

**Expert Panel Recommendations on the Preservation and Development of
Ozumo**

For the Tradition and Future of Ozumo

An auspicious day of April 2021 (Reiwa 3)

The Expert Panel on the Preservation and Development of Ozumo

Contents

Preface to the English translation	1
Introduction	3
Chapter 1. Where Ozumo should be going	5
1. Multinationalization of Ozumo.....	5
2. Internationalization of Judo and overseas promotion of Kendo	7
3. Acculturation in Ozumo	8
4. ‘Nyu-Nihon-ka’ of Takamiyama and the dignity of Ozumo.....	11
5. Where Ozumo should be going	14
6. Preservation and development of Ozumo and international friendship	16
7. Fostering Japanese rikishi	17
Chapter 2. Measures to be pursued	20
1. Improving Sumo stables	20
2. Coaching foreign-born rikishi and encouraging stablemasters’ self-improvement.....	22
3. Strengthening guidance and supervision of stablemasters	23
4. Toshiyori-myoseki succession and one-generation toshiyori titles.....	24
5. Educating Japanese rikishi about Sumodo	28
Chapter 3. Sport integrity and governance	30
1. Improving sport integrity in the Ozumo universe.....	30
2. The Japan Sumo Association’s guidance for governance (governance code)	32
Conclusions	34

Appendices: Members' opinions (summaries/excerpts)	36
YAMAUCHI Masayuki, chair:	
Taste of Sumo culture, art of mutual understanding	36
IMAI Takashi, special advisor:	
Establish a framework sustainable for 100 years	38
ATODA Takashi, member:	
Reaffirm and share the philosophy	39
OH Sadaharu, member:	
Overcome misconduct and practice hard	40
MATSUMOTO Hakuo, member:	
Kabuki and Ozumo.....	42
KONNO Misako, member:	
As a fan of Ozumo for over half a century	43
TADAKI Keiichi, member:	
Culture of empathy and beauty of Sumo performances	44
OTANI Takehiko, member:	
Bearers and supporters of the Sumo culture	46
WATANABE Daigoro, a.k.a. the former Takamiyama and former stablemaster Azumazeki:	
Ten Hearts	47

PREFACE

TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

In Japan, professional Sumo is called “Grand Sumo,” i.e. Ozumo, to distinguish it from the amateur version of Sumo in which those who practice and compete may be male or female, students or adults.

Ozumo and amateur Sumo have much in common, in aspects such as the size of sumo rings, called dohyo, and the spirit of Sumodo, meaning the Sumo way. That said, this series of recommendations, nonetheless, strictly uses the word “Ozumo,” in accordance with the contemporary usage of related terms, to refer to Sumo tournaments organized by Nihon Sumo-Kyokai Japan, i.e. the Japan Sumo Association (JASA). In doing so, this series aims to separate “Sumo” – in its use as a common noun referring to the martial art in a generalized way – from the more specific and historically rooted world of Ozumo.

Various countries in the world have martial arts similar to the Japanese martial art of Sumo. People in each of those countries are proud of their unique and traditional martial arts. Sumo, Ozumo and all of those ethnic martial arts abroad are recognized as parts of culture. JASA and we members of the Expert Panel on the Preservation and Development of Ozumo fully respect cultural diversity and cultural rights as described in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2001. Against the background of its ongoing multinationalization, the Ozumo world continues to make every effort to “ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together” (Article 2 of the Declaration).

Rikishi (Sumo wrestlers) belonging to JASA include not only many foreign-born ones but also others having Japanese citizenship after being born in Japan to parents from abroad. This series of recommendations, respecting such cultural diversity, points out the importance for those who are from foreign countries or born in Japan to parents from abroad to enter the world of Ozumo while becoming familiarized with Japan’s culture, tradition and customs as an essential part of the process of becoming acquainted with those of Ozumo. This does not at all mean that those rikishi will be forced to renounce their nationalities of origin or stop identifying with their ethnicities of origin. “Entering” the world of Ozumo of one’s own will and at one’s sole discretion means that one elects to gradually “enter” Japan’s culture, tradition and customs related to Ozumo. As there exist no Japanese terms yet to describe this particular process, the Panel uses newly coined Japanese-language expressions of its own in this series of recommendations: “nyu-Nihon” (entering Japan) and “nyu-Nihon-ka” (entering Japanese culture, tradition and customs). The Panel provides recommendations, with full respect to cultural diversity, on the process and framework for ensuring understanding and acceptance on the part of those rikishi as defined above of the tradition, culture and customs of Ozumo through the “nyu-Nihon” and “nyu-Nihon-ka” approaches, which are to be detailed in the following pages.

Those rikishi who need to understand Japan’s culture, tradition and

customs are not limited to foreign-born ones. It is true that newly recruited young Japanese disciples who hardly understand the very basis of the culture, tradition and customs of Ozumo have been on the rise in recent years. Lastly, I add that this series of recommendations was compiled out of self-reproof for such an unfortunate trend in the world of Ozumo.

An auspicious day of June 2021
Yamauchi Masayuki, representing the Expert Panel

Introduction

Nihon Sumo-Kyokai Japan, i.e. the Japan Sumo Association, (hereafter referred to as JASA), a public interest incorporated association, decided at its directorate meeting held on May 30, 2019 — in the first year of the Reiwa era — to set up “an Expert Panel on the preservation and development of Ozumo.” Citing two specific themes, JASA asked the Panel to:

- (1) Work out a series of recommendations, from a broad perspective, on how JASA should preserve and develop the tradition of Sumodo (the Sumo way), while protecting Ozumo, which embodies Japan’s traditional culture, at a time when the internationalization of the Ozumo universe is progressing; and
- (2) Compile JASA’s own guidance for governance that is in line with Sumodo, while respecting the Japan Sports Agency-initiated governance code with which Japanese sports organizations are required to comply.

Responding to the request of JASA, the ad hoc Expert Panel held rounds of discussion from multiple angles, reviewing the tradition of Ozumo and the multifaceted values embodied by Ozumo; identifying the mission JASA will have to keep fulfilling and the conceivable challenges it will have to deal with in the years ahead; and considering the path Sumodo should follow in the new era of Reiwa. We subsequently came up with a series of recommendations to present to JASA.

Our recommendations are divided into three chapters.

Chapter 1 focuses on how the multinationalization of Ozumo has proceeded since the latter half of the Showa era (1926-1989) thanks to the presence of many powerful foreign-born rikishi (wrestlers). The chapter then shows where Ozumo should be going from now on in an era in which economic and cultural globalization has been gathering momentum worldwide.

Chapter 2 recommends a set of measures that will be indispensable for JASA to implement to ensure the preservation and development of the tradition of Sumodo while Ozumo is navigating in the new era.

Chapter 3 touches on sport integrity, which has recently emerged as an international theme in the sports world, emphasizing the importance of uprightness and soundness. The chapter then looks into what governance measures Ozumo should put in place to maintain and improve sport integrity in its sphere. It finally recommends specific guidance for governance or self-discipline — a governance code — with due consideration to the circumstances that are particular to JASA.

First of all, it should be noted that we decided at the outset of our discussions to avoid using the word “internationalization” in our recommendations on where Ozumo should be going. The reason is that the word tends to be used in a way that makes it ambiguously synonymous with “de-Japanization” or “cosmopolitanization.” Instead, we refer to the hitherto and ongoing presence of foreign-born rikishi from diverse countries as

“multinationalization.”

At the same time, we describe the practice of accepting the tradition and customs of Ozumo of Japan on the part of foreign-born rikishi as the principle of “nyu-Nihon” (entering Japan) or “nyu-Nihon-ka” (entering Japanese culture, tradition and customs). This principle means the opposite of de-Japanization, but it is absolutely devoid of any implication of forcing foreign-born rikishi to separate themselves from their own inherent cultures. The adoption of the “nyu-Nihon” principle also aims to keep it from being confused with the words “assimilation” and “Japanization” — both of which are often misinterpreted to mean that foreigners are being forced to accept Japanese culture. Chapter 1 explains in detail why the Panel thinks this way.

We sincerely hope that our recommendations will be understood and shared not only by all of the members of JASA but also by all of those who have loved and continued supporting Ozumo.

Chapter 1

Where Ozumo should be going

As we look back at the history of the multinationalization of Ozumo, we remember that there were a number of foreign-born rikishi who thrilled dedicated and casual Sumo fans alike with their bouts in the ring. On the flip side, it was regrettable that there were a few others who came under criticism due to behavior that many of those fans found strange or discomforting. What kind of multinationalization do a large majority of Japanese want to happen in the Ozumo world? Seeking to answer that question, this chapter looks into the contrasting paths that Judo and Kendo chose to take on their ways to becoming recognized in the world. It finally shows the direction in which Ozumo should proceed to preserve and develop Sumodo.

1. Multinationalization of Ozumo

In 1964 (Showa 39), when Tokyo hosted the summer Olympic Games, a young Hawaiian native named Jesse — whose full name is Jesse James Wailani Kuhaulua — arrived in Japan to become a new apprentice in Ozumo. The young rikishi, better known by his ring name of Takamiyama, consistently performed so well that he was promoted to sekiwake, the third highest rank. His achievement marked the beginning of the multinationalization of Ozumo.

In this connection, it is worth noting that JASA came into being with contributing to international friendship as one of the purposes of its establishment. The “Organization Overview” section both on the official site of JASA and in the “Sumo Techo” (handbook) compiled by JASA, says of its “Purposes and Operation”:

“To uphold, inherit and develop the tradition and order of Sumodo, the inherently Japanese national sport that originated in Shinto rituals (festivals) in ancient times that were held to pray for bountiful harvests, this incorporated association shall organize honbasho (Grand Sumo Tournaments) and jungyo (regional Sumo tours), foster human resources responsible for carrying out such events, instruct and spread Sumodo, preserve and utilize Sumo records and engage international friendship...”

To that end, JASA obliges itself to maintain, manage and operate the relevant facilities and thus promote the culture of Sumo and help improve the mental and physical well-being of the Japanese people. As such, both the

instruction and spread of Sumodo and the pursuit of international friendship are important duties of Ozumo. Therefore, the multinationalization of Ozumo through the development of both Japanese and foreign human resources is not in contradiction with Sumodo. During the post-World War II decades of Japan's Showa era (1926-1989), Takamiyama and four other foreign-born rikishi became sekitori, meaning that they were qualified to compete in the top Ozumo division called makunouchi (makuuchi). During the Heisei era (1989-2019), the number of foreign-born sekitori jumped to 62. Foreign-born rikishi, including those failing to advance to sekitori status, have so far totaled 192 from the postwar years into the current Reiwa era, which began in 2019. They came from a total of 24 different countries and territories outside Japan. Of them, 65 were from Mongolia, 37 from the United States and 17 from Brazil.

Six of the foreign-born rikishi have become yokozuna (grand champions) and five others have advanced to the second highest rank of ozeki (champions). A total of 14 foreign-born rikishi have so far won the Emperor's Cup, which is given to winners in the makunouchi division of each Grand Sumo (Ozumo) Tournament. They have clinched Grand Sumo Tournament victories 117 times. Mongolian-born yokozuna Hakuho had won the Emperor's Cup 44 times as of the start of the July 2020 Grand Sumo Tournament, according to JASA data as of February 2021.

The Ozumo rikishi population has ranged from the 600s to the 800s since the latter half of the Showa era. The overall total has been gradually increasing within the 600-700 range in the last decade. The numbers of foreign-born rikishi have varied from year to year. For example, the number of foreign-born rikishi reached an all-time high of 61 in 2008 (Heisei 20), accounting for 8.7% of the rikishi population. That number has since been on the decline, ranging from about 30 to 40 in recent years, accounting for 4% to 5% each year. Eight foreign-born rikishi have been given the post-retirement status of oyakata (Sumo master). Of them, six have become stablemasters called shisho, also known as heya-mochi toshiyori (stable-owning Sumo elders). Of those six, all but Takamiyama — who completed his Sumo life when he reached the mandatory retirement age, taking the post-retirement Sumo name of Azumazeki — are still active as shisho. The number of foreign-born rikishi gaining Japanese citizenship and becoming oyakata is most likely to increase in the ongoing Reiwa era.

As seen above, when it comes to multinationalization, the Ozumo world is expected to be on the same path as it has been to date. However, the Panel recommends that, for a series of reasons to be explained in and beyond the following section, JASA should avoid a limitless increase in the presence of foreign-born rikishi from the perspective of the necessity to preserve the tradition of Sumodo and ensure the big-picture development of Ozumo.

It is true that a decrease in the number of Japanese willing to become rikishi has been offset by an increase in the number of foreign-born rikishi and that their activities have helped improve the Sumo ring scenes. But on the other hand, even though more than a few foreign-born rikishi have learned the tradition of Sumodo from experience, some rikishi have occasionally behaved in a way that dedicated and casual Sumo fans find strange and discomforting. In some cases, they have even come under criticism for failing to take Sumodo seriously. We will consider why we have had rikishi of that kind.

2. Internationalization of Judo and overseas promotion of Kendo

Sumo, like Judo and Kendo, originated from the traditional warrior's code of Budo (martial arts) or Bushido. As the Judo and Kendo societies in Japan chose contrasting ways to make their respective martial arts known abroad, their subsequent experiences must offer an important lesson for the future of Ozumo. To learn more about their experiences, the Panel invited Mr. Yamashita Yasuhiro, president of the All Japan Judo Federation, who is concurrently serving as president of the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC), and Mr. Nakai Kenji, a lawyer who used to serve as a comptroller of the All Japan Kendo Federation, to give lectures on how the two martial art societies engaged with the world.

Mr. Yamashita told the Panel that Dr. Kano Jigoro (1860-1938), the founder of Kodokan Judo — who also served as principal of the Tokyo Higher Normal School, which was the forerunner of the University of Tsukuba — was the first Asian to become a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1909 (Meiji 42). Dr. Kano was known to have been so internationally minded that he kept a diary in English throughout his life. Obviously, against this background, the internationalization of Judo began quite early.

The International Judo Federation (IJF) was inaugurated in 1951 (Showa 26) at the initiative of 17 European countries. Today, the IJF has more than 200 member countries and territories. It thus ranks among the top few international sports organizations, including FIFA, in terms of its number of member countries and territories.

In the field of Judo, an international strategy was adopted to transform the Japanese martial art into a sport capable of appealing to as many spectators around the world as possible in a more dynamic, more interest-catching way. As a result, aspects of IJF Judo, such as the scoring criteria for waza (technique) points and the rules on prohibited waza, became less in conformity with those that had been in place in Japan — the birthplace of Judo. As time went by, it became increasingly difficult for Japanese Judo society to have its opinions heard abroad.

A high-profile example was the IJF's push, despite Japan's objection, for introducing colored Judo uniforms rather than only white ones and adopting a complicated points decision system with less emphasis on clear-cut ippon victories based on decisive moves. Those decisions meant the loss of the virtues and qualities inherent in Japanese Judo.

The outbound approach of Judo, according to Mr. Yamashita, helped spread to the rest of the world the traditional style of Judo performance: One needs to wear a Judo uniform, stand barefoot on tatami mats, bow in Japanese style while both standing and sitting, compete while using certain Japanese words, respect each opponent and respect manners. It is undeniable that the outbound spread of Judo was initially useful to promote the international understanding of Japan and deepen international friendship.

Nevertheless, the internationalization of Judo has changed it from what it used to be as an inherently Japanese martial art. Judo no longer embodies the pure aspects of Japanese culture. Once Judo became a “de-Japanized” sport, some Judo federation officials in certain European countries began publicly insisting that the growing popularity of Judo had nothing to do with embodying Japanese culture and spirit.

In contrast, Japan's Kendo society adopted an outbound approach clearly different from that of Judo. Mr. Nakai told the Panel that the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) intentionally refrains from using the word

“internationalization” in the first place. The federation commonly uses such terms as “overseas spread,” “international spread” and “international responses” instead. The thinking behind this is that the AJKF places importance on “spreading” Kendo abroad as a martial art cultivated in Japan’s traditional culture — it never imagines de-Japanizing Kendo.

