

## President Bush Visits Kyoto — U.S.- Japan Summit Meeting

**P**resident George W. Bush visited Japan on November 15 - 16 and held a U.S.-Japan summit meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Kyoto.

During the summit meeting, both leaders, who enjoy close personal ties, emphasized the significance of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Mr. Koizumi said that he regards the U.S. as "the most indispensable ally" for Japan and "the U.S.-Japan alliance enabled Japan to enjoy today's prosperity." President Bush also called the two countries friendship "a strong and vital relationship" and stated that "the U.S.-Japan alliance is the anchor of peace and stability for the region and for the world."

Mr. Koizumi explained that Japan has supported the reconstruction and democratization efforts by Iraqi people through the deployment of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in congruence with the extension of its financial assistance. President Bush expressed appreciation for Japan's efforts in Iraq as well as for its support for the U.S.-led anti-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister mentioned that Japan would make efforts to realize an agreement announced on Oct. 29 regarding the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. The two countries agreed to accelerate the U.S. military integration in Asia and have Japan take a more

active role in the achievement of global peace and security.

During the summit, Bush and Koizumi also discussed relations with China. Mr. Koizumi explained that Japan's ties with China have strengthened in various fields during his tenure, although there were some contentious issues. China's economic development is not a threat and augurs well for Japan's economy. He also stated that it is important to urge China to become a "constructive partner" in political and security issues. Both leaders agreed that the strong bond between the U.S. and Japan should help encourage China to



Both leaders emphasized the significance of the U.S.- Japan alliance.

develop good relations with both countries.

Their talks covered various other topics as well, such as North Korean issues, resumption of Japan's imports of U.S. beef, privatization of the postal service, WTO, the U.N. Security Council reform, measures to fight avian flu and the situation in Myanmar.

## Taro Aso, New Foreign Minister

**O**n October 31, Prime Minister Koizumi restructured the cabinet to continue the reforms that he began during his tenure. Mr. Taro Aso was appointed the new Minister for Foreign Affairs. He served as the Minister for Internal Affairs and Com-

munications in the previous cabinet and was also the Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Policy Research Council.



Mr. Taro Aso © Photo Kyodo

# Legendary Film Director Yoji Yamada Visits New York

Almost all Japanese people recognize Yoji Yamada as the director of the incredibly popular "Otoko wa Tsurai yo," also known as the Tora-san film series. It is one of the longest running and most beloved film series in Japanese history, and Mr. Yamada directed 46 of the 48 movies. In the United States, he is better-known as the director of "The Twilight Samurai," which was nominated for



Director Yoji Yamada giving a lecture at the Ambassador's residence

"Best Foreign Language Film" at the 2005 Academy Awards®. Mr. Yamada came to New York this past September with his latest film "The Hidden Blade," his second samurai epic to celebrate the opening of "The Beauty of the Everyday: Japan's Shochiku Company at 110" retrospective series for the Shochiku studio at the 43rd NY Film Festival.

Prior to the opening of the Film Festival, Mr. Yamada gave a lecture at the residence of the Japanese Ambassador. His discussion covered not only highlights from the film and his intentions as director but also a historical background of the film. Mr. Yamada, having seen many samurai films, had always regarded them as being too fictional and focusing too sharply on the fight scenes. Mr. Yamada was inspired by the true story of a lower level samurai who

suffered from intense guilt for killing an opponent in the last days of the Tokugawa Shogunate. He felt that his fight scenes should be more realistic, not glorifying the kill, as samurai films have done. Mr. Yamada tried to convey to the audience that the purpose of his movie was to show aspects of the samurai that were equally as important as their skill with a sword, namely the love and sorrow behind their strong sense of honor and respect. He also wanted to depict the cultural background of the Edo Period. The audience, which included artists, professors, journalists and other enthusiasts, all seemed intensely interested in Mr. Yamada's historical perspective, as well as his attitude and dedication towards film-making.

