

Kawashima Yoshiko: A Biography



Kawashima Yoshiko, aged 25-27¹



Kawashima Yoshiko²

Kawashima Yoshiko (b. Aisin-Gioro Xianyu) was born around 1906³-1907⁴, making them forty to forty-two at the time of this book. They were the fourteenth daughter of Shanqi, Prince Su, of China's Qing Dynasty, led by the Manchu Aisin-Gioro clan, which had dominated the Han majority for close to three centuries. Yoshiko was one of thirty-eight children, born to Prince Su's fourth consort.

The Qing fell apart in 1912.⁵ The last emperor, Puyi, a distant cousin to Yoshiko had ascended to the throne in 1908, at the age of three, and was forced to abdicate within only a few years by Republican forces.⁶ The early Republic was a hotbed of rebellion and treachery, with the president, Yuan Shikai, trying and failing to establish his own dynasty, before dying shortly thereafter,⁷ and multiple warlords and military cliques establishing their own spheres of control. Puyi was permitted to reside in the Forbidden City, with an annual allowance of four million *taels* and the maintenance of his guard, staff, and title,⁸ until 1924, when he was forced out because of rival warlords clashing near Beijing.⁹

In the tumult following the 1912 abdication, Prince Su, a staunch monarchist and prominent voice emerging amongst Qing restorationists, fled to Manchuria. Despondent, he wrote a poem swearing never to set foot on Republican soil. In his midnight flight, he hoped to raise the banners of rebellion and join forces with the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin. These plans were thwarted by Japanese intervention, destroying a bridge and preventing Prince Su's flight. He and his entourage set up a household in the port city of Port Arthur, then

1 *Asahi Shimbun*, 22 February, 1933. Photo enhanced.

2 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, date unknown. Birnbaum, pp 147. Photo enhanced.

3 Behr, pp 6.

4 Birnbaum, pp 9.

5 *Ibid.*, pp 13.

6 Puyi, pp 23.

7 Behr, pp 85.

8 Puyi, pp 32.

9 *Ibid.*, pp 120.

under Japanese control. The residence was provided by the Japanese.¹⁰

Prince Su became consumed with plots to restore the Qing. While the Japanese wanted to hack off Manchuria, as well as Inner Mongolia, as distinct nations separate from Han China, Prince Su wanted to use these Manchu and Mongol nationalist movements as a stepping stone towards the return of Manchu rule across all China. His house in Port Arthur became a locus of conspiracy against the Republic, with various rebels coming and going, and housing imperials robes and seals, currency, firearms and explosives.¹¹ One such conspirator who was a regular at the residence was Kawashima Naniwa, a Japanese ultranationalist, described as a *tairiku rōnin*, or continental adventurer.¹² Naniwa was a sort of unofficial go-between for Tōkyō and the garrison stationed at Port Arthur.¹³

Born into a *samurai* family in 1865, before the hereditary class was abolished three years later following the Meiji Restoration, Naniwa grew up short and slight, with an overbearing mother, though toughened himself up by facing down foxes, meditating naked beneath a frigid waterfall, and hiking to remote mountain temples.¹⁴

In 1915, for reasons that are still debated, Yoshiko, aged eight, was adopted out to the Naniwa, who gave them the Japanese name for with which they are known. According to Naniwa, this adoption was arranged because his marriage remained childless.¹⁵

Yoshiko spent the remainder of their childhood in Japan, first at Naniwa's house in Tōkyō,¹⁶ thence his family home in Matsumoto. It is remarked that in these years, Yoshiko spoke using an ill-mannered, crude grammar more redolent of crass young men. An equivalent in English might be speaking like a sailor. This could be evidence of gender dysphoria from a young age, or the fact that Japanese was not their first language, and Naniwa entertained a cavalcade of young men plotting unsavoury deeds in foreign lands. They also rode a horse to school—a horse allegedly descendent from Napoléon's Marengo—rather than being ferried by coach, something remarked upon as boyish or uncouth by pupils of the local girls' school. These years were marked by loneliness and exclusion, and disparaging remarks made about how uncivilized or backward China was. Yoshiko once cut class to have tea with the school janitor.¹⁷ Other relatives from Prince Su's household, including Yoshiko's niece Renko, occasionally stayed at Naniwa's home, yet these were temporary.¹⁸

