



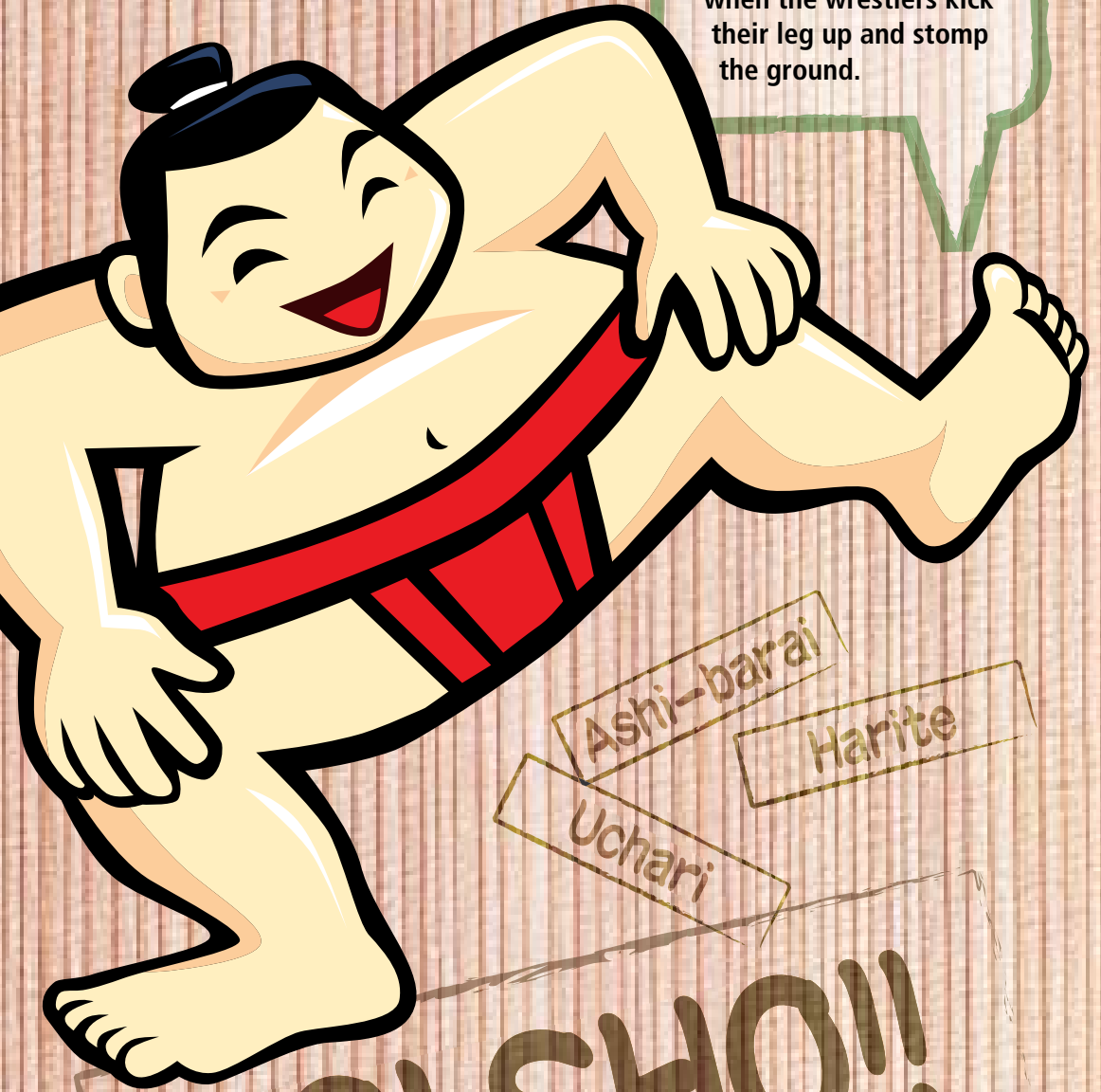
Oshi-Dashi



Yori-Kiri

**YOI-SHO!!**

What the audience shouts when the wrestlers kick their leg up and stomp the ground.



