

## Pre-reading

The title of the text asks a question. Before you read the text look at the heading of this page and write possible answers to the question. Read the text quickly and compare.

# WHERE'S POPPA?

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ON WEEKENDS Hamto Kawaguchi becomes a very modern Japanese father. He cooks. He cleans. He plays with the kids. But come Monday, Haruto crawls back into the role of an old-style Japanese employee. Rising at 4 a.m., he leaves his wife, Hisako, and three children and dutifully boards the train for Nagoya so he can arrive at his office by 9. A salesman for the Teikoku Hormone Manufacturing Co., Haruto, 41, spends the week as a *tanshinfunin*, the Japanese term for husbands whose jobs separate them from their families. Until Friday night, when Haruto returns, Hisako copes alone with the kids' baths, homework and problems.

The *tanshinfunin* are just one more manifestation of the Japanese work ethic, which places jobs above almost everything. Some 175,000 couples share the Kawaguchis' predicament. About a third of all employees posted to new cities decide they cannot take the wife and the kids with them. Instead they become part-time bachelors and weekend husbands and dads. But today's young workers aren't always willing to put the wants of their companies ahead of the needs of their families. They are against a national trend.

"In the Japanese way of thinking, the company is still more important than the family" – says Shuya Fujita, 52, who has gone through six transfers in his career with the Yamaha Corp., spending six years away from his home near Osaka. "I never considered refusing a transfer. It's difficult to change jobs, so men think they have no choice."

Fujita's wife, Yuki, went along on his first posting but soon returned to the Osaka area to enroll her daughter in junior-high school. The children's education forces many families to accept the *tanshinfunin* arrangement. Competition for college begins early in education-crazy Japan, and many secondary schools do not accept transfer students. Parents decide to keep the children in one place rather than risk problems caused by moving.

After the first transfer, Yuki Fujita stayed at home while Shuya moved. The Kawaguchis couldn't face that.

"We married to be together" – says Hisako. Besides the family needed the income from Hisako's job, and finding work in Nagoya would have been difficult. So when Hamto's employers announced his transfer, the couple did not accept it. Haruto's employers called him "selfish" and the union refused to support him, since transfers were company policy. Japanese employers defend their right to transfer workers to provide training and for the good of the firm. Several recent studies show that *tanshinfunin* can hurt separated families – accounting for divorces and even suicides. However, a striking statistics is not likely to change much: middle-aged Japanese men spend an average of just 20 minutes a day on household tasks, including time with their children.

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## Extracting main ideas

Choose the sentence which you think best illustrates the main idea of the text.

- He voluntarily gave up his family and moved to another city to pursue his career.
- He was threatened with a prospect of being unemployed if he didn't accept another job.
- He spends the week with his geisha and the weekends with his family.
- He's earning the family's living in his job and he'll be back at the end of the week.
- He thinks it's cheaper to have his life split between his job and his family.

## Checking comprehension

Read the text again and decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. In the author's opinion the Japanese way of thinking favours family oriented values to values concerned with work ethics.
2. *Tanshinfunin* is a Japanese word for a person who has no choice but to leave his family in order to meet his employers' demands.
3. Statistically speaking, the allocation of labour force in Japan does not generally affect the family relations.
4. The reason why people have to accept the *tanshinfunin* arrangements is the educational needs of their children.
5. All Japanese employees accept the transfer policy and there are no signs of any resistance.
6. The author thinks that the educational system in Japan is crazy.
7. Japanese employers have every right to transfer their employees to different jobs in different places according to the company's policy.
8. More and more couples are against the transfer policy.