

Asia's Monarchies

5 X 1 HOUR

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Japan

The Japanese Imperial family is the oldest hereditary monarchy in the world, dating back to the sixth century BC. However, its central role Japan has not prevented controversy in recent years. Through personal scandals, and vagaries of the hereditary system, even to their own biology, it's been a rocky time. But what is left if every tradition is changeable?

2. Bhutan

Bhutan's governing party pledged recently to follow the policies of the absolute monarchy it is replacing, after it won a landslide in the country's first parliamentary elections. This remote, beautiful country truly is in the throes of a noble experiment. What makes this experiment unique is that this move towards democracy has been initiated by the ruling monarch himself.

3. Cambodia

King Sihanouk retired in 2004, giving way to his son, Sihamoni - a ballet dancer. Unlike many monarchies, Cambodia's is not hereditary - rather the next monarch is chosen by the National Assembly from a pool of eligible candidates. When Sihamoni was chosen, what sort of monarch were they hoping to crown?

4. Nepal

In 2008, Nepal's monarchy was ousted from power, turfed out of their palaces, and the country began a new era as a republic. The story of the fall of the house of Shah is one of bloodshed, betrayal and intrigue. The transformation from kingdom to republic was swift, dramatic, and leaves huge questions unanswered about the future.

5. Brunei

Brunei may be one of the richest nations in the world, but financial problems have beset even their royal house. The sultan has recently made moves towards some form of partial democracy. However, it is up to him whether or not he introduces it. Why did he make a move to do so, and then let it drop?