Ashi-barai

Harite

Uchari

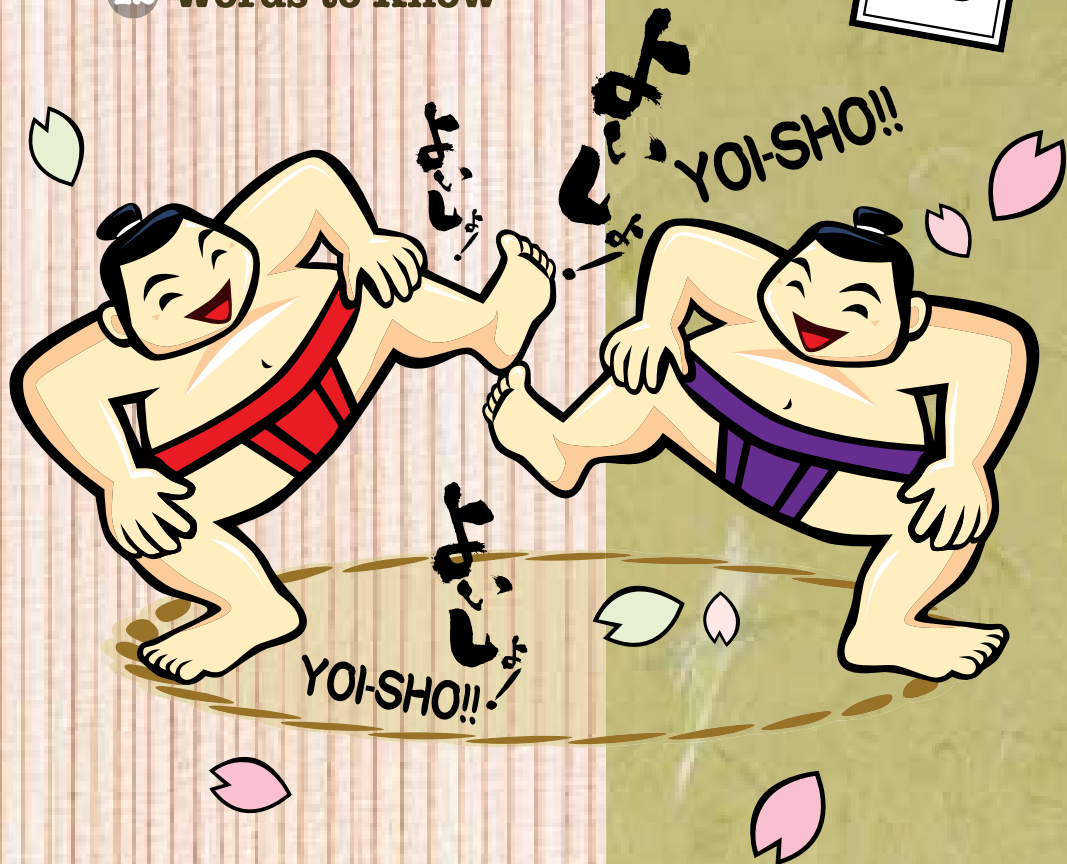
**YOI-SHO!!**

**A Beginner's Guide to Sumo**

Tsuki-Dashi

Kote-Nage

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# History of Nihon Sumo Kyokai



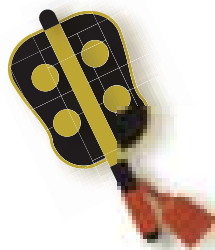
**S**umo is an ancient sport dating back some 1500 years. The first sumo matches were a form of ritual dedicated to the gods along with prayers for a bountiful harvest. Together with ritual dancing and dramas, sumo was performed in religious shrines.

In the Nara Period in the 8th Century, sumo wrestling became an annual festival which included wrestling matches and the winning sumo wrestlers participated in music and dancing celebrations. The Imperial Court was the sponsor or

patron for sumo wrestling, and established the first rules and techniques.

During a long period of warfare, the military trained soldiers in sumo, and jujitsu was formed by the samurai as an off shoot of sumo. When peace was finally restored in 1603, a period of prosperity grew, and the merchant classes organized professional sumo groups for their entertainment, and has further developed into the sumo wrestling sport enjoyed in modern times.





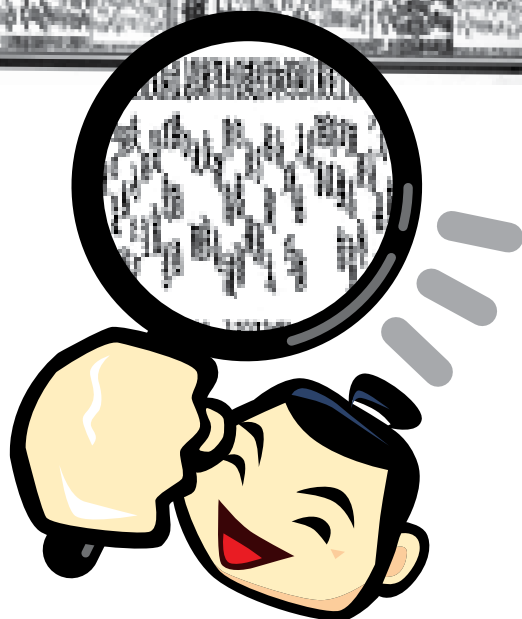
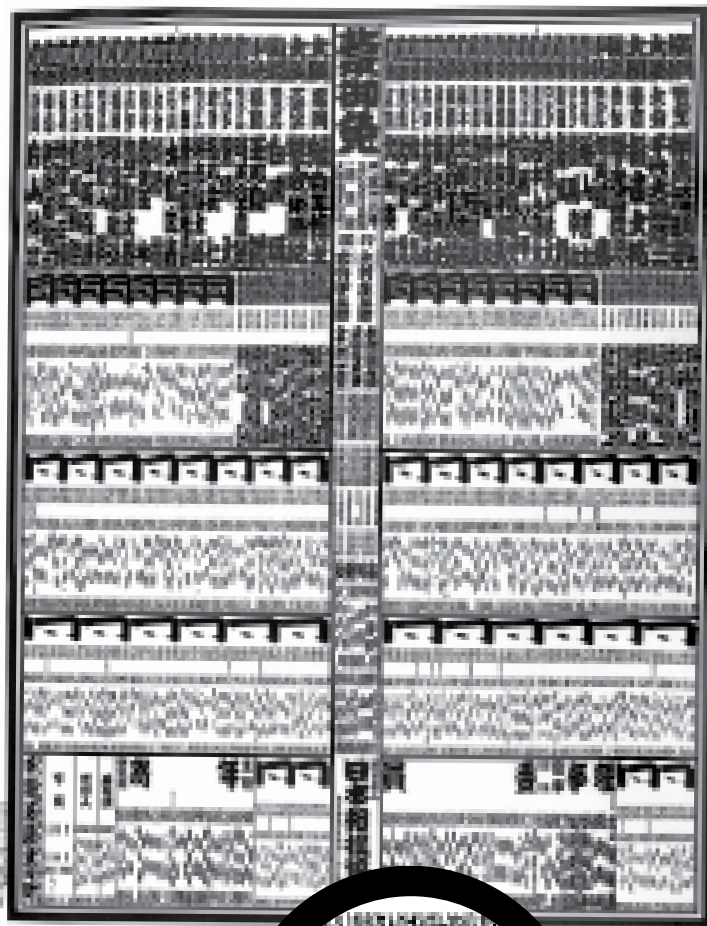
## Banzuke: The Official Sumo Ranking Record