In 1922, Prince Su died, followed immediately thereafter by the suicide of Yoshiko's mother. Naniwa and Yoshiko travelled to Manchuria to attend the funeral. Here, a power struggle broke out between Naniwa and Prince Su's sons for control of the family assets. Returning to Japan, the now teenaged Yoshiko was denied re-enrollment at the girls' school in Matsumoto, officially because the adoption was never registered and Yoshiko was not recognized as a daughter or a Japanese citizen. Unofficially, the new principal didn't want the hassle of an

10 Birnbaum, pp 22.

11 Ibid., pp 27.

12 Ibid., pp 33.

13 Ibid., pp 27; Nish, pp 18.

14 Birnbaum, pps 31-33.

15 Ibid., pps 27-28.

16 Ibid., pp 49.

17 Ibid., pps 51-54.

18 Ibid., pp 42.

disorderly student who used coarse masculine language and had an unruly horse. Thereafter, Yoshiko was home-schooled by Naniwa.¹⁹

In 1925, when Yoshiko was eighteen, a series of suitors vied for their affection. These included Moriyama Eiji, an anti-communist gang member who'd served time in prison for assaulting a politician. Moriyama was brought under Naniwa's wing upon his release, but tried to stand up to Naniwa's poor treatment of Yoshiko, a brawl ensuing between the two men. Yoshiko was humiliated by the whole thing, and Moriyama later claimed to the press that Yoshiko had attempted suicide by morphine overdose, and had been saved by Moriyama sucking the drug from their lips. Next came Iwata Ainosuke, cohort of Naniwa's, and chief of the ultranationalist group *Aikokusha* (Patriotic Society), recently released from a twelve-year prison term for his involvement with a political assassination. Wanting nothing to do with either him or the media frenzy of his courtship, Yoshiko said death with preferable, and, when Iwata provided a pistol, they shot themselves in the chest, but survived. Iwata claimed to the press that he didn't think Yoshiko had been serious about shooting themselves. Lastly was Lieutenant Yamaga Tōru, twenty-seven years of age, who visited Naniwa's place often to practise his Chinese with Yoshiko's brother, who was also staying with Naniwa at the time. Yoshiko seems to have genuinely fallen for Yamaga, and went out of their way to spend time with him at the local hot springs, though, alas, it was not meant to be. Newspapers speculated on a possible relationship, which was promptly denied by both Naniwa and Yamaga; Naniwa acting the overbearing patriarch, and Yamaga protecting his military career by denying things emphatically.²⁰ I have tweaked the details surrounding these relationships; there was no running off to a commune in Hokkaidō, and Yoshiko's suicide attempt was not because of Iwata destroying their relationship with Yamaga.

Shortly thereafter, Yoshiko cut their hair and adopted a masculine presentation. They dressed up in a *kimono* and styled their hair in a feminine style, went to a field of flowers, and posed for photos as a farewell to their womanhood, before promptly going to the barbershop and demanding a buzz cut. Always a magnet for the media, this was reported on by the newspapers, and pictures circulated of Yoshiko with shorn hair and wearing their brother's university uniform, giving an interview regarding their new life as a man, and the suicide attempt. In a newspaper interview, Yoshiko was now using masculine Japanese grammar, and adopted the male name Ryōsuke. They said, "I was born with what the doctors call a tendency toward the third sex, and so I cannot pursue an ordinary woman's goals in life. People criticize me and say that I am perverted, and maybe they're right. I just can't behave like an ordinary feminine woman."²¹

At the age of twenty, their long hair and feminine presentation had returned, and they were wed to Mongolian nobleman Ganjuurjab, son of Babuujab, who, like his Manchu nationalist counterparts, wanted to see an independent Inner Mongolian state. In 1939, such a state was created with the aid of the Japanese, the puppet state of Mengjiang. Babuujab had been killed in 1916 after clashing with a military clique in Inner Mongolia—an uprising funded by Prince

