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KEY CONCEPTS OF THE MEIJI PERIOD IN GENRO COUNCIL STUDIES (LATE XIXth CENTURY)

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The Meiji Restoration spans the entire period of modernization and Westernization of Japanese statehood in the late XIXth century. The essential scientific nature of studying Genro and the entire Meiji period will be unveiled through the key concepts of Meiji. *The objectives of the study* is to pinpoint the fundamental principles of the Meiji era in examining the Genro Council of Elders as the architects of various aspects of Japan's institutional development. An exploration of these core Meiji concepts will reveal critical factors shaping Japan's evolution, including economic progress, domestic and foreign policies, financial strategies, military reforms, and more. *Materials and methods.* This article draws upon archival data from the “National Diet Library” and research conducted by scholars from the USA, Great Britain, Japan, Hong Kong, the Republic of Turkey, and the Russian Federation. The research methodology incorporates induction, synthesis, deduction, general scientific analysis, and statistical methods. *Results.* As Japan underwent the transformation into a new country, fundamental concepts emerged that became the guiding principles of the entire Meiji period. Genro Council dedicated its efforts to addressing the paramount challenges of the time, steering the country's development across diverse social, political, and economic dimensions. *Conclusions.* Genro provided crucial advice to the emperor, shaped the new Japan's policies during the Meiji period. Understanding these key concepts like Kindaika, Seiyōka, Fukoku Kyōhei, Shinokoushou, Zaibatsu are essential for a comprehensive study of the Genro Council's pivotal role in the transformative era of the Meiji period.

Keywords: Japan, Meiji Ishin, Genro, Fukoku Kyōhei, Zaibatsu, Shinokosho, Satchōdohi, Bushi, Kindaika, Seiyōka

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ГЕНРО КЕҢЕСІ ЗЕРТТЕУІНДЕГІ МЭЙДЗИ КЕЗЕҢІНІҢ НЕГІЗГІ ТҰЖЫРЫМДАРЫ. (XIX Ғ. СОҢЫ)

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Андатпа. *Kirişne.* XIX ғасырдың аяғындағы Мэйдзи рестоврациясы жапон мемлекеттілігін модернизациялаудың барлық кезеңін қамтиды. Генро кеңесінің зерттелуіндегі Мэйдзи кезеңінің негізгі тұжырымдамалары мақаланың ғылыми мәнін ашады. *Зерттеудің мақсаты мен міндеттері.* Зерттеудің мақсаты Жапонияның мемлекеттік құрылымдарының қалыптасып дамуына ықпал еткен Генро ақсақалдар кеңесінің зерттелуіндегі Мэйдзи кезеңінің негізгі тұжырымдамаларын анықтау. Мэйдзи кезеңінің негізгі концепцияларын зерттеу: экономикалық даму, ішкі және сыртқы саясат, қаржы саясаты, әскери реформалар және т.б. Жапония трансформациясының маңызды факторларын анықтайды. *Материалдар мен тәсілдер.* Ғылыми мақаланың зерттеу материалы «Жапонияның ұлттық парламенттік кітапханасы» мұрағат деректеріне және патшалық Ресей АҚШ, Ұлыбритания, Жапония, Гонконг, Түркия Республикасы және РФ ғалымдарының зерттеулеріне сүйенген. Бұл мақала индукция, синтез, дедукция, жалпы ғылыми талдау және статистикалық әдістерге негізделген. *Нәтижелер.* Жапонияның жаңа мемлекетке айналу барысында тұтас Мэйдзи кезеңінің ұстанымын айқындайтын фундаменталды тұжырымдар пайда болды. Генро кеңесі барлық күш жігерін әлеуметтік, саяси және экономикалық бағыттағы түйіткілді мәселелерді шешуге жұмсады. *Қорытынды.* Киндайка, Сейока, Фуоку Кэхэй, Синокосё, Зайбацу сияқты негізгі ұғымдарды түсіну – Мэйдзи дәуірінің трансформациясындағы Генро кеңесінің рөлін терең зерттеу үшін өте маңызды тұжырымдар болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: Жапония, Мэйдзи Исин, Генро, Фуоку Кэхэй, Дзайбацу, Синокошо, Сатчодохи, Буси, Киндайка, Сейока

Дәйексөз үшін: Қуанбай О.Б. Генро кеңесі зерттеуіндегі Мэйдзи кезеңінің негізгі тұжырымдамалары. (XIX ғ. соңы) // Отан тарихы. 2024. Т. 27. № 2. 389-402 бб. (Ағылш.).

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КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ КОНЦЕПЦИИ ПЕРИОДА МЭЙДЗИ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ СОВЕТА ГЕНРО (КОНЕЦ XIX ВЕКА)

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Реставрация Мэйдзи охватывает весь период модернизации и вестернизации Японской государственности в конце XIX века. Ключевые концепции Мэйдзи как раз раскроет научный суть в изучении Генро и всего периода. *Цель и задачи.* Целью исследования является выявление ключевых концепции периода Мейдзи в изучениях совета старейшин Генро как основоположатели всех этих аспектов развития государственных институтов Японии. Изучение основных концепций Мейдзи раскроет важнейших факторов трансформации Японии: экономическое развитие, внутренняя и внешняя политика, финансовая политика, военные реформы и так далее. *Материалы и методы.* Материалом исследования для данной статьи послужили архивные данные «Национальной парламентской библиотеки Японии» и исследований ученых США, Великобританий, Японий, Гонконга, Турецкой республики и РФ. Данная научная статья основана на индукции, синтезе, дедукции, общенаучном анализе статистических методах. *Результаты.* По мере превращения Японии в новую страну возникли фундаментальные концепции, которые стали руководящими принципами всего периода Мэйдзи. Совет Генро посвятил свои усилия решению первостепенных задач времени, направляя развитие страны в различных социальных, политических и экономических измерениях. *Заключение.* Понимание таких ключевых концепций, как Киндайка, Сейока, Фуоку Кёхей, Синокошоу, Дзайбацу, необходимо для всестороннего изучения ключевой роли Совета Гэнро в эпоху преобразований периода Мэйдзи.

