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Emperor's Enthronement

New emperor expected to uphold progressive ways of predecessor

SAYURI DAIMON
STAFF WRITER

Emperor Naruhito will formally declare his ascension as Japan's 126th monarch in front of about 2,000 leaders and representatives from over 170 countries and regions at the Imperial Palace on Tuesday.

The Sokuirei Seiden no Gi (enthronement ceremony) will represent the old tradition that has been carried on over 1,000 years, but at the same time, it will be closely watched by people around the world as the beginning of the new era led by a new generation of the imperial family.

Emperor Naruhito ascended the chrysanthemum throne on May 1 following the abdication of his father, Emperor Emeritus Akihito, who was the first to be enthroned as the symbol of "the state and of the unity of the people" under the postwar Constitution.

Mindful of the scars left by the war fought under the name of his father Emperor Showa, Emperor Emeritus Akihito during his reign spoke of the importance of peace in many occasions and was seen as a "people's emperor." Many expect that Emperor Naruhito will basically follow his path, but also adopt a new style that reflects the modern era.

"He shall largely follow the model provided by his father, the first emperor enthroned under the postwar Constitution. At the same time, he shall not be a carbon copy of his father — he will adopt various social issues as society changes, keeping the imperial house in tune with the trends of the time," said Kenneth Ruoff, a professor of history at Portland State University and the author of the book "Japan's Imperial House in the Postwar Era" to be released by Harvard University Press in November.

Key ceremony

Tuesday's Sokuirei Seiden no Gi is considered the most important among a series of enthronement-related ceremonies that started in May as the new emperor will officially proclaim his enthronement before many guests from Japan and abroad.



"He will adopt various social issues as society changes, keeping the imperial house in tune with the trends of the time."

KENNETH RUOFF,
PROFESSOR OF
HISTORY AT PORTLAND
STATE UNIVERSITY

The ceremony at the Seiden State Hall will start at 1 p.m. in the Matsu no Ma state room, with the emperor announcing his enthronement from the 6.5-meter-high canopied throne, known as the takamikura. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will deliver a congratulatory message and lead guests in three banzai cheers to wish for the emperor's longevity.

The emperor will wear a dark orange robe called Korozen no goho, the design of which dates back to the ninth century and is only worn by emperors for special ceremonies. The color of the robe is meant to mimic the color of the rising sun. Empress Masako will be dressed in a layered court kimono during the ceremony.

Though the ceremony adheres fundamentally to the old traditional style, the

ritual has evolved over time.

Emperors formerly wore Chinese formal clothing for ceremonies, but adopted traditional Japanese attire after studying ancient customs during Emperor Meiji's reign (1868 to 1912). The enthronement ceremonies for Emperor Taisho in 1915 and Emperor Showa in 1928 were conducted in Kyoto and were based on the Tokyokurei (imperial ordinance concerning the ascension to the imperial throne) promulgated in 1909 by Emperor Meiji.

When Emperor Emeritus Akihito took over the throne from his late father Emperor Showa in 1989, the government decided to modify the traditional imperial family rites to suit the spirit of the postwar Constitution.

One of the major changes was the attire

then-Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu wore. Instead of traditional court dress worn by past prime ministers, Kaifu was dressed in a swallow-tailed coat. He also stood on the same platform as the emperor when leading the banzai cheers so as to avoid giving any impression that he was subordinate to the emperor.

The protocol of the ceremony for Emperor Naruhito will follow the precedent set by his father Emperor Emeritus Akihito.

Crown Prince Akishino, the emperor's younger brother, his wife Crown Princess Kiko and other members of the imperial family will also wear traditional Japanese clothing, while other participants are expected to wear morning dress.

During the ceremony, various banners

Emperor Naruhito makes his first speech after his ascension to the throne as his wife, Empress Masako, stands by his side at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on May 1.

POOL / VIA KYODO

and spears will be planted and ceremonial officials will carry swords and bows. Drum and gong players will also take part in the ceremony. Guests will be seated in rooms and hallways surrounding the courtyard, with monitors set up to enable them to watch the rituals.

Breaking precedent

Just like how the enthronement ceremony has changed to adopt modern aspects, many changes were brought to the imperial family during the Heisei Era led by then-Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

Midori Watanabe, a former producer for Nippon TV, who extensively covered the imperial family, remembers how she was surprised to see the changes in the imperial family traditions.

"When Emperor Showa and Empress Nagako went out, they always traveled with a huge entourage, and Empress Nagako used to walk several steps behind the emperor. But in the Heisei Era, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko always walked together side by side," Watanabe recalled.

She also said when then-Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko went to Mount Unzen in Nagasaki Prefecture when it erupted in 1991 and visited local evacuation shelters to comfort victims, they only took a few officials with them.

"What was more surprising was that the imperial couple knelt down on the floor to talk to people at the evacuation centers; something that had never happened before. When I saw it, I really thought things have changed so much in the Heisei Era," she said.

Watanabe said that Empress Emerita Michiko, who received a modern education and was active as the president of the students' association while she attended the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, and Emperor Emeritus Akihito together led the imperial household to change old practices and adopt to the new era.