19 Ibid., pps 54-55.

20 Ibid., pps 73-75.

21 Ibid., pps 76-78.

Su and Naniwa.²²

In letters, Yoshiko seems content with the match, as Ganjuurjab treated them kindly. They were responsive to his various letters, and claimed that “I don’t dislike him”, so their brother, Xianli, gave consent for the marriage to go forward. However, at the wedding itself, we have conflicting reports; we’re told they flew into a rage and refused to accept the proffered ring, discarding it, yet there are also pictures of the happy couple from that day wherein Yoshiko is wearing the ring. The wedding was attended by many prominent Japanese military officials, including Colonel Kōmoto Daisaku, who, in six months’ time, would assassinate Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin, an act to which Yoshiko’s name is often attached.²³

In many indigenous Siberian traditions, the *amanita muscaria* mushroom is used for its hallucinogenic properties. The mushroom is said to cause nausea, and, in its raw form, can cause madness and death.²⁴ It is usually dried before consumption, which may dull its effects. In many traditions, however, the mushroom is filtered through a first consumption, and the consumer’s urine is shared, stripped now of any toxins but still containing the active hallucinogen, and thus believed to be a more potent form.²⁵ Yoshiko partaking in such a shamanic ceremony at the wedding is entirely the product of my imagination.

Yoshiko refused to go through with the tradition of presenting a bloodstained cushion after consummation, for reasons that are not recorded. Perhaps they were not a virgin, as would have been expected; perhaps the marriage was never consummated; or perhaps they found the tradition too demeaning. In any case, speculations have persisted. They did not get on well with their new in-laws, who controlled the household. Ganjuurjab returned to his revolutionary fighting along the western frontiers between Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Yoshiko accompanied him at least once, but quickly returned to the home in Dalian after experiencing a Mongolian winter. Alone with the in-laws, they lived a socialite lifestyle, routinely visiting coffee houses and dance halls and signing autographs as a local celebrity. Later, Ganjuurjab took them to a new home in Tushiyetu, on the eastern plains of Inner Mongolia, where they supposedly had no patience for the bleakness of the plains, and, after three years, fled the marriage.²⁶

The marriage, presumably arranged with the influence of Naniwa and his cohorts (Ganjuurjab stayed with Naniwa for a time in his Tōkyō home²⁷), would have been a smart play in the game of carving up China. A prominent Manchu princess with the son of a Mongol hero would be a powerful chess move. In a dispatch sent to Reuters in April of 1945, it was reported that the marriage was arranged at the behest of the Black Dragon Society (*Kokuryūkai*). This report, authored by a Correspondent Shen, is a curious mix of truth, half-truth and probable exaggerations.²⁸ The details have been cited, presumably with Reuters as the genesis, by Time

22 Ibid., pps 86-87.

23 Ibid., pps 88-89.

24 Wasson, pp 157.

25 Ibid., pp 160.

26 Birnbaum, pps 89-90.

27 Ibid., pp 86.

28 Readex.

Magazine²⁹ and others,³⁰ and some of the more fanciful details seem to have made it into the legends that have been built up around Yoshiko. For example, Shen incorrectly reports Yoshiko to have attended a boys' school in Japan, accounting for their masculine dress; claimed Prince Su died by suicide (he was ill), and that the death occurred in 1917 (he died in 1922); misreports both Naniwa's and Yoshiko's names (listed as Hojiro and Toshiko); claims Yoshiko spoke excellent Chinese, Japanese and English (they required a Chinese translator at their trial,³¹ though, notably, they did take English classes at the behest of Major Tanaka for their espionage work³²); and reports on gossip that Yoshiko had been Doihara Kenji's lover (they were Tanaka's and Tada Hayao's lover, not Doihara's). Shen also reported that Yoshiko frequented opium and morphine dens undercover as a prostitute to seduce petty officials and officers. One can see the possible genesis of this tale: newspapers frequently reported on Yoshiko, and readers ate up stories of the salacious Chinese princess living a Bohemian lifestyle at dance halls.³³ Yoshiko is alleged to have gathered intelligence through sexual liaisons,³⁴ yet the specificity of honeypotting described here is highly doubtful.