The most important part of the effort to spread Kendo abroad has been, and is, the adoption of a rulebook for refereeing Kendo matches, called “The Regulations of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan [matches and referees].” Especially significant is its definition of ippon-gachi or winning by ippon. The AJKF rulebook stipulates ippon-gachi to be “striking a valid target” with “full spirit” and “correct posture” and “using zanshin,” which means mental readiness and physical preparedness.

In other words, even when a shinai (bamboo sword) hits one of the designated striking areas on the opponent, it must not be recognized as ippon if the shinai’s correct hasuji (sharp blade angle) is not used, and moreover, if no sign of zanshin is observed even after the use of correct hasuji.

The Kendo term zanshin is said to refer to the post-striking posture or tension each winning kenshi (swordsperson) needs to maintain in preparation for a hypothetically possible counterattack by the opponent. It is difficult for lay people to understand the skill of Kendo referees to make decisions by judging the state of the inner mind of each kenshi and the process for Kendo kenshi to acquire the ability to have a zanshin mindset seconds after hitting a strike.

The AJKF rulebook emphasizes the spiritual characteristics of Kendo because it believes that the idea of Kendo is to support a path for human development through the practice of the martial art.

Mr. Nakai said that what does matter in the Kendo world is neither who wins or loses in each competition nor if it is possible to become the holder of a certain dan (grade). The utmost purpose of Kendo is human development. Therefore, Kendo can be described as a martial art for individuals to practice for themselves, not a sport for entertaining spectators. Japan’s Kendo society has pursued and preserved the idea of Kendo to ultimately support human development. It has also continued to prioritize the preservation of the quality of Kendo cultivated by traditional Japanese culture out of serious concern that the essence of Kendo would be lost if it were “de-Japanize” itself for the sake of easily spreading abroad. In this way, its efforts almost exactly match the direction we on the Panel think the Ozumo world should go in.

The International Kendo Federation, often known by its French abbreviation of FIK (Fédération Internationale de Kendo), was established in 1970 (Showa 45). Currently, it has about 60 member countries and territories. The FIK rulebook used for its world championships is almost identical to “The Regulations of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan” of the AJKF. Japan is primarily responsible for coaching referees across the world. Moreover, the dan grade qualification systems adopted by FIK member countries and territories are nearly identical to that of Japan.

3. Acculturation in Ozumo

Using the abovementioned contrasting approaches of the Japanese Judo and Kendo societies as guides for considering how to deal with the multinationalization of Ozumo, we see two possible paths that JASA could theoretically follow.

The first path would be to continue to preserve and develop Sumodo in the same way as in the past. In this case, the Ozumo world's traditions, including its time-honored ethos and techniques — which originated from Shinto rituals and have been naturally accepted by a large majority of Japanese — would be the principles JASA must uphold in the future no matter how multinationalized Ozumo becomes. The existing systems of Ozumo, including the ones related to oyakata (Sumo masters) and Sumo-beya (Sumo stables), would remain.

The second path would lead to the transformation of the history and tradition of Ozumo. In this case, JASA would respect the individuality of each rikishi from diverse countries and territories, reflecting the tradition, customs, mindsets and culture inherent in each of the various places from which they hail. The Ozumo world also would move, in the progress of this kind of multinationalization, to accept the existence of multifaceted elements that would be added to Ozumo and formulate new common regulations and rules for a de-Japanized “new Sumo” world. The existing systems related to oyakata and Sumo-beya would be reviewed in accordance with the progress of such multinationalization.

The Ozumo world has thus far followed the first path. Sumodo has been preserved and developed as the main pillar of Ozumo, while foreign-born rikishi have been fostered under the traditional systems related to oyakata and Sumo-beya. The Ozumo world also has turned out multiple foreign-born shisho (stablemasters) who have taken Japanese citizenship.

The Panel does not believe that Ozumo should choose the second path, even in the future. We do not think that the second path will lead to the positive development of Ozumo. We cannot envisage such an outcome no matter how many ways we consider it in.

If JASA chooses the second path, the likely consequence would be the spread of the belief that the most important thing is to win — a phenomenon that is seen in parts of the internationalized Judo world. This is highly likely to result in the introduction to the Ozumo world of not only points-based decisions as a winning criterion but also a weight-division system, based on physical differences, with winners to be determined in separate weight classes. Such artificial across-the-board rules have already been adopted worldwide by certain types of sports, including Judo. If they were to begin governing the Ozumo world as well, such a change would rob Ozumo supporters forever of David-and-Goliath fights between rikishi of divergent weights. Ozumo fans are particularly fond of watching scenes in which rikishi of relatively small stature — like Mainoumi, who was active in the Ozumo world in the 1990s, as well as current rikishi Enho and Uno, to name just a few — overpower their towering opponents. Such a thrilling aspect of Ozumo is possible only under the existing competition system — namely, open-weight round-robin tournaments. If Ozumo were to adopt points-decision and weight-division rules, it would instantly bring an end to Sumodo — the way of developing oneself as a human being that attaches importance to the pursuit of what should be attained beyond competition, instead of myopically defining Ozumo as a venue where victories in simple contests of strength are all that matter.

It should be noted further that when the word “internationalization” is used, it often is associated with transnational activities by people who want to behave freely as cosmopolitans or be free from the limitations of nationality. For some Japanese individuals, this can mean behaving as de-Japanized cosmopolitans or people cut loose from the limitations of Japanese citizenship, meaning that they in general do not care about Japan's culture as it has been

refined by its history and tradition. In the Ozumo world, multinationalization has now been continuing unabated for decades, with foreign-born rikishi joining it from various countries and territories year after year. As a result, many people think that the Ozumo world has already become diverse and plural.

However, in reality, Ozumo has not been going along the second path. It has never deviated from the first path — the path toward uniform harmonization of the Ozumo world in a way true to its longstanding core and essence. The Panel believes that Ozumo must keep on the first path now and forever.

While Ozumo need not de-Japanize and distance itself from Japan's culture, tradition and customs, it is important to know the ways of thinking of foreign-born rikishi as they elect to join Japan's traditional competition, entering the history inherent in Ozumo. Foreign-born rikishi are expected to accept the tradition and customs of this "inherently Japanese national sport" (Article 3 of the Articles of Incorporation of JASA) and associate themselves with Japanese culture accordingly.

However, it would be short-sighted to jump to the conclusion that becoming a disciple of the Ozumo world — the process that is regarded as the beginning of one's acceptance of part of Japan's traditions — is equivalent to forcible "Japanization." Such a perception tends to lead people to imagine a situation in which there exist regulations for "assimilation" as well as the power to enforce them. This is an incorrect and unacceptable perception as it has nothing at all to do with the attitudes of JASA and shisho (stablemasters), who respect each rikishi's decision of his own will to enter the Ozumo world. What the Panel envisages is to adopt a new definition of "entry to the Ozumo world" as a process synonymous with "entry to Japan," meaning, to put it in metaphorical Japanese, "nyu-Nihon" and "nyu-Nihon-ka" for foreign-born rikishi. These Japanese terms refer to the practices of foreign-born rikishi themselves choosing to "enter" or "come into" Japan's culture, tradition and customs, which are the linchpin of Ozumo as one of Japan's national sports, by deciding on their own to "enter" or "come into" the Ozumo world.

The reason why the Panel uses the completely new Japanese terms "nyu-Nihon" and "nyu-Nihon-ka" is because, in reality, there exist no exact Japanese words that can be used to properly describe the situation of, for example, "a Mongolian-born Japanese Ozumo rikishi" or "a Georgian-born Japanese Ozumo rikishi," without contradicting the current state of the multinationalization of Ozumo, which is characterized by the presence of foreign-born rikishi from a large variety of countries and territories.

The Panel uses "nyu-Nihon" and "nyu-Nihon-ka" as terms that in no way mean forced "assimilation," or the renunciation of each rikishi's nationality of origin. Likewise, the Panel wishes that each foreign-born rikishi tackles the same tasks as Japanese rikishi for absorbing Sumo's tradition and practices.

A number of foreign countries and territories have martial arts of their own that are similar to the Japanese martial art of Sumo. For example, Mongolia has a traditional grappling martial art, called Bokh, that needs no dohyo rings. People in Senegal practice Laamb (Senegalese wrestling) using circular rings.

Should practitioners of those martial arts abroad choose to become rikishi in Ozumo, they would likely experience empathy with and acculturate themselves to the history and tradition of Ozumo of Japan. In other words, through this process of "nyu-Nihon," those foreign-born people from Mongolia, Georgia and so on can qualify themselves to become Ozumo rikishi in Japan.

Wherever they were born, foreign-born rikishi can proceed with the “nyu-Nihon” process — which again is distinct from “Japanization” and “assimilation” — by entering the Ozumo world.

Consequently, like their Japanese-born peers, successful foreign-born rikishi, reaching the top makunouchi (makuuchi) division and the second-tier juryo division also are allowed to wear the oicho (ginkgo leaf) topknot hairstyle as the symbol of their prestigious status. Rikishi, Japanese-born and foreign-born alike, wear another traditional topknot haircut known as chonmage while they are ranked below the juryo division. Rikishi in the two highest divisions must dress in the traditional formal attire of haori coat and hakama trousers on ceremonial occasions and wear kimono for everyday outings.

In the case of foreign-born rikishi with experience of participating as fighters in their home countries’ martial arts that are similar to Ozumo, it is understandable that they remain patriotically affectionate and loyal toward those national martial arts and sports. However, as long as foreign-born people aim to become Ozumo rikishi in Japan, it is natural for them to follow the process of “nyu-Nihon-ka” in their Sumodo quest by becoming acquainted with Ozumo’s unique competition regulations and customs that have been established through the history and traditions of Japan.

At first glance, this kind of acculturation looks similar to the way the Kendo world has developed. But, in the case of Kendo, foreign kenshi (swordspersons) usually practice Kendo in their own countries instead of being required to dwell in Japan. Moreover, Kendo is not a professional sport. For these reasons, the Kendo world has been free from the issue of “nyu-Nihon.” In contrast, when would-be foreign-born rikishi choose to join the Ozumo world, they need to come to Japan and live in one of the Sumo-beya stables. This in turn means that those foreign-born rikishi exactly undergo the process of “nyu-Nihon” to enter the Ozumo world by adapting themselves to becoming members of the Japanese martial art world, which is new to them.

The Ozumo world has accepted many foreign-born rikishi to date. Those rikishi, regardless of where they come from, be it Hawaii or Mongolia or elsewhere, have fascinated Ozumo fans with their dazzling ring performances — the outcome of their “nyu-Nihon” endeavors. Japanese fans of Ozumo have been, and are, pleased first by the efforts on the part of foreign-born rikishi to become acquainted with Japan’s traditions, customs, ways of thinking and culture to the level of “nyu-Nihon-ka,” and second by the important role they continue to play in ensuring the preservation of the tradition of Ozumo as Japan’s national sport.

The process for foreign-born people to become Ozumo rikishi in Japan can be defined as part of a kind of acculturation. In this case, acculturation means a change in one culture when it experiences contact with a different culture. The Ozumo world has experienced case after case of acculturation on the part of foreign-born rikishi, regardless of where they have come from in the world, as they have undergone the processes of “nyu-Nihon” and “nyu-Nihon-ka” while adapting to Ozumo of Japan in terms of culture, Sumo techniques and long-lasting traditions. The first foreign-born rikishi who went through all of these steps was Takamiyama.

4. ‘Nyu-Nihon-ka’ of Takamiyama and the dignity of Ozumo

Mr. Watanabe Daigoro, who is better known by his Ozumo ring name

of Takamiyama and his post-retirement title and stablemaster name of Azumazeki, told the Panel, “I wanted to become an oyakata (Sumo master) only after learning Japan’s culture, history and life — everything about Japan.” With this mindset, Takamiyama continued his active rikishi career until he was almost 40 years old. Four years before leaving the ring, he earned Japanese citizenship. About two years after his retirement, he became a shisho (stablemaster), teaching his disciples about Sumo culture. While running his own stable, he reportedly said, “[As far as Sumo coaching is concerned,] it doesn’t matter if my disciples are American or Japanese” and “I want to teach them about patience and endurance, faithfulness and humanity, and the traditions and qualities of Ozumo society. That’s my way of returning what [Ozumo society] did for me.” It can be said that Takamiyama successfully underwent the process of “nyu-Nihon-ka” during his rikishi career and, after becoming a naturalized Japanese citizen, he chose to “Japanize” himself as the stablemaster Azumazeki.

In the Azumazeki stable, disciples chanted a motto, titled “Ten Hearts,” every day. The motto consisted of 10 polite Japanese phrases, each one calling a particular virtue to mind:

- (1) “Ohayo” (good morning): (affection)
- (2) “Hai” (yes): (straightforwardness)
- (3) “Sumimasen” (sorry): (remorse)
- (4) “Dozo” (please): (humility)
- (5) “Watakushi ga shimasu” (let me do it): (devotion)
- (6) “Arigato” (thank you): (gratitude)
- (7) “Okagesamade” (a modest way of returning greetings when one is asked “How are you?” or “How is your business going?”): (modesty)
- (8) “Otsukaresan” (a workplace greeting with meanings that include, “See you tomorrow”): (a sense of caring)
- (9) “Nanikuso” (I won’t give up): (endurance)
- (10) “Uso o tsukuna” (Don’t lie): (honesty)

These rules of behavior have much in common with what the Ozumo world has emphasized as the spirit of decorum in its “classic” code of conduct. In other words, this everyday scene at the Azumazeki stable demonstrates that the Hawaiian-born rikishi accomplished his “nyu-Nihon-ka” endeavor of learning Japan’s traditions and history in the Ozumo world, whereas Japanese rikishi join it after learning such matters in Japanese society — at home, at school and so on.

With his “Ten Hearts” motto, Takamiyama provided an easy-to-understand explanation about the spirit of the Japanese martial art of Sumo in which decorum and dignity matter — as seen when each match begins and ends with a bow of respect.

Although, needless to say, victories matter in sports, many Ozumo fans, ardent and casual alike, abhor scenes in the dohyo ring in which winners ostentatiously gloat over their victories. Such behavior is considered to lack both dignity and consideration for the loser, no matter how exultant the winner feels. There are certain acts that may be allowable in some other sports but can hardly be accepted in Ozumo, a martial art that, as mentioned above, begins and ends with a bow of respect. Unseemly scenes in Ozumo have included an improper tachiai initial charge in which a rikishi refuses to be in tune with his opponent, fist pumps or raised fists on the part of a winner, and complaints expressed against a gyoji referee’s decision by a disgruntled rikishi returning to the ringside.

Yokozuna grand champions are strongly expected to set an example

of the highest level of decency for other rikishi in the Ozumo world.

In recent years, certain yokozuna have taken the initiative to engage in volunteer activities in host cities and towns during JASA's regional Ozumo tours, one of the association's two all-important permanent programs along with the Grand Sumo Tournament series. For example, they have encouraged local people in various areas in the country who lost their houses and even their beloved family members in natural disasters, including the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Their dedication deserves praise.

However, in sharp contrast, there are times when we are stunned to hear severe criticism from Ozumo fans about some rikishi's discomfiting moves in the ring, regardless of their standings in the banzuke rankings. Fans are disgusted to see rikishi using such moves as "harite" (slapping the opponent's face with an open hand) and "dame-oshi" (pushing an already defeated opponent). Although they do not constitute fouls in the JASA rulebook regarding kinjite (forbidden moves) and other prohibited acts, they are unbecoming of high-ranking rikishi. Even today, a majority of Ozumo fans feel a strong affinity toward Ozumo's "martial art nature," which idealistically rejects a mentality that prioritizes victories alone. Yet this victory-oriented mentality causes some rikishi feel free to do whatever they want as long as they win.

