

## Chapter 10

# What Does It Mean to be Truly “Interdisciplinary”?



**Abstract** Before concluding this work, let us return to some bioethical theories. The theme of the present chapter is integral to bioethics. My main intent is for each reader to revisit his or her definition of the meaning of “interdisciplinary,” a core term in discussions of bioethics. The manner in which this term is used varies widely. At the simplest level, “interdisciplinary” is used to indicate that researchers and others from multiple academic fields have collected together their own individual theories on a particular topic. However, it is worth wondering how much each researcher actually understands the writings and thoughts of those in other fields. In the present chapter, I first ask what is required to be truly “interdisciplinary” and present a sport ethics article my colleagues and I wrote as an experiment to demonstrate these points. My hope is that my readers will consider how this article could be changed in order for it to be understood better by as many readers as possible.

Bioethics is often said to be an interdisciplinary field of study. However, “interdisciplinary” is a complex term. In the initial stages of the debate on brain-death in Japan, it was quite typical for symposiums comprising researchers and others from multiple fields to begin with “from the standpoint of medicine,” “from a legal perspective,” or “from a philosophical point of view,” before presenting their own opinion from the specialty field. However, as various opinions were voiced from different fields, this approach was considered “interdisciplinary.” Unfortunately, this approach cultivates a very shallow level of debate. This, in turn, means that valid interactive conversations never begin. At the time of the brain-death debate, communication skills within science and technology had not yet developed in Japan, and there was little that could be done when facing this first major problem in bioethics.

A truly interdisciplinary conversation will never begin if we merely listen to the perspectives of the specialists, but then investigate the issue no further. So the question remains: what does it mean to be truly interdisciplinary? I feel that truly interdisciplinary dialogue implies a particular posture taken when addressing a given problem. Thus academic debate should result in the participants achieving a deep

understanding of each other’s opinions, and even if a resolution is not achieved immediately, obtaining the sense that “the discussion moved forward/the understanding of the other person has deepened.” Dialogue can only begin with a general understanding. As the dialogue begins and the discussion continues, a mutual understanding of each participant’s views is deepened further, and the result is something that might be considered truly interdisciplinary. Nonetheless, it is difficult to define exactly that what is “truly interdisciplinary,” but one prerequisite might depend on the “attitude” of those involved while conducting the dialogue.

In the present chapter, I will give an example. The paper below has not been published elsewhere. Using sumo wrestling as an example, one author wrote the first draft without limiting the argument to any one academic field. After the first draft was created, other authors from a variety of specialties added the flesh to the skeleton. All co-authors consented to the publication of this article in the present text. It is written with terminology from ethics, philosophy, sociology, law, psychology, and anthropology. Scholars in some specialties may criticize this as superficial. However, as a discussion increases in specialty, more specialized terminology is used such that some researchers may not be able to understand sufficiently the writings of their colleagues in other fields. One other criticism may be, “Well, that’s somewhat interesting, but you need to deepen the discussion.” However, to “deepen the discussion” in one specialty field would make this less interesting to those in other fields.

Sports ethics, which has a slightly different feel from the other themes mentioned thus far, is becoming an important field within bioethics. I hope that my readers will consider the relevance to the objectives of the text below as we discuss the topic of sumo wrestling, the national sport of Japan.

## Original Article

### *Do Professional Athletes Have the Right to Dispute a Referee’s Judgment? An Ethical Analysis of Sumo Wrestling in Japan*

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**Abstract** On November 22, 2017, the *yokozuna* grand champion Hakuho (a Mongolian citizen), losing during the final bout of the day, thought that the initial charge (*tachiai*) was incorrect and raised an objection with the referees. His objection was ignored by the referees, and Hakuho was subsequently subject to intense criticism for lack of dignity, rule violations, and foolish behavior. The following day, the judging department issued a severe warning to Hakuho, and he immediately apologized.

We first examine whether an athlete in modern sport has the right to dispute a referee’s decision, in order to examine the concept of rights that are utilized herein, and discuss the characteristics of such rights. We then analyze how professional sumo is not a typical modern sport, and based on socio-ethical aspects, address the

question of whether sumo should in fact join the category of modern sports. Finally, we argue that Hakuho's behavior after the incident can be justified under virtue ethics, and concluded that analysis of the Hakuho case could provide insight about the state and future direction of many world sports that occupy an uncertain space between traditional and modern sports.