Primary in this report, however, is the allegation that Yoshiko was an agent provocateur for the Black Dragons. According to Shen, in addition to the arrangement of the marriage, Yoshiko fled due to boredom, riding through the Gobi, dressed in scarlet, astride a white horse, in the middle of the night, yet the Dragons, despite their annoyance, saw Yoshiko's potential as a spy and paired them up with Doihara Kenji, chief of the intelligence branch of the Kwangtung Army.³⁵

By the late nineteenth century, a number of ultranationalist secret societies had formed in Japan, most notable among them the *Gen'yōsha* (Black Ocean Society), who conspired with exiled Chinese Triads to advance Japanese ambitions in Korea, then a Chinese vassal state; *Ten'yūkyō* (Heavenly Blessed Heroes or Gallant Assistance from Heaven), an elite group formed from the ranks of the *Gen'yōsha* to link up with and aid the rebellious Donghak religious movement in Korea, which, in 1895, assassinated Queen Min and prompted Japanese intervention;³⁶ and the *Kokuryūkai* (Black Dragon Society or Amur Society), whose aims were to limit European influence in China at the Amur River, separating Russia from China. By 1936, there were seven hundred and fifty such organizations operating in Japan,³⁷ and, by this late date, the influence of the Black Dragons was severely diminished,³⁸ not to mention that its reputation is probably overblown in Western media due to wartime propaganda³⁹ and the fact that its name is evocative of a nefarious SPECTRE-esque organization, where Amur Society is a better translation from the Japanese. Multiple amateur historians have speculated that Naniwa may have been connected to a group such as the Black Dragons, and, indeed, this made it

29 Time.

30 West Australian.

31 Birnbaum, pp 203.

32 Bergamini, pp 386.

33 Birnbaum, pps 90, 95-96.

34 Behr, pp 196.

35 Readex.

36 Jacob, pps 41-42

37 Saaler, pp 126n2.

38 Jacob, pp 137.

39 Saaler, pps 126-128.

into the Lilian Lee historical novel,⁴⁰ though I have been unable to substantiate the speculations. In any case, as a continental adventurer and facilitator of Prince Su, Naniwa's aims would not have been all that different from an organization like the *Kokuryūkai*, *Gen'yōsha*, or *Ten'yūkyō*, whether he was associated with any secret society or not.

Founded by by continental adventurer Uchida Ryōhei in 1901, the Black Dragon Society was the most notorious of the pre-war secret societies. Uchida had previously been a member of the Black Ocean Society (*Gen'yōsha*), and, later the *Ten'yūkyō* during the Donghak Rebellion.⁴¹ He also studied Russian, opened a *judo* school in Vladivostok in 1895, and ventured as far as St. Petersburg and Moscow on what was likely a reconnaissance mission.⁴² During the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), the *Gen'yōsha* and the *Kokuryūkai* coordinated to provide the Japanese military with maps of Sakhalin and Kamchatka, and recruited a private army of Manchurian bandits to assail Russia's supply lines on land.⁴³ The Black Dragons had a very strong interest in Puyi, manoeuvring one of their agents in place to tutor Pujie (Puyi's brother and heir) Japanese,⁴⁴ and haphazardly trying to intimidate Puyi into seeking closer protections from the Japanese by firing off shots outside his residence, with the implication that Tianjin was unsafe for his majesty.⁴⁵ Puyi would have direct and indirect dealings with them throughout his reign in Manchukuo.⁴⁶

After fleeing the marriage, Yoshiko wound up back in Japan, staying temporarily with their brother Xianli. Then they were quickly off again, now bound for Shanghai, having stolen two thousand *yen* from their brother.⁴⁷ In Shanghai, they led a voluptuous lifestyle, not rising until late in the day, and enjoying the city's dance halls most nights, often dressed in men's clothing.⁴⁸

In September of 1931, the Kwangtung Army staged the Mukden Incident, prompting Japanese military aggression in Manchuria.⁴⁹ By 1932, the state of Manchukuo had been created, and Puyi was tapped to be the puppet emperor.⁵⁰ Yoshiko, with ties to various Japanese military figures, who in times past used Naniwa to carry out unofficial business for them in secret,⁵¹ had arrived shortly after the Mukden Incident, in November of 1931.⁵² Both Puyi and his empress, Wanrong, expressed doubts about the proposal presented to them. The Kwangtung Army intelligence chief, Doihara Kenji,⁵³ was tasked to remedy that.

