

## Japs Pick Queen of Beauty on Truly American Lines

By Kimpei Sheba

Tokio.

**H**ALF A HUNDRED of the most beautiful dancers in Tokio assembled recently on the spacious stage of the Nippon Gekijo, the largest theater in the far east. They passed in review before a jury of thirty men in the first beauty contest of its kind in Japan, the type made popular by America.

The dance halls of the empire were canvassed for candidates to be elected "Miss Nippon." This is perhaps the most eloquent of all testimony to Japan's "modernity."

The men who started this craze, for beauty contests are all the rage now in Nippon, are two young Japanese, Iwao and Takato Okuyama. They got their American ideas at the American School in Japan, in Tokio, where they were educated. They were sent to this school by their father, an eminent bacteriologist and admirer of America.

Sitting with them as members of the jury were some of the leading newspaper men of Tokio, including an American, a member of the staff of the Japan Advertiser, the only American-owned newspaper in Japan. The others were artists, writers, sculptors, and theatrical men.

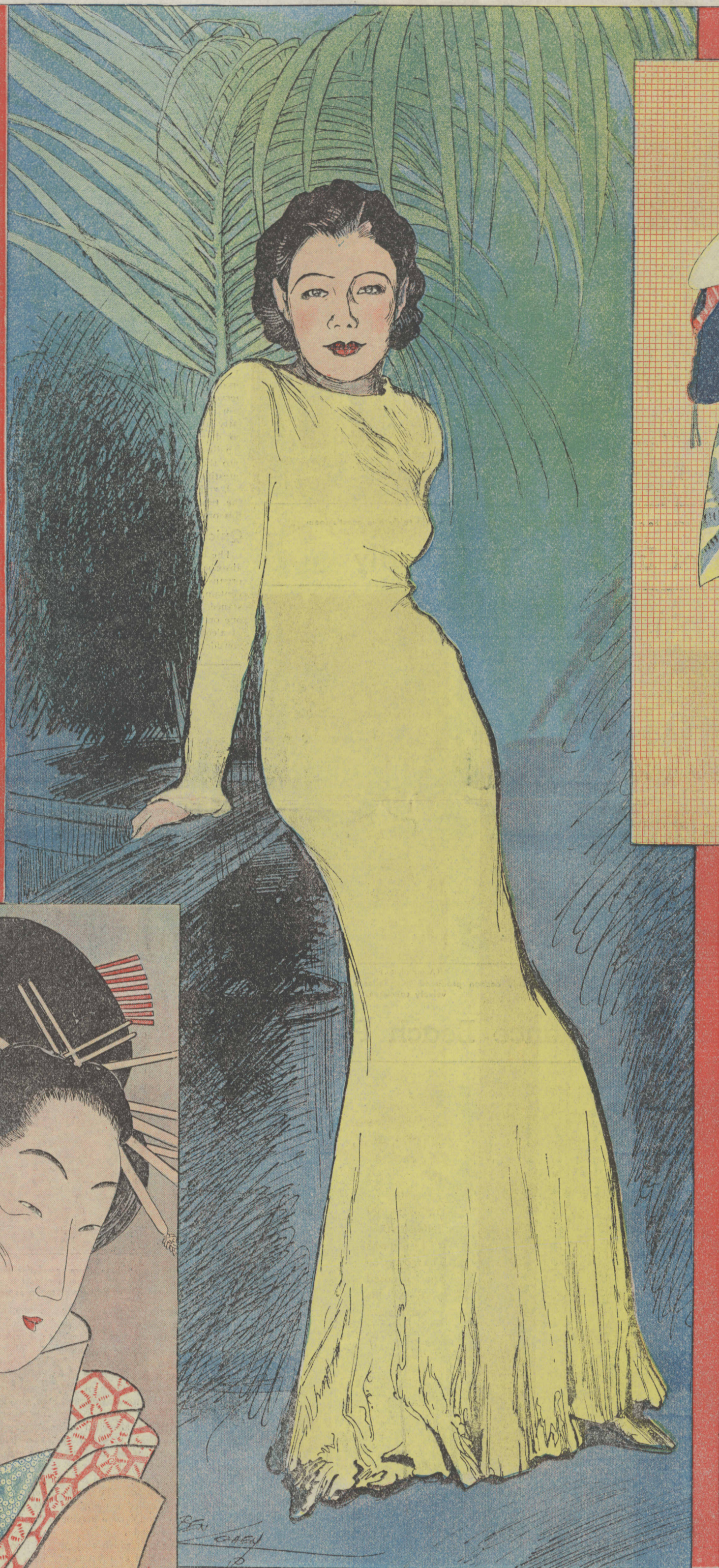
The strange thing about this beauty contest to any visitor to the land of cherry blossoms, and the home of the beautiful kimono is the fact that virtually all of the girls were attired in western garb. But there is nothing strange about this to anyone acquainted with the trend of events in fast-moving Nippon.