A yokozuna champion, as an Ozumo rikishi of the highest rank, is exempt from being demoted on the banzuke rankings no matter how poorly he performs or how many times he is absent from Grand Sumo Tournaments, usually due to injury. Until recently, from the viewpoint of respecting each yokozuna's status and self-directed responsibility, it had been thought to be natural for them to make a serious, well-considered decision on their own to retire if their performance deteriorated. However, particularly in 2020 and 2021 (Reiwa 2 and 3), the deeds of rikishi at the rank of yokozuna and their decisions to be absent from Grand Sumo Tournaments irritated Ozumo fans who place importance on the dignity and martial art nature unique to Ozumo as actions inconsistent with the traditions of Ozumo.

The fact that JASA's Articles of Incorporation and its relevant regulations have no provision pertaining to the demotion of yokozuna does not mean that yokozuna are guaranteed to indefinitely continue their active careers. Each yokozuna is obliged to show leadership to all subordinate rikishi by performing "dohyo-iri" (entering the ring) ceremonies and competing in bouts each day during Grand Sumo Tournaments and regional tours, living up to the expectations of Japanese society. It is the responsibility of shisho (stablemasters) to keep yokozuna mindful of the weight of their position.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that several days into a recent Grand Sumo Tournament, an ozeki happened to find himself in the position of the active rikishi with the highest standing in the tournament because the two reigning yokozuna both withdrew halfway through it. The ozeki, who had been performing poorly up until then, made up his mind to go through with his newfound duty to remain in the ring as the rikishi with the highest standing. After doing so, he announced his retirement. What he did is the exact way any rikishi should fulfill his responsibility in keeping with his Ozumo status.

5. Where Ozumo should be going

Based on our review of and discussions about the recent and current state of the Ozumo world, the Panel thinks Ozumo should go in the direction to be spelled out below.

As for the future of Ozumo, when comparing the outbound paths taken by Japan's Judo and Kendo societies, Ozumo should not follow the path of "internationalization" adopted by Judo. Ozumo should go in a direction similar to the one Kendo chose for "overseas promotion" and "international responses." The Ozumo world has already experienced years of recruiting foreign-born young people with physical prowess — some with experience in their own national martial arts. Those foreign-born newcomers to Ozumo have been trained through countless rounds of practice to become full-fledged rikishi. In that sense, each shisho (stablemaster) who has coached and brought out the best in new foreign-born disciples can be likened to a master lapidary — a cutter and polisher of gemstones.

In the Ozumo world, no system has ever existed requiring foreign-born newcomers to spend early days as amateurs to accumulate enough experience to become professional rikishi. Newcomers, Japanese-born and foreign-born alike, have been treated as fresh disciples — novices — in the professional Sumo world. In the case of rikishi hailing from Hawaii or Mongolia, for instance, they have been called "Hawaiian-born Japanese Ozumo rikishi" or "Mongolian-born Japanese Ozumo rikishi." Foreign-born disciples have lived together with their Japanese peers at stables in Japan. For foreign-born rikishi, such stables have served not only as gateways to the Ozumo world but also as indispensable places to experience the process of growing as Japanese Ozumo rikishi. Against this background, it can be said that, unlike the "overseas promotion" effort of Japan's Kendo society, Japan's Ozumo community has provided foreign-born rikishi with what amounts to a well-thought-out "nyu-Nihon-ka" environment of its own amidst the multinationalization of and acculturation in Ozumo. In other words, even amidst growing globalization, Ozumo has evolved to become minimally susceptible to simplistic cultural pluralism or multiculturalism.

Ozumo fans have been excited to see newly recruited foreign-born rikishi turn out to be powerful rikishi showing amazing Japanese Ozumo performances in the ring. Nevertheless, there have been regrettable exceptions. For instance, a foreign-born rikishi celebrated by raising or pumping his fists seconds after winning bouts, and waved the national flag of his home country during a victory parade in Tokyo. Another foreign-born rikishi, appearing in tournament victory interviews in the ring, asked spectators to join him for three banzai shouts on one occasion and even carried out a "sanbonjime" ceremonial cheer, which involves a triple hand-clap, with spectators on another occasion. Many Ozumo fans felt let down as they found all such acts strange, discomforting and unbecoming of Japanese Ozumo rikishi. Those reactions were natural and understandable, considering that Ozumo fans always look forward to seeing foreign-born rikishi going through the "nyu-Nihon-ka" process in a dignified manner.

Now that the Ozumo world has opened its door to foreign-born rikishi, it should not shut the door in the future. In cases when foreign-born rikishi with experience in martial arts and the like abroad manage to impeccably undergo the "nyu-Nihon-ka" process and powerfully perform as Japanese Ozumo rikishi, their presence certainly contributes to making Ozumo more attractive.

That said, however, from the viewpoint of preserving and developing

the tradition of Sumodo, JASA should avoid a limitless increase in the number of foreign-born rikishi. It rather should envisage the future of Ozumo as an idiosyncratic Japanese sport competition — a Japanese-style martial art that embodies a variety of elements, including traditional culture, Shinto decorum, entertainment, spirituality and the beauty of form — that has proved to be effective in achieving a harmonious balance between “multinationalization” and “nyu-Nihon-ka.”

The Panel thinks Ozumo should not sacrifice its distinctive nature as a one-of-a-kind competition method, or its essence as the inherently Japanese national sport originating from the history of Japan, for the sake of spreading itself internationally. The Ozumo world, while accepting foreign-born rikishi, should pursue developing them as Japanese Ozumo rikishi by motivating them to undergo the “nyu-Nihon-ka” process. The Ozumo world has continued to adapt to the multinationalization of rikishi without obliging foreign-born rikishi to earn Japanese citizenship when entering Ozumo.

As mentioned in Chapter 1-3, foreign-born rikishi are expected to accept the tradition and customs of “the national sport inherent in Japan” and associate with Japanese culture through the “nyu-Nihon-ka” process. The Panel also expects them to develop the qualities and abilities to become oyakata (Sumo masters) and shisho (stablemasters) in the future — a way they can definitely contribute to the preservation and development of Sumodo. To do so, foreign-born rikishi need to change and develop from the inside.

In their “nyu-Nihon-ka” process, foreign-born rikishi are not necessarily required to earn Japanese citizenship. That being the case, why is Japanese citizenship imperative as a qualification for foreign-born former rikishi to assume those management positions within JASA?

The reason is that they are in a position responsible for coaching and interacting with foreign-born disciples at their stables — where they live together with those disciples and supervise day-to-day practices — both in and out of the ring. There are two types of oyakata — those who run their own stables (shisho) and others who have no stables of their own but belong to one of the stables as coaches. Both shisho and other oyakata are obliged to coach rikishi, Japanese- and foreign-born alike, to ensure that they absorb Sumodo, the way of Sumo, which is “the national sport inherent in Japan.”

To perform that duty, all oyakata — especially shisho, also known as heya-mochi toshiyori (stable-owning Sumo elders) — must understand Japan’s inherent fudo (values and spirit) and customs. Therefore, they are required to take firm root in Japanese society. If foreign-born oyakata and shisho place importance on developing plural identities and favoring a cosmopolitanism that lacks special attachment to Japan’s tradition and fudo, they are unlikely to be able to fully teach their disciples about what Ozumo is and what the spirit of Japan and the spirit of Ozumo are.

In this regard, earning Japanese citizenship means the symbolic and substantive choice to live in Japan with a firm determination to take root in its soil. JASA gives the status of oyakata to those who have excellent rikishi track records and sufficient qualities and abilities as supervisors. Oyakata then are eligible to stay with JASA until the age of 65. Each heya (stable) embodies all the qualities of its shisho. This means that shisho are totally responsible for everything related to their stables, ranging from managing their own stables to developing and coaching disciples. When foreign-born rikishi, going through the “nyu-Nihon-ka” process under this system to gradually absorb Japan’s culture and tradition, become shisho with Japanese citizenship, the fundamentals of JASA can be enhanced further in real — not abstract— terms.

Further, toshiyori as members of the General Meeting of Toshiyori have voting rights in electing Toshiyori Director candidates to be confirmed by the JASA Council (Article 3-1 of the Regulations Concerning the General Meeting of Toshiyori, Ichimon and Toshiyori-kai). The word ichimon in the title of that article means a clan, grouping a certain number of stables.

Those qualified to be oyakata participate in the Ozumo world's decision-making process for preserving, inheriting and developing the tradition and order of Sumodo, the way of the inherently Japanese national sport of Sumo. They may also assume public roles to promote related activities for such a purpose. Specifically, they are appointed by JASA to be directors, deputy directors, i-in (committee members), shunin (managers) and toshiyori holding other positions in the public interest incorporated association, such as belonging to relevant divisions or committees of the organization. Given the importance of oyakata's responsibility in the Ozumo world, the possession of Japanese citizenship is a necessary precondition.

6. Preservation and development of Ozumo and international friendship

Let's again touch on the definition of Sumodo, which was discussed in Chapter 1-3. Sumodo is a way of developing oneself as a human being that attaches importance to the pursuit of attainments beyond competition, instead of myopically defining Ozumo as a venue where victories in simple contests of strength are all that matter.

Japan's Ozumo world has consistently emphasized the significance of Sumodo. The reason is related to the fact that Sumo is a martial art developing from the tradition of Bushido.

"Azuma Kagami" (literally, The Mirror of the East), a historical chronicle of events that that occurred in the Kamakura period (circa 1185-1333), repeatedly uses the descriptive phrase "masters of Kyuba (equestrian archery) and Sumo" (Vols. 19, 25, etc.). The fact that Sumo, along with Kyuba, was an art practiced by bushi also was highlighted in Volume 12 of "Teijo Zakki" (literally, Teijo's Miscellaneous Notes), a 16-volume history encyclopedia compiled during the Edo period (1603-1868). Its author, historian Ise Sadatake (whose given name can also be pronounced as "Teijo"), specialized in medieval-age imperial court and warrior customs. The Japan Budo Association defines Budo as "the way" of practitioners "striving to unify mind, technique and body; to develop their character; to enhance their sense of morality; and to cultivate a respectful and courteous demeanor."

The Articles of Incorporation of JASA mention preservation and development along with international friendship in Article 3 as being among the purposes of JASA's incorporation. This clarifies that Sumodo and the international character of Ozumo are not contradictory to each other. As a public interest incorporated association, JASA is obliged to attain all of its stated purposes, including preservation and development and international friendship, pursuant to Article 3.

In this connection, as mentioned earlier, the Ozumo world should uphold Japan's classic traditions, ethos and techniques and preserve and develop the essence of Sumodo. Foreign-born rikishi are required to engage in the "nyu-Nihon-ka" process to join the Ozumo world's efforts to attain those particular purposes. Sumodo requires more than a "yes or no" dichotomy. Instead of mechanically choosing between whether one "may do this" or "may not," rikishi need to develop flexible acumen and integrity — by gathering

experience through day-to-day practice in front of shisho at stables and Ozumo bouts — to judge whether they “should not” do something or “had better not.” The Ozumo world has traditionally eschewed a “might makes right” attitude among rikishi.

Ozumo is a profoundly multifaceted world: Rikishi take part in a popular spectator activity while also seeking after truth through Sumodo; it is a sport while also embodying traditional culture; and it retains Shinto rituals while also providing various entertaining ceremonies, such as the dohyo-iri (entering the ring) ceremony, the rare sandan-gamae ceremony — performed by the two highest-ranked rikishi to show “three stages of fighting posture” including firing oneself up and defending — and the yumitori-shiki (bow twirling) performed at the close of each day’s Grand Sumo Tournament program. Against this background, it is inevitable for the Ozumo world to expect foreign-born rikishi to engage in firsthand learning of deep and versatile expertise and knowledge of Ozumo through the “nyu-Nihon-ka” process.

The Panel sincerely hopes that foreign-born people with the desire and determination to perform in the Ozumo world will continue developing themselves through “nyu-Nihon-ka” as rikishi becoming of Ozumo of Japan. We look forward to seeing such foreign-born Japanese Ozumo rikishi taking on the important mission, true to the Articles of Incorporation of JASA, of promoting international friendship by performing abroad and showing to the rest of the world how attractive Ozumo is.

7. Fostering Japanese rikishi

The recruitment and development of excellent rikishi talent is the most important part of the responsibility for maintaining Ozumo’s traditions, spirit and techniques and preserving and developing Sumodo. JASA recognizes and pursues this as one of the main purposes — and responsibilities — of the organization, pursuant to Article 4, Section 2 of the Articles of Incorporation, which calls for “the development of talent essential for preserving the tradition and order of Sumodo.”

As long as JASA is dedicated to and responsible for preserving and developing Japanese Sumodo, it is obvious that Japanese-born rikishi must always account for the majority of the rikishi population. Therefore, it is vitally important for JASA to recruit and develop Japanese-born rikishi. It is even more important to do so from now on to keep the mainstay of Ozumo steadfastly supported by Japanese-born rikishi, especially if JASA continues to accept the multinationalization of Ozumo and promote the “nyu-Nihon-ka” process on the part of foreign-born rikishi and, therefore, needs to require foreign-born oyakata and shisho to play a greater role, together with their Japanese-born peers in the Association, to preserve and develop Sumodo.

In reality, however, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit young Japanese with enough of the qualities and motivation essential to become rikishi. The reason is because Japanese society has been inundated with diverse cultural trends and multiple popular sports even while its birth rate has been on the decrease and young people have been placing importance on higher education and greater stability in their lives. To put it differently, JASA and shisho now are experiencing the difficulty of maintaining the traditional level of Ozumo by developing young rikishi day after day under the heya (stable) system.

Against this backdrop, shisho need to be fully aware of their responsibility for being at the heart of developing rikishi by preserving Ozumo's tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction. Those rikishi who now are active in the ring also need to remember that their performance and behavior influence the aspirations and ambitions of younger people outside the Ozumo world to become rikishi. JASA needs to make every possible effort to tackle the difficulty of recruiting new disciples.

In Japanese society, parents now hesitate to let their sons join the Ozumo world as disciples. One reason is their concern about issues of health and safety management for rikishi in the event of injury or other problems. In recent years, the average weight of rikishi has increased, resulting in an apparent increase in injuries among them. When injuries force rikishi to be absent from Grand Sumo Tournaments, it can seriously lower their banzuke rankings or, in the worst case, even terminate their careers. It goes without saying that the absence from Grand Sumo Tournaments of those rikishi who are popular and likely to be promoted to higher rankings diminishes some spectators' interest in Ozumo to a considerable extent, a negative development in terms of JASA revenue from ticket sales.

The increase in the number of rikishi suffering injuries can be attributed to an improvement in the power of their physiques and a gain in weight, which may cause a too-forceful impact at the moment of a clash between two massive rikishi, leaving virtually no way for one or both of them to soften the force of the blow. On this particular point, there is also a view that the increase in injuries is a phenomenon that indicates a lack of practice at stables.

On the other hand, there has been progress in the area of medical support to prevent injuries among rikishi. Shisho and JASA should make full medical support available for them. Particularly in the case of injury among lower-ranked rikishi during Grand Sumo Tournaments and regional tours, JASA should give them special care until recovery. The Panel sincerely expects JASA to prioritize healthcare management to prevent injuries. This is a matter of life and death for every rikishi.

JASA has been studying a proposal for improving and enhancing its clinic, Nihon Sumo Kyokai Shinryojo, better known simply as the Sumo Clinic. Today, parents do not want to let their sons join Ozumo immediately after finishing compulsory education at junior high school — they want their sons to graduate from senior high school and stay healthy and free from injury. It is an encouraging development that the JASA clinic employed a full-time physician in April 2021 (Reiwa 3). At the same time, considering that rikishi are mostly prone to injury in the ring, JASA needs to improve the clinic's capabilities in the fields of orthopedic treatment and rehabilitation of injured rikishi. To facilitate the efforts to recruit disciples and develop new rikishi, the Panel expects JASA to realize the proposed reform of the Sumo Clinic as early as possible.