Mr. Yamada is planning to begin directing another samurai epic in January 2006. Like his previous work, the film will without a doubt, be another classic to go along with his two other great masterpieces.

# Astronaut Soichi Noguchi's Space Visit

As one of the Japan - US collaborations in the field of space exploration, Japanese astronauts have been trained for space flights by NASA and have been on shuttle flight missions since 1992. Soichi Noguchi is the fifth such Japanese astronaut, serving as a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery (July 26-August 9, 2005). In late September, Noguchi went back to Japan for a press conference to report on his first trip into space.

Noguchi expressed his delight at having seen such a beautiful view of the earth. He said, "While doing my work, I saw the earth below and felt very happy seeing how beautiful it looked. It was an amazing experience." He was one of two crewmembers who actually worked outside the Shuttle delivering supplies and equipment to the International Space

Station (ISS). He also mentioned how pleased he was to send a clear image of the ISS to the people on the earth. Noguchi explained that the ISS was quite clean and inviting, so much so that he hosted a tea party for the other crewmembers with Japanese green tea and aluminum packed "yokan" (a Japanese traditional red bean jelly sweet).

Noguchi explained that "although the flight itself may have sounded like a very relaxing and visually stunning experience, there were some unpredictable incidents and of course, the flight was physically very hard. The first hour was key to getting the body adjusted. Even after tough training in the water, the actual feeling of being in space was different."

For all children who dream of being an astronaut and may have been inspired by his journey, Noguchi had this mes-



Astronaut Soichi Noguchi / © NASA

sage: "It is important for children to have a dream and keep working hard to realize it no matter how long it may take."

Although it still costs a lot, in the future, travel to space should be more accessible. Noguchi says, "That is the very mission for me as an astronaut, to let other people feel connected more to space, to let children have hope to visit space in the future."

## Lecture • Film

December 10

### Shamisen Workshop with Miyako Itchu

The Japan Society  
333 E. 47th St., NYC

Shamisen Master Miyako Itchu, the 11th successor and Grand Master of the Itchu School, leads an exploration into his instrument, the three-stringed traditional Japanese lute, used in the kabuki theater. Participants are given a hands-on opportunity to play and experiment with the shamisen. 2:30 - 5:30 pm

Info: 212-832-1155 or [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)



Shamisen Master Miyako Itchu © M1 Club

December 11

### Film: Ten Dark Women (Kuroi junin no onna)

The Japan Society  
333 E. 47th St., NYC

Made in 1961 and set in a TV station when all programming was still broadcast live, the harried station staff brings

Chaplin's *Modern Times* to mind. A female director confesses, "The only way to survive in this modern world is to race against time in a mechanical world, employing yourself to the fullest." Set against the background of Japan's explosive economic growth, 10 women, some thoroughly modern, others defiantly old-fashioned, scramble over a playboy. December 11 at 2 pm.

Info: 212-832-1155 or [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)

December 11

### Film: The World of Geisha (Yojohan fusuma no urabari)

The Japan Society  
333 E. 47th St., NYC

Europe first learned of Japanese art through *ukiyo*, woodblock prints, which profoundly influenced Van Gogh and other Impressionists. They were especially amazed by the boldness and freedom of sexual expression in *shunga*. This film boldly attempts to transpose the eroticism and expressiveness of *shunga* to film. Based on an original tale by Kafu Nagai, banned for its sexual explicitness, Tatsumi Kumashiro, the leading director of the "Nikkatsu Roman-porno" genre, brilliantly succeeds in bringing *shunga* images to life. (1973). Starts at 4pm. Due to the sexual content this film is recommended for adults only.