### Traditions Cast Aside

In fact, if one were to visit Japan today he or she would be astonished during even so brief a stay as a month to perceive the constantly increasing number of girls and young women who are casting aside their traditional customs for western ways of living. The augmentation in the number of girls who are, for instance, doffing their native dresses to appear in foreign costumes is so noticeable at present that few visitors have failed to observe and comment on this phase of changing Japan.

And, what is more important, the change that is taking place is not confined to outward aspects, for just as fundamental and thoroughgoing a transition is occurring, though this naturally may not be apparent to a newcomer, in the minds of Nippon's young women and girls.

On the Ginza of Tokio, which corresponds to Michigan avenue, Chicago, on any fair day or evening one will note that more than half of the girls are attired at present in western dresses, whereas a few



In striking contrast to the old idea of pulchritude in Japan is the beauty queen of today of the island empire, Miss Mitsuko Iwasaki, recently selected from among fifty as "Miss Nippon."

years ago scarcely more than one in ten dared venture forth in such habiliments for fear of being dubbed a brazen modernist.

Imagine one-half of the young women of America altering their mode of attire completely to some foreign form of dress, say the kimono, in the lapse of a few years, and one will have an idea of what is happening in Japan today.

The beauty contest held in the Nippon Gekijo is significant mainly in that it has shattered a couple of western illusions about Nippon. It has brought to light the fact that, just as they now prefer western attire to the kimono, the men of Japan no longer are charmed by the once-popular type of quaint oblong faces to be seen in the old Japanese color prints. The type of Japanese girl who is popular today should have eyes that do not resemble almonds, who does her hair according to the accredited Hollywood fashion, and who uses rouge, rather than those who paint their faces deathly white and wear strange, picturesque headgear, as was the custom in Japan for centuries past.

Because there are so few American and European girls and women in Japan, the ordinary Japanese girl models herself mainly after American screen types. Joan Crawford, Constance Bennett, Kay Francis, and Carole Lombard are the favorite patterns of Japan's flappers.

### Movies Their Teacher

It may seem strange, but imitating the posture and imitating the movements, especially the gait, of their favorite stars are among the most important ways in which a Japanese girl, brought up in clattering wooden clogs, manages to acquire the proper walking habits of the western woman.

But affecting a comely gait is not the only thing the girls of Japan are learning from American motion pictures. They have learned, for instance, the western meaning of love, something which in their native language means very little. The consequence has been disastrous, at least to the parents of the girls. For most mothers and fathers in the land of Madame Butterfly still adhere to the ancient notion that marriages should be arranged not by the principals but by sedate outsiders with more balanced ideas of the merits and demerits of the respective parties.

So widespread, however, has been the influence exerted by the west on the life of the people of Japan that the protests of the older people are being brushed aside with great abandon and new customs adopted literally overnight.

To cite but one instance. Most people acquainted with the far east know that osculation was something quite unknown to the Japanese and that kisses in motion pictures were painstakingly clipped by the censors.

It probably will be surprising, therefore, to most readers to be told that kissing is today, thanks to American motion pictures, widely practiced in the Flowery Kingdom. So great was the public clamor against the censorship on the clipping of fervid scenes that the kissing ban was lifted several years ago, although the general impression abroad still is that it is unlawful to portray pictures on the screen showing the contact of lips.

But the thing that is far more serious than the introduction of osculation—at least to the more staid inhabitants—is the fact that the kimono, the lovely national attire, is fast disappearing. As already has been pointed out, the beauty queens of Japan are turning in ever larger numbers to the

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