

[Type here]

Imperial Japanese Government 1868-1945

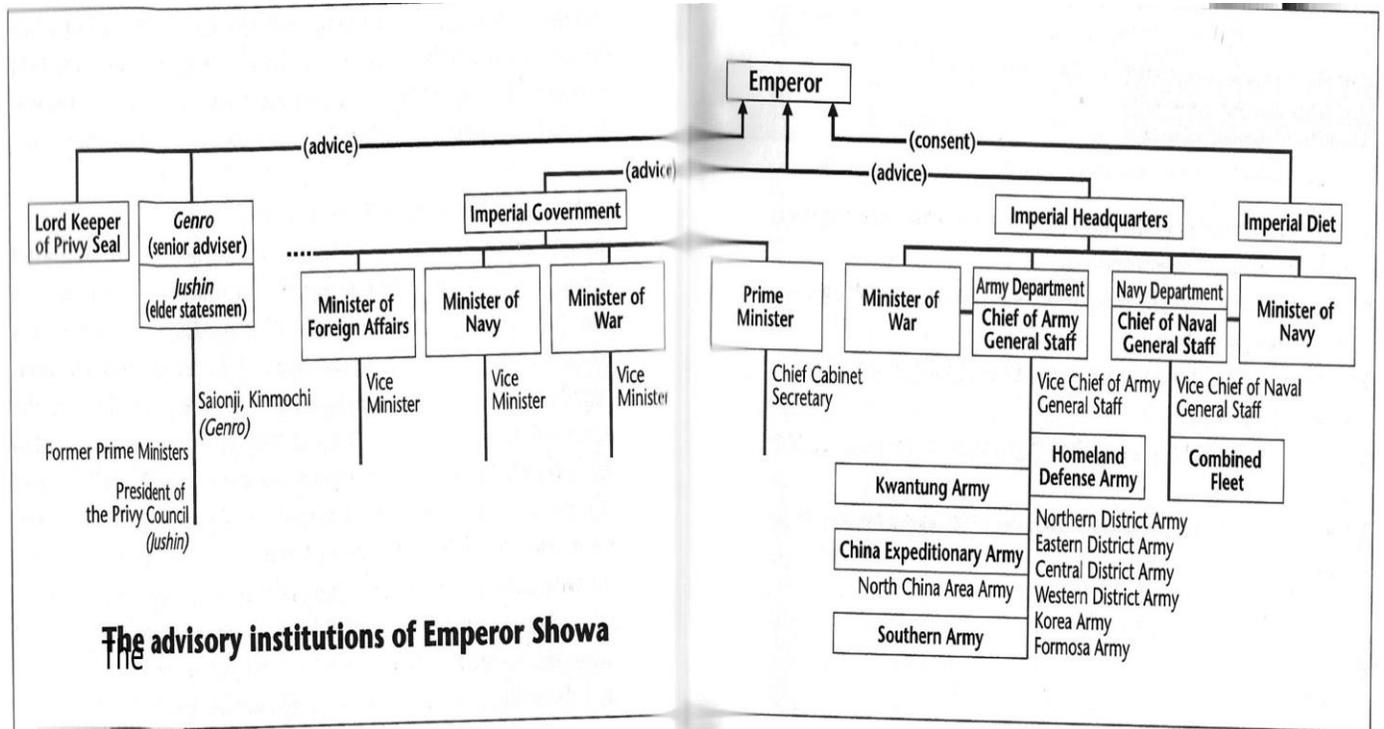


Chart from: *Who Was Responsible: From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor*, The Yomiuri Shimbun, 2006

The Imperial Japanese Government was based predominantly on the Imperial German Model (1870-1914). The unique feature of the government hierarchy was the lack of civilian control over the military. Both the Army and Navy reported directly to the Emperor and could bring down a civilian cabinet by simply refusing to appoint a War Minister (Army) or Naval Minister. This situation did occur in 1911 and 1940.

[Type here]

The other areas of power in the government were the advisors to the Emperor. At the founding of Imperial Japan, the primary advisors were the *Genro* or National Founders. The last Genro, Prince Saionji Kinmochi, died in November 1940. The most influential advisor became Marquis Kido Koichi, who was Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. Another powerful advisory body to the Emperor was the *Jushin*, which was composed of former Premiers.



Prince Saionji Kinmochi



Marquis Kido Koichi

The Japanese Diet was not very influential in the years leading up to the war. After Party Government collapsed in the early 1930s and Premier Konoe Fumimaro established the Imperial Rule Association, the Diet was seldom heard from.

[Type here]

While the Emperor was the head of the government and had the sole right to approve treaties, and make war or peace, he seldom did more than observe proceedings during Imperial Conferences. The Emperors, however, were quite active behind the scenes dealing with members of the military, government using suggestive authority. The primary way decisions were made in 1940 and 1941 was through a series of Liaison Conferences attended by both military and civilian leaders, followed by an Imperial Conference in which all decisions were finalized and approved by the Emperor.



Emperor Showa

Emperor Showa (Hirohito) did question Japanese moves into Manchuria and China. He actively moved against an army coup

[Type here]

on February 26, 1936, expressed displeasure at another army maneuver to oust a Naval Cabinet, cautioned against the Tripartite Pact, remonstrated against those who wanted war with the US, but did acquiesce to government and military regarding the commencement of war. His decision to accept the Potsdam Declaration in August 1945 ended the Pacific War. The United States decided not to try the Emperor for war crimes during the Tokyo Trials, instead he was allowed the status of a figurehead constitutional monarch. There is still controversy today as to how much Hirohito contributed to the outbreaks of war in China and the Pacific.



General Douglas MacArthur
and Emperor Hirohito 1945