Info: 212-832-1155 or [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)

December 31, 2005 & January 1, 2006

### New Year Sitting & Celebration

Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji  
223 Beecher Lake Rd.  
Livingston Manor, NY

This festive event begins with zazen at 2pm on New Year's Eve and includes ceremonial powdered Japanese green tea, a New Year's Feast featuring both traditional Japanese delicacies and contemporary Western cuisine, chanting, the traditional striking of the giant temple gong 108 times, followed by a midnight celebration, and ending with a delicious brunch on New Year's Day. Reserve by December 15th. Contribu-

tion - adults: \$125; children under 12: \$50.

Info: 845-439-4566 or [www.zenstudies.org](http://www.zenstudies.org)

January 22, 2006

### Philadelphia Print Club Collaborative Lecture

Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Benjamin Franklin Pkwy & 26th St.,  
Philadelphia, PA

This lecture examines both the Japanese print and European artists' response to it from the perspective of gender, with a particular focus on the work of Mary Cassatt. This lecture is part of Printing Philadelphia: The Big Block!, a city-wide public art project of the Philadelphia Print Collaborative. Starts at 2:30pm

Info: 215-763-8100 or [www.printcollaborative.org](http://www.printcollaborative.org) or [www.jasgp.org](http://www.jasgp.org)

## Exhibition

December 20, 2005 to March 10, 2006

### Spirit of the East Beauty of the landscape – United Nations Exhibition

United Nations Headquarters  
Visitors' Lobby  
1st Ave. & 46th St., NYC

This exhibition commemorates the Sixtieth Anniversary of the United Nations, and it will be held in the exhibition hall of the United Nations Headquarters in New York with the theme, "The Beauty of the Landscape", an ideal beauty that transcends time and space. In the poetic and atmospheric Japanese paintings by the world widely known Kaii Higashiyama one can find an element Western aesthetics coexisting with the spirit of the Oriental beauty. Chinese fine art photographer Wang Wusheng

currently gaining attention around the world, has committed his life's work to China's famous mountain – Mount Huangshan. With his unique approach, he both reflects and transcends traditional Chinese landscape ink painting.  
*Info: 212-963-8531, 212-963-0089 or www.un.org*

Through December 24, 2005

**New Paintings**  
**Akikazu Iwamoto Exhibition**

**M.Y. Art Prospects**  
**547 W. 27th St., 2nd Fl., NYC**

This is the first New York solo exhibition of Akikazu Iwamoto whose recent works are candy-color acrylic paintings depicting a variety of hybrid figurative-geometric forms set against twilight backgrounds. The appeal of Iwamoto's colors-on-patterns is similar to that of illustrative art and graphic design, but Iwamoto is distinguished by a uniquely personal vision that, according to the artist, revolves around his encounters with various individuals. This exhibition also includes Iwamoto's works on paper. Less formal than his acrylics, these works exhibit delicate colors rendered in colored pencil and watercolor. The paper he uses, made in Nepal, lends a warm texture and the subtle colors of its natural fibers to the works.  
*Info: 212-268-7132 or www.myartprospects.com*

Through January 10, 2006

**Ken Hiratsuka Open Studio 2005**  
**516 E. 11th St. (bet. Ave A & B), NYC**

Sculptor Ken Hiratsuka graduated in 1982 from Musashino University of Art



Obelisk, 6', 2005



Akikazu Iwamoto "Circus" 2004  
Acrylic on canvas 35" 7/8 x 46"

