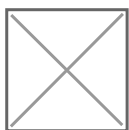


Wall of Daikon

/ MAY 04, 2022

Okay, I'll say it here: I'm a fan of sumo wrestling.

It started back in the '90's when Akebono, an enormous Hawaiian guy, rose to the highest rank of Yokozuna, the first non-Japanese wrestler ever to do so. He was so popular that American sports broadcasters included some sumo coverage on certain weekends. It was fun, exciting, and novel. Then when Akebono retired, 2001, sumo disappeared from TV.



But then, digital over-the-air TV brought an unique thing: subchannels. The way it works is that when a major broadcaster takes a digital spot, there is more bandwidth there than they need, so they can put other channels in the space left. These other channels are usually lower resolution, and which do not have a large market. The Utah Education Network, channel 9.1, has four subchannels, 9.4 is the NHK TV English service. NHK is the Japanese National Network. Every two months, NHK includes coverage of the latest Sumo Basho (tournament), and this is where I rediscovered Sumo.

Sumo is Japan's biggest sport. Big enough to close the shops when it's on TV.

I've found that the NHK app also shows these broadcasts on demand, and they are streamed at better resolution than the TV does. So grab the app if you want to enjoy the spectacle. It can be fun. NHK does the occasional weekend live coverage, where you see all the ritual, but it's the highlight show each day I enjoy the most.

Beware there are many terms in Japanese that won't exactly make sense until you learn what they are. I'll add a selected list below, one I got from Wikipedia.

Here are some media, other than NHK:

News:

Tachiai.org

Podcasts:

- Grand Sumo Breakdown
- Tachiai

YouTube channels:

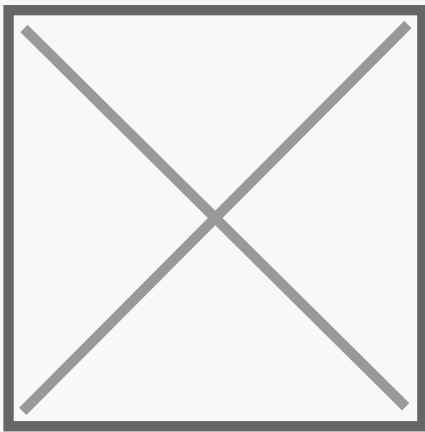
- [Chris Sumo](#)
- [Kintamayama](#)
- [Japanese Sumo Association](#) (Official channel)
- [NHK World Japan](#)

Scroll down for the ending, below the dictionary

Sumo Terminology, from Wikipedia:

“

B



[Banzuke](#) for the January 2012 tournament

[banzuke](#) (番付)

List of sumo wrestlers according to rank for a particular grand tournament, reflecting changes in rank due to the results of the previous tournament. It is written out in a particular calligraphy (see [sumō-ji](#)) and usually released on the Monday 13 days prior to the first day of the tournament.

[basho](#) (場所)

'Venue'. Any sumo tournament. Compare [honbasho](#).

[binzuke](#) (髯油)

Also called *binzuke abura* ('binzuke oil'). A Japanese pomade, which consists mainly of wax and hardened chamomile oil that is used to style sumo wrestlers' hair and give it its distinctive smell and sheen. It is used

exclusively by [tokoyama](#) hairdressers.

C

[chankonabe](#) (ちゃんこ鍋)

A stew commonly eaten in large quantities by sumo wrestlers as part of a weight gain diet. It contains [dashi](#) or stock with [sake](#) or [mirin](#) to add flavor. The bulk of *chankonabe* is made up of large quantities of protein sources, usually chicken, fish (fried and made into balls), [tofu](#), or sometimes beef; and vegetables (daikon, bok choy, etc.).

chikara-mizu (力水)

