

## Meaning of Imperial Succession Ceremonies

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### 1. What Are the Imperial Succession Ceremonies?

- The set of ceremonies involved in passing on the position of emperor to the crown prince or other imperial heir
- Not specified in any laws
- Formerly, these ceremonies were codified in the 1909 Tokyokurei [Regulations Governing Accession to the Throne], but this law was abolished. There is no mention of them in the current Imperial Household Law.
- When the current emperor was enthroned, the ceremonies were carried out based on the Tokyokurei

### 2. Process of Ceremonies

- There are 3 stages to the imperial succession
- First, the Senso-shiki, in which the Three Sacred Treasures are passed on as proof of imperial status
- The Sokui-shiki, in which the emperor notifies others of his accession
- The Daijosai, in which the emperor thanks the gods for bountiful harvests
- Of these, the Senso-shiki are what are now referred to as the “imperial succession ceremonies”

\*The Sokui-shiki are ceremonies to inform others that a new emperor has been enthroned, and not ceremonies for the enthronement itself

- For the first time, the Taiirei-Seiden-no-Gi will be performed before the imperial succession

\*Until now, the succession has generally been carried out after the former emperor passes away. This will be the first time in modern Japanese history that an emperor has abdicated.

### 3. What Ceremonies Are There?

- Four ceremonies are carried out for the imperial succession
- Kenji-to-Shokei-no-Gi, Koreiden-Shinden-ni-Kijitsu-Hokoku-no-Gi, Kashikodokoro-no-Gi, and Sokui-go-Choken-no-Gi
- In the Kenji-to-Shokei-no-Gi, two of the Three Sacred Treasures that are proof of imperial authority are passed on from the former emperor, the sword Amenomurakumo-no-Tsurugi and the jewel Yasakani-no-Magatama. The Privy Seal of Japan, used for official functions, and other items are also given to the new emperor at this time.
- In the Koreiden-Shinden-ni-Kijitsu-Hokoku-no-Gi, the new emperor reports his enthronement at the Koreiden, which enshrines the spirits of former emperors, and at the Shinden, which enshrines various gods
- In the Kashikodokoro-no-Gi, the new emperor takes possession of the third Sacred Treasure, the mirror Yata-no-Kagami, at Kashikodokoro, where Amaterasu-omikami, the ancestor goddess of the imperial family, is enshrined. Through inheriting all of the Three Sacred Treasures with this ceremony, the new emperor's status becomes official.
- In the Sokui-go-Choken-no-Gi, the new emperor speaks to the prime minister and citizen representatives for the first time

#### 4. Other Ceremonies Held After the Imperial Succession

- These are the main ceremonies held after the imperial succession ceremonies:
- Kijitsu-Hokoku-no-Gi, Chokushi-Hakken-no-Gi, Sokuirei-Tojitsu-Kashikodokoro-Omae-no-Gi, and Koreiden-Shinden-ni-Hokoku-no-Gi
- Sokuirei-Seiden-no-Gi, Shukuga-Onretsu-no-Gi (parade), Kyoen-no-Gi (banquets), visiting sites such as Jimmu-Tenno-Ryo [Tomb of Emperor Jimmu]
- The ceremonies involved in the abdication and enthronement to be carried out as national functions are the nine listed below:
- Taiirei-Seiden-no-Gi (ceremony for abdication)
- Kenji-to-Shokei-no-Gi, Sokui-go-Choken-no-Gi, Sokuirei-Seiden-no-Gi, Shukuga-Onretsu-no-Gi, Kyoen-no-Gi (ceremonies for enthronement)
- Rikkoshi-Senmei-no-Gi, Kyoen-no-Gi, Kyuchu-Kyoen-no-Gi (ceremonies for the new crown prince)

#### 5. What Issues Are There?

- Considering the role of the imperial family in a new age. There is debate over whether it is appropriate to just follow past examples for everything. Various policies have not yet been decided.

##### <Issues Involving the Ceremonies>

- What form should the abdication ceremony for the emperor take?
- What should the dates be for the abdication of the emperor and enthronement of the crown prince?
- Are female members of the imperial family not allowed at the Kenji-to-Shokei-no-Gi?
- Is the current form of the Sokuirei-Seiden-no-Gi, including the three cheers of “Banzai!”, appropriate for a democratic nation?
- Is the scale of the Kyoen-no-Gi appropriate? (Banquets lasted for three days for the previous enthronement)
- Is using public funds for the Daijosai, a Shinto ceremony, not an issue from the perspective of separation of church and state?

##### <Issues Involving the Crown Prince>

- The current crown prince’s younger brother, Prince Akishino, will take the title of “koshi,” instead of “kotaishi.” What should his position be with this title?

#### 6. What Should Be Reported, and How?

- The meaning of the ceremonies is hard to understand→ Most Japanese people do not understand them either
- Some ceremonies are not open to the public
- The separation between national affairs and the activities of the imperial family is unclear
- There is public debate underway about what role the emperor should play
- Historically, the emperor’s role was to pray for the peace of the people and for successful harvests
- This opportunity should be taken to reconsider the role of the imperial family and make it fit the modern age, including issues with female members of the imperial family