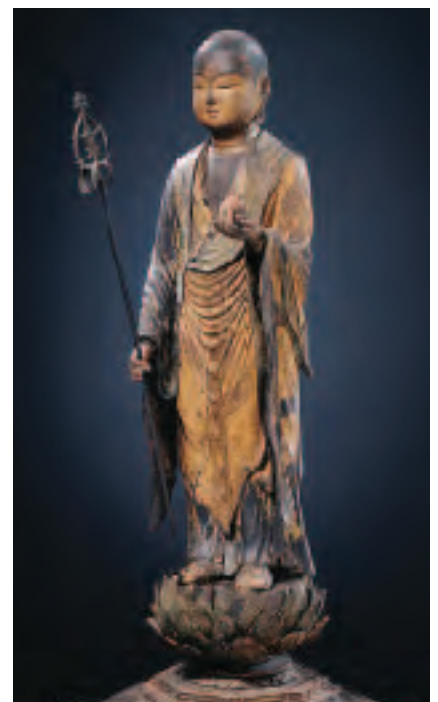
in Tokyo. In the same year, Hiratsuka came to New York City, received a fellowship from the Art Students League, and then began to carve the slate and granite sidewalks of the city. Thus began his ongoing work of carving one continuous line in stone around the world, a statement of art's capacity to transcend the differences of nations and languages. His works are both modern and ancient, a symbol of human communication through universal language on the surface of the earth as one huge rock. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 7-9pm  
*Info: 212-529-5660 or www.kenrock.com*

Through January 15, 2006

**Rockefeller Collection In Focus:**  
**Jizo Bosatsu**  
**The Asian Society**  
**725 Park Ave., NYC**

This is a rare opportunity to examine in-depth a single exquisite work from the Asia Society's renowned permanent collection: a Kamakura-period (1185–1333) Jizo Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha). The wide range of information presented offers viewers a new appreciation of this elegant wooden sculpture. Accompanied by photographs and illustrations, the exhibition explores issues of craftsmanship, conservation and function, along with the

religious and social contexts in which the piece was created. This begins a series that focuses on favorite works from the Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection, each curated by a different emerging scholar in the field.  
*Info: 212-288-6400 or www.asiasociety.org*



Zen'en (active first half 13th century); Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha (Jizo Bosatsu); Japan, Kamakura period, 1223-1226; Asia Society.

Through January 21, 2006

**Tadao Ando: The Process of Creation, Emaki-Style Sketchbooks**  
Yoshii Gallery  
17 E. 76th St., NYC

This exhibition is in the distinct emaki-style (handscrolls folded like an accordion album) by world renowned architect Tadao Ando. This will be the first time Mr. Ando has allowed a commercial gallery to show his private sketches. The exhibition will feature both realized and un-realized projects including the François Pinault Foundation for Contemporary Art, the Calder Museum, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, and the Church of the Light.

Info: 212-744-5550 or [www.yoshiigallery.com](http://www.yoshiigallery.com)

Through February 5, 2006

**Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931-1945**  
The Bard Graduate Center  
18 W. 86th St., NYC

This is the first major exhibition of propaganda fashion designed and produced in Japan, Britain, and the United States during the years of conflict in the Asia-Pacific War and World War II. This exhibition provides a unique opportunity to consider this under-recognized but visually exciting genre of wearable propaganda, worthy of note today not only for its design value but also as a reflection of the popular culture of the time. Many objects from private collections in Japan are unknown and have never before been documented, exhibited, or photographed.

Info: 212-501-3000 or [www.bgc.bard.edu](http://www.bgc.bard.edu)

Through March 26, 2006

**Fashion in Colors**  
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum  
2 E. 91st St., NYC

"Fashion in Colors" explores color as a design element through 300 years of Western fashion. Costumes are grouped by color in Cooper-Hewitt's galleries, featuring the cultural, spiritual, and social associations often linked with each color. Organized by Akiko Fukai, Chief Curator of the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI). The exhibition highlights include modern and contemporary masterpieces by Chanel, Christian

## Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History

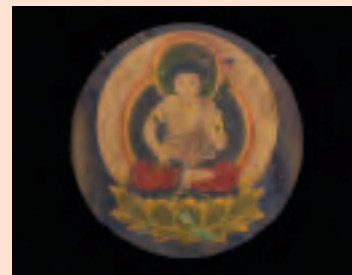
Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto (born in 1948) is one of the most widely recognized Japanese artists in history. He is highly regarded for two of his rigorous conceptual series, Seascapes and Theatre series. Influenced by minimalism and conceptualism, he creates images that hold great spiritual value and his work is acclaimed for those conceptual and philosophical aspects. This exhibition juxtaposes Sugimoto's exquisitely minimalist works, selected from the photographer's past and most recent series. The result is an extended exploration of time, life and spirituality as perceived in the contexts of nature and history. The exhibition, Sugimoto writes, addresses "recorded history, unre-

corded history, and still another history--that which is yet to be depicted... like parts waiting to be assembled in a do-it-yourself kit."