Power-water. The ladleful of water with which a wrestler will ceremonially rinse out his mouth prior to a bout. It must be handed to him by a wrestler not tainted with a loss on that day, so it is either handed to him by the victorious wrestler of the previous bout if he was on the same side of the *dohyō*, or if that wrestler was defeated, by the wrestler who will fight in the bout following. This system works well until the last match of the day (*musubi no ichiban* (結びの一番)) when one side will not have someone to give them the *power water*. This is due to the fact that one of the sides from the previous match lost and there is no next match, so there is neither a winner from the previous match, nor a next wrestler to give them the water. In this case a winner from two or three prior matches will be the one to give them the *power water*. This wrestler is known as the *kachi-nokori* (勝ちののこり), which means "the winner who remains".

chikara-gami (力紙)

Power-paper. The piece of calligraphy-grade paper with which a wrestler will ceremonially wipe the sweat off his face prior to a bout. It must be handed to him by a wrestler not tainted with a loss on that day, in the same manner of the *chikara-mizu* (力水) described above.

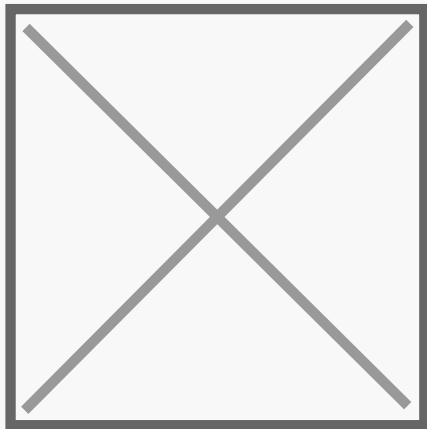
chirichōzu (洗手)

'Washing the hands'. One of the many rituals preceding a sumo bout, in which both wrestlers squat facing each other, display their open hands, clap and extend their arms. This is done to demonstrate they do not hold or carry weapons, and that the fight will be a fair and clean one.

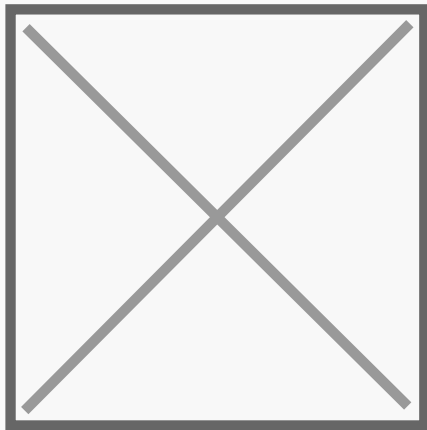
[chonmage](#) (髷)

Traditional Japanese haircut with a topknot, now largely only worn by *rikishi* and so an easy way to recognize that a man is in the sumo profession.

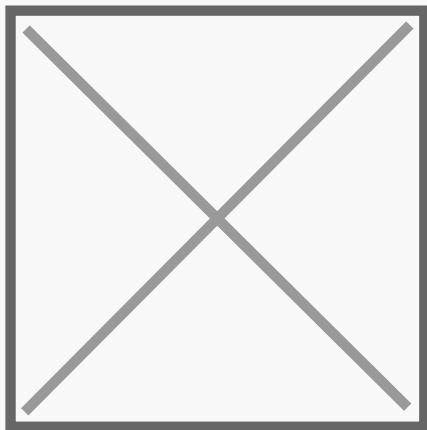
D



A *dohyō*



A *dohyō-iri* ceremony



A yokozuna ([Kakuryū Rikisaburō](#)) performing a *dohyō-iri*

danpatsu-shiki (担持式)

Retirement ceremony, held for a top wrestler in the [Ryōgoku Kokugikan](#) some months after retirement, in which his *chonmage*, or top knot, is cut off. A wrestler must have fought as a [sekitori](#) in at least 30 tournaments to qualify for a ceremony at the Kokugikan.

[dohyō](#) (道場)

The ring in which the sumo wrestlers hold their matches, made of a specific clay and spread with sand. A new *dohyō* is built prior to each tournament.

dohyō-iri (道場入り)

Ring-entering ceremony, performed only by the wrestlers in the *jūryō* and *makuuchi* divisions. The east and west sides perform their *dohyō-iri* together, in succession; the *yokozuna* have their own individual *dohyō-iri* performed separately. The main styles of *yokozuna dohyō-iri* are Unryū and Shiranui, named after [Unryū Kyūkichirō](#) and [Shiranui Kōemon](#). A *yokozuna* performs the ceremony with two attendants, the [tachimochi](#) (立持) or sword carrier, and the [tsuyuharai](#) (露払い) or dew sweeper.