Doihara, who, like Naniwa, is referred to as an 'old China hand',⁵⁴ first came to China in

40 Lee, pp 101.

41 Jacob, pps 45-46.

42 Saaler, pp 132.

43 Jacob, pps 72-73.

44 Puyi, pp 159.

45 Ibid., pp 161.

46 Ibid., pp 170.

47 Birnbaum, pp. 91.

48 Ibid., pps 95-96.

49 Coox, pps 30-39.

50 Puyi, pps 182-183.

51 Birnbaum, pp 97.

52 Ibid., pp 99.

53 I have conflicting reports on his rank at this time. Behr says he was a colonel (pp 182), Coox says a major-general (pp 46).

54 Behr, pp 187.

1913, and took part in the assassination of Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin in 1928,⁵⁵ an act which Yoshiko's name, apocryphally, is also associated.⁵⁶

Doihara dispatched a message to Yoshiko to assist with the royal family. When they reported for duty in Doihara's office, they were dressed in male attire and this threw Doihara, who assumed he was speaking to a eunuch and threatened Yoshiko. As he would later report, brandishing his *katana* and demanding a name from the impudent 'eunuch', he expertly sliced away Yoshiko's clothing, right down to the breast binding, while Yoshiko stood there unflinching.⁵⁷

Just as the Black Dragons had done earlier to scare Puyi into going along with the Japanese, Doihara and Yoshiko conducted a number of false flags against the monarch to convince him Tianjin wasn't safe. Doihara cooked up a fabricated assassination plot, and Yoshiko slipped snakes into Puyi's bed. Shortly thereafter, Doihara paid off number of Chinese malcontents to spark city-wide riots against the Japanese and Puyi.⁵⁸ Puyi left for Manchuria soon thereafter, yet Wanrong obstinately refused to go. Yoshiko was put on the case.⁵⁹

The details are fuzzy. Overly dramatized in Muramatsu Shōfū's novel, Yoshiko signs onto this version of events in their 1940 autobiography: Wanrong was finally convinced Tianjin is too dangerous, and, the riot in full-swing, Yoshiko drove a Cuban car, headlights off, with the empress and her dog hiding in the trunk, while bullets whizzed past. The empress was carted off to the docks with nothing save her dog and the clothes on her back, grateful for Yoshiko's daring. In reality, however, claimed a member of Wanrong's entourage, Yoshiko's role had only been minor,⁶⁰ and the riots had finished by the empress' departure.⁶¹ In fiction, it is a time-honoured tradition to portray the seduction of Wanrong by Yoshiko, as artistic flare or titillation—first suggested in Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* in 1987, followed by the Lilian Lee novel, and that novel's adaptation, *Kawashima Yoshiko*, in 1990. While I have not suggested it here, in the wider universe, it will be canon.

In 1932, while back in Shanghai, Japanese journalist Muramatsu Shōfū wrote a serialized novel based on Yoshiko, titled in Japanese *The Beauty in Men's Clothing*, and exaggerated or invented whole cloth many of their most fanciful exploits. Yoshiko was still going about the town to bars, dance halls, and cabaret shows, now carrying an endless supply of cash to tip the waiters and dancers, always making a scene with regards to wealth and glamour. At this time, Yoshiko had begun an amorous relationship with Lieutenant-Colonel Tanaka Ryūkichi, who was likely the source of this cash. Yoshiko met with various officials throughout the course of each day, continuing their espionage work for Tanaka. This was all but confirmed to Muramatsu, to whom Tanaka shared documents full of Yoshiko's exploits.⁶²

The book used a fictional name rather than Yoshiko's, though Yoshiko did not downplay the association to herself in later public statements. The novel was first serialized in the