**T**oday there are about 800 rikishi (wrestlers) in professional sumo from the highest ranking yokozuna to the beginner level trainees.

Nihon Sumo Kyokai, the official sumo wrestling organization of Japan, issues a ranking list of all the rikishi which is called the banzuke.

The banzuke is hand printed in ancient calligraphy with the highest ranking rikishi at the top of the list in bold large characters. The calligraphy characters get progressively smaller as the ranking decreases to the lower levels.

Writing in characters to create the banzuke is an ancient tradition upheld by the professional sumo organization. When rikishi rise to the upper ranks, special announcements and ceremonies are conducted by the organization.



## The Ranking Pyramid

**N**o weight limits exist in sumo wrestling, so a rikishi (wrestler) could face an opponent that weighs twice as much as his own weight. It takes strength and speed of the lower body, including balance and technique to win a wrestling match.

There are a total of 10 ranks of professional sumo rikishi (wrestlers). The top five ranks are considered the upper division, and are made up of highly experienced sumo wrestlers. It is the goal of a sumo wrestler to move up in ranks, which is accomplished with training, competing and winning in tournaments.

### Top Five Ranks

The top five ranks are referred to as the Maku-uchi group, and contain about 40 experienced sumo wrestlers that have trained and competed to work their way up. The names of these rikishi are printed in bold letters at the very top of the banzuke.

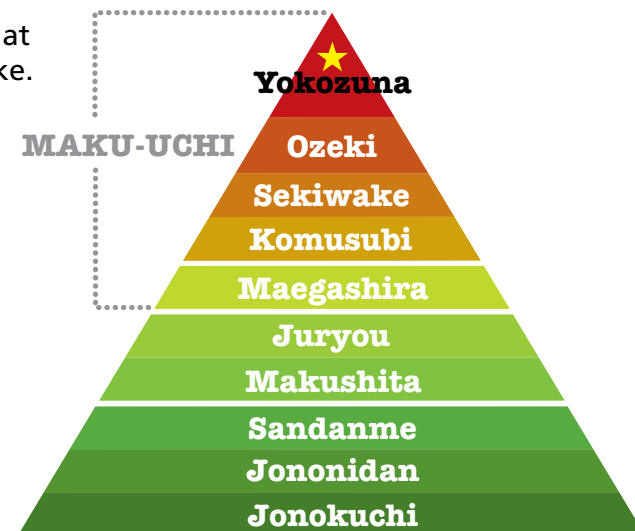
The rikishi (wrestlers) in the Maku-uchi group starting with the highest rank are:

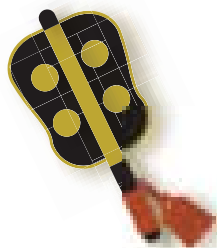
1. Yokozuna (grand champion)
2. Ozeki
3. Sekiwake
4. Komusubi
5. Maegashira

The lower ranks, Sandanme (san-dan-me), Jonidan (jo-ni-dan), and Jonokuchi (jo-no-kuchi) do not wrestle each day of a tournament.

### Grand Champion: Yokozuna (yo-ko-zuna)

The Yokozuna title, or grand champion, was created three hundred years ago, and has been held by only 69 rikishi as of 2007. Once a rikishi becomes a yokozuna, he can never be demoted, even if he loses in a tournament competition. He determines when it is time to retire from competing in tournaments. The yokozuna is an honored rank, and the rikishi that holds this rank not only is the most capable wrestler, but is a symbol of high ethical behavior and demonstrates the true nature of a grand champion sumo wrestler.





# Sumo Attire

**T**he rikishi (wrestler) wears a hair design and a loin cloth style wrestling garment that is determined by his rank. These styles honor the long standing ancient customs of sumo wrestling.