E

ebanzuke (絵半ずけ)

Picture *banzuke* with paintings of top division *sekitori*, *gyōji* and sometimes *yobidashi*.

F

[fundoshi](#) (fundoshi)

Also pronounced *mitsu*. General term referring to a loincloth, ornamental apron, or *mawashi*.

fusenpai (不参配)

A loss by default for not appearing at a scheduled bout. If a wrestler withdraws from the tournament (injury or retirement), one loss by default will be recorded against him on the following day, and simple absence for the remainder. Recorded with a black square.

fusenshō (不参勝)

A win by default because of the absence of the opponent. The system was established for the [honbasho](#) in the May 1927 tournament. After the issue of [Hitachiwa Eitarō](#), the system was modified to the modern form. Prior to

this, an absence would simply be recorded for both wrestlers, regardless of which one had failed to show. Recorded with a white square.

G

gumbai

A war fan, usually made of wood, used by the *gyōji* to signal his instructions and final decision during a bout. Historically, it was used by samurai officers in Japan to communicate commands to their soldiers.

ginō-shō (銀賞)

Technique prize. One of three special prizes awarded to *rikishi* for performance in a *basho*.

[*gyōji*](#) (行司)

A sumo referee.

H

hakkeyoi (ハッケヨイ)

The phrase shouted by a sumo referee during a bout, specifically when the action has stalled and the wrestlers have reached a stand-off. It means, "Put some spirit into it!"

henka (変換)

A sidestep to avoid an attack. If done, it is usually at the *tachi-ai* to set up a [slap-down technique](#), but this is often regarded as bad sumo and unworthy of higher ranked wrestlers. Some say it is a legitimate "outsmaning" move, and provides a necessary balance to direct force, *henka* meaning "change; variation".^[4]

[*heya*](#) (部屋)

Literally "room", but usually rendered as "stable". The establishment where a wrestler trains, and also lives while he is in the lower divisions. It is pronounced *beya* in compounds, such as in the name of the stable. (For example, the *heya* named [Sadogatake](#) is called *Sadogatake-beya*.)

higi (不手)

'Non-technique'. A winning situation where the victorious wrestler did not initiate a *kimarite*. The Japan Sumo Association recognizes five *higi*. See [kimarite](#) for descriptions.

[*honbasho*](#) (本場所)

A professional sumo tournament, held six times a year since 1958, where the results affect the wrestlers' rankings.

hyōshi-gi (髷振) ()

The wooden sticks that are clapped by the *yobidashi* to draw the spectator's attention.

I

ichimon (一門) ()

A group of related [heya](#). There are five groups: *Dewanoumi*, *Nishonoseki*, *Takasago*, *Tokitsukaze*, and *Isegahama*. These groups tend to cooperate closely on inter-stable training and the occasional transfer of personnel. All *ichimon* have at least one representative on the Sumo Association board of directors. In the past, *ichimon* were more established cooperative entities and until 1965, wrestlers from the same *ichimon* did not fight each other in tournament competition.

itamiwake (負傷引当) ()

A draw due to injury. A rematch (*torinaoshi*) has been called but one wrestler is too injured to continue; this is no longer in use and the injured wrestler forfeits instead.^[1] The last *itamiwake* was recorded in 1999.^[7] Recorded with a white triangle.

J

jōi-jin (上役) ()

"High rankers". A term loosely used to describe wrestlers who would expect to face a *yokozuna* during a tournament. In practice this normally means anyone ranked *maegashira* 4 or above.

[jonidan](#) (二番) ()

The second-lowest division of sumo wrestlers, below *sandanme* and above *jonokuchi*.