In the case of recruiting junior high school graduates as disciples, there should be a set of special discipleship measures for them, including helping them earn senior high school diplomas, to ensure that they can keep growing as both rikishi and good citizens and prepare for their future lives. At the same time, it is essential for JASA to ensure that their parents have a sense of assurance about the environment surrounding their sons who are recruited by the Ozumo world. These days, the number of young people who love Sumo and aspire to become Ozumo rikishi when they are elementary or junior high school students is regrettably small.

As a result, most new disciples recruited just after graduating from

junior high school are precious talent found by shisho and heya-tsuki oyakata (Sumo masters belonging to specific stables as coaches) on their own. Shisho and oyakata spend many hours and even days traveling to various parts of Japan to scout for promising talent after receiving tips mostly from local Sumo enthusiasts about the presence of such boys. In most cases, they have to repeatedly visit and patiently talk to the boys concerned — not all of whom necessarily wish to become rikishi in the first place — and their parents. Even in most of the cases in which they succeed, shisho and oyakata can gain the consent of boys and parents only after many more hours and days of earnest persuasion. In reality, however, a majority of their efforts have ended in vain.

Let's take a look at how many new disciples joined the Ozumo world after passing annual JASA discipleship tests in the Heisei era (1989-2019). In 1992 and again in 1993 (Heisei 4 and 5), more than 200 entrants passed the annual tests. Afterward, the annual totals of successful entrants tended to fall. In 2008 (Heisei 20) and later, the numbers of new disciples generally ranged between 50 and 100, showing a general downward trend. Nevertheless, it is heartening that in recent years, more than a few junior high school graduates still opted to join the Ozumo world, while there has been an increase in the number of Sumo club members at the senior high school level and university level who are eager to become professional Sumo wrestlers.

How can newly recruited disciples and young rikishi without post-compulsory education earn senior high school diplomas? There are at least three viable solutions.

First, Sumo Kyoshujo, the JASA-managed Sumo training school for Ozumo rookies, should be transformed into a JASA-affiliated educational corporation qualified to provide the three years of senior high school education that is standard in Japan.

Second, JASA should ask for cooperation of senior high schools located near the Kokugikan, the Ozumo venue in Tokyo, in creating schooling opportunities for Ozumo disciples and rikishi.

The third possible choice is for young rikishi to take correspondence senior high school courses given by NHK Gakuen, among other schools of the kind.

In any case, the Panel expects JASA to work out an education curriculum that can be practically compatible with rikishi's regular practices and Grand Sumo Tournament participation. JASA should start consultation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, which supervises the Association as a regulatory ministry, and the Japan Sports Agency as early as possible about specific measures to enable young rikishi to have adequate time for both Ozumo training and education.

Furthermore, we need to refer to rikishi's post-Ozumo careers. To date, shisho and stables have played a primary role in helping retiring rikishi find their second careers. Shisho take full advantage of their respective networks of contacts and supporters' associations in helping retiring rikishi. Occupations that have been chosen for post-Ozumo careers vary to a great extent indeed, ranging from cooks and manga artists to certified engineers and technicians, to name a few. It is noteworthy that retiring rikishi's relationships with shisho and stables last even after leaving the Ozumo world and that no rikishi have retired without securing a new career ahead of time. It is desirable for JASA to make further efforts for young rikishi to keep society, including parents, better informed about concrete examples of the strong, everlasting bonds between shisho and stables and former disciples even after the latter's departure from the Ozumo world.

Chapter 2

Measures to be pursued

This chapter focuses on what the Ozumo world should specifically do to ensure that it will go in the direction that it should, on the premise that the multinationalization of Ozumo will continue in the future. The Panel proposes the following measures as essential for preserving and developing Sumodo in the face of the various challenges that now confront the Ozumo world, such as the development of foreign-born rikishi and oyakata and the recruitment of Japanese-born rikishi.

1. Improving Sumo stables

Ozumo is a sport that begins and ends with a bow of respect. For rikishi, living in heya (Sumo stables) is the most vital part of Ozumo in learning virtues such as respect for shisho (stablemasters) and elders, perseverance and self-denial (through daily practice), and reverence for the dohyo ring. Being a place where such norms are fused together, enabling rikishi to learn the aesthetics and virtue of Japanese things, a heya is the right venue for foreign-born rikishi to undergo the “nyu-Nihon” process that helps them develop power and virtue.

It is noteworthy that Ozumo actually serves as a role model in Japanese society. For instance, rikishi instill a sense of public morality — a volunteer spirit — in their minds through shugyo (discipleship), which motivates them to do even unpleasant tasks by themselves without being told. Such self-motivated behavior is standardized at each stable, with disciples rigorously working to keep the whole stable always clean and organized and complying with various rules set by their shisho.

In the Ozumo world, JASA has not been directly responsible for the development of the human resources essential for preserving and developing the traditions of Sumodo. Ozumo veterans, especially heya-mochi toshiyori (stable-owning Sumo elders) have traditionally assumed that responsibility instead.

Currently, there are 42 Ozumo stables.

These stables exist under a quasi-stock ownership system called Toshiyori-myoseki, which literally means “elder’s stable name succession.” The history of Ozumo tells us that the original form of this system dates back to 1684 (the first year of the Japanese era of Jokyo). At the time, Toshiyori-myoseki name rights were granted to a select group of Edo-period Ozumo veterans, such as Ikazuchi, Tamagaki and Isenoumi. Likewise, the circular dohyo ring became fixed as the setting for Sumo bouts in the Genroku era (1688-1704), while an organization called the “Sumo Kaisho” was set up in the Horeki era (1751-64) as the original predecessor of JASA. Sumo-beya

stables themselves came into being over a period spanning the Horeki era and the Meiwa era (1764-72).

In a nutshell, almost all of the fundamental aspects of Ozumo, including toshiyori (oyakata) status, the dohyo ring, Sumo-beya stables and Sumo associations, have been in place since the middle of the Edo period. This means that Sumo-beya stables have preserved and developed Sumodo for more than 250 years.

The Sumo-beya system, backed by the tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction, has taken a firm hold in Japanese society, providing a pseudo-family environment where rikishi live together and undergo the process of growing as rikishi with sound minds. As long as the system continues to foster many good-quality shisho capable of developing as many excellent rikishi as possible, the general public in Japan is likely to keep supporting it as a useful and reasonable mechanism for preserving and developing Sumodo.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that there is no clarity as to the authority and responsibility concerning the development of rikishi.

Compared with other professional sports, in which teams exist as incorporated businesses, Ozumo is unique in that the Sumo-beya to which rikishi (athletes) belong to are not incorporated — each stable is owned and run by a self-employed shisho.

As mentioned above, Ozumo has been preserved thanks to the tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction in a pseudo-family communal environment. From this perspective, the characteristics of Sumo-beya as private business operations seem natural. However, as the stables are not incorporated, it is difficult to fully apply to them the governance and compliance requirements that are increasingly applied to incorporated entities these days.

For instance, Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) and J.League soccer have contractual relationships with their players. But Sumo-beya and rikishi in the Ozumo world have no contracts between them — they only have pseudo-familial human relationships. Although shisho's wives, called okamisan, play an important role in helping disciples grow as rikishi, they are not members of JASA, meaning that they are not bound by the disciplines of JASA.

Because no contracts exist between shisho and rikishi, JASA is the sole holder of official disciplinary authority over rikishi. Likewise, JASA is responsible for all public-relations activities related to rikishi. Therefore, it is difficult to know, for example, who should actually be accountable for a scandal involving a rikishi. JASA or the shisho? Or, if both are responsible, how should JASA and the shisho share responsibility? Given that shisho have almost total de facto responsibility for developing rikishi, it is really difficult to understand from the outside how this matter should be sorted out.

Due to this ambiguity, JASA is exposed to accusations of “negligence of duties” even in the event of a rikishi's violation of rules for which his shisho should obviously be held responsible because of his de facto – and arguably contract-like – relationship with the rikishi concerned.

To make the Sumo-beya system effective in preserving and developing the traditions of Sumodo, JASA and Sumo stables should be clearly aware of their respective authorities and responsibilities and redefine and build smooth cooperation and mutual relations between them — with a healthy sense of tension. In the process of solving this issue, certain other matters, including the role of the ichimon (clan) system — which creates multiple collaborative groups of Sumo-beya — should be prudently reviewed as well.

Sumo-beya are run as self-employed, self-reliant business entities. Some of them actually appear to be ordinary business organizations that include many people who are concurrently JASA members — indeed, one stable has more than 40 JASA members. Against this background, it is natural to request that each Sumo-beya be mindful of complying with governance rules. JASA’s regulations regard a “Sumo-beya as the same person as its shisho” (Article 4, Section 4 of the Sumo-beya Regulations), delegating governance responsibilities to shisho, who directly manage their own stables. But those shisho are JASA members, making them responsible for conforming with JASA’s governance rules even as they remain independent of JASA as Sumo stable owners.

JASA’s governance compliance policy requires shisho to realize governance in their stables in harmony with JASA’s governance criteria by sincerely complying with JASA’s governance rules as JASA members (Article 13, etc., of the Sumo-beya Regulations). Shisho should be mindful of not only their responsibility as the persons in charge of governance at stables but also self-management and self-improvement.

Especially when accepting newly arrived foreign-born disciples, who are not yet fluent in Japanese and need time to familiarize themselves with Japan’s lifestyle and customs, it is indispensable for shisho and their wives, okamisan, to be mindful of a balance between love and discipline in giving instructions and creating a Sumo-beya environment for newcomers.

It is natural that shisho’s independence should be duly respected and also that they are required to be highly capable of coaching rikishi. When shisho breach governance rules, JASA, which is responsible for supervising them, needs to strictly take punitive measures, in accordance with its disciplinary regulations, to correct the misconduct. Shisho are obliged to comply with a series of provisions set forth by the Sumo-beya Regulations. If a shisho infringes upon any of those provisions, JASA will punish him and potentially issue an order to either close down his stable or have another oyakata take it over (Article 6 of the Sumo-beya Regulations). In fact, we recently have seen JASA taking such punitive measures against shisho. JASA, which obliges Sumo-beya to contribute to “improving the dohyo,” the very center of Ozumo, should also sternly request shisho to work hard for “improving Sumo-beya.”

2. Coaching foreign-born rikishi and encouraging stablemasters’ self-improvement

JASA’s current foreign-born rikishi quota allows each Sumo stable to have one rikishi with foreign citizenship. The Panel invited the former Takamiyama — who became stablemaster Azumazeki after retirement — to share his Ozumo experiences with the Panel members. He told the Panel how he managed to overcome many barriers, including the language one and those related to the “nyu-Nihon” and “nyu-Nihon-ka” processes to learn Sumodo. He was born and educated abroad — in Hawaii — and came to Japan, where people’s lifestyle and cultural backgrounds, among other things, were completely new to him. It was obvious that he would have to work at least twice as hard as his Japanese-born peers in the Ozumo world to learn the traditions of Sumo, which has inherently Japanese cultural characteristics that originated from Shinto rituals. The Panel pays respect to those many foreign-born rikishi, including the former Takamiyama, who have made many

“nyu-Nihon” efforts to adapt to Japan’s history and traditions, contributing to the rejuvenation of Ozumo.

On the other hand, many foreign-born rikishi have been punished for scandals or misconduct. In 2017 (Heisei 29), JASA set up an ad hoc independent committee for studying measures to prevent the recurrence of acts of violence in the Ozumo world in the wake of the so-called Harumafuji incident. In a report issued in October 2018 (Heisei 30), the committee revealed the numbers of scandals committed by Ozumo rikishi in recent decades — acts of violence, the use of rude words coupled with improper deeds, and inappropriate ring behavior. Japanese-born rikishi were responsible for 33 cases and foreign-born ones were responsible for 77 cases between January 1989 (Heisei 1) and 2018. In more recent years, since 2000 (Heisei 12), there were 24 cases caused by Japanese-born rikishi and 74 cases caused by foreign-born rikishi. Considering that foreign-born rikishi accounted for a high of 8.7% during the period from 1989 and 4% to 5% in the more recent years, the scandal incident rate was considerably high among foreign-born rikishi.

When foreign-born rikishi practice day in and day out to learn Sumodo while grasping the beauty of Japanese Ozumo’s traditions, they can surely advance in the “nyu-Nihon” process. In this context, to preserve and develop Ozumo into the future, young Japanese-born shisho and oyakata who are responsible for coaching foreign-born rikishi should develop themselves by keeping up their own training and learning to become good shisho.

Each shisho runs a Sumo stable he either inherited or established, covering everything from developing human resources to managing financial, upkeep and personnel matters. Simultaneously, shisho, all of whom are JASA members, are assigned by JASA to take up various posts within the Association to contribute to its management and operations. In that sense, being a shisho is an intense job compared with many other professions. That said, however, shisho still have to fulfill the most important part of their responsibilities as educators who have to find disciples and develop them as rikishi.

When new disciples join Sumo stables, an important thing that shisho should teach them — foreign-born rikishi, in particular — at the very beginning and continuously thereafter, is the sense of ethics that has been the sustainable basis of support for the beauty of the traditions and history of Ozumo, originating from Shinto rituals. Shisho should make sure that rikishi absorb such indispensable ethics and integrity to the extent that they naturally avoid a “victory is everything” way of thinking and understand — for example — how unseemly it is for higher-ranked rikishi, such as yokozuna, to selfishly refuse to be in tune with their lower-ranked opponents at the time of tachiai (initial charge) because of their own inadequate preparation. The Panel strongly recommends that inexperienced shisho, in particular, recognize the importance of teaching each newly arrived foreign-born rikishi about the significance of Sumodo, the significance of carrying on the traditions of Sumo as a national sport, and the significance of becoming a role-model rikishi respected by people in Japan.

3. Strengthening guidance and supervision of stablemasters

For newly arrived foreign-born disciples, who undoubtedly are unable to immediately get used to Japan’s lifestyle and customs and speak Japanese fluently, Sumo-beya can be an oasis when shisho, together with their wives

(okamisan), are mindful of a balance between love and discipline in giving instructions and creating a Sumo-beya environment for newcomers. Takamiyama recalled what he experienced when he entered the Ozumo world, saying, “I was told first that the Sumo-beya was my [new] home from that moment.”

In the Ozumo world, while shisho’s independence is respected, they are naturally required to have high leadership qualities. As mentioned earlier, whenever it has become evident that a shisho violated the JASA regulations that must be complied with by all shisho, JASA, as an organization that is intrinsically responsible for governing human resources development in the Ozumo world, intervened to punish acts of violation.

As mentioned in the preceding section of this chapter, in 2018 (Heisei 30) the ad hoc committee worked out measures to prevent the recurrence of acts of violence similar to the one committed by then yokozuna Harumafuji in 2017 (Heisei 29). Its report recommended, first of all, that the Ozumo world “change its way of thinking to eradicate the mindset, including subconsciously, of tolerating violence — the mindset that has been held by shisho themselves [and rikishi under their leadership], and implement specifically relevant steps accordingly.” In response to the recommendation, the Ozumo world led by shisho is thought to have made every effort to discard the mindset of tolerating violence.

Notwithstanding such efforts within the Ozumo world, cases of interpersonal disputes and various kinds of harassment have often occurred at Sumo stables. That is why shisho now are expected, to a greater extent than before, to carry out Sumo-beya management in a proper manner. In the report cited above the committee also recommended that the existing “criteria for qualifying as new shisho be clarified and rigidly applied.” However, there has been no sufficient response to this recommendation. The Panel, too, recommends that JASA take necessary measures to ensure that only those former rikishi who have the right qualities to become shisho will ever be chosen, thus keeping all Sumo-beya run and managed by shisho with a high level of qualities and abilities.

Shisho have often been held responsible for a lack of leadership in connection with improper behavior and misconduct committed by foreign-born rikishi, including yokozuna, in and out of the ring. The Panel expects JASA to take a greater leadership on this particular issue, which tends to draw the attention of — and serious backlash from — the public.