Empress Emerita Michiko, born Michiko Shoda, daughter of former president of Nisshin Flour Milling Co., also broke precedents in many ways. She was the first commoner to marry into the imperial family. She also breastfed and raised children by herself instead of entrusting to the care of court chamberlains.

Such new practices have certainly been passed onto Emperor Naruhito, who

Continued on page B4→

Congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on Your Enthronement

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Emperor Naruhito profile

Ushering in an era of harmony between old and new

KYODO, STAFF REPORT

Emperor Naruhito ascended the throne on May 1, a day after his 85-year-old father, now referred to as Emperor Emeritus Akihito, became the first living Japanese monarch to abdicate in over 200 years.

In accordance with his ascension, the new imperial era of Reiwa (meaning “beautiful harmony”) began, bringing the 30-year Heisei (meaning “achieving peace”) Era to a close.

The 59-year-old earlier signaled his intent to adapt to “the changing times,” while also saying his years with his parents would serve as “major guideposts” for him as he performs his nonpolitical duties as the symbol of the state in the years ahead.

In his first speech following ascension on May 1, the emperor vowed to fulfill his role as the symbol of the state.

“In acceding to the throne, I swear that I will reflect deeply on the course followed by his majesty the emperor emeritus and bear in mind the path trodden by past emperors, and will devote myself to self-improvement,” he said in his speech broadcast live on TV.

“I will act according to the Constitution and fulfill my responsibility as the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people of Japan, while always turning my thoughts to the people and standing with them,” he said.

On the duties of a monarch, the emperor has said he believes it would be essential to “stand by the people, listen to their voices and be close to them in their thoughts.”

Emperor Naruhito was born on Feb. 23, 1960, as the eldest son of Emperor Emeritus Akihito and Empress Emerita Michiko a year after their marriage. His now 85-year-old mother, formerly known as Michiko Shoda, was the first crown princess who was born an ordinary citizen.

His name Naruhito, given by his grandfather Emperor Hirohito, posthumously known as Emperor Showa, consists of two Chinese characters taken from an ancient



Emperor Naruhito returns to his Akasaka Estate residence in Tokyo on May 1 after attending ceremonies marking his accession to the throne at the Imperial Palace. KYODO

book of Chinese Confucian philosophy and means “a man who acquires heavenly virtues.”

Unlike his father who grew up away from his parents in line with imperial family custom, Emperor Naruhito; his younger brother Crown Prince Akishino, 53; and younger sister Sayako Kuroda, 50, who left the imperial household upon marrying Yoshiki Kuroda in 2005, were raised by their parents.

The emperor entered Gakushuin University's kindergarten in 1964 and attended the university's elementary, junior high and high schools; Gakushuin University was initially established as a school for aristocrats in the 19th century.

“His majesty was gentle and always calm, and he naturally attracted people,” said Akihiko Imai, a friend of the emperor since junior high school.

In 1978, the emperor enrolled in the university's Faculty of Letters, majoring in history. Before his graduation in 1982, he wrote a diploma thesis on medieval water transport throughout Japan's Seto Inland Sea.

After advancing to the university's graduate school in April 1982, he studied for two years at the University of Oxford's Merton College from 1983 where he lived in a dormitory for the first time.

During his stay, he said he casually visited pubs and bought posters of American actresses Jane Fonda and Brooke Shields to decorate his room.



Crown Prince Naruhito plays the viola with national orchestra members in Ulaanbaatar during his official visit to Mongolia in July 2007. KYODO

A friend from his time at the university noted he is well-prepared and temperamentally suited to the role he assumed after his father's abdication, reflecting on his early impressions of the royal figure then known as Prince Hiro.

“The Japanese people are fortunate they have him as the emperor, that he represents Japan,” said Keith George, an American lawyer from Charleston, West Virginia, who studied at Oxford for the same two years in the 1980s as Emperor Naruhito.

“Monarchies in some countries have scandals and erode moral standards, (but) Hiro doesn't have that at all,” George said, describing the new emperor as a “perfect fit” to “maintain tradition but also respect change” during Reiwa.

The emperor's research theme at Oxford was the history of transportation on the River Thames. He published a paper titled “The Thames as a Highway” in 1989 and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree by the university in 1991.

This expertise led to him serving as honorary president of the U.N. Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and



Crown Prince Naruhito receives an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from a University of Oxford official at the university in September 1991. KYODO

Sanitation between 2007 and 2015.

Having set himself the goal of finding a partner before turning 30, he married Masako Owada, a career diplomat who spent her early childhood in Moscow and New York, at the slightly later age of 33, in June 1993.

“I will protect you with all my might for the rest of your life,” the then-crown prince said when proposing to her.

Their wedding took place the following year, and the couple's only child, Princess Aiko, 17, was born on Dec. 1, 2001.

The emperor is known to have a number of hobbies, including mountain climbing, jogging, playing tennis and skiing. He plays viola and was part of an orchestra during his time at Gakushuin University.

The emperor has participated in a variety of events and rituals, both in and outside the Imperial Palace, sometimes on behalf of Emperor Emeritus Akihito in recent years.

In late May, the emperor and empress greeted U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania as the first state guests of the new era.