## Hair Design

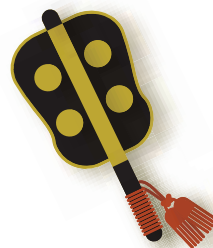
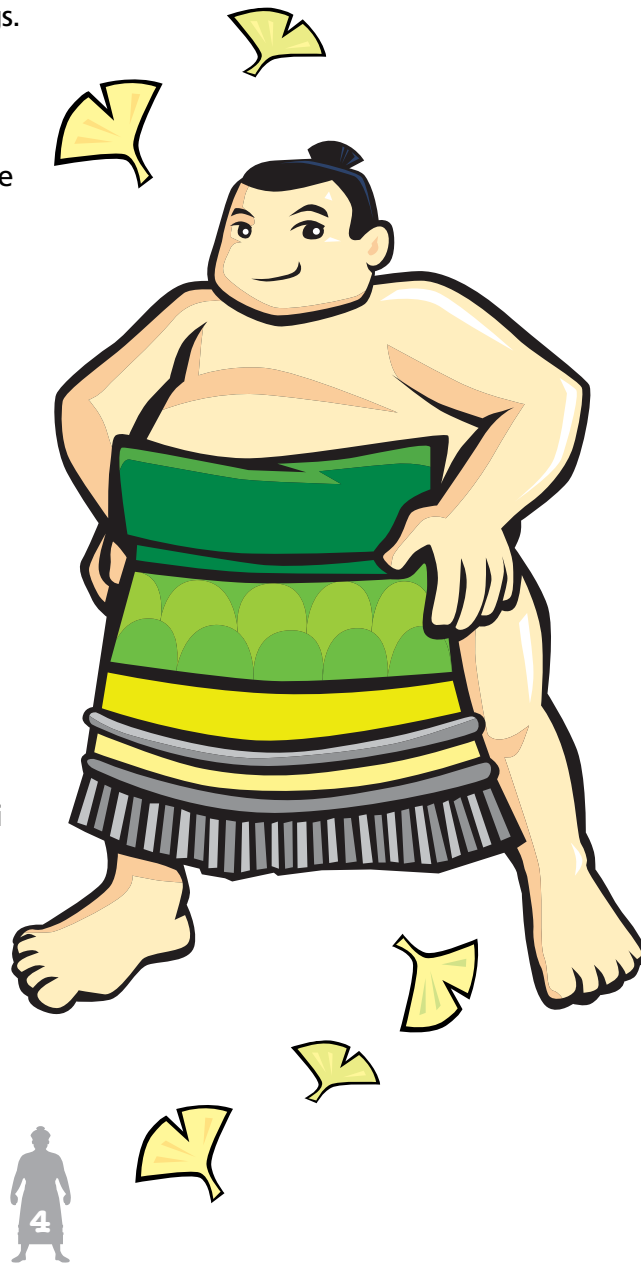
The ranks below the juryou rank wear a hair style called chon-mage; a plain style tied with paper strings. The rikishi of the maku-uchi (upper 5 divisions) and the juryou ranks wear a hair style that is called the o-icho-mage, which is more elaborate and resembles the ginkgo leaf.

## Wrestling Garment

The rikishi loin cloth is called a mawashi, and the cloth is about 10 yards long by 2 feet wide. It is folded in six and then wrapped around the waist of the rikishi four to seven times depending on the size of the rikishi's waist. Different types of mawashi are worn for training and for tournaments.

During the sumo tournaments, maku-uchi rikishi (the five upper ranked rikishi) wear kesho-awashi or ceremonial aprons which are more elaborate and display special symbols in the materials. These aprons are made of silk, embroidered with special designs and hemmed with gold fringe.

The yokozuna, (grand champion rikishi), wears both a kesho-mawashi, and a 25 to 35 pound hemp rope belt. The belt is tied in a large single bow in the back. A zigzag patterned paper ornament hangs in the front from the belt. This zigzag pattern is a religious symbol of Japan found in Shinto shrines and used in shrines in Japanese homes.



# Basho: Official Tournament Competition

**N**ihon Sumo Kyokai, is the official organization of sumo wrestling, and oversees the national sport of Japan. Sumo wrestlers honor the origins of sumo wrestling by observing ancient traditions and ceremonies during their training, and when they participate in the official sumo tournaments. Six Grand Tournaments, or Basho, a year are held in Japan; three in its capital, Tokyo, and one each in the cities of Osaka, Nagoya and Kyushu.

The fifteen day Basho allows the rikishi of higher ranks to fight once per day. The winners and losers are tracked just as college basketball tournaments. A chart in the tournament program helps spectators to organize the winners of the matches.

## Awards

There are four awards that are presented on the last day of the Basho. The rikishi that has the best record of wins over losses is awarded the ultimate trophy, the Emperor's Cup.