Through February 19, 2006

**The Japan Society**  
333 E. 47th St., NYC

Info: 212-832-1155 or [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)



Monju Bosatsu (Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva)  
Kamakura Period, 13th Century  
pigment on wood

Dior, Emilio Pucci, Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons, along with historical costumes taken from the KCI's extensive collection.

Info: 212-849-8400 or [www.ndm.si.edu](http://www.ndm.si.edu)



Multicolor room  
Installation view at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto 2005 © Naoya Hatakeyama

**Sunport Jazz Festival in New York**  
**SAUNUKI @ Lincoln Center**  
Allen Room, Lincoln Center  
60 W. 60th St., NYC

This is the 3rd performance of SWJO (Swingin' Wonderland Jazz Orchestra), the internationally renowned jazz group from Kagawa prefecture, Japan, in NYC. The performance is a collaboration session between SWJO musicians, and top jazz musicians living in NYC, such as Toshiko Akiyoshi, Lew Tabackin, Mike Ponella, Dennis Mackrel, Kimiko Ito, Kazuhiro Ebisawa, Koji Goto. The music of Count Basie, Makoto Ozone, and Toshiko Akiyoshi jazz orchestra will be performed. The children of the Japanese school in NJ will chorus and share the spirit of the Japanese standard numbers. Kagawa prefecture is also known for its Sanuki udon noodles. At the event, an udon vendor will serve the unforgettable Sanuki. The performance starts at 5:30pm.

Info: 347-239-1822 or [info@sanukiproject.org](mailto:info@sanukiproject.org)  
or <http://homepage1.nifty.com/JAZZ/>  
or [www.geocities.jp/npo\\_swjo](http://www.geocities.jp/npo_swjo)

## Performance

January 2, 2006

January 20 & 21, 2006

### 9th Annual Japanese Contemporary Dance Showcase

The Japan Society  
333 E. 47th St., NYC

The annual staple of cutting-edge dance celebrates its ninth season. This year's line-up features the three-woman group Shinonome Butoh, who have broken new ground in the "dark dance" of butoh by transforming it into their own energetic and bright aesthetic; the feminine and romantic work of choreographer Kaoru Uchida's Rousewaltz; two maverick soloists, Yukiko Amano, the lead dancer of the celebrated dance company Biwa-kei and a participant in the 2005 U.S.-Japan Choreographers Exchange Residency; and Youya Shinjo, an accomplished jazz dancer/choreographer who makes frequent TV appearances. 7:30pm.

Info: 212-832-1155 or [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)



Amano Flower ©Noriko Masuda

January 29, 2006

### Salon Series #24 Love stories and Fantasies in Japanese Dance

Sachio Ito and Company  
At Tenri Cultural Institute  
43A W. 13th St., NYC

Salon Series is an ongoing series of informative and educational lectures, lecture-demonstrations and performances aimed at those who are interested in deepening their knowledge of the performing arts of Japan. The series is held on Sunday afternoons three times a year. Refreshments are served during the Q/A period. 3:00 to 4:00pm.