Chronology of major events related to Emperor Naruhito's life

- Feb. 23, 1960** — Born the eldest son of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.
- April 1978** — Enters Department of History, Faculty of Letters, Gakushuin University.
- April 1982** — Enters Graduate School of Humanities, Gakushuin University.
- October 1983 to October 1985** — Studies in Britain at Merton College, University of Oxford.
- Oct. 18, 1986** — Meets then-diplomat Masako Owada at reception for Princess Elena of Spain.
- March 1987** — Visits Nepal, where he develops interest in issues surrounding water.
- March 1988** — Completes first part of doctorate.
- Jan. 7, 1989** — Moves to first in line for throne upon death of Emperor Hirohito, posthumously called Emperor Showa.
- Feb. 23, 1991** — Officially becomes crown prince after investiture as crown prince.
- April 1992** — Becomes visiting research fellow of the Museum of History of Gakushuin University.
- August 1992** — Crown Prince Naruhito, Masako Owada meet again at home of former diplomat Kensuke Yanagiya.
- June 9, 1993** — Marries Masako Owada.
- February 1995** — Visits areas affected by the January Great Hanshin Earthquake.
- Dec. 1, 2001** — Daughter, Princess Aiko, is born.
- Nov. 1, 2007** — Becomes honorary president of the U.N. Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation.
- June 2011** — Visits Miyagi Prefecture, which was hit by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.
- March 2013** — Gives keynote speech at special U.N. session on water and disasters at U.N. headquarters in New York.
- June 9, 2018** — Crown Prince Naruhito, Crown Princess Masako celebrate 25 years of marriage.
- May 1, 2019** — Ascends the throne upon the abdication of Emperor Emeritus Akihito.

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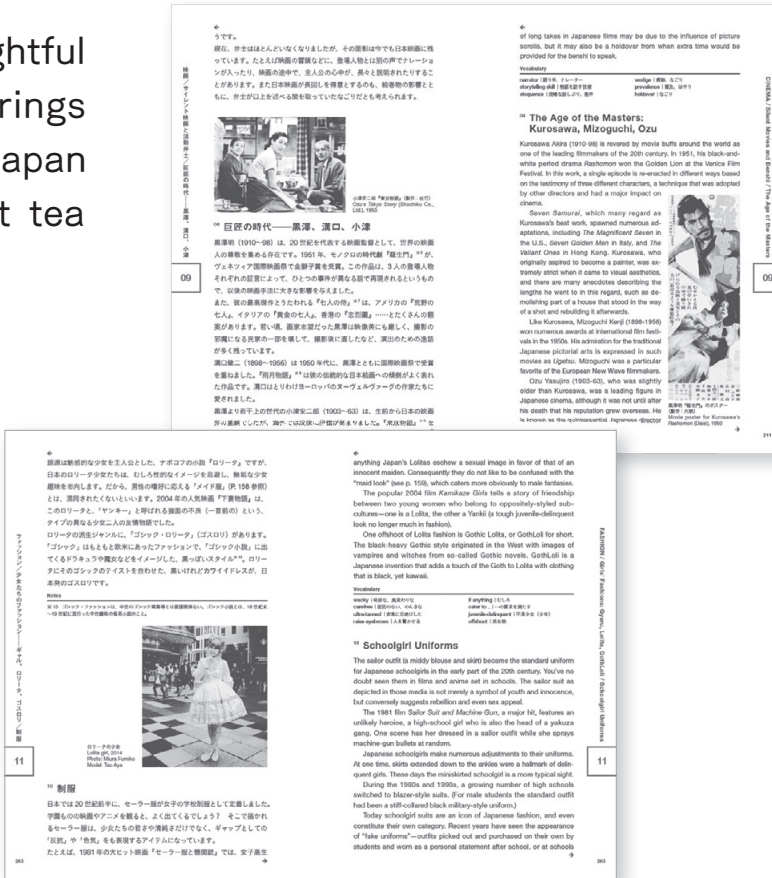
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Empress Masako profile

Striving for the people’s happiness

KYODO, STAFF REPORT

Empress Masako is a Harvard University alumna who also studied at the University of Oxford, serving as a career diplomat before marrying into the imperial family over 25 years ago.

The 55-year-old is the second commoner after Empress Emerita Michiko, 85, to wed a crown prince. Her time as crown princess is largely characterized by her struggles to adapt to the rigid expectations of one of the world's oldest monarchies.

Born Masako Owada in Tokyo on Dec. 9, 1963, she has two younger twin sisters and is the eldest daughter of then-diplomat

Hisashi Owada, 87, a former vice foreign minister and judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Her father's various assignments helped cultivate her international outlook from a young age — she spent her early childhood in Moscow and New York before returning to Tokyo and attending Denenchofu Futaba's elementary, junior high and high schools. In 1979, her family moved back to the U.S. once more after her father was posted to the Japanese Embassy in Washington and invited to Harvard as a visiting professor of international law.

After graduating from high school in the U.S., the empress went on to major in international economics at Harvard and later

attended the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Law to study politics before passing the Japanese Foreign Ministry's entrance exam in 1986.

In 1988, she was assigned a probationary diplomat role in the U.K. at the Japanese Embassy in London and studied at Oxford's Balliol College for two years.