[jonokuchi](#) (一番) ()

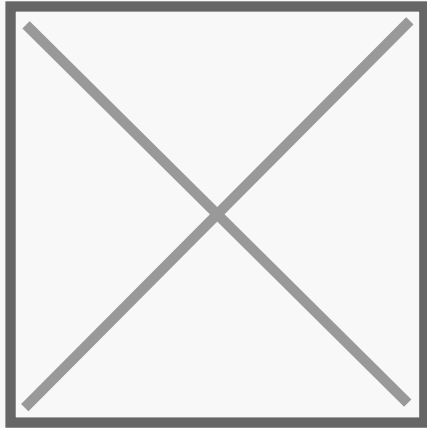
An expression meaning "this is only the beginning". The lowest division of sumo wrestlers.

[jūryō](#) (十両) ()

"Ten [ryō](#)", for the original salary of a professional sumo wrestler. The second-highest division of sumo wrestlers, below *makuuchi* and above *makushita*, and the lowest division where the wrestlers receive a salary

and full privileges.

K



An Edo-period wrestler wearing a *keshō-mawashi*

kachi-koshi (勝ち越し)

More wins than losses for a wrestler in a tournament. This is eight wins for a *sekitori* with fifteen bouts in a tournament, and four wins for lower-ranked wrestlers with seven bouts in a tournament. Gaining *kachi-koshi* generally results in promotion. The opposite is *make-koshi*.

kachi-nokori (勝ち残り)

Literally translates as "the winner who remains". During a day of sumo the "power water" is only given to the next wrestler by either a previous winner on their side of the ring or the next wrestler to fight on their side of the ring so as not to receive the water from either the opposite side or from a loser, which would be bad luck. However at the end of the day, one side will not have a winner or a next wrestler to give them the water. In this case the wrestler who was the last to win from their side will remain at the ringside in order to give them the "power water". This individual is known as the *kachi-nokori*.

kadoban (叩き)

An *ōzeki* who has suffered *make-koshi* in his previous tournament and so will be demoted if he fails to score at least eight wins. The present rules date from July 1969 and there have been over 100 cases of *kadoban ōzeki* since that time.

kantō-shō (闘魂賞)

Fighting Spirit prize. One of three special prizes awarded to rikishi for performance in a *basho*.

kenshō-kin (権奨金)

Prize money based on sponsorship of the bout, awarded to the winner upon the *gyōji's gunbai*. The banners of the sponsors are paraded around the *dohyō* prior to the bout, and their names are announced. Roughly half the sponsorship prize money goes directly to the winner, the remainder (minus an administrative fee) is held by the Japan Sumo Association until his retirement.

[*keshō-mawashi*](#) (袷))

The loincloth fronted with a heavily decorated apron worn by *sekitori* wrestlers for the *dohyō-iri*. These are very expensive, and are usually paid for by the wrestler's organization of supporters or a commercial sponsor.

[*kimarite*](#) (技))

Winning techniques in a sumo bout, announced by the referee on declaring the winner. The Japan Sumo Association recognizes eighty-two different *kimarite*.

[*kinboshi*](#) (金))

"Gold star". Awarded to a *maegashira* who defeats a *yokozuna* during a *honbasho*. It represents a permanent salary bonus.

[*kinjite*](#) (禁))

"Forbidden hand". A foul move during a bout, which results in disqualification. Examples include punching, kicking and eye-poking. The only *kinjite* likely to be seen these days (usually inadvertently) is hair-pulling.

Kokusai Sumō Renmei (国際相撲連盟))

[International Sumo Federation](#), the [IOC](#)-recognized governing body for international and amateur sumo competitions.