55 Puyi, pp 171.

56 Birnbaum, pp 88.

57 Behr, pp 190.

58 Ibid., pps 191-192.

59 Birnbaum, pp 104.

60 Ibid., pps 105-106.

61 Behr, pp 192, pps 195-196.

62 Ibid., pp 121.

magazine *Fujin kōron* in 1932, then printed as an edited, tamed-down novel in 1933. In the novel, the protagonist is sexually abused by their adoptive father as a teenager.⁶³ Yoshiko made no public comment on this aspect of the novel.⁶⁴

It may be the case that Yoshiko's financial stability was dependent on the success of this novel, and didn't want to publicly contradict Muramatsu. I would be remiss not to point out that childhood sexual trauma is often a trope used against queer people to suggest that their adult 'aberration' (in heavy inverted commas) is a result of a childhood aberration. Historians remain split on whether any sexual assault occurred,⁶⁵ or if this was merely a bit of salacious (not to mention homophobic or transphobic) pulp invented by Muramatsu that got retconned in Yoshiko's biography. Correspondent Shen reported the sexual assault as though it were fact in his 1945 dispatch to Reuters.⁶⁶ In either case, avoiding such tropes, I have not mentioned it in the novel, and this will not be a part of Yoshiko's biography in future instalments.

Muramatsu, whose novel was first suggested by Tanaka, was acquainted with both of them. His impression of their dynamic was of a domineering Yoshiko, Tanaka being weak-willed with women, calling Yoshiko "imperious and rude ... like a master to a servant."⁶⁷

In 1931, Yoshiko began a relationship with a household secretary, Chizuko, alternately introduced as their sister, companion, and wife. The two even posed for a photograph together reminiscent of a wedding photograph, with Chizuko in a *kimono* and Yoshiko in a man's formal robe.⁶⁸

In January of 1932, they allegedly took on two more lovers, both of whom possible espionage targets, and whose pillow talk, regardless of intent, made its way to Tanaka. The first of these was a British military attaché who let it slip that, regardless of the upcoming Lytton Commission in April-June, Britain was in no position to take action against Japan's actions in Manchuria beyond verbal condemnations. The second lover was Sun Fo, the son of Sun Yat-sen, and a high-ranking politician in the Republican government. Also in January, a month-long conflict broke out in Shanghai between Japan and Republican forces, allegedly a plot by the Japanese to draw attention away from the events in Manchuria. Yoshiko played both sides of the coin—simultaneously fomenting conflict as an agent provocateur, and, from Sun Fo's bed, gathering intelligence to take back to Tanaka.⁶⁹

By 1932/33, Yoshiko had taken up residence in Xinjing (modern Changchun). We begin to see their nationalism shining through with one particular incident: a deceased Manchu chief's property had been seized by the Japanese railroad authorities, and Yoshiko used their influence to ensure the man's widow was compensated, a service which netted Yoshiko 20,000 *yen*. With this heavy payday, Yoshiko lived large, staying in a lavish hotel, attending dance halls, and recording an album of Mongolian songs. The money quickly gone, Yoshiko sent Chizuko to the South Manchurian Railroad Company for more money, which was refused.⁷⁰

63 Birnbaum, pps 63-67.

64 Ibid., pp 76.

65 Ibid., pps 67-69.

66 Readex.

67 Birnbaum, pp 113.

68 Ibid., pps 124-125.

69 Behr, pp 196. Yamaguchi also confirms conspiring in the Shanghai Incident, pp 59.

70 Birnbaum, pps 150-151.

In 1933, the Kwangtung Army arranged for Yoshiko, dressed in a men's military uniform, to take command of the Vigilance Corps in Rehe (modern Chengde). Here, they would command a military unit of three thousand men,⁷¹ hunting down "bandits" (who were, in reality, anti-Japanese resistance forces). They took on the name Jin Bihui ("Radiant Jade"), emphasizing their Chineseness.⁷² This was after their relationship with Tanaka Ryūkichi ended, and they now found themselves in a relationship with Major-General Tada Hayao, the chief military adviser in Manchukuo. This assignment in Rehe was his doing, and was, in reality, a major propaganda campaign back in Japan, with many newspaper articles and radio programs covering it. Commander Jin was called both a "Glittering Joan of Arc" and "The Beauty in Men's Clothing", referencing the Muramatsu novel to which their name was attached. According to Yoshiko, this assignment was less to do with propaganda and more with a payday; once more low on cash, living above a furniture store with Chizuko and two of their sisters, they jumped on the opportunity when two Manchukuoan officers came with the offer.⁷³