Fluent in English, French and German, the empress engaged in negotiations to resolve Japan-U.S. trade disputes after returning to Japan.

The empress is known to be good at softball, skiing and tennis.

She first met then-Crown Prince Naruhito in October 1986 at a party to welcome Spain's Princess Elena on a visit to Japan. However, despite meeting several more times over the next year, it was not until August 1992 that they encountered each other again.

He proposed to her in October of that year and, after turning him down because of indecision over leaving her career, she eventually accepted in December 1992.

What won her over was his honest admission of his own worries. Initially,

he had declared, "I will protect you with all my might for the rest of your life." This time, he said he was unsure whether to propose to her again because he had begun questioning whether he could truly live up to the gravity of his words.

The couple's engagement became official in January 1993 and the two wed the following June. Around 190,000 well-wishers greeted the newlyweds during a procession in central Tokyo. For some of the general public, she represented the potential for change in the imperial tradition.

However, over the next decade, the accumulated pressures that accompanied her new role as crown princess would gradually take their toll. Instead of being able to continue applying her diplomatic and language skills when carrying out her duties, heavy expectations to produce a male heir resulted in the Imperial Household Agency preventing her from traveling abroad.

"The situation in which I could not visit other countries for six years required a great effort for myself to adjust," the



Empress Masako leaves the Imperial Palace after attending a ceremony marking her husband Emperor Naruhito's ascension on May 1. KYODO

Chronology of major events related to Empress Masako's life

Dec. 9, 1963 — Born the eldest daughter of diplomat Hisashi Owada.

September 1981 — Enters Harvard University.

June 1985 — Graduates from Harvard University.

April 1986 — Enters the University of Tokyo.

Oct. 18, 1986 — Prince Naruhito, Masako Owada meet for the first time at reception to welcome Spain's Princess Elena.

April 1987 — Joins the Foreign Ministry.

July 1988 — Moves to Britain to study at University of Oxford's Balliol College.

August 1992 — Crown Prince Naruhito, Masako Owada meet again at home of former diplomat Kensuke Yanagiya.

Oct. 3, 1992 — Crown Prince Naruhito proposes to Masako Owada for the first time at Shinjima Imperial Wild Duck Preserve in Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture.

Dec. 12, 1992 — Accepts Crown Prince Naruhito's second attempt.

June 9, 1993 — Marries Crown Prince Naruhito.

November 1994 — The couple visit Middle Eastern countries on their first official overseas trip.

Dec. 1, 2001 — Daughter, Princess Aiko, is born.

March 11, 2011 — Massive earthquake, tsunami hit northeastern Japan, triggering nuclear disaster in Fukushima. The couple visits those affected at evacuation centers in following months.

June 9, 2018 — Crown Prince Naruhito, Crown Princess Masako celebrate 25 years of marriage.

May 1, 2019 — Becomes empress.

KYODO



Masako Owada (standing), during her days with the Japanese Foreign Ministry, serves as interpreter during a meeting between Japanese officials and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker (left) in Tokyo in November 1991. KYODO

empress said at a press conference in 2002.

At present, Japan's Imperial House Law limits imperial succession to males of the male line belonging to the imperial lineage. There has been debate over whether to allow women of the imperial family to succeed to the throne, but no substantial progress has been made.

The couple's only child, Princess Aiko, was born in 2001. The 17-year-old is currently a third-year student at Gakushuin Girls' Senior High School in Tokyo and shares her parents' interest in learning about other countries.

Following the birth of their daughter, the then-crown princess continued to experience pressure to produce a son and began receiving treatment for a physical and mental ailment in 2003. In 2004, the Imperial Household Agency disclosed she had been diagnosed with adjustment disorder; following this, she withdrew from all official duties.

Two months prior to that announce-

ment, the then-crown prince had shared during a press conference that, "It is true that there were developments that denied Masako's career as a diplomat as well as her personality." His unexpected comment sparked a society-wide debate about the Imperial Household Agency prioritizing the birth of male heirs.

While she has mostly remained out of the spotlight since then, the empress has gradually expanded the scope of her public activities in recent years. These efforts include visiting children at welfare facilities and learning about animal therapy options for sick children.

"I want to devote myself to the happiness of the people, so I will make efforts to that end while gaining more experience," she said on her birthday last December.

"She must well understand other people's pain as she has suffered herself from an adjustment disorder," said an individual familiar with her recent activities of interacting with sick children.



Embassy of the Republic of Benin

On behalf of the President of the Republic and the people of Benin, I respectfully extend my heartfelt congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on the occasion of Your Enthronement.



H.E. Makarimi Abissola Adechoubou
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Republic of Botswana

On behalf of the Government and People of Botswana, we congratulate Your Majesties the Emperor & Empress on Your Ascendance to the Chrysanthemum Throne. Pula!



H.E. Nkoloi Nkoloi
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon in Japan

On behalf of the government and people of Cameroon, I would like to convey my most sincere wishes for peace and success to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako.



H.E. Pierre Ndzengue
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Republic of Congo

On behalf of the president and the people of the Republic of Congo, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on Your Enthronement.



H.E. Felix Ngoma
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

On behalf of the President and the people of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, I wish longevity, happiness and excellent health to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne.