**Keywords** Sumo, professional athletes' rights, modern sports, traditional sports, Japan

## *Introduction*

The International Sumo Federation (ISF), in which 84 countries are registered, holds tournaments divided by weight class every year and also allows women to participate (<http://www.ifs-sumo.org>). The ISF is one of the International Sports Federations recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The ISF and the Japanese Olympics Committee have been working proactively to make sumo an Olympic sport [1, 2].

Sumo is divided into *Oh-sumo* (professional sumo) and amateur sumo. The ISF has jurisdiction over amateur sumo, while the Nihon Sumo Kyokai (NSK, <http://www.sumo.or.jp/En/>) exercises jurisdiction over *Oh-sumo*, which is the national sport of Japan.

While there are multiple theories about its origins, the history of sumo can be traced back to the eighth century. The sport has existed in various forms and contained elements of religious ritual. Modern sumo is said to have begun to converge during the Edo Period (1603–1868) [see, for example, 3–5].

At present, *Oh-sumo* has been internationalized to a significant degree. Of the 70 wrestlers ranked *Jūryō* or above at the March 2018 tournament, 18 (25.7%) were not Japanese citizens. Among the three *yokozuna* grand champions, two are Mongolian.

This paper takes up a recent case from *Oh-sumo* in order to discuss the rights of professional sumo wrestlers from an ethical viewpoint and offer perspectives on the future orientation of *Oh-sumo*.

## *The Yokozuna Hakuho Case*

On November 22nd, 2017, the previously undefeated *yokozuna* grand champion Hakuho (a Mongolian citizen) lost to the *sekiwake* Yoshikaze (a Japanese citizen) in the final bout of the day. Thinking that the *tachiai* initial charge was incomplete, Hakuho let down his guard and was rammed out in one stroke by Yoshikaze. Dissatisfied, Hakuho raised his right hand to appeal to the referees, a gesture requesting review by referees called a *mono-ii*, and continued standing outside the ring (*dohyō*). He moved his right hand five times to appeal to the Shikihide referee (former

*maegashira* wrestler Kitazakura), who was directly opposite of him. There was, however, no rematch granted. The referee urged him several times to ascend to the ring, and after 61 seconds he finally did so, only to again raise his right hand to appeal. Yoshikaze was declared the winner and stepped out of the ring. But for the next 17 seconds, Hakuho stood at full height in the ring, refusing to leave. After being urged several times to “step down,” he finally left. The announcer for Nihon Hoso Kyokai (NHK) broadcasting the tournament commented, “This is the sort of thing that must never occur.” (See Figs. 10.1 and 10.2, and the following YouTube video describing the course of events: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60DYeZgMJMU>).

Hakuho, returning to the dressing room, was asked by the media “Did it seem like a false start (*matta*)?” and he replied, “Well, that’s how it seemed. I wanted them to review it once (on the video). It isn’t that I am unconvinced, but it is true that we were out of sync [6].”

Criticism of Hakuho began immediately after. The Shikihide stable master stated: “It is absurd as far as the rules go, isn’t it? A *mono-ii* appeal can be raised by the referee or wrestlers waiting ringside. But this is inconceivable [7].” Hakkaku, Chairman of the NSK board, commented, “Wrestlers cannot make judgments on their own. It is unsportsmanlike [8].” In addition to criticism from the referees, Hakuho was widely criticized by the media in general, with the incident characterized as “the shameless behavior of a stubborn *yokozuna*” [9], and as “unthinkable behavior, for a wrestler to contest his own loss [10].” There were also countless critical posts on SNS and YouTube, including discriminatory statements such as “You see, this is the problem with Mongolians.”



Fig. 10.1 Hakuho appealed to the referees and did not step up in the ring

**Fig. 10.2** Hakuho, losing to Yoshikaze, appealed to the referees and did not step down from the ring



On November 23, the day after the match, Hakuho was called before the judging department and issued with a severe warning for his behavior following his loss to Yoshikaze, including appealing about an uncompleted *tachiai* and demanding a *mono-ii* discussion to review the referee's decision, which were called undignified behavior unbecoming a *yokozuna*[11]. In response, Hakuho took a repentant stance stating that he would “sincerely take it to heart and act properly in the future [12].”

