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Japan close to allowing female emperor

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Homework	9
Answers	10

27 October, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Japan close to allowing female emperor

Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi will soon pass a law that allows a woman to become emperor. The decision is because a male royal baby has not been born in Japan since 1965. Changes to the laws will allow the children of a female emperor to be heirs to the throne. The law will also guarantee that an emperor's first-born child will be first in line to the throne, regardless of its sex. This historic decision follows ten months of high level talks and discussions. It means three-year old Princess Aiko may one day reign over the world's oldest monarchy.

Opponents of the proposals have already voiced their concerns. Many strongly disagree with the idea that a woman can be emperor. They believe God wants men only to be head of the royal family. They argue that a male emperor is an essential and sacred part of Japanese history and culture. They also want the return of former imperial family members who left royal life after World War II. These relatives could make sure a male becomes emperor. The public strongly supports Mr. Koizumi's plans. The *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper reported that 84 percent of Japanese back the changes.

WARM-UPS

1. ROYAL ME: You are now a member of one of the world's royal families. Walk around the class and talk to the other "royals" about your everyday life. Is it a good life? Are you jealous of any other royals, for example, those in Britain, Denmark, Japan, Swaziland, Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Bhutan, Thailand...? What do you think of the royals on other countries? Do you have any stories about them?

2. ROYAL TITLES: Match the royal title with the countries/country. After you have finished, talk about what you know about the monarchies.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| a. Emir | 1. UK, Belgium, Cambodia, Denmark, Holland, Morocco, Nepal, Spain, Swaziland, Thailand... |
| b. Emperor / Empress | 2. Oman, Malaysia, Brunei, parts of Indonesia |
| c. King / Queen | 3. Qatar, Kuwait |
| d. Sultan | 4. Liechtenstein, Monaco |
| e. Prince | 5. Japan |
| f. Grand Duke | 6. Bhutan |
| g. Druk Gyalpo | 7. Samoa |
| h. Chief | 8. Luxembourg |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Japan / Junichiro Koizumi / emperors / females / royal babies / first-born children / tradition / history / culture / rituals

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ROYAL: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "royal". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. TWO-MINUTE DEBATES: Debate each of the arguments below with a partner for just two minutes, before moving on to the next partner and debate. Student A agrees with the first argument, Student B, the second.

- Japan should have a female emperor. vs. Japan should have a male emperor.
- All monarchies should disappear. vs. Monarchies are valuable. They should stay.
- Monarchs should work in real jobs. vs. Monarchs are important and should get money from taxpayers.
- Monarchs should ride bicycles in the town, like they do in Scandinavian countries. vs. No. Way too dangerous.
- Every country should have its own monarchy. vs. Monarchies are useless.
- Monarchs should sell their possessions for charity. vs. They can't do that forever.
- There should be a world monarchy. vs. How ridiculous.
- People should vote for their monarch. vs. Monarchies are too special to vote for.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Japan will give a foreign empress a visa so she can live in Japan. T / F
- b. Japan is changing its laws about who can become emperor. T / F
- c. Laws will make first-born sons and not older sisters heir to the throne. T / F
- d. A Japanese princess called Aiko will be the world's oldest monarch. T / F
- e. Opponents say God decided the emperor can only be a man. T / F
- f. Opponents would prefer a foreign prince to a Japanese woman. T / F
- g. A male emperor is an essential and sacred part of Japanese history. T / F
- h. The Japanese public opposes Mr. Koizumi's new changes. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| a. allows | recommendations |
| b. woman | ex |
| c. children | reign |
| d. sex | permits |
| e. rule | say |
| f. proposals | gender |
| g. argue | female |
| h. essential | support |
| i. former | offspring |
| j. back | necessary |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| a. pass | decision |
| b. a male royal baby has not been | oldest monarchy |
| c. ...first-born child will be first in | supports Mr. Koizumi's plans |
| d. historic | already voiced their concerns |
| e. reign over the world's | Japanese history and culture |
| f. Opponents of the proposals have | born in Japan since 1965 |
| g. an essential and sacred part of | back the changes |
| h. the return of former | a law |
| i. The public strongly | imperial family members |
| j. 84 percent of Japanese | line to the throne |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Japan close to allowing female emperor

Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi will _____ pass a law that allows a woman to become emperor. The _____ is because a male royal baby has not been born in Japan _____ 1965. Changes to the laws will allow the children of a female emperor to be heirs to the _____. The law will also _____ that an emperor's first-born child will be first in _____ to the throne, regardless of its _____. This historic decision follows ten months of _____ level talks and discussions. It means three-year old Princess Aiko may one day reign over the world's oldest monarchy.