H.E. Jerome Kloh Weya
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Republic of Djibouti

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Djibouti, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on Your Enthronement.



H.E. Ahmed Arait Ali
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

I would like to congratulate Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on Your Enthronement. I also express my sincere wish and hope that the new Reiwa Era is one of comprehensive ties for the two countries.



H.E. Kassa T. Gebrehiwet
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



Embassy of Greece in Japan

Embassy of Greece

On behalf of the Hellenic Republic I have the honor to offer my warmest Congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on Your Enthronement



H.E. Constantin Cakioussis
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

enthronement ceremony

A duty to serving the nation, global society

→ **Continued from page B1**
married career diplomat Masako Owada. The couple is currently raising Princess Aiko by themselves.
Many experts expect that Emperor Naruhito will also inherit his father's value of cherishing peace, and the remark made by then-Crown Prince Naruhito on his birthday in 2015 seems to back this expectation.
"Although I was born after the war and

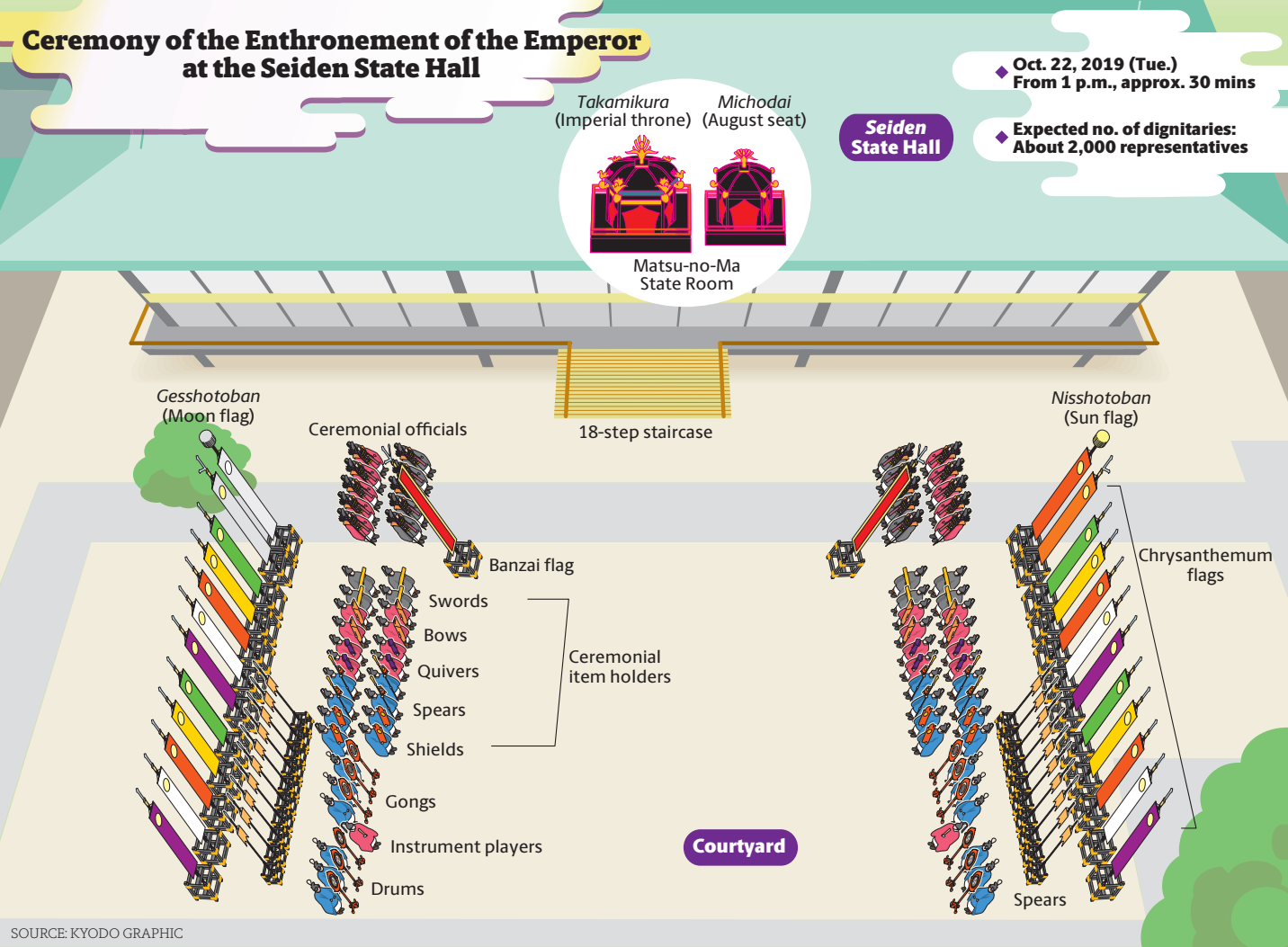
did not experience it, I think that today, where memories of the war have started to fade, it is important to look back in a humble way on the past and correctly pass on the tragic experiences of war and the knowledge of the course of history that Japan has followed, from the generation that experienced the war to those who have grown up without firsthand knowledge of it," he said.
Emperor Emeritus Akihito and Empress

Emerita Michiko, who experienced the war firsthand as children, made a series of visits to the sites of fierce battles and devastation during the war, including Saipan, Peleliu Island in Palau and the Philippines, to pray for the war victims.
"Emperor Akihito was in a way taking on a burden of bitter legacy left by Emperor Showa. ... He's been to Okinawa many times to pray for the victims of war, but he never went to Yasukuni Shrine during

his reign," Watanabe said, referring to the shrine in Tokyo, which enshrines Class-A war criminals alongside the souls of millions of Japan's war dead.
"After all, the three main duties of the imperial household are to pray for peace, promote international exchanges and carry on Japanese tradition and culture," she said, adding that these duties will continue to be carried on by the new imperial couple in the Reiwa Era.