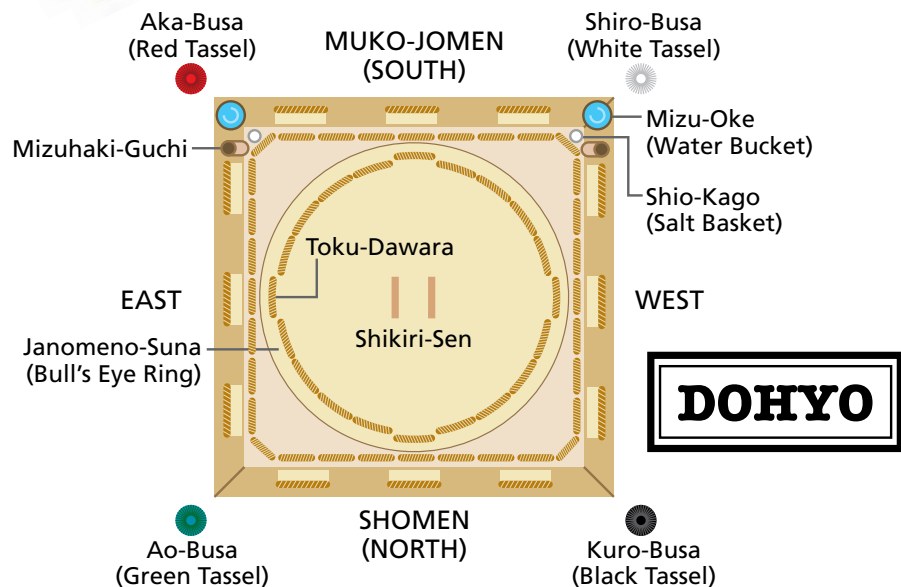
The rikishi (wrestler) that wins at least eight of his fifteen matches is eligible for shukunsho, kantoshu and ginoshu awards. The shukunsho is awarded to the rikishi that upset the most yokozuna (grand champions) and ozeki (champions). The kantoshu award is given to the rikishi that has the best fighting spirit. And the ginoshu is an award for the best wrestling technique.



(top): Presentation of Sakura Cup (bottom): 2007 Hawaii Grand Sumo Tournament



## Dohyo: The Sumo Ring



**T**he dohyo is specially constructed by hand and takes one week to build. The dohyo stands 2 feet high and is 18 feet square. It is made of special clay found in and transported from Japan and has a thin top layer of sand.

The inner circle where the wrestling takes place is 15 feet in diameter. There is a traditional blessing of the dohyo ceremony led by a Dohyo-Matsuri who buries grains of crops in the center of the ring. This represents the hopes for bountiful crops at harvest time.

### Dohyo Design

There are several key elements of the dohyo design. First, a roof resembling a Shinto shrine or tsuriyane hangs above the dohyo which honors the ancient religious roots of sumo wrestling.

The direction bearings, East, West, North and South, are important to the design of the dohyo.

A giant colored tassel hangs on each corner of the Shinto roof. Each color signifies a season of the year. White signifies autumn, black is winter, green is spring and red is summer. The white and red tassels hang on the south side of the roof, and the green and black tassels hang on the north side. A salt basket and a water container are placed on the North and South corners of the dohyo. For the tournament opening ceremonies two groups of maku-uchi rikishi (wrestlers) enter the dohyo; the first group enters from the East, and the other group of rikishi enters from the West.



## Traditional Ceremonies

**A** tournament begins with the dohyo-iri or “entering the ring” ceremony. The maku-uchi rikishi (the five upper ranked sumo wrestlers) participate in the dohyo-iri and wear their kesho-mawashi or ceremonial aprons. These wrestlers are divided up into East and West groups and are in order by their ranking. Maegashira (5th) and Komusubi (4th) ranks, followed by the more experienced ranks of Sekiwake (3rd) and Ozeki (2nd).

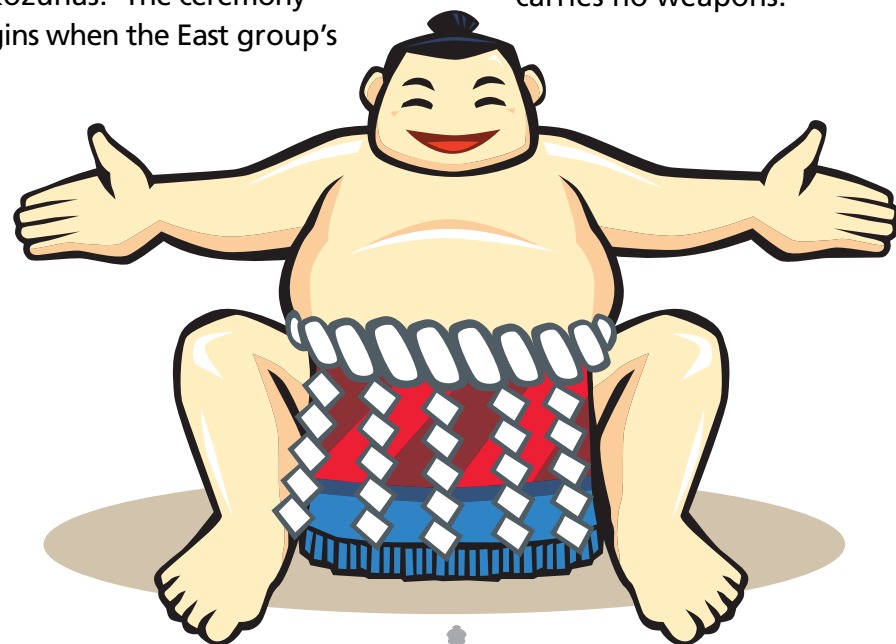
### Opening Ceremony: Dohyo-Iri

East and West Yokozunas Perform Each of the East and West groups of maku-uchi rikishi are represented by a head yokozuna. An entering the ring ceremony or dohyo-iri is done by both East and West yokozunas. The ceremony begins when the East group’s

yokozuna enters the arena.