In 1935, Yoshiko and niece Renko hosted a seventieth birthday party for Naniwa in Matsumoto, Yoshiko appearing in a *kimono* and wig, accompanied by about twenty soldiers from the Vigilance Corps. On the same sojourn, they visited Tōkyō, where they were spotted in the company of the *Gen'yōsha's* Tōyama Mitsuru and the *Aikokusha's* Iwata Ainosuke⁷⁴—the latter being the suitor who had supplied the gun used for their suicide attempt in 1925, and who was now rabbleroxing in the Dutch East Indies to pave the way for Japanese intervention in the same vein as Korea and China.⁷⁵

The campaigns of this Vigilance Corps were minimal. Doihara acted as a financier, continuously doling out money to Yoshiko that promptly disappeared, and even Doihara knew not what it was for. Yoshiko was shot three times in the course of these campaigns,⁷⁶ lost a certain amount of their hearing in the right ear,⁷⁷ and, in 1937, had to take time off to recuperate, at which time the Corps disbanded.⁷⁸

After their recuperation, they returned to Tianjin, now a restaurateur in Tianjin, managing a Mongolian-themed hotpot restaurant⁷⁹ named The House of the Rising East.⁸⁰ The building was financed and built by Tada, supposedly with the goal of keeping Yoshiko occupied now that the full-scale invasion of China had begun.⁸¹ They were still with Chizuko,⁸² and also slept with numerous singsong girls, and pursued a Chinese actor.⁸³ Their attire shifted between masculine⁸⁴ and feminine.⁸⁵ At a lavish party at the restaurant, they became acquainted with

71 Ibid., pp 138. Exact number of troops remains unclear. Ibid., pp 137.

72 Ibid., pps 133-134.

73 Ibid., pp 136.

74 Ibid., pp 158.

75 Gotō, pp 64.

76 Birnbaum, pps 137-138.

77 Yamaguchi, pp 56.

78 Birnbaum, pp 137.

79 Ibid., pp 21.

80 Yamaguchi, pp. 151

81 Birnbaum, pps 170-171.

82 Ibid., pp 173.

83 Behr, pp 197; Yamaguchi, pp 59.

84 Yamaguchi, pp 56.

85 Birnbaum, pp 173.

the young Japanese actress Yamaguchi Yoshiko,⁸⁶ who, in 1938, would make her film debut in a production by the Manchukuo Film Association Corporation. Yoshiko requested Yamaguchi call them 'dear brother'.⁸⁷ They'd also adopted four pet monkeys,⁸⁸ and were regularly taking morphine injections for back pain,⁸⁹ possibly lingering pain from the gunshot wounds sustained in Rehe. Yamaguchi independently became acquainted with Yamaga Tōru, Yoshiko's first love, and, according to Yamaguchi, Yoshiko developed an antagonism towards her under the assumption Yamaguchi and Yamaga were lovers.⁹⁰

The restaurant didn't last long. In 1938, Yoshiko was visiting a friend known as Mrs. Wang. This friend had just ended a relationship with a member of an anti-Japanese resistance band, and three men broke into the home and assailed the two with axes, killing Mrs. Wang and seriously wounding Yoshiko. The restaurant was shut down due to nonpayment of rent.⁹¹

By now, in 1940, they had alienated their former friends; Tanaka Ryūkichi and Tada Hayao had each independently entertained the idea of assassinating Yoshiko to do away with them.⁹² Even the rightwing continental adventurers would have nothing to do with them.⁹³ With few options, a Japanese handler—Mussolini-loving China *rōnin* and political fixer Sasakawa Ryōichi⁹⁴—shipped them off first to the Kawashima home in Dalian, where Naniwa's reaction was not recorded, and soon after to Fukuoka, where they were stranded without adequate funds or a travel visa to return—effectively a form of house arrest.⁹⁵ This is also the last we hear of Chizuko, and we can assume the relationship ended sometime between the opening of the restaurant and the relocation to Fukuoka. Perhaps some internal strife broke them up, or perhaps the influence of men like Sasakawa played a part. According to Yamaguchi, Kawashima had contacts in Fukuoka, particularly Tōyama Mitsuru.⁹⁶

