to help workers and employers negotiate successfully in terms of increasing compensation. In 1953, Kazuo Taoka, the third generation leader of the Yamaguchi Gumi, opened a company engaged in intra-port freight transportation, and the Yamaguchi Gumi gradually grew stronger. Through the above way, the Yamaguchi Group collected protection money to become "civilian police", with the money collected to expand to the outside world, members soon exceeded 100,000. [2]

In the first years after the war, government regulation remained light. When the Yamaguchi-Gumi and other gangs found government restrictions relaxed, they stepped up their violence and continued to break out in bloodshed. The Yamaguchi Gumi, under the leadership of Kazuo Tanoka, the third-generation leader, has made local industries bigger and bigger, and has basically monopolized some important industries. On this basis, Yamaguchi group's ambitions continue to expand, the group backbone also plans to expand the scope of control of Yamaguchi group to the whole country. After a period of planning, the Yamaguchi Gumi exerted its power over various parts of Japan, and despite fierce resistance from other Yakuza, the Yamaguchi Gumi eventually achieved great success in Japan, greatly expanding its influence and increasing the income and number of the pump industry.

But the Yamaguchi-Gumi's expansion has led to violence and heavy casualties. This finally caught the attention of the police. Incidents such as fires and casualties sent a dangerous signal to the government, which could not tolerate fighting and bloodshed in areas witnessed by citizens, and the government began to crack down on gangs. In 1963, the Police designated the Yakuza gang and other gangs as the "wide area Gang," and launched the first nationwide gang crackdown on the "Top operation," the Yakuza gang is the most important target. However, the forces of the Yamaguchi group can not be underestimated, the action of the police failed. Since then, the police have failed to win many battles against the Yamaguchi-Gumi and its offshoots. In 1981, after the death of the third generation leader Kazuo Taoka, the Yamaguchi Gumi experienced frequent internal conflicts, which lasted until the 1990s, and the Yamaguchi Gumi gradually grew stronger in the wind and rain.

In short, during this period, under the disguised protection and direct attack of the police, the Yamaguchi Gumi also made great efforts to change the image of the Yamaguchi Gumi in the eyes of the Japanese people. For example, the obvious fire and violent conflicts were significantly reduced, which greatly attracted more gang members, and the strength of the Yamaguchi Gumi became stronger.

#### **4. PROSPERITY PERIOD: THE YAMAGUCHI GUMI REACHED ITS PEAK DUE TO THE "AMBIGUOUS" ASSOCIATION WITH POLITICAL CIRCLES (1992-2015)**

In 1992, the Japanese government enacted and implemented the Law on Countermeasures against Yakuza and began to crack down on violent crimes. The status of yakuza and other yakuza groups continued to decline. The main goal of the police is to reduce the social status of triad members, which is different from the previous frontal search and suppression, the fight is very strong. At the time, Koji Kunimatsu, head of the National Police Agency, said, the legal definition of criminal gangs as anti-social completely isolates them from society. By 2000, the Yakuza expulsion Act had pushed the Yakuza to the brink of collapse. The Yamaguchi-Gumi are being cut off from society. In response, the Yamaguchi-Gumi have actively transformed themselves, seeking to change society's perception of them. For example, after the 1995 Hanshin earthquake, the Yamaguchi Gumi immediately threw itself into relief work, providing food, daily necessities and medical assistance to the disaster-hit areas. After the earthquake in March 2011, the Yamaguchi Gumi even actively carried out relief work ahead of the Japanese government, quickly sent supplies to the disaster area, and some gang cadres even lent their offices to the government to help victims. These efforts have led to a slight improvement in public opinion of the gang. In addition to boosting its social contribution, the Yamaguchi-Gumi has long maintained good relations with politicians. In the run-up to the 2021 lower house election, it was revealed that Yoshihiko Noda, then justice minister of the Democratic Party of Japan, had made marriage references to senior Members of the Yamaguchi Gumi. Mr Abe was quick to attack, but a few days later a photograph emerged of him meeting members of the Yamaguchi-gumi, which he did not deny. The Yamaguchi-Gumi also strengthened cooperation with the Japanese right-wing forces, supported the right-wing extremist activities, acted as the "thugots" and "mouthpiece" of right-wing politicians and ultra-conservative forces, stirred up quarrels in downtown areas or yasukuni Shrine and other places, incited nationalistic sentiments and advocated militarism. [3]

After the 21st century, the Yamaguchi Gumi found new sources of revenue in addition to traditional activities

such as drug trafficking, extortion, protection rackets, brothels and casinos, and loan sharking. They established a complete corporate system, involved in the field of finance, Internet, real estate and other industries, founded newspapers, set up official websites, become wearing suits, tie underworld. Letizia Paoli: *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, Oxford University Press, 2014, PP. 239-240 Experts in the field cooperate, buy well-known Internet companies, and make huge profits by manipulating stock prices. This income built the Yamaguchi-Gumi's wealth empire. According to Fortune magazine, Yamaguchi Gumi's annual revenue reached about \$80 billion in 2014, ranking eighth after Hitachi (\$95.9 billion in 2014) when compared with Japanese companies. By the end of 2014, the Yamaguchi Gumi had forces in 44 prefectures and prefectures in Japan, with about 13,000 formal members and 23,000 associate members, accounting for 43% of the total number of violent groups in the country. [4]

During this period, the Yamaguchi-Gumi were so powerful and financially powerful that the government, and especially the politicians who needed financial support, could not take them seriously. As an invisible force, yakuza and other yakuza organizations gradually deepened their influence on the government and reached its peak.