Emperor Naruhito participates in the opening ceremony of an extraordinary Diet session in Tokyo on Oct. 4. AFP-JJJI



Emperor's role in Reiwa
Many predict that Emperor Naruhito, who was educated at Oxford University, and Empress Masako, who graduated from Harvard University, are likely to approach various issues in society from even more of an international perspective than their predecessors.
"Consider Naruhito's interest in water: What make this so interesting is that water is not a pressing issue for Japan, as all Japanese have access to clean water. But water is a consuming issue for the billions of individuals around the world for whom accessing clean water is a daily challenge," said professor Ruoff of Portland State University.
The emperor, while he was still the crown prince, served as honorary president of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation from 2007 through 2015, and was internationally active in trying to solve this global issue.
"Although it is too early to conclude this with certainty, it is likely that in the same way that his father and mother devoted much of their reign to lending their prestige to the most vulnerable members of Japanese society, (Emperor) Naruhito intends through the focus on water to lend his prestige to some of the most vulnerable members of global society to try to make a difference in their lives," Ruoff said.
Information from Kyodo added

Embassy of the Republic of Iraq

On behalf of the Iraqi people and its government, I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on the Chrysanthemum Enthronement.

H.E. Khalil Ismail Al Mosawi
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of Italy to Japan

On behalf of the Italian Republic I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Your Majesty the Emperor on the occasion of the Ceremonies of the Accession to the Throne

H.E. Giorgio Starace
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of the Republic of Namibia

The Government and the people of Namibia, wish to convey sincere congratulations on Your Majesty's accession to the Throne as well as continued good health and economic prosperity for Japan.

H.E. Morven M. Luswenyo
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of Nepal

On behalf of the government and people of Nepal, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito on the occasion of Your Enthronement.

H.E. Prativa Rana
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines

The Philippines stands with Japan in joyous celebration of the Enthronement of Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito. May the Reiwa Era bring abiding peace and profound harmony to all nations.

H.E. Jose C. Laurel V
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Royal Thai Embassy in Tokyo

On behalf of the Thai people, I wish to express our warmest congratulations on Emperor Naruhito's enthronement. May the close ties between our countries continue to strengthen for years to come.

H.E. Bansarn Bunnag
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of the Republic of Turkey

On behalf of H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey, I extend my sincerest congratulations on Emperor Naruhito's Ascension to the Throne and wish Japan peace and prosperity.

H.E. Hasan Murat Mercan
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

On the auspicious occasion of the enthronement of Your Majesty Emperor Naruhito, the government and people of the UAE extend their sincere congratulations. May Japan enjoy peace and prosperity in the new Reiwa Era.

H.E. Khaled Alameri
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

ASEAN Committee in Tokyo (ACT)

ACT extends its heartfelt congratulations to Your Majesty the Emperor Naruhito on the occasion of the eminent ceremony of Your Majesty's Enthronement.

the past revisited

Old friend details life with emperor

ERIKO ARITA
STAFF WRITER

Meeting Emperor Naruhito in person is a limited opportunity for regular people, a majority of whom have only seen his solemn expression at ceremonies or gentle smile at receptions. However, Andrew B. Arkley, an old friend and schoolmate, has shed some light on the emperor's natural self to The Japan Times, including his friendliness and nickname in high school.

"He is always smiling and he is always very warm and thoughtful, and he goes out of his way to make people fit in and feel comfortable. He is the epitome of thoughtfulness," said Arkley, the general manager of a medical clinic in Yokohama and former Australian trading company owner.

As an exchange student of the Rotary Club then, the Melbourne native entered Gakushuin University's high school in Tokyo in April 1975 as a second year student and one of the school's first non-Japanese pupils. Arkley had known the emperor, then-Prince Naruhito, was among the first-year students, but couldn't tell who the prince was because every student wore the same school uniform.

Arkley took a German class that combined both first and second year students, and one of the first-year students that he befriended introduced the prince to him.

"I said: *'hajimemashite'* (very nice to meet you). I think I spoke to him in Japanese.



Andrew B. Arkley and Emperor Naruhito during their high school's geography club trip to Nagano Prefecture in 1975. ANDREW B. ARKLEY



Andrew B. Arkley's "Heika, kyo wa naniwo hanashimasho" ("Your Majesty, what shall we talk about today?") published by Subaru Corp.

And I said 'Can we be friends?' And he said 'With pleasure.'" Arkley said, adding that the prince's amiable aura made him feel they could easily become friends.