## *Discussion*

### **Does an Athlete in Modern Sports Have the Right to Dispute a Referee's Decision? If So, from What Standpoint Is That Right Justified?**

Based on the classical framework of rights theory set forth by Hohfeld, the “right” to make a “claim” has been understood as something interdependent with a “duty [13, 14].” In other words, if X has a right vis-a-vis Y, this means that Y has a duty to



discharge vis-a-vis X. This argument typically posits a contractual relationship, which may be either written or social. With respect to the theme of our paper, the right for an athlete to dispute a referee’s judgment in modern sports, however, we find it difficult to account for this right within that classical framework. We thus propose the concept of “**rights characteristic to modern sports,**” and discuss the standpoints from which these could be justified.

To confirm the factual basis for the right of a competitor to appeal a decision, the Olympic Charter includes stipulations about appeals and the procedures for settling disputes, and the Court of Arbitration for Sports plays a central role [15]. FIFA has also set forth a Human Rights Policy [16]. What can be said based on these developments is that modern sports were founded on the basis of the concept of fundamental human rights that took shape during the eighteenth century.

Is the right to appeal the decision of a referee, then, counted among the rights within modern sports? If so, what sort of justification exists for these rights? In international tennis tournaments, for example, an athlete can challenge a referee’s judgment. In numerous other sports, instant replay by video is permitted. In what follows, we discuss two standpoints, through which we hold that athletes in modern sports do in fact have the right to dispute the ruling of a referee.

The first standpoint is that of **accountability**. In general, when the reason for one’s behavior is questioned by others, there is a responsibility to explain. In his philosophical analysis of referees, Collins describes that in sports, referees have two characteristics. First, they have ontological authority, and they can decide whether an athlete’s action under a certain situation (for example, offsides in soccer) falls under the definition of foul play. Why do they have such authority? The answer lies in the second characteristic of referees: epistemological privilege. That is, a referee’s judgment is regarded as a “superior view,” since it is made from a suitable position (whether they stay in one place as in the case of tennis, or move around with the players as in the case of soccer). Also, referees are trained experts whose abilities are expected to improve through actual refereeing activities. Moreover, their qualifications and eligibility must stand up to the scrutiny of a group of specialists. Hence, it follows that the athlete should obey the referee’s ruling, as it is based on “specialist skills” [17].

That said, “fallibility” is a general human trait, and not just limited to referees. It is because of the possibility of misjudgment that systems such as a video replay were introduced in modern sports. Inappropriate judgments by referees would make it difficult for modern sports to continue. Thus there must be mechanisms for objection and accountability. Athletes are obliged to obey the final ruling of a referee but they also have the right to appeal. On the other hand, while the referee has the authority to make a final decision, if the athletes raise an objection, he/she are obligated to confirm the propriety of the decision by appropriate means (e.g., a video replay system) and provide explanations to the athletes as well as to the audience (i.e., accountability).

It would be irrational for referees not to accept the athlete’s appeal, if they are aware of their own fallibility in decision-making, as their authority would be lost if they were found to be prone to misjudgment. “Accountability” is another obligation

they must fulfill if they strive to carry out their specialized job as referees appropriately. Accountability might even be described as a virtue of sorts, like fairness or modesty. In the end, modern sports in the proper sense cannot be founded on rules that do not incorporate an athlete's right to challenge a referee's decision, or referee accountability.

Let us consider more specifically referee accountability in the case of sumo. Current rules allow only ringside referees, and wrestlers waiting their turn to protest against or dispute (*mono-ii*) the ruling of the referee. However, from the perspectives of "epistemological privilege" and "superior view," the wrestlers who are participating in the match have witnessed the moment of winning/losing from a close distance, so they have equal (if not more) capabilities to the referee or ringside referees and wrestlers to properly judge their victory/defeat. In this regard, the current situation (i.e., the right to appeal to the referee in the form of *mono-ii* or a request to confirm on the video is not extended to the wrestlers in the match (as concerned parties)) might reflect that referee accountability is going unfulfilled.

The second standpoint is that of **fairness**, an essential value that makes possible modern sports. Modern sports might be called "a practice constituted by rules" [18, 19]. Whether it is market economics or sports, fair rules are essential for any kind of competition to exist as a practice. Fairness is both a value that must be practiced in modern sports, and an indispensable value that makes possible the very practice of modern sports. Furthermore, if fairness is internalized by athletes, this leads to the cultivation of a sportsmanship that values fairness while aspiring to individual excellence. The right of an athlete to appeal a referee's decision is thus also justified from the standpoint of fairness.

