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Japanese Royal Family

Lead: The position of the royal family of Japan has swirled in and between myth and reality until the modern era. Today the Emperor and his kin are respected, even loved, but fulfil a role that is strictly symbolic.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: While Buddhism is Japan's dominant religion, Shinto is the country's indigenous faith where originate the ancient creation myths that established the foundation of royal governance. In this mythological tradition, Japanese emperors were

thought to possess magical powers and direct divine communication. This cultic role made it unseemly for the emperor to be engaged in day-to-day public administration which was handled by advisors and ministers. From the establishment of the a new capital in Kyoto in the late eighth century, a city following a Chinese design, real power was wielded behind the throne in alternating succession by two powerful clans, Fujiwara and Taira.

In the early modern era power gradually was assumed by a series of military leaders or shoguns. This came to an end in the 19th with the overthrow of Tokugawa shogunate and the establishment of national

government under direct imperial rule – the Meiji Restoration. After two decades of experimentation, the Meiji leaders created the Constitution of the Empire of Japan with sovereignty resting in the hands of the Emperor though real power was executed by his ministers.

After World War II, consideration was given to abolishing the imperial function, but the American shogun, Douglas MacArthur, decreed that the emperor would remain as the non-divine symbol of the state, though largely in a ceremonial capacity, a role the royal family maintains into the 21st century.

**From Richmond Virginia, this is
Dan Roberts.**

Resources

<http://www.japan-zone.com/cuture/imperioal.shtml>.

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