"From a distance, he looks like anyone else. But when you meet him, he is very friendly. His eyes are looking at you and understanding you. You could feel his warmth," he reflected on his first impression of the imperial figure who was called "Miya-sama" (Prince) at the school. "He is always like that when he is talking to anybody."

After their first meeting, Arkley had more chances to speak with the emperor as they belonged to the school's geography club. During the club's excursion to the Hokuriku region, an area facing the Sea of Japan, the emperor talked about his nickname "Jii" to Arkley. While the Australian said he didn't know what Jii meant then, he heard from the emperor why he was nicknamed that several years later.

"During his junior high school days, he was walking on the school grounds and passed one of the neighbors' backyard. And there was a bonsai. And he said to his friends, 'Nakanaka ii edaburi dane' ('The tree has quite a handsome foliage'). And his friends said: 'Your taste is something like of *ojiisan* (an old man). Let's call you Jii (old man). That's how it started," Arkley said. "To me, I

found it very difficult to say Jii to the prince. So I maybe called him Jii a couple of times. But I think he liked his nickname."

During the excursion to Hokuriku, Arkley was surprised to see a crowd of around 1,000 locals welcoming the emperor at Kanazawa Station. Although met with a mass of people waiting for him, the emperor spent his time as any other student did by visiting geographical spots, as well as chatting and laughing with each other until late at night at inns, said Arkley, who detailed this and many other episodes with the emperor in his recent book in Japanese "Heika, kyo wa naniwo hanashimasho" ("Your Majesty, what shall we talk about today?")

The book shared how much the emperor loved going on trips with his fellow students as he wrote a Japanese and English poem on another excursion in a letter to Arkley when he went back to Australia. The poem went: "The hour for putting out lights was over, We were, however, chatting with each other, A bear shouted out 'Go to sleep sooner.'" "This is an example of how he likes poetry and his sense of humor," Arkley said.

"The emperor, the prince at that time, loves telling jokes. He is very humorous. And that's why maybe he is smiling a lot."

After corresponding with the emperor, Arkley came back to Japan in 1977 and went to a Japanese language school attached to Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. At that time, he often visited the emperor at the palace at the Akasaka Estate.

"And we usually spoke in English, and the reason I went was to let him practice his English conversation ... we discussed different things ... And he might have asked me some questions," said Arkley, explaining the emperor had free time before entering Gakushuin University. "It was an opportunity for him to concentrate on other things like studying English, which he knew of course was going to be so important for him in the future. But to me, I didn't feel it a burden but a real pleasure. It was such a lovely experience."

Although they met less for their English sessions as the emperor became busy with university, Arkley had been invited to the palace many times when the emperor held parties, he said. And as the emperor became more occupied with his official duties and family after he married Masako Owada in 1993, Arkley was only able to meet him twice since then. He said all the time he has

known the emperor, he has been positive and never said anything bad about anybody.

"He is always very positive and always sees a positive outcome for everything." Such characteristics, Arkley believes, were greatly influenced by the emperor's upbringing.

"I think his parents did a remarkable job of raising their children. Not just him, but also Prince Akishino and Sayako-sama (former Princess Sayako). Such a warm family and environment," said Arkley who has met the emperor's family members.

Arkley said warm familial relations were also a factor in the abdication of Emperor Emeritus Akihito in April. He described it as a marvelous change of style for the emperor to abdicate when he was still healthy, which in turn gave people a chance to say thank you, and welcome the new emperor without going through bereavement.

"I think it's wonderful and so typical of the way that family looks after each other. And of course, there were probably many reasons why the emperor wanted to abdicate. One reason I am sure is because he wanted to give his son the opportunity to become emperor before he got too old. So it's been such a happy event and I know the new emperor must be ready to take on his role."

Since he was young, Emperor Naruhito was the kind of person to try and see things through, said Arkley. He expressed his hope for the emperor to continue his research into water matters, which he has devoted himself to. This passionate and serious attitude toward research and duties also extends to his wife, Empress Masako, Arkley added, referring to what the emperor said to her when he proposed.

"He said, when he got married, '*Bokuga issio zenryokude omamorishimasu*' ('I will protect you with all my might for the rest of your life'). Don't take that lightly. He is very serious when he says something like that.



Emperor Naruhito and Andrew B. Arkley in 1989. ANDREW B. ARKLEY



Andrew B. Arkley, an Australian friend of Emperor Naruhito, holds a handwritten poem and message from the emperor in 1976 at his home in Yokohama on Sept. 19. SATOKO KAWASAKI

He is man of honor," Arkley said and maintained he wasn't surprised when in 2004, the emperor obliquely accused the Imperial Household Agency, which administers all affairs of the imperial family, of suppressing his former diplomat wife's wish to make overseas trips and thereby negating her personality.

It is believed the agency's policy of reducing her foreign trips to let her concentrate on giving birth to a male heir caused her stress and she was diagnosed with a type of mental illness later in the year.


But in recent years, the empress has been steadily recovering and she has joined the emperor's duties. In May she attracted attention through her native-level English when she welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump during their state visit to Japan.

Arkley said, as the empress was a dip-

lommat and speaks English and other languages very fluently, the imperial couple are more outreaching to foreign countries and acting as something like diplomats while also working on domestic issues in Japan.