How does this affect the sumo case? Under the current rule, wrestlers are permitted to dispute a referee's decision regarding other wrestlers' matches, but not their own. As suggested above, in modern sports, referees' authority to make a final decision is paired with their accountability when their decision is challenged, just as an athlete's right to challenge a referee's decision is paired with their obligation to obey the final ruling. In this sense, it would be fairer to recognize the right of sumo wrestlers who participated in the match to raise a *mono-ii* appeal.

In what follows we will discuss what characterizes the concept of "**rights that are characteristic to modern sports.**" What rights specifically are included among these, and from what standpoints are such rights justified? What should first be confirmed is that these rights come into being because modern sports find their basis in the concept of fundamental human rights. For example, in boxing, the athlete has the right to be protected by a referee from danger to life, from the standpoint of **nonmaleficence**, which stresses that one will not be subject to undue harm. The right to participate in competition regardless of race, sex, or religion is justified from the standpoints of **uniformity of opportunity** and **equality**. Furthermore, in recent years, athletes' rights of publicity (for example, in the case of female beach volleyball players and swimmers) have come to be given weight from the standpoint of **privacy**. In addition, the rights possessed by competitors are not limited to those that apply during competition. Athletes' rights not to be subject to improper treatment by instructors during practice (for example, sexual harassment or intimidat-

tion) may be recognized from the standpoint of “**respect for individuals.**” Athletes participating in the Olympics who are dissatisfied with the propriety of the selection process, doping certification, or suspensions for rough play have the right to appeal to sports arbitration bodies. This is none other than the right to “**appeal.**” This right to appeal has already been incorporated into the practice of modern sports, regardless of whether athletes actually exercise it. For this reason, disputing the decision of a referee, as part of an athlete’s right to appeal in the broadest sense, is included within “**rights that are characteristic to modern sports**” from the standpoints of **accountability** and **fairness**.

### Is Oh-sumo as Practiced in Japan Really a Modern Sport?

The sociologist Guttman listed secularism, equality, specialization, rationalization, bureaucracy, quantification, and records as the seven characteristics of modern sports [20]. Thompson has discussed whether these characteristics can be found within modern sumo [21]. Thompson’s analysis does not find that it fulfills all seven characteristics fully, although *Oh-sumo* has modernized to some degree. We concur with this conclusion.

Yet, with respect to Thompson’s judgment that professional sumo has been to some degree *Rationalized*, we come to a somewhat different opinion when discussing the present Hakuho case. Rationalization refers to the process by which facilities and tools are standardized, and the rules are made universal and clearly stipulated in writing. Thompson has pointed to the standardization of the *dohyō* ring and the clear stipulation of rules. In actuality, however, the documentation of rules has not been sufficient.

In 1955, the NSK issued the “Official Sumo Rules.” These were then revised 1958, but it is now impossible for ordinary people to obtain them. One of the authors visited the Sumo Museum (<http://www.sumo.or.jp/EnSumoMuseum>) and confirmed with the archivist that the rules have not been revised since 1958. Searching at the Japanese National Diet Library, we confirmed an entry including the “Official Sumo Rules” [22], and examined the contents.

After carefully examining the Official Sumo Rules, we found that there was no clearly documented stipulation that “competing wrestlers must not attempt a *mono-ii* appealing a referee’s decision.” All it did include in Regulation 5 on “Referee Regulations” were agreements about inspectors’ *kensayaku* (=referees) *mono-ii* (Articles 4, 7, and 9) and a statement that wrestlers waiting ringside for the match could do a *mono-ii* (Article 5).

What should be noted here is that rules in general take the format of positive lists of matters that are permitted and negative lists of matters that are prohibited. Rules often contain a mix of these two formats. There is the view that because *mono-ii* is included on the positive list of the Official Sumo Rules, and foul play is noted on the negative list, it was not necessary to clearly stipulate that “competing wrestlers must not attempt a *mono-ii* appealing a referee’s decision.” Yet, the Shikihide stable master’s comment that “It is absurd as far as the rules go, isn’t it?” is not accurate [7].



There is no mention of *mono-ii* by competing wrestlers on either the positive or negative list of the rules. Therefore, it is that it is an unwritten rule. We assert then, that Thompson's understanding of sumo's rationalization is correct, but only to a degree. That is sumo has been rationalized when compared to the Edo Period. Thompson likely wanted to argue that sumo was rationalized because the Official Sumo Rules were created, but when we consider the Hakuho case in light of these rules, there is no sign that Hakuho violated any clearly documented rule.<sup>1</sup>

Guttman argues that sumo is a "hybrid sport" as follows [23]:

The result of these cross-current of modernization and what we might refer to as "traditionalization" was the hybrid sport that we see today.....No matter. Sumo, like the imperial line that traces its origins back to the goodness of the sun, is authentically Japanese. No traditional sport—with the possible exception of Spanish bullfighting—has more successfully "naturalized" its concessions to modernity.