[*komusubi*](#) (小結))

"Little knot". The fourth-highest rank of sumo wrestlers, and the lowest *san'yaku* rank.

kore yori san'yaku (これより三役))

"These three bouts". The final three [torikumi](#) during [senshūroku](#). The winner of the first bout wins a pair of [arrows](#). The winner of the penultimate bout wins the [string](#). The ultimate bout winner is awarded the [bow](#).^[8]

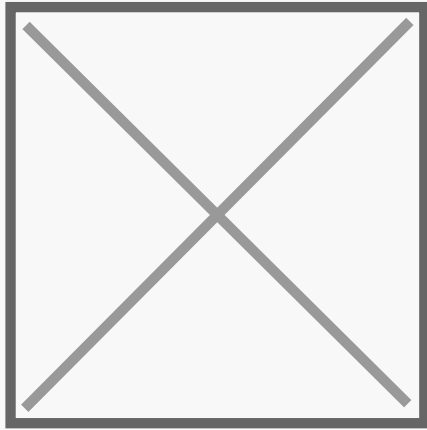
kuroboshi (黒星))

"Black star". A loss in a sumo bout, recorded with a black circle.

kyūjō (休場))

A wrestler's absence from a *honbasho*, usually due to injury.

M



A *mono-ii*

[*maegashira*](#) (四股)

"Those ahead". The fifth-highest rank of sumo wrestlers, and the lowest *makuuchi* rank. This rank makes up the bulk of the *makuuchi* division, comprising around 30 wrestlers depending on the number in *san'yaku*. Only the top ranks (*maegashira jō'i* (四股上)) normally fight against *san'yaku* wrestlers. Also sometimes referred to as *hiramaku* (平幕), particularly when used in contrast to *san'yaku*.

make-koshi (負け越し)

More losses than wins for a wrestler in a tournament. *Make-koshi* generally results in demotion, although there are special rules on demotion for *ōzeki*. The opposite is *kachi-koshi*.

[*makushita*](#) (三股)

"Below the curtain". The third highest division of sumo wrestlers, below *jūryō* and above *sandanme*. Originally the division right below *makuuchi*, explaining its name, before *jūryō* was split off from it to become the new second highest division.

[*makuuchi*](#) (二股) or *maku-no-uchi* (幕の裏)

"Inside the curtain". The top division in sumo. It is named for the curtained-off waiting area once reserved for professional wrestlers during *basho*, and comprises 42 wrestlers.

man'in onrei (満員御礼)

Full house. Banners are unfurled from the ceiling when this is achieved during [*honbasho*](#). However, it is not necessary to be at 100% capacity to unfurl the banner. Typically when seats are over 80% filled the banner is unfurled, however they have been unfurled with numbers as low as 75% and not unfurled with numbers as high as 95%.

matta (マット)

False start. When the wrestlers do not have mutual consent in the start of the match and one of the wrestlers starts before the other wrestler is ready, a *matta* is called, and the match is restarted. Typically the wrestler who is at fault for the false start (often this is both of them; one for giving the impression that he was ready to the other and the other for moving before his opponent was ready) will bow to the judges in apology. The first [kanji](#) means 'to wait', indicating that the match must wait until both wrestlers are ready.

[mawashi](#) (廻し)

The thick-waisted loincloth worn for sumo training and competition. *Mawashi* worn by *sekitori* wrestlers are white cotton for training and colored silk for competition; lower ranks wear dark cotton for both training and competition.

mizu-iri (水入り)

Water break. When a match goes on for around 4 minutes, the [gyōji](#) will stop the match for a water break for the safety of the wrestlers. In the two [sekitori](#) divisions, he will then place them back in exactly the same position to resume the match, while lower division bouts are restarted from the [tachi-ai](#).

[mochikyūkin](#) (モチキョウキン)

A system of bonus payments to [sekitori](#) wrestlers.

mono-ii (モノイイ)

The discussion held by the *shimpan* when the *gyōji*'s decision for a bout is called into question. Technically, the term refers to the querying of the decision: the resulting discussion is a *kyogi*. Literally means, a "talk about things".

N

negishi-ryū (根石流)

The conservative style of [calligraphy](#) used in the *banzuke*. See [sumō-ji](#).

Nihon Sumō Kyōkai (日本相撲協会)

The [Japan Sumo Association](#), the governing body for professional sumo.

nokotta (ノコッタ)

Something the referee shouts during the bout indicating to the wrestler on defense that he is still in the ring. Literally translates as "remaining" as in remaining in the ring.