Ключевые слова: Япония, Мэйдзи Исин, Генро, Фуоку Кёхей, Дзайбацу, Синокошо, Сатчодохи, Буси, Киндайка, Сейока

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Introduction. Before delving into a thorough examination of the subject, I'd like to provide a brief historical context for the term Genro in my own words. Japan's "Genro" system didn't primarily derive from Western models but was shaped by the country's historical and cultural context. During the Edo period 「江戸時代」 the samurai government was stable, and the shogunate held real power. Positions like "Roju" 「老中」 and "Rochukaku" 「老中格」 played crucial roles in the shogunate's political and military center. In ancient Japan, high-ranking aristocrats around the emperor influenced politics and the legal system. The Heian period 「平安時代」 saw the development of a regent government, introducing roles like regent Sesshō 「摂政」 and Kanpaku 「関白」 supervising the imperial court at the political core.

The Sengoku 「戦国時代」 period marked the rise of the samurai government, with Sengoku daimyo and their vassals establishing a governing structure. In the Edo period, "Roju" served as close aides to the shogun, holding power at the shogunate's center. Many experienced and politically savvy individuals among the Roju occasionally offered advice and policy proposals to the shogun. This system stems from Japan's unique history and political structure, distinct from Western parliamentary systems.

Entering the Meiji period, Japan underwent significant government reforms during modernization and Westernization. While some political and legal systems from Western countries were adopted after the Meiji Restoration, the specific "Genro" system wasn't directly modeled. Instead, the Genro system traces its origins to Japan's historical and cultural background and the political structure dating back to the Edo period.

The Meiji Restoration 「明治維新」 has a definition as the comprehensive transformation of Japan from feudalism to modernization led by Emperor Mutsuhito, marking the beginning of the Meiji period. The Genro Council 「元老」 is a group of elder statesmen



who provided crucial advice to the emperor, shaping Japan's policies during the Meiji period. The Genro is a central institution in the governance structure, pivotal in decision-making and policy formulation.

As an introduction, let me briefly describe some important aspects that will be scientifically substantiated during the research of this article. Some aspects of the Meiji period were a Political Stability and Imperial Authority. As a definition we can say the consolidation of political power under the emperor's constitutional monarchy. Genro's efforts in establishing political stability and reinforcing imperial authority.

The concept *Fukoku Kyōhei* 「富国強兵」 is a national slogan emphasizing “Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Military,” reflecting Japan's pursuit of economic prosperity and military prowess. The “*Fukoku Kyōhei*” was a guiding principle for Genro in fostering a robust and powerful nation. The one of the main social structures of Japan was a *Shinokosho* 「士農工商」. It is the four traditional social classes of samurai (士), farmers (農), artisans (工), and merchants (商). The main significance is Genro's role in eradicating this class system, fostering socio-economic reforms.

Modernization and Westernization is the deliberate adoption of Western technologies, institutions, and practices to modernize Japan. the main significance was the Genro's initiatives in steering Japan towards becoming an industrialized and globally competitive nation.

Economic Development and Industrialization: The systematic development of Japan's economy was a transitioning from agrarian to industrial. Significance of economic development and industrialization was a Genro's role in formulating policies that propelled economic growth and industrial advancements.

Social and Cultural Transformation: There was profound changes in societal norms, cultural practices, and values during the Meiji period. Has been observed Genro's influence on shaping a modern and dynamic social and cultural landscape.

Foreign Policy and International Relations: Japan's diplomatic strategy and interaction with foreign countries had a special character. In guiding Japan's foreign policy, including treaties, alliances and international commitments, the new government has always tried to stay two steps ahead on the international chessboard.

Constitutional Reforms: Established modern constitution, defining the structure of the Japanese government. Genro's contributed to the creation of a constitutional framework that shaped Japan's political landscape. Understanding these key concepts is essential for a comprehensive study of the Genro Council's pivotal role in the transformative era of the Meiji period. The foundational concepts of the Meiji period played a pivotal role in shaping Japan's subsequent development. A closer look at these fundamental terms will unveil the true essence of the Genro Council's research.

Materials and research methods. Archival materials from the “National Diet Library of Japan” *Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan* 「国立国会図書館」 used for studying this scientific article. Explored primary sources from the Meiji and Taisho periods. Japanese archives were valuable sources for understanding the perspectives and actions of the Genro. The theoretical findings presented herein offer a reasonably accurate depiction of historical events at the end of the XIXth century in Japan.

The article is based on general scientific analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, statistical methods. This article sets out the theoretical result with a certain accuracy and coincides with data from archival documentation and material from Japanese scholars. This research article is based on quantitative analysis: statistical methods were used to analyze socio-economic data from the Meiji period. With the help of this scientific approach, it was possible to study the broad impact of Genro's policy on the development of Japan. **Historiographic analysis:** the works of historians of Japanese studies were studied. This helps



us to deeply explore the role of Genro in the rethinking of Japanese historical scholarship. Methods of political science and historical analysis are applied to assess the influence of Genro on political development, governance and decision-making processes in Japan.