Meanwhile, the Panel points out that in July 2019 (Reiwa 1), JASA established a set of rules governing the compliance procedures within the Association, including a provision regarding the role of ichimon clans. Currently there are five clans, each comprising five to 14 Sumo stables. In the Ozumo world, ichimon are expected to play a “mezzanine” role between JASA and Sumo-beya. As such, JASA should continuously articulate the importance of ichimon as a vital element that links JASA and Sumo-beya.

4. Toshiyori-myoseki succession and one-generation toshiyori titles

The Ozumo world’s Toshiyori-myoseki name succession system dates back to the Edo period — specifically to 1684 (Jokyo 1), as mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 1. At the time, the Tokugawa shogunate, also called the bakufu, decided to prohibit tsuji-zumo (street corner Sumo) and kanjin-zumo (fundraising Sumo to solicit contributions to temples and shrines). Then, 15

rikishi who had become “kanjin-moto” or kanjin-zumo promoters, including Ikazuchi Gondayu, formed a guild called a “kabu-nakama” (literally meaning a “stock association,” i.e. a trade and crafts guild). Like other kabu-nakama associations formed by merchants, artisans and so on, the Sumo group offered to pay the bakufu “myogakin” — a de facto tax for receiving exclusive business permits. As a result, they were able to resume kanjin-zumo events. Against this historical background, the Ozumo term “Toshiyori-myoseki” is also called “toshiyori-kabu” (literally meaning “Sumo elder stock”).

Reflecting Ozumo’s growing popularity, the number of holders of Toshiyori-myoseki rights gradually increased from the 15 founding members, including former rikishi Ikazuchi, Tamagaki and Isenoumi, to 105 as of 1927 (Showa 2). Since then, the number has remained unchanged. This means, of course, that the Ozumo world today has a total of 105 holders of Toshiyori-myoseki rights.

To become a Toshiyori-myoseki rights holder by succeeding a retiring toshiyori, a former rikishi needs to undergo the name succession process under the Toshiyori-myoseki system, from passing screening examinations by JASA’s Toshiyori Qualifications Examination Committee to approval by the JASA board of directors.

According to the JASA rules, former yokozuna may remain in JASA as toshiyori, retaining their ring names, for five years from retirement even without acquiring Toshiyori-myoseki rights. However, former yokozuna holding this special title are not entitled to own their own Sumo stables.

Nonetheless, an ad hoc privilege was granted to some former yokozuna in the years preceding the 2014 reorganization of JASA as a public interest incorporated association. The special privilege, given in recognition of those yokozuna’s outstanding rikishi career records or distinguished achievements, enabled them to hold the title of special toshiyori, using their ring names, until reaching the mandatory retirement age or resigning from JASA. Because of their acquisition of special Toshiyori-myoseki rights, those former yokozuna, known by their ring names, were able to establish stables of their own and become shisho.

They were called “ichidai (one-generation) toshiyori” because the privilege was applicable to the specific yokozuna only. None of their disciples would be eligible to become new shisho by succeeding to the names of those former yokozuna and obtaining ownership of their stables. In other words, in the case of one-generation toshiyori, the Sumo way they pursued with power and waza (techniques) as yokozuna would officially disappear with the Sumo-beya bearing their names — without generation-after-generation name succession.

We have so far had three former yokozuna choose to become one-generation toshiyori — the 48th yokozuna Taiho, the 55th yokozuna Kitanoumi and the 65th yokozuna Takanohana. The 58th yokozuna Chiyonofuji declined to receive the special privilege because he wanted to “succeed to a long-existing heya (stable) name.” He succeeded to the toshiyori name of Kokonoe and became the 13th shisho of the Kokonoe-beya stable.

As of today, the Ozumo world has no former yokozuna with one-off toshiyori status. Following the death of Kitanoumi and the pre-retirement resignation from JASA of Takanohana, the names of the Sumo-beya run by them disappeared. Kitanoumi’s stable was renamed, while Takanohana’s stable was closed down, with its rikishi moving to other stables that had close relations with the disbanded one. The disciples of the two former yokozuna had no chance to succeed to the names of the stables where they were coached, receiving their shisho’s tutelage.

The consequences of the one-generation toshiyori system were extremely regrettable in terms of (1) diminishing the shine of Ozumo's tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction and (2) both symbolically and substantially disrupting Ozumo's all-important missions of preserving Sumodo and fostering future Ozumo leaders and human resources, namely rikishi. It also is regrettable that the demise of the two stables run by Kitanoumi and Takanohana deprived the Ozumo world of a precious chance to have the two former yokozuna's Sumo knowledge and skills handed down to future generations.

The name succession system is an idiosyncratic Japanese tradition that has been commonly followed for centuries in various classical theatrical and musical genres, for instance, Kabuki, Rakugo (storytelling), Noh (dance-drama theater), Kyogen (comic theater) and Ningyo-joruri Bunraku (puppet theater), as well as various forms of Hogaku (classical Japanese music), including narrative shamisen music such as Nagauta and Kiyomoto, among others.

Like those classical theatrical and musical genres, the Ozumo world has preserved its myoseki system to certify that those Ozumo veterans gaining Toshियori-myoseki rights have definitely inherited Ozumo's traditions, history, authority, ethos and so on. The more toshiyori succeed to myoseki rights for generation after generation, the more priceless those rights become. This is possible only when a qualified former rikishi actually emerges as the successor to the existing rights concerned, namely succeeding to the current toshiyori name. On the other hand, the Ozumo title of one-generation toshiyori was created as a one-off privilege on an ad hoc basis for certain retiring yokozuna, a system that rules out, in the first place, any chance for their disciples to honor Sumodo by succeeding to their names. Such a preclusion does not exist in the previously mentioned classical theatrical and musical genres at all. More importantly, the one-generation toshiyori privilege is a "qualification" that is incongruous with Ozumo's tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction.

The one-generation toshiyori privilege is said to have been created in 1969 (Showa 44), when Taiho still was an active yokozuna, to allow him, on an exceptional basis, to have uchideshi (live-in disciples) of his own as a current rikishi and, after retirement, to retain his yokozuna name, Taiho, to be known as "toshiyori Taiho." The explicit purpose of the unprecedented privilege was to pay tribute to Taiho's outstanding contributions to Ozumo. But it had an implicitly practical purpose, capitalizing on his popularity, to make as many young people as possible aspire to join the Ozumo world as disciples. However, later on, the purpose of praising retiring yokozuna with extraordinary ring achievements was the only one emphasized. No attention was paid to the fact that the one-off privilege is contradictory to Ozumo's tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction.

Early in the Showa era, the Ozumo world had its 35th yokozuna Futabayama, called Ozumo's "kakusei" (saint of Ozumo) or "greatest rikishi of all time." He was in the highest-ranked position from 1937 to 1945 (Showa 12 to 20). In 1941, while he was active in the ring, he established a Sumo training hall (dojo) of his own, named "Futabayama Sumo Dojo."

After retirement, he was named toshiyori Tokitsukaze and, therefore, Futabayama Sumo Dojo was formally renamed Tokitsukaze-beya. Yet, he continued displaying the Futabayama Sumo Dojo signboard together with one for the stable bearing his toshiyori name. The dual signboard placement was the former yokozuna's endeavor to reconcile the continuation of praise for his yokozuna-age achievements with his obligation to uphold Ozumo's

tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction.

The one-generation toshiyori system was introduced without regard for any of JASA's self-governing statutory provisions while the Association was in its previous organizational status as an incorporated foundation — which existed from 1925 to 2014. The JASA board of directors in those days approved the ad hoc system in an ad hoc manner. As mentioned above, the exceptional privilege has been granted to three former yokozuna — Taiho, Kitanoumi and Takanohana. But there has been no consistency in its application — no special treatment was given to Futabayama, the 44th yokozuna Tochinishiki or the 45th yokozuna Wakanohana (also known the first Wakanohana), all of whom were popular in the years preceding the debut of Taiho. The exceptional system intrinsically runs counter to the integrity of Ozumo, as will be further discussed later. Moreover, as we members of the Panel reviewed the circumstances behind the somewhat surprising origins of one-generation toshiyori, it became apparent that the exceptional privilege is incompatible with the statutory criteria for the existence of JASA as a public interest incorporated association.

In fact, JASA's existing Articles of Incorporation have no provisions pertaining to the one-generation toshiyori privilege. When JASA transformed into a public interest incorporated association, it adopted its current Articles of Incorporation, declaring its public-interest purpose “to uphold, inherit and develop the tradition and order of Sumodo, the inherently Japanese national sport.”

The Articles of Incorporation adopted by JASA in its previous form as an incorporated foundation had specified the honing of Sumo techniques as well as Sumo instruction and the spread of Sumo.

When the new JASA sought to be recognized as a public interest incorporated association, it introduced its currently existing Articles of Incorporation, emphasizing its commitment to the improvement of the mental and physical well-being of the Japanese people, and to the promotion of cultural aspects such as the Shinto rituals (festivals) from which Sumo originated, through JASA's overall obligation to preserve and develop tradition-rich Ozumo.

This purpose was officially certified as a public-interest one, which is a prerequisite step for establishing a public interest incorporated association. More importantly, JASA was able to restart itself as a public interest incorporated association because its decision to revise the Toshiryori-myoseki system was certified as well. The new JASA renounced the old system that enabled individuals to make decisions on Toshiryori-myoseki rights succession at their discretion. Instead, it decided to take on across-the-board responsibility for managing the system.

The Toshiryori-myoseki system originally came into being 337 years ago. Today, the Ozumo world has 105 holders of Toshiryori-myoseki rights, a number that has been unchanged for 94 years. From the standpoint of preserving the traditions of Ozumo, all JASA members need to jointly bear a great responsibility for upholding the authority of the system as the symbol of the preservation and development of Sumodo by refraining from either increasing or decreasing the existing number. For this particular reason, when JASA as a whole is committed to continue respecting Ozumo's obligatory tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction, no basis can be found for allowing any former yokozuna to name himself as a one-generation toshiyori even if it is meant to recognize his fame for his past achievements. The yokozuna position itself is proof of the honor bestowed on those reaching the supreme post — the ultimate goal for all

current rikishi to attain. JASA maintains the Sumo Museum as the place to permanently and greatly honor those great yokozuna of the past who brought brilliant achievements to Ozumo.

That said, nonetheless, the Panel does not rule out the possibility that JASA will still find it necessary to decide on some form of honoring some yokozuna for their outstanding contributions to the Ozumo world. For instance, the former JASA devised a solution to allow former yokozuna Futabayama, who succeeded the name of a retiring toshiyori, to display the Sumo training hall (dojo) signboard bearing his ring name alongside the one showing the stable name, which was identical to his toshiyori name. Such a solution may be viable in future cases.

Needless to say, when it comes to traditions, it is not good enough to preserve their extrinsic sides alone. In the process of handing down the essence of a tradition to future generations while keeping it vibrant, the Panel thinks that it is necessary to sort out traditions that absolutely must be preserved just as they are from others that may be slightly modified. Considering that, as time goes by, preserving and developing Ozumo's traditions in their entirety continues to become increasingly difficult, now is the time to take stock of Ozumo's traditions with a view to choosing what specific ones JASA ought to resolutely uphold or might modify slightly.

To do so, JASA should set up a panel, tentatively called "the Committee on the Reaffirmation of Ozumo Traditions for Preservation," with the cooperation of directors and relevant members of JASA and outside experts. The proposed committee would be tasked to:

- (1) Examine whether those traditions that must be resolutely upheld are upheld;
- (2) Instruct Sumo-beya and rikishi to conform with such traditions if they fail to do so;
- (3) Advise JASA to take the initiative in determining and announcing association-wide specific measures — instead of leaving Sumo-beya or rikishi to act on their own — for the slight modification of any element of Ozumo's traditions whenever and wherever necessity arises.

Even as the multinationalization of Ozumo progresses, JASA should make steadfast efforts to impeccably hand down to future generations the multifaceted allure of Ozumo, which embodies Japan's traditional culture, Shinto decorum, entertainment, spirituality and the beauty of form, among other facets.

5. Educating Japanese rikishi about Sumodo

Earlier sections of this report discussed the importance of teaching foreign-born rikishi about Sumodo through the "nyu-Nihon" process. However, given that Ozumo is a national sport of Japan, it is more obvious than anything else that Japanese-born rikishi must continue pursuing Sumodo further.

Once there was a time when it was not unusual for many rikishi to enter Sumo-beya fresh from junior high school graduation — after completing their nine-year compulsory education — to embark on Ozumo careers despite having had no Sumo experience.

Shisho (stablemasters) in those days not only taught new disciples

about Sumo techniques and spurred their fighting spirit but also taught them about the traditions of Sumodo and the dignity of rikishi, starting from scratch to make them cultivate themselves and behave properly. What shisho in those days provided can only be described as an all-round education.

Of late, an increased number of new disciples enter Sumo-beya after graduating from three-year senior high schools or even universities. They typically have well-developed physiques and a certain level of Sumo technique that they acquired as students. However, some students learn skills from their coaches with a victory-above-all mindset, which is different from Sumodo, the ideal Sumo way that is pursued by the Ozumo world. For instance, some university and other Sumo clubs instruct their members to intentionally avoid performing the tachiai (first charge) motion in sync with their opponent as a tactic to get a favorable fighting position first. As a result, shisho now have to give extra rounds of coaching to make those disciples from universities and other Sumo clubs adapt to the Ozumo world's Sumodo, which differs from the practices found in campus Sumo clubs.

Against such a background, it is thought that now also is the time for JASA to revamp the Ozumo world's Sumodo teaching methods for Japanese-born rikishi to focus on developing mind, technique and body so that they will be able to contribute to upholding Ozumo's traditions, ethos and techniques and preserving Sumodo. For example, Sumo Kyoshujo, the JASA-managed Sumo training school for Ozumo rookies, should think of providing multitier courses, depending on students' academic backgrounds and Sumo experience.

Chapter 3

Sport integrity and governance

In August 2019, the Japan Sports Agency (JSA) introduced the “Governance Code for National Sport Federation Members.” The Governance Code is a set of principles and norms aimed at protecting “sport integrity,” which means uprightness and common sense.

As Ozumo is a sport, it is subject to the JSA Governance Code. However, it should be pointed out that because Ozumo embodies Japan’s traditional culture, certain elements of it are not be suitable to be — and indeed cannot be — governed by the Governance Code for National Sport Federation Members. Hence, this chapter focuses on the sport integrity of Ozumo and discusses measures to maintain and improve it, including steps to ensure sport integrity-related governance in the Ozumo world.

1. Improving sport integrity and the Ozumo universe

The Ozumo world’s efforts to maintain and improve the sport integrity of Ozumo center on dedication to the pursuit of Sumodo and the realization of the perfection of the dohyo ring. Anyone visiting a Sumo-beya for the first time would be astonished by the intensity of practices by rikishi. Ozumo spectators with a close view of tachiai (first charge) scenes in the dohyo ring are amazed by the fierce clash between two rikishi at the start of each bout, right after an initial charge full of energy and spirit. Only those rikishi who diligently endure months and years of unrelenting practice under the guidance of shisho and coaches can climb up the banzuke rankings.

The sport integrity of Ozumo means dedication to preserving and developing the traditions of Sumodo — which, like Judo and Kendo, inherits the essence of Budo (martial arts) — by observing the Sumo-specific ritual order and protocols. In that sense, the sport integrity of Ozumo advances in its development and sophistication in tandem with the preservation and development of Sumodo.

The development of Sumodo is, and must be, guaranteed by those who become capable of handing down the essence of the techniques and power indispensable for Sumodo to their successors. Such rikishi gain the required qualification by sternly and intensely practicing under the guidance of shisho — who follow Ozumo’s tradition of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction — and eventually surpassing their shisho.

Sumodo embodies the traditional culture and the beauty of form that are fused with the sternness and intensity of practices. Therefore, when it comes to the integrity of Ozumo, it should be understood alongside the

previously mentioned qualities of Ozumo that are underpinned by the history of generation-to-generation, master-to-disciple instruction. The same is true of the generation-to-generation succession of Sumo-beya. Compared with those centuries-old traditions, ichidai (one-generation) toshiyori is a “qualification” or “system” of convenience that only furthers individual fame and is intrinsically incompatible with the integrity of Ozumo.