A year previous, they had become acquainted with a Fukuoka girl by the name of Sonomoto Kotone, who, at this point, was in high school (Yoshiko was thirty-two). Kotone's exact age is not listed in my sources, and I have not alluded to her youth in mentions of her in this book; any appearances she might make in future instalments of this series will adjust her age to something more appropriate. The two exchanged erotic letters and poetry with each other, Yoshiko expressing a need for female companionship, an alienation felt in Japan, and fantasies of running off to China with Kotone.⁹⁷

Eventually granted permission to travel to Tōkyō in 1941, they tried to insert themselves into negotiations to end the war, writing multiple letters to the household of Hideiki Tōjō offering to be a mediator, which were ignored.⁹⁸

86 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

87 Ibid., pp. 56.

88 Ibid., pps 172, 189.

89 Yamaguchi, pp 61.

90 Ibid., pps 149-150.

91 Birnbaum, pps 173-174.

92 Ibid.; Tanaka assassination at pp 122, Tada at pp 176.

93 Yamaguchi, pp 58.

94 Birnbaum, pp 175.

95 Ibid., pp 177.

96 Yamaguchi, pp. 151.

97 Birnbaum, pp 187.

98 Ibid., pps 188-189.

After the war, they returned to China, ostensibly because one of their pet monkeys was suffering from diarrhoea and Beijing was the only place for adequate treatment.⁹⁹ They were arrested on 11 October, 1945, by Republic of China forces.¹⁰⁰ Interrogated repeatedly, they were presented with 'evidence' of their guilt in the form of fictitious elements of Muramatsu Shōfū's book, as well as a 1932 film which featured a fictionalized version of Yoshiko.¹⁰¹ It was a show trial.¹⁰² They were sentenced to death on the charge of being a traitor to China,¹⁰³ and executed by *Koumintang* forces on 25 March, 1948.¹⁰⁴ They were approximately forty years old.

Rumours of a faked execution abounded for years afterwards.¹⁰⁵

I have heavily implied Yoshiko was associated with the Black Dragons or another ultranationalist secret society, including hinting that the Dragons were the masterminds behind Yoshiko's alleged faked execution. In the novel, this role is filled by Suzuki Kanehara, an entirely fictional character. Beyond the loose connections that have been referenced above, I have no concrete evidence that Yoshiko was associated with them, or that their influence in later years was prominent.

Kawashima Yoshiko was well-known for dressing in men's clothing, though they would, on occasion, present female. They were openly bisexual. Muramatsu used male pronouns when referring to them in conversation.¹⁰⁶ They used male Japanese grammar in speech, and once preferred the male Japanese name Ryōsuke when they announced they were of the persuasion of the third sex. They were reviled for their open lifestyle,¹⁰⁷ and called a whore in public.¹⁰⁸ Their reputation has not fared well in China. Portrayed with an unquenchable sexual thirst, with many conspiracy theories swirling around them,¹⁰⁹ they have been the subject of many novels and film adaptations; daring, brazen, malevolent—perhaps they were all these things, but they were also groomed into a fascist worldview draped in the nationalism of their people, had frequent money problems, struggled with their expected role, were targeted for assassination more than once, were shot many times, and developed a morphine addiction. Kawashima Yoshiko is more complex than any one-dimensional media portrayal.

99 Ibid., pps 190-191.

100 Ibid., pp 198.

101 Ibid., pp 202.

102 Ibid., pp 200.

103 Ibid., pp 204.

104 Ibid., pp 212.

105 Ibid., pp 12.

106 Ibid., pp 120.

107 Ibid., pp 96.

108 Ibid., pp 151.

109 Ibid., pp 14.

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