

## Enough with Asashoryu Bashing

By MIYAZAKI Atsushi

Mongolia is an important country for Japan's foreign policy. Besides, Mongolians and Japanese are ethnically the same people. But, in contrast to Japanese who live in an island, Mongolians live in the heart of the great plains of Asian continent, being exposed to harsh natural environment. The epitome of what you would think of tough continental Asians. A young man from those great plains of Mongolia came to Japan and performed outstandingly in the sport of sumo wrestling. That is what former Grand Champion Asashoryu is all about. He should not so much be reproachable as admirable. And, one thing I find quite bizarre is that a Mr. Yaku Mitsuru, wearing a Chaplin-esque mustache and a weird hat, makes TV appearances and lashes out at Asashoryu, referring to such big words as "the dignity of a Yokozuna (Grand Champion)," whose exact meaning even Japanese do not understand. Mr. Yaku's strange looks are only tolerable because he is a cartoonist, but can never pass as an ordinary businessman. I wonder if he has gone a little overboard with his words and deeds.

Such a concept as "the dignity of a yokozuna" is something to be pursued or digested individually by each Japanese or those from the sumo world. But it is the last thing to be foisted onto others, just as "the dignity of an Emperor" is not supposed to be foisted onto the Imperial Family, at the sacrifice of their integrity as a human. Few of the contemporary people should know the dignity of Futabayama, a legendary sumo wrestler of the pre-war period. The concept, after all, adds up to their irresponsible imagination.

Just as I was worried about the negative impressions this move could give to Mongolians, Mr. Yaku made an embarrassing remark on TV that Asashoryu should aggravate a relationship between Japan and Mongolia. In what capacity could he say such things? I sincerely hope that the two countries will become increasingly friendly through Sumo wrestling and will cultivate a sense of affinity between the two peoples, which should lead to closer ties in both politics and economy.

We, Japanese, should know better than to assume a parochial attitude to foreigners. I

hope more and more foreigners will enter the sumo world and that it will grow into a truly international sport in Japan. I want to say "Keep it up!" to those foreign sumo wrestlers such as Hakuho, Kotooshu, and Baruto. Also, I will root for Kaio. The beauty of sumo wrestling is to be pursued by each individual. We should refrain from asking too much of others out of imagination. And we should foster spirit of fairness in Sumo wrestling, which might, in the long run, help Japan become more internationalized and have a bigger say in the international community. There used to be "ping pong diplomacy," which led to the restoration of Sino-U.S. relations. We should take the chance of making the Japan-Mongolia relations closer through Sumo wrestling.

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