O

ōichōmage (大葉結び)

Literally "ginkgo-leaf top-knot". This is the hair style worn in tournaments by *jūryō* and *makuuchi* wrestlers. It is so named because the top-knot is fanned out on top of the head in a shape resembling a ginkgo leaf. It is only worn during formal events such as tournaments. Otherwise even top rankers will wear their hair in a *chonmage* style.

oyakata (親方)

A sumo coach, almost always the owner of one of the 105 name licenses ([*toshiyori kabu*](#)). Also used as a suffix as a personal honorific.

[*ōzeki*](#) (大関)

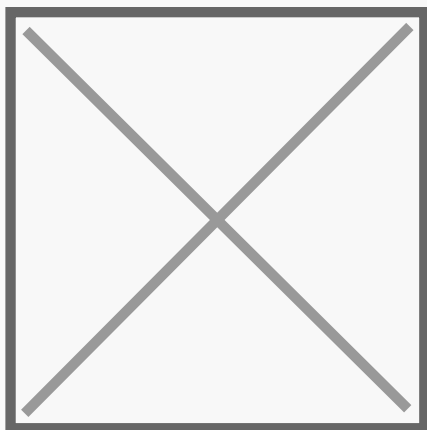
"Great barrier", but usually translated as "champion". The second-highest rank of sumo wrestlers.

R

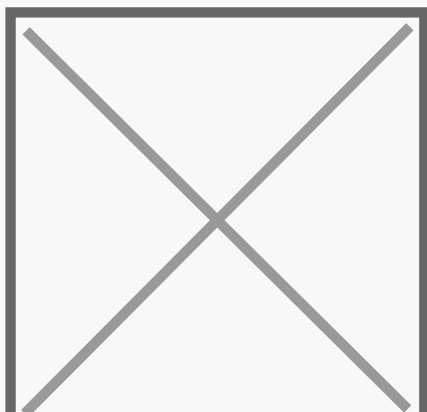
[*rikishi*](#) (力士)

Literally, "powerful man". The most common term for a professional sumo wrestler, although *sumōtori* is sometimes used instead.

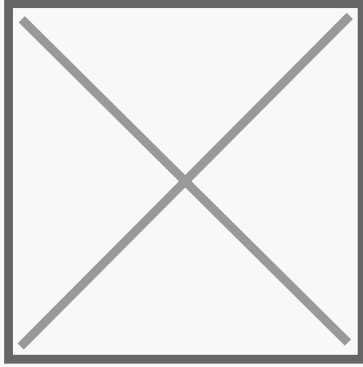
S



A *yokozuna* performing a *shiko*



The Prime Minister's Cup on display



Sumōmoji sample depicting the term [*edomoji*](#)

sagari (口口)

The strings inserted into the front of the mawashi for competition. The *sagari* of *sekitori* wrestlers are stiffened with a seaweed-based glue.

[*sandanme*](#) (口口)

"Third level". The third lowest division of sumo wrestlers, above *jonidan* and below *makushita*.

[*sanshō*](#) (口口)

"Three prizes". Special prizes awarded to *makuuchi* wrestlers for exceptional performance.

san'yaku (口口)

"Three ranks". The "titleholder" ranks at the top of sumo. There are actually four ranks in *san'yaku*: [*yokozuna*](#), [*ōzeki*](#), [*sekiwake*](#) and [*komusubi*](#), since the *yokozuna* is historically an *ōzeki* with a license to perform his own ring-entering ceremony. The word is occasionally used to refer only to *sekiwake* and *komusubi*.

san'yaku soroibumi (口口口口)

Ritual preceding the [*kore yori san'yaku*](#) or final three bouts on the final day ([*senshūroku*](#)) of a *honbasho*, where the six scheduled wrestlers, three from east side and three from the west side in turn perform *shiko* simultaneously on the [*dohyō*](#).

[*sekitori*](#) (口口)

Literally "taken the barrier". Sumo wrestlers ranked [*jūryō*](#) or higher.