The reason why rikishi are obliged to comply with the Ozumo world’s code of decency, rules and norms is not only that they are required to follow Ozumo’s traditional customs originating from Shinto rituals but also that Sumo is a martial art in which any lack of comity and adherence to the rules may place their lives at risk. The most important element of the integrity of Ozumo is represented by the “perfection of the dohyo ring,” which means an all-out devotion by the entire Ozumo world to bring to and display in the dohyo ring of the wholesome appeal of Ozumo.

To put it differently, the Ozumo world should always make the dohyo ring a venue where spectacular bouts take place between well-built rikishi who, while duly respecting each other’s Sumo expertise, fully clash head-on and aim to throw their opponent down. The integrity of Ozumo is the ultimate value sought by both devoted and casual Sumo fans, for whom the perfection of the dohyo ring means the perfection of rikishi competition. For this particular reason, those fans cannot tolerate seeing a yokozuna engage in disappointing tachiai moves or lose by default without appearing in the dohyo ring.

Japanese people who want to see rikishi fighting with all their might — the essence of Sumo — will feel disenchanting by those Sumo scenes that end up eroding the perfection of the dohyo ring. If a yokozuna is responsible for them, the popularity of Ozumo will suffer a terrible blow. Therefore, yokozuna, the highest-ranked rikishi, should realize that the integrity of Ozumo depends on them and that they have to contribute to the perfection of the dohyo ring, namely the perfection of rikishi competition, in a conscious manner and with a sense of duty.

Rikishi’s devotion to the perfection of the dohyo ring can only be possible after countless rounds of practice. A member of the Panel, citing his professional baseball experience, said he thought that people qualified to speak of the baseball world were those who knew how painful it is for a baseball player to be struck in the chest or any other part of the body with a horsehide ball. He added metaphorically that those who had no experience of the severity of engaging in butsumari-geiko (literally meaning “collision practice”) might not be qualified to speak of Ozumo. What he meant seemed to be that for a rikishi equipped only with a cloth belt around his body, it would be difficult to apply a sneaky tactic or coast to an easy win. In other words, he meant that rikishi should become capable of tenaciously fighting by assiduously building up their bodies while developing the courage to overcome fear.

Another member of the Panel, referring to the Kabuki world, said Kabuki actors are compared to artisans because they are unable to become genuine Kabuki actors without thoroughly rehearsing day after day — just like rikishi practicing at each Sumo-beya. An enormous amount of practice, especially an accumulation of “heavy practice,” is the only path toward the understanding of Sumodo and the emergence of a genuine Sumaibito (literally meaning “Sumo person”), the term used in the Heian period (794-1185) to refer to rikishi. The integrity of Ozumo means the zenith of Sumodo is reachable only after countless rounds of practice and effort that are indispensable to reach the realm of artisanship.

2. The Japan Sumo Association's guidance for governance (governance code)

In the past, Nihon Sumo-Kyokai Japan, i.e. the Japan Sumo Association (JASA), has improved its self-management structure from time to time. JASA should continue such efforts with particular emphasis on the furtherance of governance. The delivery of enhanced governance is increasingly important to prevent the occurrence within JASA of various kinds of misconduct frequently occurring in modern society. Organizational governance is necessary to ensure the healthy and transparent operations of Ozumo with the participation of all JASA members, improve the environment for rikishi to develop themselves, and equitably reflect the intentions of Ozumo supporters and related stakeholders. Organizational governance is also indispensable to keep Ozumo understood and supported as a widely recognized national sport by people at large and various sectors and groups in Japanese society.

Responding to a recent spate of scandals in sports, the Japan Sports Agency (JSA) introduced the Governance Code for National Sport Federation Members in 2019, with its primary purpose being to protect sport integrity.

Threats to sport integrity include doping, match-fixing, violence, gambling and harassment. The JSA's Governance Code for sport federations is, in a nutshell, a set of principles and norms for preventing misconduct and protecting sport integrity.

Ozumo, in its form as JASA, is not categorized as a nationwide athletic organization governed by the JSA. Even so, JASA has pledged to comply with the JSA Governance Code in improving its organizational structure while adhering to Ozumo's intrinsic historical background. The Panel values the JASA decision.

As explained earlier, Sumodo embodies the moral ethics that are inherent in it and is respectful of its traditions and dignity. All members of JASA should be increasingly conscious of the significance of the role Ozumo plays as a national sport not only in serving as a role model for the whole sport universe but also in giving dreams and hopes to the young generation. Now that JASA has accepted the intent and purpose of the JSA Governance Code while remaining responsible for preserving and developing Sumodo's traditions and order on its own, it should run itself in accordance with the agency's Governance Code with due consideration for its differences and commonalities with the national sport federations directly covered by the JSA code in terms of organizational management.

Nonetheless, it should be emphasized once again that Ozumo exists not as a pure sport entity but as a national sport embodying its own traditional culture. Therefore, it also should be noted that although Sumodo maintains the characteristics of both sport and traditional culture as its indivisible elements, the authentic value and quality of Sumodo exist in its cultural characteristics. Sumo culture can and should be cultivated through intense practice and is preserved and developed only when rikishi contribute, with full force, to the perfection of the dohyo ring.

For JASA, its own guidance for self-discipline, promulgated to uphold the integrity of Ozumo, is definitely the governance code of Ozumo, and, therefore, its content should precisely reflect the qualities of Ozumo.

On the other hand, the Membership Regulations of JASA stipulate that those who want to join the Ozumo world "to become rikishi shall be male

and younger than 23 years of age.” This means that only men are qualified to become rikishi and that, as a result, all toshiyori (Sumo elders) are inevitably male.

As such, JASA is an entity that is responsible for staging male-only Ozumo competitions contested exclusively by male rikishi with male toshiyori assuming jobs related to Ozumo tournaments and regional tours and male gyoji (referees) and yobidashi (ushers) working as tournament facilitators. JASA is not an organization with both men’s and women’s divisions. As such, it is obviously different from other sport entities that include female athletes as well. Nihon Sumo Renmei, i.e. the Japan Sumo Federation, which covers amateur Sumo wrestlers, has a women’s division. In contrast, JASA is responsible for running and managing Ozumo, which has historically been maintained only by men as a professional sport.

Even so, JASA, in conforming with the JSA Governance Code, has some operational areas where it needs to become more flexible in terms of gender equality. That said, however, the operational guideline contained in the JSA Governance Code requiring each sport’s governing body to have at least 40% of its director positions occupied by women simply cannot be applied to Ozumo.

It should be pointed out, however, that more than 30% of JASA’s internal clerical work now is being done by women, who are responsible for human resources management, accounting and legal affairs management, marketing, communications, and video production, among other aspects. Many of those sections are supervised by female managers or deputy managers.

Moreover, female staff, employed by JASA on a contract basis, take on jobs that are essential for the success of each Grand Sumo Tournament. They include running “Sumo annai-jo” (Sumo information centers, better known among Sumo fans as “chaya” or teahouses) located adjacent to the Kokugikan, as well as providing information and audience control services at the Kokugikan itself. It is obvious that Ozumo tournaments that are full of splendid charm and vigor cannot be successful without the dedicated activities of those female JASA staff members and affiliated figures. In that sense, JASA deserves praise for having made efforts toward adequate gender inclusion.

JASA has so far commissioned outside female members to serve on the Yokozuna Deliberation Council, various committees — including the independent panel on governance, the panel on measures to prevent the recurrence of acts of violence and the compliance committee — and the Expert Panel on the Preservation and Development of Ozumo. Likewise, JASA should consider having a female outside director on its board, provided that she is well versed in Ozumo.

Conclusions

Like other parts of Japanese society, JASA's Grand Sumo Tournaments and regional tours were negatively affected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020 and 2021 (Reiwa 2 and 3). A certain number of rikishi were infected with COVID-19 and some Sumo-beya were directly affected. In 2020, JASA had to cancel the summer Grand Sumo Tournament in May and some regional tours. Otherwise, well-coordinated efforts and precautionary steps by JASA, Sumo-beya and rikishi have prevented COVID-19 infections from worsening in the Ozumo world. The infectious disease still is a great unprecedented menace to rikishi who live and practice in a familial environment. The Panel recognizes that Sumo-beya have managed to maintain a high level of health protection for rikishi. The Ozumo world, too, needs to discuss, based on its COVID-19 experiences, how Ozumo and rikishi should deal with this "new normal."

Meanwhile, the Panel is concerned about an increase of late both in injuries of rikishi in the ring and in absences from the ring due to illness. Until 2003, the "kosho seido" (public injury system) allowed any rikishi, suffering an injury in the ring, to sit out the next tournament with no impact on his banzuke ranking. With the abolishing of the system, injuries now cause serious disadvantage to rikishi in terms of banzuke assessment of ring performance — in the worst case, an injury results in the permanent termination of a rikishi's ring career. A perception of Ozumo as a dangerous sport would impede the Ozumo world's efforts to recruit future rikishi. The Panel urges that JASA consider implementing a set of comprehensive measures — including the enhancement of capabilities of the Sumo Clinic and related departments within the Association — to further ensure the health and safety of rikishi, rather than leaving the matter to each Sumo-beya.

The Panel discussed a wide range of issues to come up with effective measures to preserve and develop Ozumo — with the utmost purpose of ensuring the "perfection of the dohyo ring" — amidst the progress of the multinationalization of the Ozumo world.

Ring scenes in which male rikishi with different weights and physiques agilely move and fiercely clash in open-weight bouts remind us of Sumo-related scenes dating back about 170 years to the late Edo period.

Also back in those days — on February 26, 1854 (Ansei 1) — a Japanese rikishi, with a bale of rice (weighing about 57 kilograms) in his arms, agilely did a somersault in front of members of a U.S. delegation headed by Commodore Matthew C. Perry — whose mission was to have Japan, then a self-isolated country, open itself to the United States. One of them is said to have likened what he saw to an illusion — the rikishi looked like a mayfly and the bale of rice like a bundle of downy feathers.

The somersault was followed by fierce bouts between male rikishi in a holy ring. One American noted that during their pre-bout practice, each time the "very stout and immensely muscular" rikishi clashed head-on, striking each other with force that might make "even a bull faint and collapse,"

they remained in an almost normal state afterward. When the rikishi began their actual bouts, grappling much more fiercely with each other, the Americans found almost everything to be beyond description. Those “burly fellows” kept fighting even as their faces became swollen and red — as if blood would start spurting out “in a twinkling.” The U.S. delegation left behind an elaborate report — “The East India Squadron of the United States Japan Expedition” — about what its members observed in Japan, including Sumo wrestlers.

Perry is known to have observed a group of rikishi engaging in a series of moshiai-keiko, or practices with opponents of their own choice. After seeing rikishi after rikishi fully absorb one powerful offensive after another and remain undaunted even when bleeding from their foreheads due to injuries, the commodore might have had an impression about Sumo that would be different from that of the Japanese people.

Yet, there is no difference between what rikishi of the late Edo period exhibited to Perry and what we see during Sumo-beya practices and Grand Sumo Tournament performances by rikishi of today. In the ring, rikishi confront each other like solid rock, and use their intensely muscular arms to throw their opponents down or push them out. This is the way rikishi contribute to the perfection of the holy dohyo ring — their timeless utmost goal of pursuing Sumodo.

Appendices: Members' opinions (summaries/excerpts)

The following are summaries/excerpts of opinions expressed by members of the Expert Panel and an interview with Mr. Watanabe Daigoro, who is better known as the former Takamiyama:

Taste of Sumo culture, art of mutual understanding

YAMAUCHI Masayuki, chair:

Ozumo of Japan preserves traditional culture and, in that sense, has much in common with some of the nation's traditional performing arts. Like Kabuki and other classical forms of theater or music, Ozumo has a long history of entertaining.

Ozumo is different from many overseas martial arts because it is not a setting in which rikishi may freely do anything they like after beating an opponent in the dohyo ring – even if the victory was a fair one. For example, a scene in which a winner raises his fists is alien to Ozumo. A majority of Ozumo fans are unhappy to see a yokozuna, who holds the highest rikishi position, choosing a fighting tactic that is void of dignity in a bout with a lower-ranked opponent even when he is mindful to avoid technically violating the rules.

Sumodo is the way of making rikishi capable of judging things flexibly and with dignity rather than making simplistic thumbs-up and thumbs-down decisions. In other words, rikishi shouldn't mechanically choose between whether one "may do this" or "may not." They should judge whether one "should not" do something or "had better not." This is the intrinsic taste of Sumo culture that comes with the art of mutual understanding. Compared with other sports, Ozumo remains more respectful of a longstanding — and long-cultivated — code of behavior, which obliges rikishi to behave in a way becoming of their role of preserving and developing the traditions of Ozumo, including the morals and manners that must be observed by winners.

Such qualities can be internalized only through months and years of practicing under the leadership of a shisho (stablemaster) and with each rikishi's accumulation of Grand Sumo Tournament experience. The continuity of painful practice is identical to the classical Budo way of relentlessly practicing to seek truth and purity. The endurance gained in the course of hard practicing helps rikishi cultivate discernment — discernment on whether rikishi "should not" do something or "had better not" — and builds and enhances each rikishi's character. The Ozumo world has traditionally shied away from a "might makes right" attitude among rikishi because such behavior is contradictory to the traditional beauty of Ozumo.

No matter how multinationalized the Ozumo world may become, it is absolutely inconceivable that Ozumo, a national sport of Japan, would ever import waza (techniques) and behavior that run counter to Sumodo.

The development of excellent rikishi begins with unearthing diamonds in the rough. It is the inherent quality and joy of Ozumo to foster young men — even those with no amateur Sumo experience — from scratch to greatness. Foreign-born young people who are drawn to sumo usually have better physiques and athletic abilities. Yet, the Ozumo world has trained foreign-born newcomers on an equal footing with new Japanese-born disciples, motivating them to work hard to become good at Sumo techniques and build character. Indeed, in its devotion to educating rikishi, the Ozumo world has not avoided multinationalization.

Apart from those who are qualified for the Makushita Tsukedashi system, all new disciples, be they Japanese or otherwise, have been — and are — given an equal opportunity to begin their professional Sumo careers from the very bottom of the Ozumo ladder. The Makushita Tsukedashi grade-skipping system is applied to those with experience of winning or being high-place finishers in amateur Sumo championships. Those rikishi start their Ozumo careers from the third highest division of makushita.

In the Ozumo world, all rikishi must live and practice together at Sumo-beya. For each of them, the Sumo-beya to which they belong is a quasi-family with its shisho being their de facto father and the okamisan (his wife) their de facto mother. Ozumo of Japan thus provides a unique environment in which rikishi continue pursuing Sumodo without separating everyday life and Sumo practice. All new disciples have to attend Sumo Kyoshujo, the JASA-managed Sumo academy, for six to 12 months, receiving both practical training and classroom lessons. Those lessons are intended to make them conscious of the significance of being an Ozumo athlete who has much in common with athletes in those modern sports that originated in the West.

The Ozumo dohyo ring's diameter must be 15 shaku (4.55 meters). With such technical meticulousness and ingenuity, Ozumo stands out as a truly Japanese martial art, differentiating itself from martial arts that exist in foreign countries and territories.

When Ozumo fans say, for instance, “That’s not Sumo” or “That is different from the traditions of Japan,” what they have in mind is Ozumo as it embodies the history and traditions of Japan. For those Ozumo fans and Japanese people at large, Ozumo is basically a great martial art that is closely linked to Shinto rituals and the history and traditions of Japan. Ozumo fans’ reactions, like “This is exactly what Sumo is about” and “This is perfectly becoming of Sumo,” are indivisible from the origins of Ozumo.

The Japanese expressions “Sumo no kata” (forms of Sumo) and “Sumo no hinkaku” (dignity of Sumo) implicitly express what we see as the domestically and globally unique value of Ozumo.