The yokozuna is escorted by a senior gyoji (referee), and two maku-uchi rikishi. The rikishi are in full ceremonial dress with one bearing a sword, a symbol that represents samurai warriors. The gyoji and two attendants crouch in the dohyo, as the yokozuna prepares to perform the dohyo-iri ceremony.

This solemn ritual is a tradition that all yokozuna uphold in a dignified respectful manner. You will see the yokozuna stand in an upright position with his knees bent and on his toes. He loudly claps his hands together to attract the attention of the gods. He then extends his arms wide, and opens his palms to demonstrate that he carries no weapons.



## Traditional Ceremonies

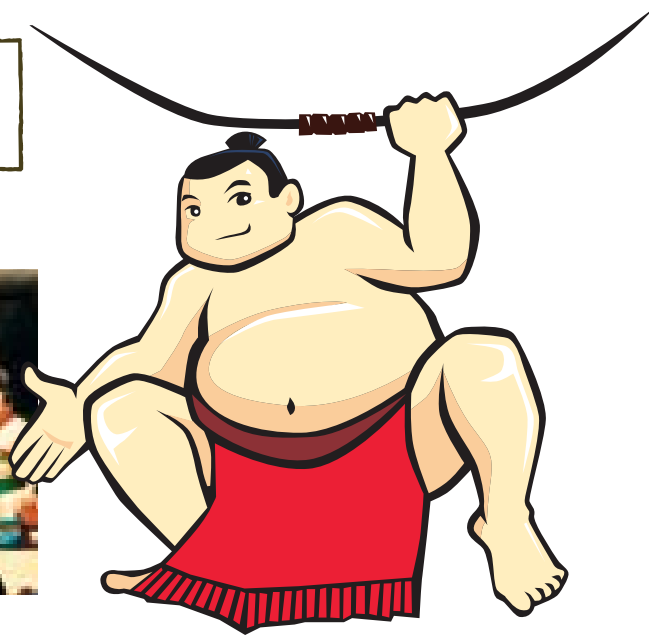


In the opening ceremony, the yokozuna's kesho-mawashi (ceremonial apron) hangs in full display.

At the end of the ritual to drive away any evil spirits, he will lift to his side, one leg very high into the air, and bring it down to make a loud clap noise. When the ceremony is completed, the East yokozuna and attendants exit the dohyo. Next, the West yokozuna enters the arena, with his senior gyoji (referee), and two maku-uchi rikishi. The ritual is conducted in the same manner by the West yokozuna, and he too wears a kesho-mawashi with a heavy hemp rope belt that has two large bows in the back. When this ritual has ended and the West yokozuna and attendants have exited the dohyo, the wrestling matches begin.

### Tournament's Closing Ceremony

The yumitori-shiki or "bow dance" is the traditional dance that originated



in ancient times. A winning rikishi was awarded a bow for winning wrestling matches, and expressed his appreciation by doing a dance with the bow. This tradition is upheld during the closing ceremony.

A rikishi is selected from the makushita rank, after the final wrestling match, to receive the bow award. The bow is handed to the makushita rikishi by the gyoji, and the dance is performed with the bow being twirled in various routines.



## Gyoji and Judges

**R**eferees are called gyoji, and are the officials that judge the wrestling bout. They are ranked, just like sumo wrestlers. A tate-gyoji is the highest ranked referee, and judges all wrestling bouts of any yokozuna.

All the gyoji carry a fan that has a tassel and its color indicates what the rank is of the gyoji. The tate-gyoji rank (highest rank) has a purple or purple and white tassel; san-yaku rank is red and white, juryo rank is blue and white, and either a blue or black tassel for the lower ranks. The fan is used to give signals to start the wrestling bout, and the winner.

The gyoji attire is a kimono of the style worn by samurai warriors of ancient times. Their hat resembles a Shinto priest hat and is made of black gauze. The highest ranking gyoji wear split-toe socks with straw sandals, (called zori), while lower ranked gyoji are barefoot.

### Judges

Judges dressed in black formal kimonos sit along the four sides of the dohyo. Five judges are present for all tournament matches. The chief judge sits on the North side in front of the dohyo. One judge sits at each of the directions: East, West, North and South. When there is a question about a gyoji's (referee) ruling, the judges enter the ring to discuss the situation. These judges will either over-rule a decision or order a rematch.