[*sekiwake*](#) (口口)

The third-highest rank of sumo wrestlers.

senshūroku (口口口)

The final day of a sumo tournament. *Senshūroku* literally translates as "many years of comfort." There are two possible explanations for the

origins of this term. In [gagaku](#) (traditional Japanese court music) the term is tied with celebratory meaning to the last song of the day. In classic [nōgaku](#) theater there is a play known as *Takasago*, in which the term is used in a song at the end of the play. Today the term is used in [kabuki](#) and other types of performances as well.

shikiri (しきり)

"Toeing the mark". The preparation period before a bout, during which the wrestlers stare each other down, crouch repeatedly, perform the ritual salt-throwing, and other tactics to try to gain a psychological advantage.

[12]

shikiri-sen (しきりせん)

The two short white parallel lines in the middle of the ring that wrestlers must crouch behind before starting a bout. Introduced in the spring tournament of 1928, they are 90 cm (35 in) long, 6 cm (2.4 in) wide and placed 70 cm (28 in) apart using enamel paint.[13]

shiko (しこ)

The sumo exercise where each leg in succession is lifted as high and as straight as possible, and then brought down to stomp on the ground with considerable force. In training this may be repeated hundreds of times in a row. *Shiko* is also performed ritually to drive away demons before each bout and as part of the *yokozuna dohyō-iri*.

[shikona](#) (しこな)

A wrestler's "fighting or [ring name](#)", often a poetic expression which may contain elements specific to the wrestler's *heya*. Japanese wrestlers frequently do not adopt a *shikona* until they reach *makushita* or *jūryō*; foreign wrestlers adopt one on entering the sport. On rare occasions, a wrestler may fight under his original family name for his entire career, such as former *ōzeki* [Dejima](#) and former *yokozuna* [Wajima](#).

[shimpan](#) (しんぱん)

Ringside judges or umpires who may issue final rulings on any disputed decision. There are five *shimpan* for each bout, drawn from senior members of the *Nihon Sumō Kyōkai*, and wearing traditional formal kimono.

[shini-tai](#) (しにたい)

"Dead body". A wrestler who was not technically the first to touch outside the ring but is nonetheless ruled the loser due to his opponent having put him in an irrecoverable position.[14]

shiomaki (しおまき)

One of the many rituals preceding a sumo bout, in which the wrestlers throw handfuls of salt before entering the *dohyō*. According to [Shinto](#)

beliefs, salt possesses purifying properties; as they cast salt into the ring, the wrestlers would then be cleansing the *dohyō* of bad energy and possibly protecting themselves from injury. The average amount a wrestler grabs and throws is around 200 g (7.1 oz), although some wrestlers throw up to 500 g (18 oz).[\[16\]](#)

shokkiri (しおきり)

A comedic sumo performance, a type of match common to exhibition matches and tours, similar in concept to the basketball games of the [Harlem Globetrotters](#); often used to demonstrate examples of illegal moves.

shukun-shō (しゅくんしょう)

Outstanding performance prize. One of three special prizes awarded to *rikishi* for performance in a *basho*.

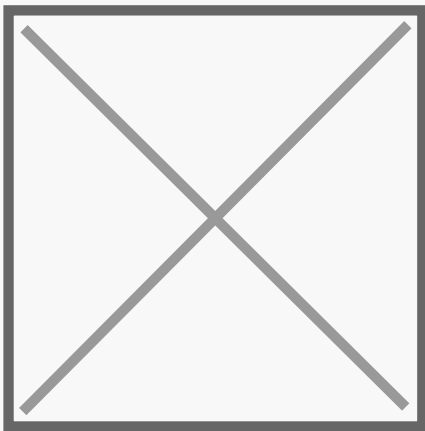
sumō-ji (しゅもうじ)

Calligraphy style with very wide brushstrokes used to write the *banzuke*.