Discussion. For this scholarly article, we delved into Japanese archival sources to explore the fundamental concepts of the Meiji period as observed through the lens of the Genro Council in the late of XIXth century. The following Japanese archival sources were used in this scientific article: 日本国憲按明治9年10月数量: 1 綴墨書元老院野紙陸奥宗光関係文書 61-3 陸奥宗光関係文書 // Nihon kokuken'an Meiji 9-nen 10 tsuki sūryō: 1 Tsudzuri bokusho motorōin keishi mutsu munemitsu kankei bunsho 61 - 3 mutsu munemitsu kankei bunsho. (National Archive of Japan)., 明治憲法と日本国憲法に関する基礎的資料 (明治憲法の制定過程について) 最高法規としての憲法のあり方に関する調査小委員会 (平成15年5月8日の参考資料) 平成15年5月衆議院憲法調査会事務局 Meiji Kenpō to nihonkokukenpō ni kansuru kiso-teki shiryō (Meiji kenpō no seitei katei ni tsuite) saikō hōki to shite no kenpō no arikata ni kansuru chōsa ko iinkai Heisei 15-nen 5 tsuki Shūgiin kenpō chōsa-kai jimukyoku. Tokyo, s. 12. (National Archive of Japan)., 日本国憲按明治9年10月数量: 1 綴墨書元老院野紙陸奥宗光関係文書 61-3 陸奥宗光関係文書 DOI 10.11501/3860371. National Archive of Japan. Tokyo.

We thoroughly examined key English-language scholarly works to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. Such as *Bessho Koro*, “Identities and Security in East Asia” London: Routledge, 2013., *Borthwick Mark*, “Pacific Century: The Emergence of Modern Pacific Asia” Melbourne: Westview Press, 1998., *Clyde Paul Hibbert*, “The far East, A History of the Impact of the West”, Second Edition, New-York, Prentice-Hall., Inc, 1953., *Jansen, Marius Berthus*, “The Making of Modern Japan” Cambridge, third printing, Printed in the USA, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2002., *Nish Ian Hill*, “The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1884-1907” London, 2013., *Thompson, R. Mark*, “Authoritarian Modernism in East Asia” Hong Kong, Palgrave Pivot Publishing, 2019., *Patrick T. Hugh*, “Japan 1868-1914. Ch. 8. Banking in the Early Stages of Industrialization. A study in comparative economic history” Oxford University Press, 1967.

To conduct a thorough investigation, we incorporated literature from Japanese and Turkish sources. We compiled data from these books and conducted an analysis of historical information: *Itō Yukio*. “Itō Hirobumi Kindai Nihon o Tsukutta Otoko” 伊藤之雄、「伊藤博文 近代日本を創った男」第1刷発行、2015年3月10日、発行者鈴木 哲株式会社講談社、発行所東京都文京区音羽 2-12-21 // Tokyo. Kōdansha. 2015. *Shinichi Kitaoka*, “The Army as a Bureaucracy: Japanese Militarism Revisited” USA, Lexington, Virginia: The Journal of Military History, 1993, *Dündar, A.M.* “Meiji Modernleşmesinin Osmanlı Dönemi Türk Aydınları Üzerindeki Etkisi Üzerine” Meiji Japonyasına 150. Yılından Başıklar: Seçilmiş Makaleler. 2019. Y. 4, S. 633., *İslam ansiklopedisi* 5. Cilt.,

The roots of Japanese studies in Russia have deep historical connections, given that Russian-Japanese relations span over three centuries. This scholarly article draws upon books and articles published by the Russian Academy of Sciences at the Institute of Oriental Studies: *Kutakov, Leonid Nikolayevich*, “Rossiya i Yaponiya” Moskva, Akademiya Nauk SSSR, Institut Vostokovedeniya, Nauka, 1988., *Kantur Ruslan Alekseyevich*, “Institut genro v sisteme organov gosudarstvenno politicheskoy vlasti Yaponii epokhi Meydzi”, Yezhegodnik Yaponiya Vol.0. 2015, *Sarkisov Konstantin Oganosovich*, “Yaponskiy opyt transformatsii: ot “monarkhicheskogo konstitutsionalizma” k totalitarnoy sisteme”, Yezhegodnik Yaponiya, Vol.48. 2019., *Streltsov Politicheskaya sistema sovremennoy Yaponii*, Moskva: Institut vostokovedeniya RAN-Aspekt Press. 2013., *Vinogradov, Konstantin Georgiyevich*,



“Transformatsiya pravyashchego sloya Yaponii, 1868-1890”, Yezhegodnik Yaponiya 2000-2001, Vol.0. 2001., *Yemelyanova Olga* “Osobennosti formirovaniya bankovskoy sistemy Yaponii v posledney treti XIX v”, YAPONIYA: 150 let revolyutsii Meydzi, Vol.7. 2018.

Results. Presently, advisors to the Presidents and influential figures are integral parts of state administrations. A closer examination of the Genro 「元老」 Council of Elders will shed light on internal motivations and external influences in Japanese Modernization. Moreover, delving into the highest-level reflections of intellectual-political ideas and discussions during the implementation of structural reforms will provide a profound understanding. Undoubtedly, this holds significance in explaining the dynamics in an Asian country striving to build a “Modern State,” as exemplified by Japan.