Info: 212-627-0265 or [www.ichinohedance.org](http://www.ichinohedance.org)

February 8 & 9, 2006

### Shamisen Festival! Agatsuma: Contemporary Shamisen Fusion

The Japan Society  
333 E. 47th St., NYC

## Beyond Tradition (New Year Celebration)

The Japanese celebrate the New Year with what is called *osechi-ryori*, traditional boxed dishes filled with signature New Year foods which have traditional significance such as good health, fertility, happiness and longevity. *Osechi-ryori* is usually offered to guests who visit homes during the holiday. Preparation of these traditional boxed dishes are finished by the last day of the year and normally last for at least the first three days of the New Year. This is done to free housewives from some of their busy housework and allow them to relax. However these days, traditional practices have begun to give way to more modern habits since it is more convenient to buy prepared food and people look for more variety in their holiday meals.

As Japanese culture continues to weave its way into American culture, entertaining with a Japanese flair may seem like a chic, or "avant garde" way to celebrate the New Year holiday. For those people who want their New Year's Eve party to have a more Japanese spirit, they should keep a few ideas in mind. Japanese party food is not strictly sushi (raw fish). Bite sized rice balls (*onigiri*) with various flavors (seaweed, pickled plum, fish) are a good snack to have at a party.

Smoked salmon and rice balls presented on a traditional lacquer ware tray with a glass of champagne can be a quick and easy setting for a sophisticated New Year's Eve party. Grilled skewered chicken (*yakitori*), is also a perfect appetizer at a cocktail party. Mixing western bone china plates, silverware or crystal ware with traditional Japanese food also adds another dimension to your New Year celebration.

The one ingredient that any Japanese-style New Year celebration in the U.S. or Japan needs is *sake*. *Sake*, called *otoso* at the beginning of the year, is a kind of herbal medicine. It is made from sweet rice wine and was originally brought to Japan from China. Drinking *otoso* is said to drive out evil spirits and help bring good luck and happiness. What better way to begin the New Year!



Dressed up rice balls add another dimension to your party © Lawrence Ivy

Hiromitsu Agatsuma, the "messiah" of Japanese traditional instruments is amazing and proves it. A virtuoso on tsugaru-shamisen (a three-stringed lute played in the fast aggressive style which originated in northern Japan), Agatsuma performs with a lively ensemble of traditional Japanese taiko drum, cello and piano, in a vibrant acoustic set—a testament to his constant exploration of the range of his instrument. Agatsuma's trademark

bridging of rock and traditional music creates an appealing pop sensibility from this new instrumental fusion without losing the essential Japanese folk spirit. Now a pop star in Japan, Agatsuma performed at Lincoln Center in 2004. The concerts will feature a world premiere piece by an American composer, written especially for the band. 7:30pm

Info: 212-832-1155 or [www.japansociety.org](http://www.japansociety.org)



# Yokosuka - A Gateway to Japan

Yokosuka is a major port city with about 430,000 people, and is abundant with lush green hills. The area's rich history, location, and culture make it a convenient and worthwhile escape from Tokyo. It is also the hometown of the current Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi who was born and raised in Yokosuka.

It was the 1853 arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry that brought about



Countdown—Illuminated ships light Yokosuka Harbor on New Year's Eve

historic changes leading the city and country to internationalize. The harbor is the site from which Japan first opened itself up to the world, thus forging great relationships with other nations, most importantly with the United States. Today, the community of Yokosuka is proud to host both the US Navy and the Japan Self Defense Forces. Together, they sponsor concerts and festivals which draw international and local crowds.

Yokosuka's annual celebrations include events such as the New Years Countdown, the US-Japan Cherry Blossom Festival, the Black Ship Festival (to commemorate C. Perry's landing in Japan), the Mikoshi Parade and a food festival featuring the famous "Naval Curry". Recreation areas feature beautifully landscaped promenades and parks



themed around flowers, agriculture and the sea. These spots offer families a chance to rediscover nature and are great educational experiences for children.

As we move into the future, Yokosuka is gaining worldwide recognition as a leader in the information age. The Yokosuka Research Park, birthplace of cutting edge mobile telephone and communications technology, hosts multinational corporations, laboratories, and a futuristic showroom for visitors to test out the latest in communications technology.