## Sumo Wrestling Begins

**T**he gyoji will start the wrestling bout by entering the dohyo ring and calling out the names of the sumo wrestlers. The rikishi (wrestler) has chosen a special sumo name that comes from their sumo master's name or his place of birth. The ending of the name can be: *-umi* (meaning sea), *-yama* (mountain), or *-gawa* (river). The gyoji undergoes special voice training and uses a high-pitch to call out each of the rikishi's name.

### Entering the Dohyo: Shiomaki Symbolic Gesture

Each rikishi enters the dohyo and completes symbolic gestures that are a sumo wrestling tradition. Water and salt are symbols of purity. First, the rikishi rinses his mouth with water and wipes his body with a cloth as symbols of cleansing his mind and body. Purifying the ring by throwing salt is only done by higher ranked rikishi.

### Preparing to Wrestle: Chiri-o-kiru & Sonkyo Postures

Each rikishi will squat on their toes, and stretch their arms wide with their palms open to show each other they respect fair play which is referred to as chiri-o-kiru. They move closer to the center of the ring where the toe line marks are located. This is a line that they don't cross prior to the bout. They

crouch with toes lined up in the correct location which is called sonkyo.

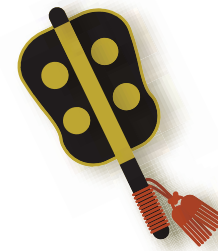
### Get Set, Ready Position: Shikiri

The rikishi will move to the center of the dohyo, squat, and face each other. This is called shikiri, when they crouch and glare at each other with their fists on the ground. This is similar to how NFL/AFL football players line up prior to hiking the football.

Each rikishi can stand up to throw off the concentration of the other wrestler. There are time limits to getting into position; the lower ranks must begin wrestling at once, while higher ranks can take up to seven minutes. Both wrestlers will throw salt again, and then resume the shikiri stance.

When the rikishi are in the get-set shikiri position, the gyoji (referee) signals with his fan, and the wrestling match begins. The initial clash is called tachi-ai, and the following move, when the rikishi actually grasp each other, is called torikumi.

The winner of the bout is indicated by the gyoji when he points his fan at the winner. Only the referee and judges can protest or make objections to decisions.



## Tournament Rules

**T**o win a bout the rikishi (wrestler) must force his opponent out of the inner circle or throw him in the dohyo. A rematch is authorized when both competitors touch the surface of the inside or outside dohyo at the same time.

### A rikishi loses a match when he:

- ❖ falls down in the dohyo,
- ❖ any part of his body, from his finger tip to the top-knot of his hair, touches the ground,
- ❖ steps over the straw bales that mark the circle.



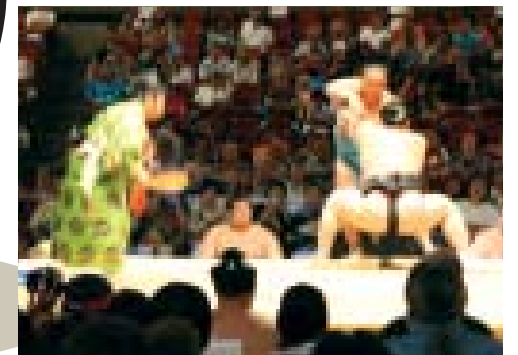
### It is against the rules to:

- ❖ strike opponents with fists,
- ❖ pull hair,
- ❖ gouge eyes,
- ❖ choke,
- ❖ kick in the stomach or chest, or
- ❖ seize the loin cloth or mawashi that covers vital organs.

There are hundreds of wrestling moves that the rikishi must train and master.

### Some common sumo moves:

- ❖ Shoving out of the ring: *Oshi-Dashi*
- ❖ Leg trip: *Soto-Gake*
- ❖ Underarm throw: *Shitate-Nage*
- ❖ Lift and throw out of the ring: *Tsuri-Dashi*
- ❖ Lifting up and throwing down in the ring: *Tsuri-Otoshi*
- ❖ Catching a leg and pushing down: *Ashi-Tori*
- ❖ Lifting with both hands of the opponent's belt to move out of the ring: *Yori-Kiri*



# Words to Know



**BASHO:** the six grand tournaments held in Japan each year; three in its capital, Tokyo, and one each in the cities of Osaka, Nagoya and Kyushu.

**BANZUKE:** the official ranking list of sumo rikishi (wrestlers) issued by the Nihon Sumo Kyokai.

**CHIRI-O-KIRU:** sumo wrestling opponents stretch their arms wide and palms open to show each other they respect fair play prior to a bout beginning.

**CHON-MAGE:** the plain hair style tied with paper strings worn by rikishi of the lower ranks below makushita.

**DOHYO:** (pronounced: dough-yo) The ring in which the sumo wrestling takes place. Hand made using special clay to create a hard surface with a thin top layer of sand, the dohyo is 18 feet square and 2 feet high, and takes one week to construct by hand.

**DOHYO-MATSURI:** an official who performs a traditional dohyo 'blessing' ceremony where he buries grains in the center of the dohyo ring which represents hopes for bountiful crops at harvest time.

**DOHYO-IRI:** the "entering the ring" ceremony of the sumo wrestling tournament which includes the maku-uchi rikishi (the five upper ranked wrestlers).

