



Japan's emperor spends a night with a goddess

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Japan's new emperor finishes last major accession rite but critics say it recalls the country's militaristic past.

1. Draped in white, Japan's Emperor Naruhito arrived on Thursday night for the most religious ritual of his ascension to the throne.
2. It's called the "Daijosai" - or the great Thanksgiving festival -- in which he spends a symbolic night with the sun goddess of Shinto religion.
3. In this case the sun goddess is his wife, the empress.
4. It's said to be a feast, where the emperor offers food to the goddess to seal his new status.
5. But this ceremony is polarizing in Japan. The ritual has prompted a range of lawsuits in the past.

6. Some say it's too reminiscent of the country's militaristic past, when the emperor was considered divine.

7. Similarly, past emperors were rumored to have sex with the goddess, dating to before World War Two.

8. And there are also charges that it violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

9. Because this elaborate ceremony with 400 dignitaries, including the prime minister, is paid in taxpayer money for a whopping \$25 million.

10. Preparations began months ago, with the construction of a special shrine compound within the palace grounds.

[Vocabulary]

□ **drape**: to put something made of cloth over or around something

• *He wore a long scarf draped around his neck.*

□ **ritual**: a formal ceremony; the established form for a ceremony

• *All religions have their own specific rituals.*

• *He was buried simply, without ceremony or ritual.*

□ **ascension**: the process of moving to a higher level or position

• *the story of a young man's rapid political ascension*

• *The dictator's death cleared the way for the ascension of his son.*

□ **Daijosai**: *The Daijosai is a secret ritual performed by the Emperor immediately following his accession to the throne. Little is known about the details of the rite, but it involves the one performing ritual making his first offering of rice as Emperor, consuming rice, and becoming imbued with the spiritual power of his forebears.*

*It was replaced for many centuries by a Buddhist sokui kanjo rite, beginning in the **Northern & Southern Courts period**; this Buddhist rite continued to be performed as part of imperial accession ceremonies until 1847, but the Daijosai was revived, or recreated, by the Meiji government and was then performed into the 20th century.*

□ **thanksgiving**: an expression of thanks, often in the form of a prayer to God; a short prayer of thanks before a meal; Thanksgiving is best known as a holiday in which people give thanks. That should help you remember that a thanksgiving is also a short prayer that can be said before any

meal on any day. Like the holiday, a thanksgiving expresses gratitude for food. Often, a thanksgiving might express thanks for family, friends, a job, or good news too. A thanksgiving is also called a blessing or grace.

□ **Thanksgiving festival:**

□ **symbolic:** representing something important

- *This meeting has great symbolic importance for the people of Ireland.*
- *It was highly symbolic that she named her son after our father.*

□ **sun goddess:** a goddess that represents or personifies the sun in various religions: the **Sun Goddess**

• *By their account, the emperor is descended directly from the sun goddess even if the post-war order stripped him of his divinity.*

□ **Shinto:** the traditional religion of Japan; the ancient indigenous religion of Japan lacking formal dogma; characterized by a veneration of nature spirits and of ancestors; a principal religion of Japan, with emphasis upon the worship of nature and of ancestors and ancient heroes and upon the divinity of the emperor: prior to 1945, the state religion

□ **empress:** a woman Emperor or the wife of an Emperor; a woman who rules an empire or who is married to an emperor

- *the Emperor and Empress of Japan*
- *Catherine the Great was Empress of Russia.*

□ **feast:** a large number of good, enjoyable, or interesting things to do or see; a religious festival such as Christmas or Passover; a large amount of a particular food that you enjoy eating

□ **seal:** to seal something means to make it definite or confirm how it is going to be.

- *the Feast of St. Nicholas*

□ **status:** a high social position that makes other people respect and admire you

- *He presided over our company's rise to global status.*

□ **polarize:** to form two very different groups, opinions, or situations that are completely opposite to each other, or to cause this to happen

- *The issue has polarized the entire community.*

□ **prompt:** to cause something to happen or be done; to encourage someone to speak or continue speaking

- *The Neo-Nazis' xenophobic slogans prompted the riot.*

□ **range:** a number of different things that are of the same general type; a variety of different things or activities

- *Such a decision is not within the range of my responsibility.*

□ **a range of:** many; extensive

- *He answered a range of questions.*

□ **lawsuit:** a case that a court of law is asked to decide involving a disagreement between two people or organizations

- *The victim filed a lawsuit against the company.*

□ **reminiscent:** reminding you of people or experiences in your past

- *The scent was reminiscent of my childhood.*

□ **militaristic:** imbued with militarism; Militaristic is used to describe groups, ideas, or policies which support the strengthening of the armed forces of their country in order to make it more powerful.

- *... aggressive militaristic governments*

- *A militaristic government is focused on building up its armed forces, and often acts aggressively toward other countries.*

□ **divine**: like a god, or relating to a god

- *Many religious leaders consider themselves to be divine.*

□ **charge**: statement accusing someone of committing a crime

- *She was accused of shoplifting but the police later dropped the charges.*

- *He is now likely to face a murder charge.*

□ **violate**: to do something that is in opposition to a law, agreement, principle, etc.

- *Police arrested the man for breaking and entering and for violating the Domestic Abuse Law.*

- *He was arrested for violating the tax laws.*

□ **elaborate**: very detailed and complicated

- *His theory is elaborate and difficult to understand.*

□ **dignitary**: someone who has an important official position

- political dignitary

- visiting foreign dignitary

□ **taxpayer**: someone who pays tax, especially tax on income

- *Whenever the government messes up, it's the taxpayer who has to foot the bill.*

□ **whopping**: extremely large

- *Sales grew last year by a whopping 78%.*

- *The play was a whopping success.*

- *The car sped by at a whopping 110 miles per hour.*

□ **compound**: a fenced or walled-in area containing a group of buildings and especially residences

- *an embassy compound*

[参照辞書: Merriam-Webster, Oxford English Dictionary, America Heritage of the English language, Collins English Dictionary, Macmillan Dictionary, the Free Dictionary, Wikipedia]