I am of the opinion that it is important for the Expert Panel to reaffirm the aspects of Ozumo that embody Japan’s culture, history and traditions. Ozumo is a martial art that has no weight-based divisions, offering amazing ring scenes of lightweight rikishi overwhelming heavyweight opponents. Those scenes represent the dignity and qualities unique to Ozumo. Therefore, Ozumo should not choose to “de-Japanize” itself.

Thus far, Ozumo has refrained from “de-Japanization” and, instead, attracted people by remaining as a sport conduit for foreign-born athletes who are inspired to willingly enter Japanese culture. I am confident that Ozumo will continue paving that way in the future.

Establish a framework sustainable for 100 years

IMAI Takashi, special advisor

Ozumo has a long history dating back to the 17th century, when Sumo developed as a professional spectator sport known as kanjin-zumo, a series of Sumo bouts played to solicit contributions to temples and shrines. Today, Ozumo remains loved so widely by Japanese people for two main reasons. First, the Ozumo world has maintained a tradition of staging Grand Sumo Tournaments (honbashi) in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka every year and making regional tours across Japan. Second, NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai), Japan's only public broadcaster, has been broadcasting honbashi live since 1928 by radio and since 1953 on television. Thanks to those efforts, almost every Japanese has an interest in Ozumo. In other words, Ozumo can stay as it is because the Japanese population supports it.

But why do Japanese people really support Ozumo? In my view, they do not necessarily support Ozumo because it is a national sport. I think that they do so because it is a competitive sport.

What matters in any competition is, first of all, whether rikishi have a sense of respect for their opponents. We Japanese traditionally use the phrase "sokuin no jo," which literally means "hidden feelings" but actually means sympathetic pity and concern for the misfortunes or suffering of others. We also use the phrase "yokusei no bi" or the beauty of restraint. We respect those who emerge as winners but still embody what those phrases mean by refraining from indulging in triumphant raptures.

Ozumo is an integral part of traditional Japanese culture. In fact, it is so great a part of traditional culture that it is now acclaimed internationally. For instance, Mr. Jacques Chirac, who was president of France from 1995 to 2007, was known as a Japanophile who loved Ozumo very much. He often watched Ozumo on television. On many occasions when I met him, the first thing he customarily mentioned to me was how exciting he had found recent Ozumo bouts. For example, he said to me one day, "Wakanohana just won!"

Even nowadays, there are many foreign spectators at the Kokugikan. As such, I want to emphasize that Ozumo of Japan really is a part of Japanese culture we should be proud of.

On the other hand, it is true that Ozumo cannot continue to thrive if people stop coming to the Kokugikan and other venues to see competition in the ring. As long as the Ozumo world depends only on the historical fact that Ozumo has been a national sport, it will be destined for decline. Considering that Ozumo is a spectator sport, it will inevitably go under — even as a traditional sport — if it stops accepting foreign-born rikishi. What is more, the world changes as time goes by. For its part, Ozumo also has to adequately change in accord with changes in the circumstances surrounding it.

Now it is very important for the Ozumo world to find a solution to reconcile two needs — to make Ozumo more attractive as a spectator sport in line with the changing times and also to uphold traditional Japanese culture.

The "do" in Sumodo means a "way," a key Japanese term that clearly indicates the ethnic aspect of Ozumo. Shisho (stablemasters) are the ones primarily responsible for ensuring the sustainability of Ozumo. In the Ozumo world, groups of shisho form ichimon (clans) and JASA exists as the supreme entity bearing overall responsibility for the preservation and development of Ozumo. The Ozumo world now needs to clarify the shisho-ichimon-JASA relationship with a view to specifying who is responsible for which areas of

Ozumo. All of them now have to work out a new framework of Ozumo that can be sustainable for 100 years, from the Reiwa era onward.

Reaffirm and share the philosophy

ATODA Takashi, member

Globalization has progressed exponentially and with much fanfare. As a result, various aspects of the world — ranging from the major areas of politics, economy, science, arts and sports to numerous minor areas and even such terrible matters as war — now are under the influence of Western mentalities, legends and customs. (Of course, the degree to which this is so depends on where you are.)

Even amid such circumstances, Japanese society has a certain number of idiosyncratic things that it has cultivated, developed and preserved on its own. Those indigenous things exist at high levels of cultural sophistication. Yet, they are not always fully appreciated by the world as they do not meet Western standards due to language barriers, ethnic uniqueness, racial considerations and so on.

For example, let's take a look at literature. We have the Manyoshu (literally Ten Thousand Leaves), an anthology that was compiled in the seventh and eighth centuries; Genji Monogatari (The Tale of Genji), which goes back to the 11th century; Noh playwright Zeami in the 14th to 15th centuries; haiku poet Matsuo Basho and poet and novelist Ihara Saikaku in the Edo period; and a large number of talented authors in and ever since the Meiji period (1868-1912).

This means that Japan, in any given period of the past 1,000 years or so, has had talented poets, novelists and other writers of its own, with people at large appreciating their works. I think this is unparalleled in the world. In this regard, I think, Japan deserves recognition as a greatly distinguished country, but, in reality, we are not near that point because Western standards prevail in the world.

In other fields of culture, there are many similar cases. In other words, although we Japanese have created a number of outstanding genres of culture, the tide of globalization makes it increasingly difficult for them to develop further on their own amid the visible or invisible struggles to reconcile with international influences.

Ozumo is one such example.

Let's look at the circumstances surrounding Judo and Kendo. If I may skip the fine details, I can say Judo has chosen to internationalize itself as much as possible through the compromise of slightly diverting from its inherent essence. Japanese Judo's efforts to globalize the culture of Judo ultimately succeeded in prompting practitioners of similar martial arts abroad to take part in the international Judo movement, thus spreading Judo worldwide in spite of a series of complications.

On the other hand, if I may again offer a rough summary, I now want to speak of Kendo. Kendo continues adhering to its original principles and purpose. Japan's Kendo society has made no compromise, saying, "If you want to follow our path, respect our traditions." More than a few Kendo fans exist abroad and they generally respect the stance of Kendo of Japan. However, Kendo clearly lags behind Judo in terms of global spread. That said, it is the natural consequence of what Kendo needs if it remains determined to be

accepted as it is.

Just for convenience, let me coin two words — “Judo-teki” (Judo-like) and “Kendo-teki” (Kendo-like) — to further discuss the impact of the tide of globalization.

Roughly speaking, Ozumo should choose a Kendo-teki solution. Actually, Ozumo should do more than that — it may be advisable for Ozumo to devise and develop an “Ozumo-teki” solution regarding globalization.

In short, the Ozumo-teki solution means that it is desirable for Ozumo as a sport of Japan to basically uphold its spiritual, traditional and national aspects that are different from the Western way of thinking and, to that end, accept the negative consequences of such a stance relative to an “Obei-teki” (Western-like) global spread of Ozumo.

All stakeholders, including JASA, of course, and Sumo enthusiasts, should unwaveringly maintain that stance. When there may be a genuine need for the Ozumo world to compromise that solid stance, it may indeed consider compromising — but only a little. I think this is what the Expert Panel should give thought to in its recommendations. I think it is important for us to come up with unwavering and unequivocal judgments.

The multinationalization of Ozumo is necessary to develop mighty rikishi because Ozumo is also a sport. However, it is meaningless for Ozumo to compromise the essence of Sumodo for the sake of having such rikishi. Ozumo needs no rikishi who cannot be true to the essence of Sumodo, no matter how powerful they may be.

Ozumo is run and managed by a large organization, but each rikishi is a professional sportsman responsible on his own for his ring performance, which is a highly individual matter. I mean that we need to consider offering them specific measures to help them definitely learn and abide by the philosophy of Ozumo while belonging to a large organization.

For instance, it may be worth introducing a system in which JASA would formally commend rikishi when they are recognized for mastering the essence of Ozumo.

Overcome misconduct and practice hard

OH Sadaharu, member

I think those who do not know how painful it is for a baseball player to be struck in the body with a horsehide ball are not qualified to speak of the baseball world. Likewise, those who have no experience of enduring the intensity of Ozumo practice cannot speak of Ozumo.

Compared with various other professions in the world, professional baseball is quite unique. Ozumo is still more unique — it is really unique in that rikishi have nothing but their bodies with which to do combat.

As such, there is no room in the Ozumo ring for either sneaky tactics or an easy win. All they need is to develop courage and overcome fear through practice and assiduously build up their bodies so that they become capable of tenaciously fighting.

In reality, Ozumo is a world where rikishi can survive only by winning bout after bout.

The other day, I had an opportunity to watch a keiko-soken pre-tournament public practice session. The young rikishi appeared to have already become exhausted, having difficulty breathing, due to rounds of hard

practice in front of their peers and oyakata (Sumo masters). They still had to throw themselves at ozeki (champions) and yokozuna (grand champions). They had no choice but to do so when their senior rikishi, including ozeki and yokozuna, said to them, “Come on!”

Those young rikishi really had difficulty breathing. Their senior rikishi shouted to them to “come on” and “get through it,” offering to go through workout after workout with them.

Rikishi have to endure days, weeks, months and even years of practicing to become really powerful little by little. It is a process they have to undergo to overcome difficulty after difficulty. This means that only those who practice hard enough can become mighty. Senior rikishi know this so well that they offer to work out with their junior rikishi to show the importance of relentless practice. I was profoundly impressed.

At first glance, those young rikishi appeared to be forced to practice beyond their limits, but they got back to normal a few minutes later.

The real limits of practice are something that can be determined only by those oyakata and senior rikishi who have experienced years of hard practice themselves.

JASA recently came under criticism for an assault incident perpetrated by a rikishi. As Japanese society always pays attention to Ozumo, any scandal involving an individual rikishi tends to be treated as an Ozumo-wide one, not as a personal affair. JASA should make every rikishi conscious of this social tendency.

That said, however, I would like to state that there is one area where the Ozumo world should not compromise and become less rigid, even in the face of criticism from the public. By that “one area,” I mean intense practice and intense coaching. Both of them are important for Ozumo. When sport organizations come under criticism, they often tend to lower the level of practice intensity. I believe that the Ozumo world should not do so, for the sake of preserving the traditions of Ozumo.

The Ozumo world should definitely preserve the core values of Ozumo. To do so, it should show what Ozumo — the world of rikishi — is all about.

It goes without saying that everyone in the Ozumo world should refrain from doing what people outside of Ozumo may see as acts of violence. Then, rikishi should be intensely coached. All members of JASA, including oyakata and rikishi, should determine themselves to improve Sumodo further. They should show the spirit of Ozumo to the full extent so that people outside of the Ozumo world would find it comfortable to watch Ozumo at ease.

To preserve and develop Ozumo for the future, oyakata should continue developing themselves as coaches. When oyakata stop doing so, it is impossible for either Ozumo or rikishi to continuously develop.

Oyakata should study Ozumo even beyond their days as rikishi. They should simultaneously improve their coaching methods as they learn more about Ozumo. They also should coach rikishi by putting themselves into the shoes of their trainees. They should take good care of disciples who join the Ozumo world of their own will and continue encouraging them to continuously pave the way toward the pinnacle of Ozumo. I am sure that it is all right for such oyakata to coach rikishi intensely. As I said earlier, Ozumo is a world where rikishi cannot survive without beating opponent after opponent, and only intense practice leads to victories.

Mongolia, Korea, Switzerland, Turkey and some other parts of the world have their own Sumo-like stand-up grappling sports, all with long histories. I personally want members of JASA to be proud of the Japanese national sport of Ozumo as the most powerful of stand-up grappling sports in

the world. Such pride can make all of those who are involved in the Ozumo world exert further efforts and be innovative in making Ozumo more powerful.

Kabuki and Ozumo

MATSUMOTO Hakuo, member

Artisans

Some people say Kabuki actors are “artists.” But I do not think so. After spending many years in the Kabuki world, I now think Kabuki actors actually are “artisans.”

The reason is that you can never become a genuine Kabuki actor if you fail to assiduously and tirelessly practice. But the mere accumulation of practice is not enough; you must build up your mettle. To be called a Kabuki actor, you need to be able to complete all the planned rehearsals — six rounds, for example — and still have enough energy and spirit left to go through six more rounds of rehearsal if necessary. This means that you have to improve your practice in both quantitative and qualitative terms with each passing day.

I am sure that the same is true of the Ozumo world. Only those who keep up enormous amounts of intensive practice can understand what Sumodo is all about and become genuine rikishi. In other words, I think those who fail to keep practicing that much may neither become genuine rikishi nor understand Sumodo.

For both Kabuki actors and Ozumo rikishi to be successful in their careers, I think they need to reach the stage of being artisans.

Kabuki and Ozumo

In my view, society has never treated Kabuki and Ozumo better than right now. In the latter half of the Edo period, Kabuki and Sumo got the cold shoulder from society, which did not appreciate traditional culture. As a result, Kabuki and Sumo fell into states of considerable distress.

Compared with those days, we now are blessed with a very good environment in which many people say society needs to cherish traditional culture. But we nevertheless must refrain from resting on such laurels. We should not feel puffed up with the way we are favorably treated. We now need to think hard about how to preserve and develop our traditions.

Miracles

Each traditional cultural circle tends to exist in its own small world. Yet, those traditional cultural circles should keep giving opportunities to various people. To do so, it is essential for each of them to have a system to help people who are willing to preserve the venerable culture concerned to bring about miraculous results.

My maternal grandfather, Nakamura Kichiemon I, had a traditional background. His father was the Meiji-era Kabuki actor Nakamura Karoku III and his mother came from a family that ran a shibaijaya restaurant attached to a theater.

In contrast, my paternal grandfather Matsumoto Koshiro VII was born to a kuchi-ireya (construction company) family in Ise, now part of Mie Prefecture. He was adopted by the Koraiya Kabuki family, eventually becoming a great Kabuki actor.

I think the Ozumo world, which has its own system of drawing in talent, should enhance that system to develop rikishi who will bring about miraculous results.

The future of traditions

In the Edo period, when Kabuki and Ozumo came into being, the bakufu government attached importance to Confucianism as the religion to control the country and its populace.

Confucianism teaches people to conform with the Wuchang (five constant virtues), namely “benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and faith,” and to respect the Wulu (five human relationships), namely father-son, ruler-minister and husband-wife relations and those between elder brothers and younger brothers and between friends.

It is undeniable that Kabuki and Ozumo were influenced by Confucianism to a certain extent. However, Confucian teachings seem to have faded away among young people with the passage of time. We no longer should impose Confucian teachings on them.

What we now need to do is to pursue the right way to preserve the traditions of Kabuki and Ozumo.

As a fan of Ozumo for over half a century

KONNO Misako, member

“Taiho’s winning streak ends!”

The news that yokozuna Taiho was defeated on the second day of the 1969 Spring Grand Sumo Tournament threw my family into an uproar. I clearly remember that my grandmother, an ardent Sumo fan, was the most excited of all. I became a Sumo fan, too, under her influence. When I was an elementary school student, “Taiho is a nice man” was imprinted on my subconscious mind.

Many people often ask me, “What is the charm of Ozumo?” I love Ozumo so viscerally that my heart flutters as I visit Ryogoku and an Osumo-san (rikishi), wonderfully redolent of binzuke abura (a Japanese pomade to style rikishi’s hair), passes by me. Once I enter the Kokugikan, I am moved to find myself surrounded by the Edo-period atmosphere, which gives me an otherworldly sensation. I have been fascinated by the “men’s world” that is full of a long history and traditions. I would like the Ozumo world to perpetuate this mystique, meaning those aspects of Ozumo that are strictly prohibited to women.

The attractiveness and values of Ozumo cannot be simply explained by data. I am afraid that much of the appeal of Ozumo will be lost if the Ozumo world were to become completely transparent. To me, Ozumo is attractive as it has certain aspects that remain indescribable. No matter how times may change, I believe that the attitude of stubbornly upholding its own traditional culture will create rarity value, leading to the preservation and development of Ozumo.