The Meiji Modernization 「明治維新」 stands out as a crucial phase in Japan's progress. Extending from 1867 to 1912 under Emperor Mutsuhito's rule, the term “Meiji Restoration” encompasses the entire period of Japan's modernization and Westernization. The systematic transformation of Japan, evolving into a formidable and prosperous nation through Emperor Meiji's reforms, along with its emergence as a significant global military power, sparked awe and curiosity not only in the West but also among Asian communities (Dundar, 2019: 17).

In Japanese, the term for “modernization” is 「近代化」 Kindaika. Unlike the concept of Westernization, which often reflects cultural and social values, the notions associated with modernization carry a relatively neutral meaning: “They are predominantly focused on material advancements such as technical, technological, productive, and rational aspects, devoid of, at first glance, immediate spiritual values. In this context, the concepts of modernization become essential for movements of innovation and change, representing a phenomenon applicable to all nations and observable across various historical periods” (İslam ansiklopedisi, 1992:148). The Genro members made extensive efforts to swiftly establish an economic system mirroring the West: “Through collaborative initiatives with emerging industries, the framework of commercial banks evolved over the following fifteen years. Between 1888 and 1901, the number of banks surged nearly sixfold, stocks quadrupled, loans increased sixfold, and deposits grew 7.5 times” (Hugh, 1967: 264). The term for Westernization in Japanese is 「西洋化」 Seiyō-ka. It refers to the endeavors of non-Western societies aiming to attain a level of development comparable to that of the Western world (İslam ansiklopedisi, 1992:148).

The Meiji Ishin (1867-1868), while sharing similarities with major revolutions in other countries, had significant distinctions: “The Japanese monarchy later adopted a “progressive” constitutional monarchy in the style of the German (Prussian) model, which was perceived as the most advanced and dynamic. Choosing between the two forms of constitutional monarchies— “the monarch reigns but does not rule” and “the monarch reigns and governs according to the constitution,” with the latter involving the monarch as a guarantor of the bureaucracy—Japan opted for the latter” (Sarkisov, 2019: 250) This decision was based on the premise that the emperor would disengage from direct governance, and the real authority would rest with those who orchestrated the revolution and established the new monarchy. This concept was at the core of the state builders' original vision.

The Genro actively worked to enhance the country's financial situation, providing a significant boost to the development of all other sectors of the state structure: “This effort set the stage for the establishment of various specialized banks in subsequent years: the Japan Mortgage Bank (Nihon Kangyo Ginko) in 1897, the Industrial Bank of Japan (Nihon Kogyo Ginko) in 1902, the Bank of Taiwan (Taiwan Ginko) in 1899, the Bank of Korea (Kankoku Ginko) in 1890, and the Hokkaido Development Bank (Hokkaido Takushoku Ginko) in 1900. These specialized banks were created under government directives to offer financial support for official projects. The Mortgage Bank primarily focused on agricultural development, the Industrial Bank supported manufacturing and mining enterprises, the Hokkaido Colonization



Bank financed projects in Hokkaido, the Bank of Taiwan collaborated with various industrial ventures in Taiwan, and the Bank of Korea was associated with businesses in Korea and Manchuria” (Yemelyanova, 2018: 366).

In April 1875 (8th year of Meiji), the “Ordinance Establishing a Constitutional Government” 「立憲政體樹立の詔」 was promulgated, leading to the abolition of the Sain 「左院」 Institute. The responsibilities of the dissolved Sain Institute were transferred to the newly established Genroin 「元老院」, taking the place of the Left Assembly (Archive Meiji Kenpō, 1882:12). It's important to note that Genro and “Genroin” are distinctly different entities.

The Genro Council played a pivotal role in shaping the foundation of the new state. Comprising initially seven and later nine distinguished politicians of the Meiji Era, the Genro was established in 1889. Members of the Genro Council served as unofficial advisors to the Emperor throughout the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa Periods. By imperial decree, seven representatives of the highest state institution were granted Genro status (Kitaoka, 1993: 64). Every government structure carries an official status. However, uniquely, Genro did not possess such a documented status, even though it wielded control over the entire state structure: “Genro members did not have direct involvement in political matters regarding the constitution. The official status of Genro was never formally established or documented” (Hill, 2013: 4).

Up until 1931, shortly after the Constitution was promulgated, the most influential force in Japanese government and politics was Genro. Comprising trustworthy and experienced statesmen, this group spearheaded the development of the new Japan from around 1880 to 1900, effectively making crucial decisions. However, by 1922, their supremacy in overseeing all significant state matters, both domestic and foreign, began to face challenges and questioning (Clyde, 1953: 203).

In matters of ideology, Genro adhered to the Fukoku Kyōhei 「富国強兵」 motto, which translates to “Rich Country, Strong Army.” The concept of national enlightenment, as introduced by the Mito school 「水戸学」, encompassed four key branches: reshaping domestic policy, optimizing military management, enhancing the country's well-being, and prioritizing national security – essentially, fostering a prosperous state and a robust military. As previously mentioned, in Japan's developmental journey, Genro embraced these principles: “As Meiji Japan refined its understanding of international relations, the rallying cry of 「尊王攘夷」 “Respect the Emperor, Drive Out the Barbarians” – that fortified the Meiji Restoration, transitioned to the “Fukoku Kyohei” slogan of “Rich Country, Strong Army” (Koro, 2013: 1).