#### **5. DECLINE PERIOD: YAMAGUCHI GROUP WAS GRADUALLY REJECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND WAS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE IN THE CRACKS (2015 TO NOW)**

Despite some changes, the Yamaguchi-Gumi's violent, lawless and crime-loving nature has not changed, as it always has, and it continues to operate on the borderline between legality and illegality. The suppression such as domestic police and international force falls, triad faces increasingly serious survival crisis, atrophy day by day.

At the end of 2010, the Japanese police began to the Yamaguchi group of heavy blows, have arrested the second person Takayama qingji and three people into the jiangzhen and many backbones. In the legal aspect, the government has improved various institutional measures to curb the existence of triads and submitted the Amendment to the Law on Countermeasures against Violent Groups in 2012. On February 23, 2012, the United States announced sanctions against the Yamaguchi Gumi, freezing all of its assets in the United States, and prohibiting any American citizens and companies from conducting any transactions with the Yamaguchi Gumi's top leaders, Kenichi Shinoda, and his no. 2, Seiji Takayama. *The True face of Yamaguchi Gumi, Japan's biggest yakuza: Black and white Business*, Beijing Youth Daily, March 2, 2012. In the strong police sweep, other triad struggle nibbling under, Yamaguchi

group appeared in the history of the largest internal conflict, 13 secondary groups broke away from Yamaguchi Group to establish "Kobe Yamaguchi Group", this exodus accounted for one third of the total number of Yamaguchi group at the end of 2014, about 70,000 people. [5] In 2017, the Yamaguchi group split again, Oda Kotoma et al set up renxia Yamaguchi group is the "trip". [6] The three groups are in opposition to each other, and there is constant friction. This has greatly weakened the overall power and influence of the Yamaguchi-Gumi, and has intensified the police crackdown, which is decaying.

The activities and income of the Yamaguchi Gumi have also been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The shops they run are difficult to sustain, and it is also difficult to collect protection money. Some members have nothing to do and live a difficult life, so selling masks has become their main source of income. Aging population is also an important factor affecting the Yamaguchi Group. The Yamaguchi-Gumi Shimbun, a newspaper, published lines that embarrassed even the yakuza: "What is more serious than leaking information is leaking urine. My wallet cries every time I see my child in January. The doctor's diagnosis is accurate for an old man." Today's gang is almost a center for senior citizens. [7] Statistics show that in 2015, more than 40 percent of yakuza members were aged 50 or older, while those aged between 20 and 29 decreased from 12.6 percent to 4.7 percent. The Yakuza have few successors.

Different from the past when the police turned a blind eye to the yakuza, the police suppressed the yakuza more and more. With the improvement of the law-based society in Japan, the Yamaguchi Gang with a history of more than one hundred years was going to the end of the road under the double pressure of police suppression and sharp drop in economic income.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In Japanese society, there has always been a tacit understanding between the yakuza and the government that neither side will easily cross the other's line. In freely elected Japan, ensuring social stability and citizen safety is part of the bargain, but when it is broken, the yakuza cannot escape being suppressed. Yao Tianchong, Zhang Junmei: *An Analysis of the "legitimacy" of Japan's Underworld*, Japanese Studies, no.2, 2011. As the largest yakuza in Japan, the establishment and development of Yamaguchi-Gumi benefit from The Times it is in, the product of Japan's special culture and history, the product of the compromise between the Japanese government and the public, and the product of its development under the protection and conniving of politicians. A Japanese yakuza boss once said: "In the life of a politician. Without us. It's going to be difficult." Fu Yi: *The Japanese right wing uses Mafia to do evil again*, China Defense News, April 8, 2008, edition 001. Can say, at

present, yakuza group and other triad will continue to exist in a certain historical period.

However, as Japanese society progressed and the rule of law gradually improved, it became clear that profiting from violence as before was not sustainable. The Yamaguchi-Gumi must change if they are not to lose out to the new era. At present, the Yamaguchi Gumi may have the following options: transfer the accumulated funds into the white channel, through investment and other legal channels to obtain funds; After returning to society, he returned to normal life, after all, most of the internal work of the Yamaguchi-Gumi is similar now; Or transform into a voluntary civilian peacekeeping organization that gets funding through sub-industries and provides timely opportunities in the event of a disaster... The Yamaguchi-gumi have plenty of options, but they don't have much time to try. The Yamaguchi-Gumi and other yakuza members may face one of the toughest choices in their history. The Times can make heroes, but if you do not keep pace with The Times, it is easy to be eliminated by The Times. As the government approached, the Yamaguchi-Gumi needed to change. The future of the Yamaguchi group, only from the triad this identity, just have the possibility of survival.

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