

Prince Chichibu Yasuhito

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Born on the 25 June of 1902 in Tokyo. He was the brother of the emperor Hirohito. After his schooling he enrolled in the Central Military Preparatory School in 1917 and then in the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in 1922. Already in October 1922 Prince Chichibu received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the infantry and was assigned to the First Imperial Guard Division. 1925 he was promoted to First Lieutenant. 1930 he was promoted to Captain after he graduated from the Japanese Army War College. In 1935 he was promoted to Major and commanded from then on the 31st Infantry Division stationed in Hirosaki. It is unclear if Prince Chichibu was directly involved in the failed coup d'état in Japan, but it is sure that he greatly sympathized with the rebels. He favored the prohibition of the in his eyes corrupt political parties and the creation of a military dictatorship led by Hirohito himself. After the failed coup d'état he was sent together with his wife on a trip in Europe. He represented Japan in May 1937 during the coronation of King Georg VI in the Westminster Abbey. Afterwards he travelled to Sweden and the Netherlands. Finally he arrived in Germany alone and took part at the Reichsparteitag of 1937 in Nuremberg. Subsequently he met Hitler to negotiate about an intensification of the Japanese-German relations. During a meal at the Nuremberg castle Hitler launched a scathing attack against Stalin. This led Prince Chichibu to tell his companion Homma Masaharu: "Hitler is an actor, it will be difficult to trust him." Despite his doubts, Prince Chichibu was convinced that the future Japan lay in an alliance with Nazi Germany. Especially in the years 1938 and 1939 he discussed the possibility of a military alliance with Germany against the USA and Great Britain with his brother Hirohito. While still in Europe he was appointed the commander of the 31st Infantry Regiment in 1937. 1938 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, 1939 to Colonel. In the Second Sino-Japanese war he took part in several combat operations, directly and indirectly. He was in Nomonhan during the fighting with the Soviet Union and was sent to Nanking after the massacre. On 09 February 1939, he received an exposé of Ishii Shirō about biological warfare. Subsequently he attended several vivisection demonstrations by Ishii. Some books accuse Prince Chichibu to have taken part in Operation Kin no Yuri, which had the aim to steal art treasures in occupied areas. These allegations are contrary to the official version. According to them Prince Chichibu sickened of tuberculosis in June 1940, of which he never recovered. Following this, he retired from active military service and spent the rest of the war as a General Major without assignment in his house in Gotemba. After the war Prince Chichibu supported many sports organizations and promoted the sport "Rugby". This led to his nickname "sporting prince". Furthermore he was honorary president of the Japan-British Society and the Swedish Society of Japan. He died from tuberculosis on 04 January 1953. His remains were cremated and the ashes buried at Toshimagaoka Cemetery, Bunkyo, Tokyo, on 12 January 1953.