This type of approach is in fact Japan's survival strategy. Not simply in sports but also in politics, scholarship, religion, and all social systems and products, whenever something is imported to Japan, it is modified and fused to be compatible with Japan, and "reconstructed" so that it can easily be adopted. Religious matters are an excellent example. With the introduction of Buddhism, there was a process that harmonized the new religion with native Shintō (the phenomenon of the syncretization of Shinto with Buddhism, which is distinct from polytheism). Professional sumo was transformed from a traditional sport into a hybrid sport, rather than a modern sport.

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<sup>1</sup>On the subject of *Equality* in sumo, Thompson notes that, although women previously could not even watch sumo, they now can. In effect, he found trends of *Equality* in the modernization in *Oh-sumo*. Thompson carefully avoids judging whether sumo is modernized or not by using Guttman's seven characteristics [21]. However, we have some concerns.

In *Oh-sumo*, the tradition holding that the *dohyō* ring is off limits to women persists. In 2000, during the March *Oh-sumo* tournament, Osaka's prefectural governor Fusae Ōta expressed her desire to present a Governor's Award during *Senshuraku* (last day of the tournament) by herself in the ring, but the NSK strongly disapproved. This became a widely publicized social issue, but the governor ultimately abandoned the plan.

The tradition still continues to this day. At just after 2 pm on April 4, 2018, during the *Oh-sumo* Spring Tour's "*Oh-sumo* Maizuru Tournament" held in Maizuru City, Kyoto Prefecture, Mayor Ryozo Tatami (67-year-old male) collapsed while giving a welcome speech. As several women were performing cardiac massage on the mayor in the ring, announcements were made at least three times saying "Women please exit the ring" and "Men please enter the ring [28]."

On the evening of April 4th, Hakkaku, the NSK chairman, admitted that the NSK's *gyoji* referees made several announcements saying "Women, please leave the ring," and commented, "The *gyoji* made these calls because they were distressed, but it was not an appropriate response to a situation in which a human life was on the line. I deeply apologize [29]."

This comment by Hakkaku suggests the view that a human life overrides the value of tradition, which we agree with. However, NSK's position has not changed at all since the case of Ōta in 2000. On April 6, 2018, only two days after the Kyoto case, Mayor Tomoko Nakagawa (70-year-old female) of Takarazuka City, Hyogo Prefecture, was prohibited from giving a speech in the ring for the same reason as in the Ōta case in 2000. Mayor Nakagawa commented that "It is regretful I could not make my speech in the ring. While keeping the tradition, it is important to have courage to change [30]." This has become a social issue once again, but change seems unlikely. Does *Oh-sumo* reflect the form of society of this period as Thompson stated?

Thus, professional sumo has a hybrid dimension as described by Guttmann, but if we take into account characteristics such as the lack of universalizability, publicly open rules, and the inequality surrounding women’s participation. In that sense, the tradition has been stubbornly preserved in a changed form, and there are, in fact many elements that have not been modernized.

Thus, our conclusion is that “professional sumo (*Oh-sumo*) in its current form is not a typical modern sport.”

### **Should Oh-sumo Join Modern Sports? Professional Sumo and Cultural Imperialism**

Cultural imperialism within modern sports should certainly be criticized [24, 25]. Sports have been employed in political contexts during the history of colonization. This undermines our understanding of sport as something good, as it promotes health.

On the culturally imperialistic dimensions of modern sports, Guttmann writes [26]:

Standardized universality does replace diversity, but, when accompanied by the other characteristics of modern sports, it enables everyone to play the game—whatever game it is. . . . .As Ommo Grupe noted at the international symposium, modern sports are—despite their many abuses—inherently cosmopolitan. . . . .If sports are an occasion for the expression of *communitas*, which they can be, let them express the human community as well as the tribal one.

This is a powerful ethical and normative claim. We, however, would like to express some concern with the way that Guttmann emphasizes the value of universality in modern sports.

Because we are not cultural anthropologists, we will not adopt a position of relativism. Nonetheless, we must not forget that traditional sports arose from games (amusement) and religious ceremonies. In the modern and contemporary period, robbing people of their freedom to play games, or their freedom of religious belief, would be a **violation of civil liberties**.