Zaibatsu played a pivotal role in Japan's modernization. Thanks to the significant influence of Genro member Matsukata Masayoshi 「松方正義」 on the economic landscape, Zaibatsu groups like Mitsubishi 「三菱」 and Mitsui 「三井」 became the unshakeable pillars of a robust Japanese economy. Under the leadership of Finance Minister Matsukata Masayoshi, strides were taken to stabilize the Japanese economy, despite the challenges posed by unequal treaties. In the 1880s, Matsukata's fiscal policies, marked by deflation and austerity, led to a substantial reduction in government spending and the privatization of state enterprises, ultimately revitalizing Zaibatsu and corporate conglomerates like Mitsubishi and Mitsui (Borthwick, 1998: 132). It's essential to emphasize that Genro isn't an oligarchy representing the business elite: “The association of six out of seven Genro with Mitsui Zaibatsu can be traced back to the Mitsui group's substantial financial support for the new government established by Niigata entrepreneur Masuda Takashi in 1876. Over time, this led to close ties with influential figures from Choshu and Satsuma, making Mitsui the largest industrial monopoly association. However, the term “Genro oligarchy” is politically and historically inaccurate. Genro never acted on behalf of Zaibatsu, and the Zaibatsu, in turn,



never sought access to government control. They were content with the advantages and preferences offered to them by the government” (Kantur, 2015: 260).

From 1868 until the close of the first quarter of the 20th century, representatives of the Satchōdohi 「薩長土肥」 – the “Four Western Khanates” from the four Western principalities known as Genro – occupied crucial positions in the state's political system. Samurai hailing from the principalities west of Tokyo held a prevailing influence in the ruling elite. The victory in Meiji Ishin was secured by the coalition of the western principalities, namely Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa, and Hizen, which retained dominant positions until the end of the first quarter of the 20th century. Representatives from these principalities were samurai of middle and low rank” (Vinogradov, 2001: 262-270).

To grasp the meaning of the Satchōdohi 「薩長土肥」 concept during the Meiji period, it's crucial to understand the origins of the Genro members: “Ito Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru belonged to the original Sangi group (Councillors) of the first Meiji government. Others soon joined them, maintaining their positions as their numbers dwindled from 106 to 26 and eventually to 7 when the modern cabinet system replaced this arrangement in 1885. Key members of the group were abroad; Ito Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru were part of the small Choshu contingent sent to England in the 1860s, while others like Yamagata Aritomo (Choshu) and Matsukata Masayoshi (Satsuma) soon traveled abroad to study military and financial systems. Initially, they held lower bureaucratic roles, but they seemed to have quickly risen in prominence during the 1870s, coinciding with the growing influence of Satsuma and Choshu” (Jansen, 2002: 371).

Japanese sources document that “Emperor Meiji consulted Aritomo Yamagata, Kiyotaka Kuroda, Kaoru Inoue, and Masayoshi Matsukata regarding the selection of the next Prime Minister for the second Ito Cabinet. Apart from Ito, they held influential positions in Satsuma and Choshu. Shigenobu Okuma, the leader of the Progressive Party, had already formed a partnership with Matsukata, and both business and industry figures and journalists held high expectations for Okuma and Matsukata. Following this trend, Matsukata was elected prime minister. In September 1896 (Meiji 29), Prime Minister Matsukata also assumed the role of Minister of Finance, Okuma became Minister of Foreign Affairs, and three members of the Satsuma family and two others were part of the government” (Itō, 2015: 214-216).

In addition to the upper echelons of the oligarchies, within the framework of modernization, there were Samurai from the lower ranks – Bushi 「武士」 – who stood in favor of positive societal changes. Building upon the support of these lower-ranked Samurai, the Genro embarked on further modernization and military strengthening. However, their initial step was to dismantle the old societal structure by granting freedom to the Samurai. This move allowed old, middle, and low-ranking as well as new Samurai the opportunity to, at least officially, stand on equal footing with the most esteemed families in Japan. The development mobility of the average Samurai might be lower than that of the lowest-ranking Samurai, affirming the realization of equality within the ancient and deeply structured Samurai class. Consequently, increased mobility and activity were observed at the highest echelon among the old Samurai. After 1890, former Samurai Hirobumi Ito and Masayoshi Matsukata were bestowed with the title of princes, ascending to the highest echelon of the aristocracy (Berthus, 2002: 371).