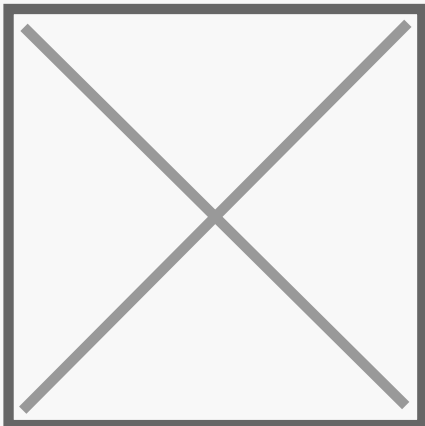
sumōtori (しゅもうとり)

Literally, "one who does sumo". Sumo wrestler, but occasionally refers only to *sekitori*.

T



A *tegata* made by [Terao](#)



Emperor's Cup on display

[*tachi-ai*](#) (立合い)

The initial charge at the beginning of a bout.

tawara (藁)

Bales of rice straw. *Tawara* are half-buried in the clay of the *dohyō* to mark its boundaries.

tegata (手形)

"Hand print". A memento consisting of a wrestler's handprint in red or black ink and his *shikona* written by the wrestler in calligraphy on a square paperboard. It can be an original or a copy. A copy of a *tegata* may also be imprinted onto other memorabilia such as porcelain dishes. Only [*sekitori*](#) wrestlers are allowed to make hand prints.

tegatana (手切)

"Knife hand". After winning a match and accepting the prize money, the wrestler makes a ceremonial hand movement with a *tegatana* known as *tegatana o kiru* (手切三つ) where he makes three cutting motions in the order of left, right, and center.

Y

[*yobidashi*](#) (引当 or 立当)

Usher or announcer. General assistants at tournaments. They call the wrestlers to the *dohyō* before their bouts, build the *dohyō* prior to a tournament and maintain it between bouts, display the advertising banners before sponsored bouts, maintain the supply of ceremonial salt and *chikara-mizu*, and any other needed odd jobs.

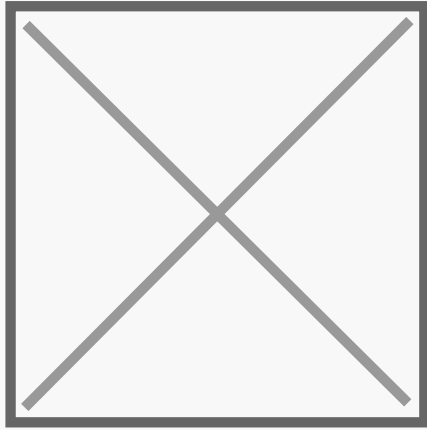
[*yokozuna*](#) (横綱)

"Horizontal rope". The top rank in sumo, usually translated "Grand Champion". The name comes from the rope a *yokozuna* wears for the *dohyō-iri*. See [*tsuna*](#).

yumitori-shiki (玉手廻し)

The bow-twirling ceremony performed at the end of each *honbasho* day by a designated wrestler, the *yumitori*, who is usually from the *makushita* division, and is usually a member of a *yokozuna*'s stable.

File:Yumitori shiki.ogg



yūshō (優勝)

A tournament championship in any division, awarded to the wrestler who wins the most bouts.

All this is one big lead-in to what I wanted to post today. One of my favorites is Shodai, an Ozeki (second-highest rank), who graduated from NODAI, the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (Get it, Shodai from NODAI), and NODAI had a very unusual thing they do, the Daikon Dance. Daikons are large Japanese radishes, not spicy, that cook up really nicely. [On American farms they are sometimes used as a cover crop, as "oilseed radish."] Here is the Daikon Dance:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/YCexVYHqtZQ>

One American sumo commentator thought that Shodai looked something like a daikon, and Shodai has a nice defensive way of wrestling, so he refers to the "Wall of Daikon" when Shodai is unbeatable. Here is Shodai vs. Hoshoryu, Shodai is in the black mawashi (belt):

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/mj7uIMwoz6c?start=51>

Wall of Daikon.

Revision #1

Created 7 April 2024 19:35:17 by bruce

Updated 7 April 2024 19:35:36 by bruce