Guttmann’s claim should be limited to the context of “modern” sports only. In actuality, the “International Conference on Traditional Sports” was held in Tokyo in 1993, and declared for the first time how traditional sports could serve as a means of intercultural understanding on a global scale [27]. In the present day, as the world intensifies its internationalization even as the rise in nationalist sentiment emerges as a serious social issue, it is thought that traditional sports can play an important role in true international exchange and internationalism based in respect for other cultures.

For Japanese people, *Oh-sumo* is a popular national sport and form of mass entertainment. Who should decide, and on what basis, the question of whether *Oh-sumo* should join the club of modern sports. Thompson explains that “The form of sumo reflects the form of society in any given period. Since long ago *Oh-sumo*

has adapted to society, and it is necessary for it to do so now as well [21].” In saying that sumo should reflect the direction of society in a particular age, he is making a powerful normative, ethical argument.

Our view, which is similar to Thompson’s, is that because sumo has an important cultural dimension as a national sport, its rules and their application should take Japanese national opinion into account. Yet, currently one-fourth of ranking sumo wrestlers are foreigners, which suggests that the internationalization of *Oh-sumo* is already happening. Therefore, we would recommend that *Oh-sumo* should tackle with the issue of internationalization, in order not to remain a sport that is closed off from international society just because it is a national sport.

Furthermore, even though many, including the government, NSK, and citizens hope that sumo will be accepted as an Olympic sport in the future, this is not possible in its current form (sumo has already been rejected by the IOC multiple times). If sumo truly aspires to become an Olympic sport, it will likely be necessary to advance its transformation into a modern sport and, from the standpoint of fairness, to clearly document the rules and discuss the right of an athlete to appeal a referee’s decision. At the same time, we would like to add that yet another key ethical consideration is that this process of decision-making should not be made solely by the NSK’s board meeting behind closed doors, but rather in a way that adheres to **procedural justice** by taking into account a wide spectrum of opinions within Japan and abroad.

### Can Yokozuna Hakuho’s Behavior be Justified Ethically?

Hakuho simply wanted the referee to confirm on the video whether the *tachiai* initial charge had been properly completed or not. He did not refuse to obey the referee’s judgment. In fact, roughly one minute later, he obeyed the referee’s command to return to the ring. It is thus not difficult to imagine that the referee’s compelling power had an effect on him.

If *Oh-sumo* is a modern sport, it would be clear that Hakuho’s rights as a competitor have not been guaranteed. It goes without saying that the significance of a single victory is great for a competitor in professional sports. Based on the reactions of the media, NSK, and the public on SNS, however, it appears that contemporary Japan does not really want *Oh-sumo* to become a modern sport. If that is true, then we must conclude that Hakuho did not actually have the right to appeal the referee’s decision.

Hakuho was criticized based on traditional values holding that it is undignified for a *yokozuna* grand champion to question a referee’s judgment. How would the attacks on Hakuho that day appear to the eyes of a foreigner? Japan also has the Japan Sports Arbitration Agency, which is a division of the International Sports Arbitration Agency. Yet, due to the distaste for litigation in Japanese culture, the mass media treats athletes who simply seek arbitration as if they have done something wrong. Hakuho fully understood this aspect of Japanese culture.

The following day, when Hakuho was called before the judging department and given a severe warning, he immediately apologized. Was this the brave, wise, dignified, and virtuous thing to do? Hakuho apologized because he is accustomed to Japanese culture, understood it, and accepted national opinion.

## ***Conclusion***

The internationalization of sumo is already underway. The interest in sumo will probably increase further during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Should *Oh-sumo*, Japan’s national sport, really seek to become a modern sport? If the nation desires for it to continue in its current form as a hybrid sport, then it is fine as it is. If the idea is to internationalize sumo as a modern sport and an Olympic sport, however, it will be necessary to revise the rules, reflect the universal values of accountability and fairness, and protect the human rights of competitors.

Japanese *Oh-sumo* is at a crossroads. We argue that at the very least, even a hybrid sport must give consideration to the rights of athletes and protect the basic human rights that are guaranteed even in the Japanese Constitution. The state of Japanese *Oh-sumo*, which is caught between traditional sports and modern sports as illustrated so clearly by the Hakuho case, offers insight relevant to the status and future direction of traditional sports in many countries throughout the world.

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