"As we all know, the previous emperor and empress also spoke fluent English. The new emperor and empress have much more opportunities studying and living overseas, ... not just learning languages but also firsthand experience of learning different cultures and societies," said Arkley. "And of course, at this age in Japan, the working labor force is becoming smaller and the elderly (population is) becoming bigger, there are going to be needs for foreign people. Japan has to think about Japan and the world. In that sense, I think the new emperor and empress will be setting a remarkable example (of understanding people from other countries)."

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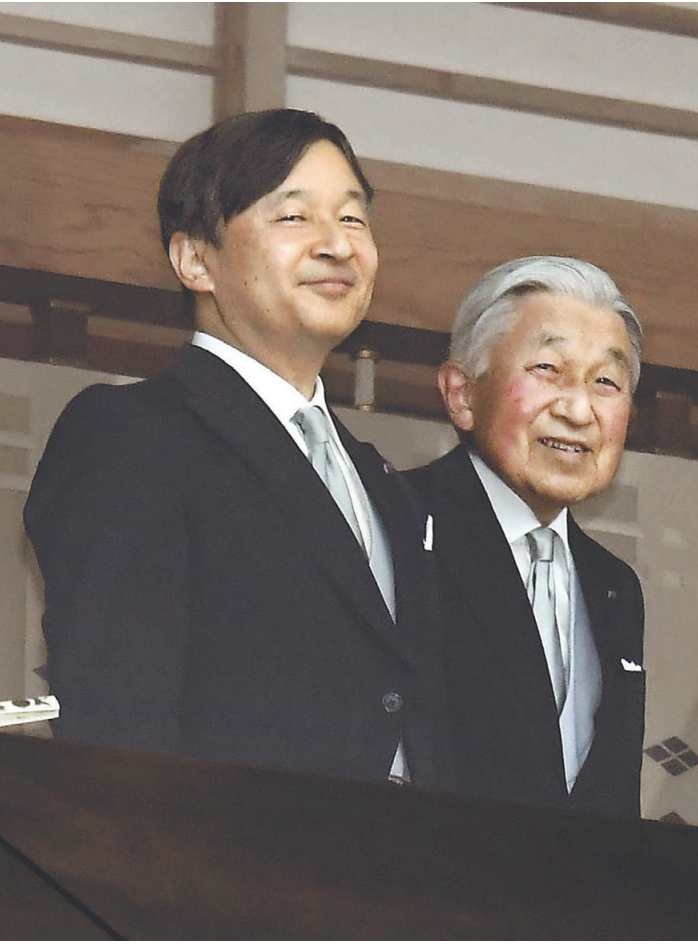
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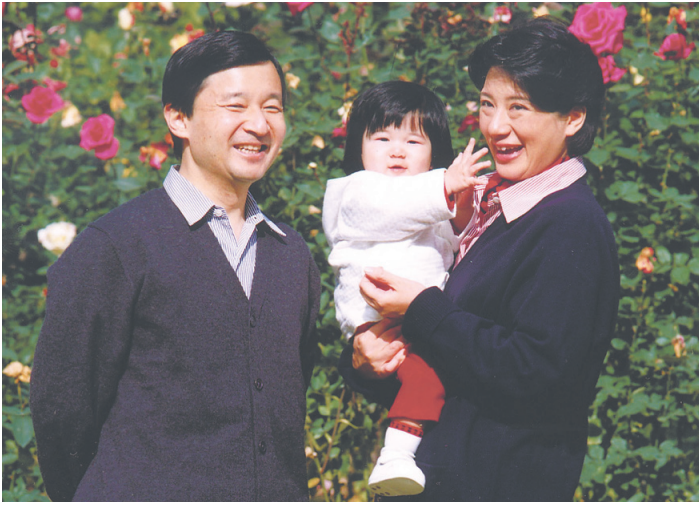
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life in photos



Crown Prince Naruhito and Emperor Akihito at the Chowa Den building in the Imperial Palace on Dec. 23. Right: Emperor Naruhito, Empress Masako and their daughter, Princess Aiko, take a stroll with their dog Yuri at the Nasu Imperial Villa in Tochigi Prefecture on Aug. 19.

KYODO / POOL / VIA KYODO



Top: (From left) Crown Prince Akihito, Prince Akishino, Prince Naruhito, Princess Sayako and Crown Princess Michiko in November 1972. Above: Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako with their daughter, Princess Aiko, on the grounds of the Akasaka Estate in Tokyo on Nov. 19, 2002.

KYODO / IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD AGENCY / VIA KYODO



Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako with other guests following the coronation of Dutch King Willem-Alexander at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam on April 30, 2013. Below: Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako speak with individuals affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami at a temporary housing facility in Shichigahama, Miyagi Prefecture, on Aug. 20, 2013.

POOL / VIA AP / VIA KYODO / KYODO



Prince Naruhito and U.S. President Ronald Reagan at the White House on Oct. 11, 1985. Left: Prince Naruhito in traditional attire to celebrate his coming of age in February 1980.

AP / VIA KYODO / KYODO



Crown Prince Naruhito delivers a speech at the World Water Forum in Brasilia on March 19, 2018.


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