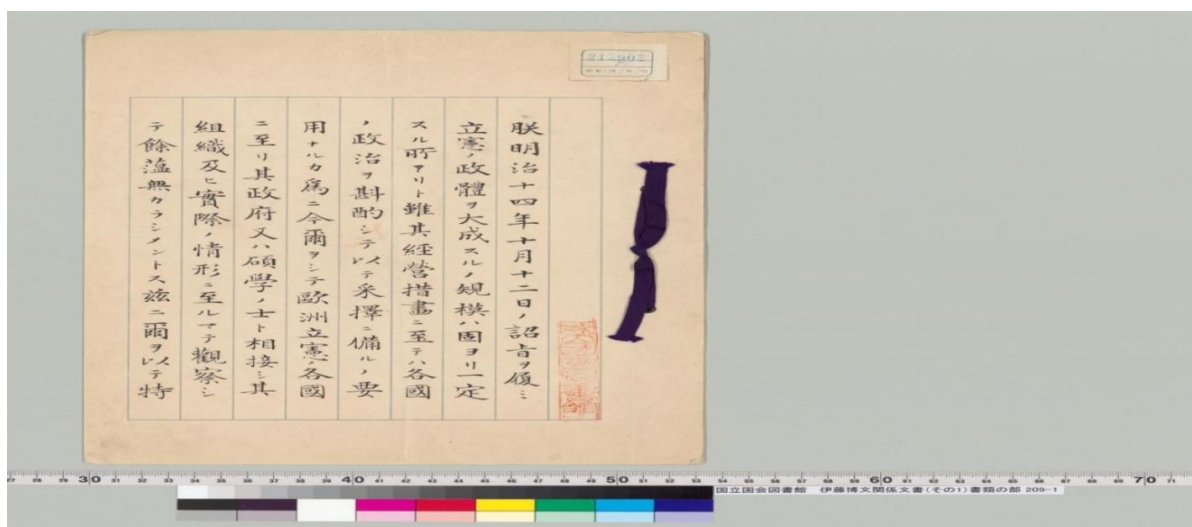
During the Meiji Period, Japanese society adhered to the “Shinoukoushou Four Social Class Hierarchies: samurai, peasants, artisans, and merchants. In this era, Meiji Japan was governed by an oligarchy composed of low-ranking samurai rebels who triumphed in a brief civil war, toppling the Tokugawa shogunate, while the emperor regained power symbolically. As the Meiji oligarchs sought to eliminate the feudal Shinoukoushou 「士農工商」 – the “Four Societies” in Japanese society, encompassing samurai, peasants, artisans, and



merchants—and initiated various social and economic reforms, a substantial faction of traditionalists staunchly opposed any changes advocated by the liberals. They encountered significant resistance” (Thompson, 2019: 20).

The enduring remnants of feudalism, deeply rooted in the countryside, coupled with the low standard of living for the majority of the population subjected to harsh exploitation, restrained the growth of the domestic market. Consequently, Japanese capitalism swiftly turned its focus to capturing foreign markets, aiming to address these internal contradictions: "The formation of Japanese capitalism, *Nihon Shihon Shugi* 「日本資本主義」, traces back to the Meiji period. Japan's economy, constrained by a limited industrial raw material base, relied on foreign markets for essential resources. The colonial conquests of military-feudal imperialism, driven by the adventurous militaristic cliques in government, aligned with the imperative of Japanese industrial capitalism to secure foreign markets for higher profits while grappling with the lingering remnants of feudalism. The army, with its backbone rooted in the ancient samurai, maintained close ties with the landowning class and evolved into a crucial instrument for executing the predatory policies of the ruling coalition of landowners and capitalists. This heightened the influence of monarchical Japan across the entire state system, emerging as an almost independent and highly active factor in the overall political life of the country” (Kutakov, 1988: 195).

The renowned Iwakura Mission, *Iwakura Shisetsudan* 「岩倉使節団」 comprised notable Meiji oligarchs who gleaned invaluable "lessons" during their two-year global tour (1871–1873), spanning North America and Europe: “In 1873, this Meiji-government delegation held discussions with German Chancellor Bismarck. A year later, the Japanese finance minister attended the opening of the Imperial German Reichstag. Witnessing the diverse paths of modernization among Western countries, influential Meiji leader (and later prime minister) Ito Hirobumi staunchly advocated for the German model. Ito favored diminishing the power of the monarchy in favor of parliamentary authority, similar to Imperial Germany, and endorsed the bureaucracy, a concept later incorporated into the Japanese constitution. He was particularly impressed by the robust position of the army. The draft of the 1889 constitution was crafted by the Prussian jurist Hermann Roesler” (Thompson, 2019: 14).

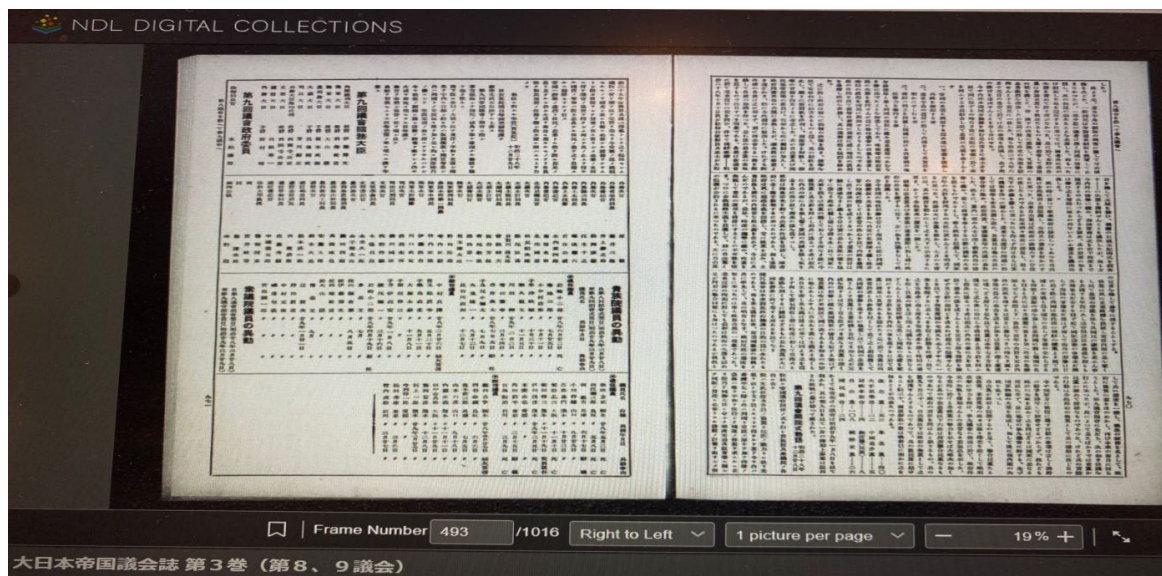


Archive, 立憲政体調査につき特派理事欧洲派遣の勅書 [Imperial letter dispatching special director to Europe for research on constitutional government. Japan. Tokyo. 3 Mart 1882].