Opponents of the _____ have already voiced their concerns. Many _____ disagree with the idea that a woman can be emperor. They believe God wants men only to be _____ of the royal family. They _____ that a male emperor is an essential and _____ part of Japanese history and culture. They also want the return of _____ imperial family members who left royal life after World War II. These _____ could make sure a male becomes emperor. The public strongly supports Mr. Koizumi's plans. The *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper reported that 84 percent of Japanese _____ the changes.

guarantee

decision

throne

high

soon

sex

since

line

head

relatives

strongly

back

sacred

proposals

argue

former

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Japan close to allowing female emperor

Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi will soon _____ that allows a woman to become emperor. The decision is because a _____ royal baby has not been born in Japan since 1965. Changes to the laws will _____ the children of a female emperor to be _____ to the throne. The law will also guarantee that an emperor's first-born child will be first in _____ to the throne, regardless of its sex. This _____ decision follows ten months of high level talks and discussions. It means three-year old Princess Aiko may one day _____ over the world's oldest monarchy.

Opponents of the proposals have already _____ their concerns. Many strongly disagree with the idea that a woman can be emperor. They believe God wants men only to be _____ of the royal family. They argue that a male emperor is an _____ and sacred part of Japanese history and culture. They also want the return of _____ imperial family members who left royal life after World War II. These _____ could make sure a male becomes emperor. The public _____ supports Mr. Koizumi's plans. The *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper reported that 84 percent of Japanese _____ the changes.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'voice' and 'concern'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "MONARCHY" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about monarchies.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| • soon | • voiced |
| • born | • God |
| • heirs | • sacred |
| • in line | • imperial |
| • historic | • public |
| • reign | • back |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you think a woman should be allowed to become emperor?
- c. What do you think of Japan forgetting centuries of tradition?
- d. What do you know about Japan's royal family?
- e. Do you think the new law is a big change for Japan?
- f. Do you think it is important to keep the bloodline in a royal family?
- g. What do you think of the idea that God decided a male should be emperor?
- h. What questions would you like to ask a monarch?
- i. What do you think the monarch's answers would be?
- j. Are women forbidden from doing things in your country that men can do?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you like the idea of having a monarchy?
- d. What is the role of a monarch in today's world?
- e. Do you think it makes a big difference if the monarch is a man or a woman?
- f. How are countries with monarchies different from those without emperors, queens and sultans?
- g. Do you think former members of Japan's royal family should be allowed to return and provide a male heir?
- h. Are there any male-only rituals or ceremonies in your country?
- i. Would you like to be a monarch?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Japan's royal family. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. WORLD ROYALS: Make a poster describing one of the world's royal families. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Who found out the most interesting things?

4. DIARY/JOURNAL: You are a member of a royal family. Write your diary/journal entry for one day in your life. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

ROYAL TITLES:

a 3 b 5 c 1 d 2 e 4 f 8 g 6 h 7

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. F d. F e. T f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. allows	permits
b. woman	female
c. children	offspring
d. sex	gender
e. rule	reign
f. proposals	recommendations
g. argue	say
h. essential	necessary
i. former	ex
j. back	support

PHRASE MATCH:

a. pass	a law
b. a male royal baby has not been	born in Japan since 1965
c. ...first-born child will be first in	line to the throne
d. historic	decision
e. reign over the world's	oldest monarchy
f. Opponents of the proposals have	already voiced their concerns
g. an essential and sacred part of	Japanese history and culture
h. the return of former	imperial family members
i. The public strongly	back the changes
j. 84 percent of Japanese	supports Mr. Koizumi's plans

GAP FILL:

Japan close to allowing female emperor

Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi will **soon** pass a law that allows a woman to become emperor. The **decision** is because a male royal baby has not been born in Japan **since** 1965. Changes to the laws will allow the children of a female emperor to be heirs to the **throne**. The law will also **guarantee** that an emperor's first-born child will be first in **line** to the throne, regardless of its **sex**. This historic decision follows ten months of **high** level talks and discussions. It means three-year old Princess Aiko may one day reign over the world's oldest monarchy.

Opponents of the **proposals** have already voiced their concerns. Many **strongly** disagree with the idea that a woman can be emperor. They believe God wants men only to be **head** of the royal family. They **argue** that a male emperor is an essential and **sacred** part of Japanese history and culture. They also want the return of **former** imperial family members who left royal life after World War II. These **relatives** could make sure a male becomes emperor. The public strongly supports Mr. Koizumi's plans. The *Tokyo Shimbun* newspaper reported that 84 percent of Japanese **back** the changes.