A Study on Objectification of Tournaments in Folklore Studies: From Modernization of the Tournament System over Amateur Sumo after the Early Modern Period

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Recently, the standing of Japanese sumo, particularly of the Grand Sumo Tournament and amateur sumo as a "national sport" has come into question. This is because the lineup of sumo wrestlers, the management policy of the organization, the form of the tournament, etc. have been changed in many ways as a result of the rise of foreign sumo wrestlers in the Grand Sumo Tournament, the movement toward the registration of amateur sumo as a medal sport in the Olympic Games, etc. Meanwhile, the human qualities, the posture, etc. of sumo wrestlers are regarded as a kind of formal beauty based on religious discourse, which positions sumo as a representative example of a "Japanese traditional tournament" or "national sport" while entwining with the discourse of "grace" and "dignity."

Conventional studies on sumo in folklore studies highlight only the aspect of religious ritual in sumo, which guarantees the "dignity of national sport" in sumo, and neglects other aspects. The choice of case examples and the orientation of mentioning specific to folklore studies are observed there. Furthermore, folklore studies may not have objectified tournaments including sumo as a tournament.

This article first looks back on mentioning about tournaments in folklore studies, and examines its specific orientation. Then, through a case example of religious sumo performed in the Hokuriku area, this article examines the target case example in detail to contribute to the construction of a more open approach for tournaments in folklore studies.

Key words: Religious sumo, Amateur sumo, Traditional tournament, Sports imported from abroad, Modernization