The Prussian constitution served as a model for crafting the 「大日本帝国憲法」 Imperial Constitution of Japan. This choice was intentional: “the constitutions of France and



the United States were deemed “too democratic” for Japan, while Great Britain lacked a clearly defined written constitution. The Prussian constitution, blending a rigid bureaucratic system with the preservation of a semi-feudal order, and recognizing the bourgeoisie as a significant economic force, resonated ideologically with Japan's ruling elite. According to Japanese legal scholars, 46 of the 76 articles in the first Japanese constitution are of Prussian origin. Simultaneously, the Japanese constitution leaned more conservatively than the Prussian constitution, primarily due to granting almost unlimited rights to the Japanese emperor” (Streltsov, 2013: 37-38).



Archive, 大日本帝国議会議誌 第3卷 (第8、9議會). 大日本帝国議会議誌刊行会 編.

大日本帝国議会議誌刊行会. Publication Date: 昭和 2. Number: BZ-5-011. Source Identifier: NDLBibID. 000000761460. Dentifier: DOI10.11501/1447930. [Imperial Japanese Parliament Vol. 3. Japan. Tokyo. 1927.]

The Japanese archives mention a similar organization to Genro called Genroin. However, Genroin commenced its activities not in 1889, but prior to Genro: “Genroin delved into the different forms of representative government in the West and examined translations of various Western constitutions by American Guido Verbeek and others. The information presented here was documented by Genroin in October 1876” (National Archive of Japan, 1876: 61). The initial version of a national constitution was the Proposed Japanese National Constitution.

Military development was orchestrated by the Genro Council, wielding incredible authority across key domains with the emperor's direct support and prestige influencing paramount state decisions. A distinctive aspect of the Japanese political system under the first constitution was the unique position of the military elite: “All affairs concerning the establishment of the armed forces, Guntai 「軍隊」 were exempted from parliamentary and governmental oversight. The principles of military policy were formulated by the Council of Generals and Admirals. The leaders of the military and naval forces, concurrently serving as commanders of the army and navy, possessed the privilege to report directly to the emperor, bypassing the chairman of the council of ministers. In the event of disagreements between military ministers and the head of the cabinet, their resignation could automatically lead to the government's downfall” (Streltsov, 2013: 43).

The leading Japanese expert mentioned by William Beasley in the article is Ito Takashi. Beasley references pages 127-133 from Ito Takashi's book, "Showa Shoki Seijishi Kenkyu," published by Tokyo's Today Shuppankai in 1969: “Following World War I and its aftermath, Japan experienced substantial naval construction activities. A preeminent expert on Japan



identifies three distinct periods: 1906-1916 characterized by gradual expansion, 1917-1921 marked by rapid development, and 1922-1932 denoting a phase of adjustment to naval disarmament” (Beasley, 1975:67).

Russian researchers note that following the formation of the Genro Council of Elders, the authorities of Tsarist Russia also observed the swift expansion of Japan's naval capabilities. The Japanese assault on China in 1894 and the decisive defeat of Chinese forces raised concerns among the authorities of Tsarist Russia. In response to Japan's rapid development of both naval and land forces, a new naval construction program in 1895 outlined plans to augment the Pacific Fleet with 14 sizable ships (Kutakov, 1988: 195).

Genro Council member Matsukata Masayoshi played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for the current banking system through financial reforms: “The shift in Japanese fiscal policy unfolded after the resignation of Okuma Shigenobu in October 1881 and the appointment of Matsukata Masayoshi as Minister of Finance, ushering in his unique approach to default prevention—a stringent fiscal policy. Initially, the domestic and international credit plan being developed within the Ministry was scrapped. Subsequently, active preparations commenced for the document “Annual Report” on the State of the Market for 1882. “Meiji 13 Nendo Shokyo Nenpo” presented a fresh analysis of the disparity between the value of paper money and silver coins, alongside an exploration of the reasons behind the rise in prices” (Yemelyanova, 2018: 366-367).

The study of the Genro Council during the Meiji period has elucidated key concepts that served as linchpins in shaping Japan's transformative journey. Central among these concepts is the council's instrumental role in orchestrating Japan's shift from a feudal society to a modern nation-state. Militarily, the Genro Council's strategic focus on development emerged as another pivotal concept, steering the nation's armed forces through a period of rapid growth and modernization. This military emphasis not only bolstered Japan's defense capabilities but also positioned it as a formidable player on the global stage.

Furthermore, the Genro Council's imprint on fiscal and financial reforms, notably under the stewardship of Matsukata Masayoshi, signifies a critical aspect of its influence. The council's commitment to a tight fiscal policy and the establishment of the foundational elements of the contemporary banking system underscore its role in shaping Japan's economic landscape. As these key concepts intertwine, they paint a comprehensive picture of the Genro Council's multifaceted impact on the Meiji period. Beyond the immediate historical context, the enduring legacy of the Genro Council resonates in Japan's modernization journey, reflecting its pivotal role in steering the nation towards a path of progress and transformation.