**GINOSHO:** an award for the best wrestling technique of a rikishi in a tournament.

**GYOJI:** a referee that resides over the sumo wrestling match.

**KANTOSHO:** the award given to the rikishi that has the best fighting spirit in a tournament.

**KESHO-MAWASHI:** the ceremonial aprons are made of silk, embroidered with special designs and hemmed with gold fringe. These are worn during sumo tournament ceremonies and by the maku-uchi group of rikishi wrestlers.

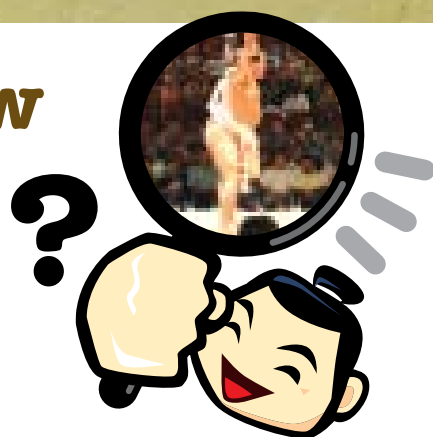
**MAKU-UCHI GROUP:** the top five ranks of the professional sumo wrestlers as determined by Nihon Sumo Kyokai, the organization that oversees professional sumo wrestling.

**MAWASHI:** the loin cloth worn by the rikishi (wrestler). The design style worn by a rikishi is determined by his rank order.

**MAKUSHITA:** the rank of rikishi that is chosen to do the ceremonial bow dance which occurs at the end of a tournament.

**NIHON SUMO KYOKAI** is the official name of the organization that oversees the professional sumo wrestling tournaments, the banzuke (ranking list of /wrestlers), and is responsible for the rules, regulations, wrestling ethics, and ceremonial traditions of sumo wrestling. Nihon translated to English means Japan, and Kyokai means organization.

**O-ICHO-MAGE:** the hair style of the rikishi of the maku-uchi (upper 5 divisions) and the juryou ranks which is elaborate and resembles the ginko leaf.



**OZEKI** is the term for champion and is the second highest rank of rikishi.

**RIKISHI** is the term for sumo wrestlers.

**RIKISHI RANKING:** #1 rank is Yokozuna, #2 rank is Ozeki, #3 rank is Sekiwake, #4 rank is Komusubi, #5 rank is Maegashira, #6 rank is Juryou, #7 rank is Makushita, #8 rank is Sandanme, #9 rank is Jonidan, #10 rank is Jonokuchi.

**SAMURAI:** a highly trained military warrior of ancient Japan that practiced a special code of conduct and ethics.

**SHIKIRI:** when sumo opponents crouch and stare at each other with their fists on the ground. This is the beginning of the wrestling bout, and resembles the stance of NFL/AFL football players lining up before the football is hiked.

**SHIOMAKI:** throwing of the salt ritual performed by rikishi in upper maku-uchi ranks as they enter the ring to purify the dohyo.

**SHUKUNSHO:** the award given to the rikishi (wrestler) that upset the most yokozuna (grand champions) and ozeki (champions) in a tournament.

**SONKYO:** wrestling opponents position themselves in the center of the ring, with toes lined up where the bout will begin.

**TACHI-AI:** the initial clash between the two rikishi as they come up out of the get-set position (shikiri) that resembles football players before the football is hiked.



**TATE-GYOJI:** the highest ranked referee that judges wrestling bouts of a yokozuna. This rank is indicated by a purple or purple and white tassel on his fan.

**TORIKUMI:** after the two rikishi (wrestlers) make initial contact and they actually grasp each other to wrestle.

**TSURIYANE:** the roof that resembles a Shinto shrine which hangs above the dohyo (wrestling ring).

**YUMITORI-SHIKI:** a "bow dance" is a traditional dance performed by makushita rikishi at the conclusion of a sumo wrestling tournament.

**YOKOZUNA:** the title of the grand champion, the highest rank a rikishi can attain in professional sumo wrestling.

**ZORI:** a straw sandal that higher ranked gyoji (referees) wear with a split-toe sock.



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*History of Sumo video: Grand Sumo Tournament 2007 in Hawaii, [www.sumohawaii.com](http://www.sumohawaii.com)*

*International Sumo Federation website: <http://lamaterusumo.com/nrsrsumobook>*

*Photos courtesy of McKenzie Media Circus and Mr. George Kodama*

*A sumo website: <http://www.Sumotalk.com>*



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**Who wins the Sakura Grand Sumo Cup?**



The rikishi that wins the overall tournament receives the giant giant 46 inch Sakura Cup. In Hawaii's 2007 Grand Sumo Tournament, Yokozuna Hakuho won the Sakura cup. Who will win the next Sakura Cup in Los Angeles?



**Why was Manga or Japanese comic illustration style used in the Sumo Primer?**



The growing popularity of Manga captures the interest of a wide audience. Manga artists the world around exclusively draw with Sakura's **Pigma® Micron®** pens. Look for Manga Start! drawing guide for beginners in your local retail stores.



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