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Kimonos were 'out' at Akihito's party

THEY'RE TOO WARM—AND PARIS IS PREFERRED, ANYWAY

Daily Mail Reporter

THE Orient met the West yesterday in Kensington Palace-gardens, where London's rich are cloistered from the Hyde Park crowds. There was rice wrapped in seaweed, pickled chicken livers, chopsticks and kimonos. And there were maids-of-honour, sardine sandwiches, and spats.

It was all by command of His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan, Akihito Tsugu-no-Miya ("Bright and Magnanimous Prince of the Succession"). He gave a garden party in the hot sunshine at No. 23, the Japanese Ambassador's residence, for his "little peoples" living in London.

To it came 200—diplomats, business men, Japanese pressmen covering the Crown Prince's Coronation visit, and their wives, with names like "Gracious Maid of the Rice Fields" and "The Swift White Crane."

Chopsticks

Crown Prince Akihito, who is 19, arrived 15 minutes late. He was delayed, it was explained, by the drum-thumping May Day processions while driving back from horse riding on the Berkshire Downs.

Faintly came the strains of the "Red Flag" from Hyde Park as His Imperial Highness came out from the white Regency residence on to the lawns.

As he sat for China tea and English pastries 150 of his father's subjects took advantage boldly of Japan's new system of democratic monarchy to take close-up pictures of the Crown Prince.

He bowed and chatted and smiled, and then he went to the sushi bowls—platters of rice wrapped in seaweed flown especially from Japan; bamboo shoots, shredded chicken, prawns. He ate with chopsticks.

He followed with fruit cake, then ice cream, then orange juice.

Crown Prince Akihito bowed slightly to Mr. Koizumi, 68-year-old "king" of Judo in Britain. Mr. Koizumi returned the bow.

Paris gowns

Mr. Rinzo Arita, 82-year-old retired business man, bowed to his Emperor-to-be. The Emperor-to-be returned the courtesy. And Mr. Arita, wearing a brown tweed suit, a stiff starched collar, two waistcoats, spats over big black boots, and the medallion of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, murmured "Wonderful, wonderful."

Only six of the 40 women wore kimonos. The rest wore Paris gowns.

The explanation came from the woman who designs the gowns for the Empress of Japan, Madame Chiyo Tanaka.

She said: "We Japanese like Western clothes. Traditional kimonos are so heavy—there are 12 yards of silk in the Empress's kimonos, 12 yards of lining, undergarment material, and the sash—two yards. Sometimes so much clothing can be uncomfortable."

Picture—Page TEN.



CHOPSTICKS FOR TWO : One wears a Western-style costume at Akihito's party. The other wears the traditional kimono.

MR.

STAGG.