

Rikishi of Old

The 4th Yokozuna Tanikaze Kajinosuke (1750 - 1795): Part 2

by Joe Kuroda

Last issue saw coverage of Tanikaze's incredible winning run, which Hakuho recently managed to equal. This issue covers the conclusion of the career of the great Tanikaze, still revered by older Japanese sumo fans today.

Tanikaze was already 31 years old when he was beaten by 23 year old Onogawa but their illustrious battles had just begun. At the time of his encounter against Tanikaze, Onogawa was ranked Makushita Ni-dan and was virtually unknown in Edo. Today we never see an ozeki facing a Makushita rikishi but in this era there were fewer makuuchi rikishi, not all of whom participated in every basho as they often had a commitment to attend to their benefactors (regional lords) back home.

Onogawa had already proven his strength in Kyoto and Osaka Sumo, and possessed a high level of ability. His reputation shot up after his win against the previously invincible Tanikaze and he backed up his claims to greatness by displaying superb technically skilled sumo.

There was no doubt that Onogawa was a worthy opponent of Tanikaze and was just about the only opponent Tanikaze could ever lose to. Tanikaze had a better record against Onogawa in Edo Sumo with a career record of six wins, three losses, three draws ("wake"), two holds ("azukari") and three no contests ("mushobu"), but in Kyoto and Osaka their wins were more equally divided. Every basho, a

legion of sumo fans eagerly waited for their encounter and not only ensured a sell out on the day they faced each other but helped usher in an unprecedented sumo boom. The Tanikaze-Onogawa Era is known as the first golden age of Ozumo, taking Ozumo to the height of popularity and to national prominence for the first time in its history.

Shortly after receiving their yokozuna licenses, Onogawa and Tanikaze participated in an historic tournament attended by the 11th Tokugawa Shogun, Ienari Tokugawa on June 11, 1791. Presiding over the most well known and strongest rikishi of the day was Oikaze Yoshida of the House of Yoshida Tsukasa. This was the culmination of his lifetime work of attempting to bring much needed respectability to, and inject high spiritual values into, Ozumo from a carnival like atmosphere often associated with Ozumo in the Edo era.

If there was a headline in the day's sports pages, it may have been the legendary Raiden Tame-emon losing his first "public" bout to Jinmaku Shimanosuke (the third Oshioigawa oyakata) or Onogawa losing to Tanikaze in the Musubi-no-ichiban by a "matta" even before the bout began. A rather controversial call was made by the gyoji, Oikaze Yoshida, handing out the loss to Onogawa for refusing to jump out of tachiai by calling for a matta. Despite pleading from others including the Tokugawa Shogun, Oikaze refused to budge saying, "both had their breathing matched and were ready to go".

Onogawa was subsequently given a kimarite of "kimake" (literally: a mental loss).

This tournament is considered to be historic in other noteworthy aspects. It was the first time a "yokozuna" performed their ceremonial dohyo-iri in front of a supreme head of state or dignitary. The musubi winner Tanikaze was given a yumi (bow) by the shogun and he became the first rikishi ever to twirl the yumi on the dohyo (currently performed by a Yumitori rikishi on behalf of the Musubi-no-ichiban winner). Tanikaze also participated in another tournament staged for the Tokugawa Shogunate and again had the honour of performing the yumitori ceremony on that occasion.

On the dohyo Tanikaze was reported to be a sore loser as, when he lost, he was known to issue a mono-ii himself but off dohyo he was such a warm hearted man that there was even a story of him intentionally losing to a rikishi who had a sick mother and giving her the kensho money as well as doing shiko in front of her to make her well. More than likely such a story was made up in the day of Edo where the people loved such stories of gentle giants.

Around 1784 a cold then commonly known as "Tani-kaze" ("kaze" in Japanese means either a wind or cold) was spreading around Edo and Tanikaze himself was even heard to utter, "it's impossible to get me down on the dohyo. But if you really want to see me lying down, come see me when

I have a cold." During a flu epidemic of 1795, despite feeling the effects of general ill health, Tanikaze was on another winning streak of 35 bouts when he succumbed to the illness on February 27, passing away as an active ozeki at 44 years old. Some still believe Tanikaze died of "Tani-kaze" cold due to the name confusion.

When Tanikaze passed away there were only two known yokozuna and there was no ordered list of yokozuna. Actually at the time even the House of Yoshida Tsukasa was not even certain the

custom would take hold. The yokozuna tradition was far from well established, still new to the people's mind as it was considered to be just another innovation.

But a precedent or two did begin to emerge. Tanikaze and Onogawa were awarded the yokozuna license at the same time. As far as they were concerned they were both yokozuna, not even caring who was the first and who was the second. Onogawa was eight years younger than Tanikaze but with Tanikaze's death, his reign began to be counted as ahead of Onogawa's, by way of the tradition

documented by the 12th Yokozuna Jinmaku Kyugoro as he etched their shikona on the Yokozuna Monument he erected in the grounds of Tomioka Hachimangu in Tokyo.

When the 69th Yokozuna Hakuho Sho defeated his opponent on day 1 of the 2010 Kyushu Basho, he tied the consecutive win record set by this long forgotten 4th Yokozuna, Tanikaze Kajinosuke. In doing so, Hakuho helped highlight the great accomplishments of great yokozuna in the nascent era of Ozumo as we know it today.

Tanikaze Kajinosuke

Born in:	Wakabayashi, Sendai
Born on:	September 8th, 1750
Real name:	Yoshiro Kaneko
Shikona:	Hidenoyama, Dategaseki, Tanikaze
Dohyo debut:	1769 April
Final basho:	1794 November
Highest rank:	Yokozuna
Number of upper division basho:	49
Makuuchi record:	258 wins, 14 losses, 6 draws, 16 holds, 5 no contests
Winning percentage:	94.90%
Number of yusho equivalent:	21
Height:	189 cm
Weight:	160 kg
Favorite techniques:	Yori
Date of death:	February 27th 1795