In conclusion, the study of the Genro Council during the Meiji period unraveled key concepts that significantly shaped Japan's trajectory. The Genro Council played a central role in navigating the transition from a feudal society to a modern nation-state, influencing political, economic, and military policies. The council's commitment to a Prussian-inspired constitutional framework, its strategic focus on military development, and its impact on fiscal and financial reforms, particularly under the leadership of Matsukata Masayoshi, emerged as crucial themes. The Genro Council's influence extended beyond the Meiji period, leaving a lasting imprint on Japan's political landscape. This examination not only sheds light on historical developments but also provides insights into the broader implications of the Genro Council's decisions and policies on Japan's modernization journey.

Analyzing the aforementioned aspects leads to the following conclusions. The Genro Council of Elders exerted profound influences on modern Japan through various key dimensions:

Political Guidance: Serving as unofficial advisors, the Genro played a pivotal role in providing fundamental political guidance to Emperor Meiji. Their influence was instrumental



in establishing the constitutional monarchy in Japan in 1889, introducing a bicameral legislature, and drafting the Meiji Constitution.

Modernization Policies: Advocates of modernization, the Genros recognized the importance of adopting Western technology, education, and management systems. They actively implemented policies that facilitated Japan's transformation into a modern nation-state, influencing reforms across various sectors.

Economic Development: Genro members played a crucial role in fostering economic development in Japan. Their initiatives included encouraging foreign investment, developing modern infrastructure, implementing land reforms, and supporting the growth of key industries. These efforts significantly contributed to Japan's emergence as an industrialized nation.

Military Modernization: Acknowledging the significance of a robust military, the Genro Council focused on modernizing the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. They laid the groundwork for Japan's subsequent military successes by adopting Western military doctrines, technology, and training methods.

Foreign Policy and Imperialism: The Genro Council actively pursued a foreign policy agenda, renegotiating unequal treaties with Western powers and expanding Japan's influence in East Asia. They supported territorial expansion, contributing to Japan's imperialist ambitions through the annexation of territories such as Taiwan, Korea, and Okinawa.

Stability During Transition: During a period of significant transition, the Genro provided stability. Their leadership proved instrumental in helping Japan navigate the challenges of modernization, social transformation, and the shift from a feudal to a more centralized government structure.

Legacy Beyond the Meiji Era: The influence of the Genro Council extended beyond the Meiji period, as many of their policies and reforms continued to shape Japan's trajectory during the Showa period. This enduring legacy contributed significantly to Japan's ascent as a major global power.

Conclusion. In our exploration of Genro, Japanese archives and materials in Japanese, English, Russian, and Turkish were consulted, along with numerous scientific books, magazines, newspapers, and historical notebooks. The Japanese Studies Associations of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences and English scientific articles played a crucial role in enriching our understanding of Genro. The article is grounded in a comprehensive scientific approach, utilizing analysis, induction, synthesis, deduction, and statistical methods.

The Genro Council of Elders played a pivotal and enduring role in shaping the trajectory of Modern Japan from 1889 to 1940. As we delve into the influence and legacy of this esteemed group, several crucial conclusions come to light. The term Genro denotes elder statesmen who wielded significant influence in shaping Japan's political landscape during the Meiji period (1868-1912).

Comprising distinguished statesmen and leaders, the Genro Council made substantial contributions to Japan's political, economic, and social transformation in this era. Their guidance to Emperor Meiji and subsequent leaders facilitated the nation's modernization, steering away from feudal traditions towards a robust and dynamic nation-state. Genro's influence transcended the Meiji period, leaving a lasting impact on later periods as well.

The Meiji period in Japan (1868-1912) marked a transformative era during which Japan underwent rapid modernization and industrialization. While there are aspects of Japan's experience during the Meiji period that can offer insights for modern developing countries, it's essential to recognize the unique historical, cultural, and geopolitical context of Japan at that time. Some lessons and considerations include:



Adaptation of Western Technology and Institutions: Japan successfully adapted and implemented Western technology, institutions, and industrial practices while maintaining its cultural identity. Developing countries today may consider a balanced approach to modernization, combining global best practices with local values and traditions.

Emphasis on Education: The Meiji government prioritized education as a means of fostering a skilled workforce and building a foundation for modernization. Investing in education remains a crucial factor for the development of any nation, as it equips the population with the skills needed for economic and social progress.

Strategic State-led Development: The Meiji government played a central role in guiding and supporting economic development. This interventionist approach, while successful in Japan's case, should be adapted carefully, considering the unique circumstances of each country and ensuring effective governance.

Infrastructure Development: Japan invested heavily in infrastructure development, such as railways and telecommunication networks, which facilitated economic growth. Developing countries can learn from the importance of robust infrastructure as a catalyst for economic development.

Global Engagement: Japan adopted an outward-looking approach, engaging with the global community to learn and adopt best practices. This highlights the importance of international cooperation and learning from the experiences of other nations.

However, it's crucial to note that each developing country has its own specific challenges, opportunities, and cultural context. Simply replicating the Japanese model may not be feasible or effective. Modern developing countries should carefully assess their unique circumstances, consider global best practices, and tailor their development strategies to suit their needs. Moreover, the Meiji period was characterized by centralized governance, which may not align with contemporary ideals of democratic governance. Developing countries today often aim to balance economic development with democratic values, human rights, and inclusive governance. Therefore, while certain principles from Japan's Meiji period can be informative, adaptation and contextualization are key when applying historical experiences to contemporary development strategies.

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