Please visit and find out for yourself what Yokosuka has to offer.

## THE JET PROGRAM

# An Inspirational Journey

by Olga Samborska Moroz, Hyogo Special Goodwill Envoy

Three years ago, I arrived in Japan, eager to begin my life and work as a Junior High School assistant language teacher on the JET Program. My mission was to teach English and foster cultural exchange.

In the classroom, I initially faced many challenges, instructing Japanese teachers whose lessons, aimed at preparing the student for tough entrance exams, focused strictly on grammar. My JET experience also extended outside the classroom; when I started reaching out to the community. Groups interested in cross-cultural issues invited me to give speeches comparing multiple aspects of life including the work ethic of Japan and America. I discussed, for example, how the Japanese group men-

tality provides strength and stability, whereas the American individuality provides sharpness and creativity. Through these talks I realized it was not a matter of right and wrong but a different approach that both sides could learn from.

My neighbors also invited me to perform in a local o-bon festival. For weeks, I joined entire families, and practiced the steps to the beat of drums accompanied by the shamisen, gong and flute. It was inspiring to witness the dedication and pride each person exhibited while practicing this 400 year-old dance.

My most memorable adventure in Japan was when, with my wide brim straw hat and a white pilgrim coat, I embarked on a 22-day journey to 88 Buddhist temples in



Shikoku. One day, resting beside a statue of Kobo Daishi, the founder of Shingon Buddhism, a monk in straw sandals emerged from the woods, greeting me with a deep bow, he sat beside me and we began to talk. He explained to me, that the most important part of this journey is the people that you meet, for each encounter is an exchange of love.

Today, I remember that monk's words and continue to reminisce about my time with JET. Though I went to Japan as a teacher, I was also a student and with each experience and friendship, a new understanding was born.

# Sumo Wrestling As a Cultural Bridge

In October, the Grand Sumo Tournament was held in the biggest entertainment city in the world, Las Vegas, after a two-decade hiatus. The event was a surprising success for a sport whose fame has stretched only as far as Japanese borders. Sumo is a 1500 year old national Japanese sport steeped in spiritual origins. However nowadays, Sumo's internationalization is more and more noticeable. There have been many champions in the sport's long history including Hawaiian born Takamiyama, Konishiki, Akebono and Musashimaru who all became stars in the sport. The



Asashoryu of Mongolia performs a ritual in the sumo ring in Las Vegas © Photo Kyodo

most recent champion was neither Hawaiian nor Japanese but rather Mongolian. His name is *Yokozuna Asashoryu*.

There has been a remarkable rise in Mongolian wrestlers as Asashoryu's success in the sports demonstrates. Russian-born Roho and the Bulgarian Kotooshu, also have been garnering recognition not just for their immense talent but for leading the latest phenomena, the European wave of sumo wrestlers. Most of these foreign wrestlers possess not only the skills but a passionate hunger for sumo. That dedication has pushed 12 non-Japanese wrestlers into what is called the rank of *makuuchi* (42 top-ranked wrestlers). The climax of the Autumn Sumo Tournament on September 25 in Japan was a sudden-death match between a Mongolian and a Bulgarian. This is obviously an epoch-making change in Japan's most revered, culturally iconic sport.

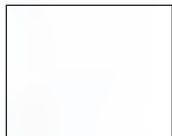
## CULTURE CONNECTION

There are mixed opinions over the effect of Sumo wrestling's internalization. However, there is no question that the talent from overseas revived the sumo industry by attracting more TV viewers and increasing attendance at arenas, including at the latest Las Vegas event. It seems that viewers thoroughly enjoy the games, which have 82 techniques in three categories: pushing/thrusting, pulling and throwing.

Sumo has now reached beyond Japanese tradition, becoming more of a universal entertainment rather than just Japan's national sport. Perhaps in the future, it will gain similar international popularity as the other sports that have crossed cultural borders like soccer, baseball and tennis.

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