However, I have to point out that Ozumo’s sustainability will not be guaranteed if it cannot attract future rikishi, whose presence is indispensable to support the future of the Ozumo world.

The Ozumo world needs to have an “Ozumo-first” perspective in carrying out its vital task to increase the number of young people who long to

become rikishi, then actually become rikishi and finally run and manage JASA. For example, one possible “rikishi-first” solution, which I think is increasingly necessary, would be to resurrect the “kosho seido” (public injury system) as a way of giving consideration to the social needs of the Reiwa era.

It also is important for the Ozumo world to implement specific measures to increase the number of Sumo fans. JASA has the Sumo Museum and the Sumo Kyoshujo, the JASA-managed Sumo training school for Ozumo rookies. JASA should utilize its know-how from running these two affiliates in planning to open a public cultural center, such as a Sumo School, for the general public to learn the history and traditions of Ozumo and hold regional Ozumo workshops for the same purpose. Such facilities are likely to help people deepen their understanding of Ozumo, an important step toward expanding the Ozumo fan base.

Or, it may be worth considering a multi-grade “Ozumo Kentei” (assessment) quiz to invite people at large to test — and certify — their Ozumo knowledge. The lowest grade would be named “jonokuchi” (beginning) after the lowest Ozumo division, and anyone having a “kachikoshi” result with more wins than losses, would be able to climb a banzuke-style ladder. When they reach the juryo division, they would be privileged to use ring names of their choice and keep moving upward to be given komusubi, sekiwake, ozeki or yokozuna titles. It may be possible to develop an Ozumo-related app to entertain both existing and future Ozumo fans.

JASA should have more opportunities for exchanges with Ozumo fans and similar events to spread Ozumo to society. Former rikishi may be asked for cooperation in such events.

I would like to see various Ozumo systems improved and enhanced to take care of each rikishi as a practical approach to help increase the number of young people entering the Ozumo world. I sincerely hope that Ozumo will develop further as Japan’s leading national sport, which has already drawn attention from the rest of the world.

Culture of empathy and beauty of Sumo performances

TADAKI Keiichi, member

Every time I watch Ozumo bouts in a Grand Sumo Tournament, I am impressed by the beauty of Ozumo. Rikishi with traditional topknot haircuts and mawashi loincloths look “beautiful” when they stand up in the ring — the beauty of Ozumo is beyond description, indeed. Rikishi are powerful and dignified when they are in the ring. I think this impressive scene we can see in every Grand Sumo Tournament embodies the goodness and beauty of Japan. To me, Ozumo’s intrinsic beauty is really superb.

The beauty of form of Ozumo is expressed by the way rikishi move in the ring. In the makunouchi (makuuchi) division, there are a certain number of bouts with kenshokin (prize money) presented by bout sponsors. Winning rikishi customarily receive it in a humble manner. But some foreign-born rikishi show no such humility when receiving kenshokin. Every time I see such regrettable scenes, I feel uncomfortable and think they are awkward.

Judo has been internationalized with the introduction of a penalty category, called shido (instruction), for minor fouls. As it has become common for judoka to rack up as many points as possible by having opponents receive shido penalties, Judo no longer is what it used to be — a world of ippon-gachi

competition based on straightforward offensive moves.

In contrast, Kendo remains particular about preserving its tradition of ippon-gachi competition. To do so, Kendo has used the phrase “global spread,” not the word “internationalization.” Of the two paths, Ozumo should follow the one toward global spread while preserving Japan’s traditions.

In that event, we need to clarify what traditions — or what aspects of Sumodo — should be upheld. This is an important task for the Ozumo world.

We need to clearly define which of Ozumo’s traditions are indispensable for the preservation of the spirit and beauty of form inherent in Ozumo. At the same time, we need to identify what aspects of Ozumo of today are impeding the spirit and beauty of form of Ozumo. I think it is necessary to review and redefine the importance of every aspect of Ozumo, ranging, among many others, from courtesy and the choice of mawashi colors to rikishi’s performance and behavior.

It will undoubtedly be a very difficult and time-consuming task. But it should be carried out as a way to craft well-thought-out guidance, which, for instance, will enable the president of JASA, at any given time, to readily call for a corrective measure in the event of an incident running counter to the beauty of form of Ozumo. This should be part of the Ozumo world’s efforts to preserve itself in the coming 100 years at the least.

Also, if the Ozumo world needs to continuously accept the multinationalization of Ozumo, it will have to deal with a very important matter — how to educate foreign-born rikishi. These days, we often encounter an issue that is difficult to readily resolve. It is an issue that is caused by certain yokozuna. Now [when the Expert Panel was in session] we have two yokozuna who have been repeatedly absent. They have often skipped one tournament due to injuries but, to my surprise, then come back and win the next one. I suspect they think that being yokozuna gives them the privilege to decide on absences and comebacks at their own discretion.

The Ozumo world now has to deal with an issue that had never emerged among Japanese-born yokozuna.

Consider the case of Japanese-born rikishi Kisenosato, who clinched his first Grand Sumo Tournament championship in January 2017 and was promoted to yokozuna. In March 2017, he captured the championship for the second successive time. However, during that Grand Sumo Tournament, he was heavily injured, forcing him to agonize over what to do until he retired in January 2019. The yokozuna position is a really high-profile one, but hard-working yokozuna like Kisenosato often run the risk of terminating their rikishi careers, which turn out to be ephemeral. I think such poignant heroism can be said to be part of the beauty of form of Ozumo.

It is regrettable that the yokozuna who is currently absent from the ring shows no such poignant heroism.

Japanese people usually make up their mind on whether to stay in their present position or leave it by tacitly taking the surrounding circumstances into consideration. On the other hand, some foreign-born rikishi, having grown up in a “personal-rights-come-first” culture, do not so. How can the Ozumo world make them understand this aspect of Japanese culture? It is a really difficult matter to deal with.

To deal better with this matter, the quality of Sumo-beya management and that of shisho (stablemasters) needs to be improved. Nevertheless, adapting the rikishi qualification criteria and the rikishi development system to certain modern governance models is not what the Ozumo world should do. I think JASA should give necessary instructions to Sumo-beya to help improve the quality of both shisho and their respective

stables while preserving the traditions and liveliness of Ozumo.

Bearers and supporters of the Sumo culture

OTANI Takehiko, member

Recently, the protection of sport integrity is a global theme for the international sport community. Japanese society generally uses the English term “sport integrity” in its katakana form. The equivalent Japanese words for it are “koketsusei,” “kenzensei” and “seijitsusei,” which can be re-translated into English to mean “uprightness,” “common sense” and “honesty.”

Threats to sport integrity include doping, match-fixing, violence and harassment. In short, they are scandals. To ensure uprightness and common sense in sports, such scandals must be prevented. The Japan Sports Agency has adopted the Governance Code for National Sport Federation Members in Japan, which sets forth the principles and rules for protecting sport integrity by preventing scandals.

The Articles of Incorporation of JASA stipulate that the utmost purpose of the Association is “to uphold, inherit and develop the tradition and order of Sumodo, the inherently Japanese national sport.” To that end, the Articles of Incorporation emphasize the importance of holding Grand Sumo Tournaments and regional tours and developing Sumo human resources.

When JASA reorganized itself as a public interest incorporated association, it completely rewrote its Articles of Incorporation, emphasizing its commitment to the preservation and development of the traditional culture of Ozumo.

In Japan, there is another Sumo-related public interest incorporated association, named Nihon Sumo Renmei, i.e. the Japan Sumo Federation, which groups amateur Sumo wrestlers. Therefore, JASA’s role is to be responsible for the professional Sumo world.

While the Articles of Incorporation of the Japan Sumo Federation specify the spread of Sumo as its sole purpose, those of JASA do not limit the role of the Association purely to the spread of Sumo. JASA assigns itself, as just mentioned, to be responsible for maintaining and developing “the tradition and order of Sumodo” as a traditional culture of Japan.

Ozumo has the characteristics of both sport and traditional culture, but it should be reaffirmed that the essential value and quality of Sumodo’s traditions exist in its cultural characteristics. This means that the sport integrity of Ozumo should be pursued with due consideration to the value and quality of Sumodo.

Sumo culture is cultivated by oyakata (Sumo masters) and rikishi and is supported by Ozumo patrons and spectators. Oyakata are responsible for developing Sumo human resources by upholding the tradition of master-to-disciple instruction. Rikishi are responsible for realizing the perfection of the dohyo ring — the zenith of Sumo culture — by assiduously and intensively practicing day after day. Ozumo supporters appreciate such efforts by oyakata and rikishi. When virtuous relationships between those displaying spectacular Sumo performances and their supporters are sustainable, Sumo culture can surely be preserved and developed.

To keep Ozumo popular among Japanese people in the future, the Ozumo world should always endeavor to have a sufficient number of people directly involved in promoting Sumo culture together with a stable supporter

base. JASA should accordingly pursue the integrity of Ozumo and develop an effective governance strategy.

Ten hearts

WATANABE Daigoro, a.k.a. the former Takamiyama and former stablemaster Azumazeki

I am not of Japanese descent, but most of my senior high school friends were Japanese sansei (third-generation Americans of Japanese descent). All of the Japanese Americans around me liked Sumo and, during each Grand Sumo Tournament, they were glued to the radio.

In my first year of senior high school, I was playing American football. Our coach had his team play Sumo to strengthen their hip muscles. When I was 18 years old, Mr. Takizawa Hisao, then the manager of Meiji University's sumo club, invited me to join the Ozumo world of Japan. At the time, I, as a Maui resident, wanted to become a policeman in Hawaii. Mr. Takizawa's invitation motivated me to see the outside world.

In the winter of 1964 (Showa 39), I left Hawaii for Japan. When I arrived at Haneda Airport, it was snowing. That was when I saw snowfall for the first time. Two oyakata — former yokozuna Maedayama, who at the time was the fourth Takasago shisho, and former yokozuna Asashio, who later became the fifth shisho of the Takasago stable — welcomed me at the airport.

At the Sumo-beya, we began practicing at 4 a.m. every day. Former yokozuna Asashio, who at the time belonged to the Takasago stable as an oyakata named Furiwake, coached me on a one-on-one basis. I learned Ozumo's traditional exercises of shiko (lifting and stomping legs), suriashi (dragging feet without lifting them from the ground), teppo (pushing hands forward) and matawari (sitting on the ground and spreading one's legs as wide as possible). I couldn't do matawari because my body was stiff. Butsukari-geiko (charging hard to collide with an opponent) was so painful that I wept in spite of myself. At the time, former yokozuna Azumafuji happened to visit our Sumo-beya to watch our practice sessions. He asked me, "Did you shed tears?" I answered, "It was sweat, not tears." This remark of mine was then repeatedly quoted by the news media.

In 1970 (Showa 45) when I was 25 years old and three years into the makuuchi division, my shisho — Takasago IV — said to me, "You've been doing your best," and let me know more about the Ozumo system, including becoming an oyakata and acquiring Toshiyori-myoseki rights. I was glad because my shisho praised me for practicing hard. At the time, I became conscious of my future in the Ozumo world for the first time.

In 1971, my new shisho, Takasago V, told me that a new provision was added to the Toshiyori-myoseki name succession regulations, requiring any candidate to have Japanese citizenship. I asked my family in Hawaii, including my brothers, for advice. They said I should get Japanese citizenship. I also asked the governor of Hawaii and the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Mr. Mike Mansfield, for advice. They, too, agreed with my family.

I wanted to become an oyakata only after learning Japan's culture, history and life — everything about Japan. So, I remained an active rikishi until I was very close to 40 years old.

After retirement (as a rikishi), I became a shisho and ran my own Sumo-beya to teach my disciples about Sumo culture. I said, "It doesn't matter

if my disciples are American or Japanese. I want to teach them about patience and endurance, faithfulness and humanity, and the traditions and qualities of Ozumo society. That's my way of returning what [Ozumo society] did for me."

Ozumo dates back to the Edo period. In the Meiji era, rikishi were told to stop being naked (except loincloths) and have their hair cut. The Ozumo world overcame such difficult circumstances, and at the end of the Taisho era (1912-1926), the Shihai prize — the Prince Regent Cup, to be renamed the Emperor's Cup the following year — was inaugurated. In 1927 (Showa 2), the Tokyo and Osaka sumo associations merged to form the Japan Sumo Association. The modern Ozumo world did not come into being all at once after the end of World War II. It embodies the culture that was built and preserved by Japanese people enduring years and centuries of diligent work and hardship.

The Azumazeki stable adopted its own motto, titled "Ten Hearts" (phrases that expressed certain virtues or qualities), for its disciples. They were:

- (1) "Ohayo" (good morning): (affection)
- (2) "Hai" (yes): (straightforwardness)
- (3) "Sumimasen" (sorry): (remorse)
- (4) "Dozo" (please): (humility)
- (5) "Watakushi ga shimasu" (let me do it): (devotion)
- (6) "Arigato" (thank you): (gratitude)
- (7) "Okagesamade" (a modest way of returning greetings when one is asked "How are you?" or "How is your business going?"):
(modesty)
- (8) "Otsukaresan" (a workplace greeting with meanings that include, "See you tomorrow"): (a sense of caring)
- (9) "Nanikuso" (I won't give up): (endurance)
- (10) "Uso o tsukuna" (Don't lie): (honesty)

Special gratitude:

The Expert Panel is grateful to the authors of the following books, among others, to which it referred in compiling this report:

Kanazashi Motoi, with editorial supervision by the Japan Sumo Association, *Sumo Daijiten (Sumo Encyclopedia)*, 4th edition, Gendai Shokan, 2018

Nitta Ichiro, *Sumo: Sono Rekishi to Giho (Sumo: Its History and Techniques)*, Nippon Budokan, 2016

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Timeline of Expert Panel discussions and agenda

Session	Date	Agenda/speakers
1	June 21, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinions expressed by each member • A Sumo Museum curator: “History and traditions of Sumo”
2	August 31, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yamauchi, chair: “Outline, outlook and direction of Expert Panel discussion” • Yamaguchi Juichi, director of JASA: “JASA organization, ichimon (Sumo clans), Sumo-beya, JASA membership, etc.” • Tadaki, member: “Report of the JASA Committee on Preventing the Recurrence of Violence” • JASA Secretariat: “The latest on Japan Sports Agency debate on Governance Code”
3	October 10, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JASA briefing (by Chairman of the Board Hakkaku and others) on media reports regarding Ozumo-related developments • Atoda, member: “Establishing and sharing the Sumodo philosophy” • Opinion of Matsumoto Hakuo (introduced by Yamaguchi, JASA director) • JASA Secretariat: “The Japan Sports Agency’s introduction of Governance Code”
4	December 9, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yamashita Yasuhiro, president of the Japanese Olympic Committee: “The internationalization of Judo” • Nakai Kenji, lawyer: “Global spread of Kendo”
5	February 6, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JASA briefing (by Chairman of the Board Hakkaku and others) on media reports regarding Ozumo-related developments • Watanabe Daigoro (former Azumazeki): “As the first foreign-born sekitori and shisho (toshiyori)” • Konno, member: “An opinion of a half-century female fan of Ozumo”
Sessions suspended due to COVID-19 state of emergency declaration		
6	August 20, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JASA briefing (by Chairman of the Board Hakkaku and others) on COVID-19 impact on the March Grand Sumo Tournament and other Ozumo events and media reports regarding Ozumo-related developments • Opinion of Expert Panel member Oh (introduced by Yamaguchi, JASA director) • Otani, member: “Key points the Panel needs to discuss from the perspective of preserving and developing Ozumo and complying with the JSA Governance Code”
7	September 17, 2020	JASA’s opinions based on panel discussions so far (by Chairman of the Board Hakkaku and others)

8	November 9, 2020	Debate on what should be included in the upcoming Recommendations
9	December 23, 2020	Ditto
Sessions suspended due to COVID-19 state of emergency declaration		
10	April 3, 2021	Ditto
11	April 19, 2021	Recommendations submitted to JASA