

Ethnicity in Professional Boxing: Why do Filipino Boxers in Japan Always Lose?

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27 June 1994. A brown body fell powerlessly on the canvas: "Hard puncher of the Philippines" Triffon Turralba rolled down in front of Hiroki Ioka, former WBA Flyweight champion, with 8,000 people watching the two men in the glaring light of the main arena of Osaka Prefectural Gymnasium in Osaka City. It was the fourth round, less than 20 minutes from the start of the bout entitled, "Preliminary Match for WBA Flyweight Title Match."

It was the very first professional boxing bout that I watched live. The promotion was meant for the local hero, Hiroki Ioka. Turralba was invited all the way from Mindanao Island of the Philippines merely to showcase the strength of Ioka in the Osaka ring.

22 November 1996. I sat down with a black marker in my right hand. I wrote in large, bold letters as the Kaicho (boxing club owner/manager) said: "Congratulations! Japan Flyweight Champion Suzuki Cabato." Shin Nippon Osaka Gym in Tengachaya, Nishinari Ward of Osaka City, gave birth to its very first champ-

ion since it was established thirty years ago. The champion's name was Suzuki Cabato, whose real name was Nolito Cabato, a Filipino.

Smiling, the white-haired Kaicho Taichi Suzuki was satisfied and took a look at the poster I made and put up at the gym's entrance. It was 6:00 p.m. the start of the day's training. Several Renshusei (nonprofessional young boxers) came and parked their bicycles in front of the small gym, greeting "Onegaishimassu" (Hello and let me join the training) and then prepared for training. A middle-aged man on bicycle on the way from a construction site passed by the gym. Noticing the poster stating, "Wow, Nishinari is popular!"

— from field notes.

The number of Filipino professional boxers fighting in Japan is increasing, and most of them are losing. For instance, there were only seven Filipino boxers who fought in Japan in 1981, but the number rose dramatically to the maximum of 150 in 1996 (statistics provided by the Japan

Boxing Commission; statistics before 1980 were not available). The increase started in 1987 and the number gradually decreased after 1996, but compared with foreign boxers of other nationalities, the Filipinos comprised the majority. However, the winning rate of Filipinos was strikingly low. In 1998, a total of 2,208 bouts took place in Japan. Filipino boxers fought in 100 winning only seven of those 100 bouts, making their winning rate a mere 7 percent. Next to Filipinos were Koreans, whose winning rate was 11 percent (*Boxing Magazine of Japan*, 1995, 56). It was usual in professional boxing in Japan to see "journeymen" losing "naturally."

Turralba, described above, was a typical foreign boxer. A Japanese boxing fan would readily assume Ioka would win quickly because his opponent was a Filipino. On the other hand, as the second part of my field notes reproduced above suggests, there were "special" Filipinos who were "imported" to Japanese gyms and given the chance to become Japan champions and/or other title holders. There were four Filipinos who became Japan champions. Many lost "naturally" on the one hand, while on the other, some became "state of the gym."

How can we understand such a situation? This paper aims to answer this question. It does so by (1) providing a historical outline and categorization of Filipino boxers in

Japan; (2) discussing issues relating "foreign boxers"; and (3) reevaluating the status of Filipino boxers in Japan.

The study is significant because there are few studies of this kind. Although there are a number of studies in the field of international migration of sports players in Europe (e.g., Maguire et al. 1994; Maguire 1996) very few studies in Japan and Asia (e.g., Chiba and Ebihara 1999) have been conducted. Moreover, one of the pioneer studies in sports sociology was on professional boxing (Weinberg and Around 1952) which concluded that ethnic composition of professional boxers in the United States reflected the changes in the composition of the ethnic urban poor. Sports sociologists in Japan, however, pay little attention to professionals in boxing while researchers in Philippine studies pay little attention to sports. Finally, while Filipino female migrants to Japan have been researched on and documented since their massive inflow beginning in the 1980s, Filipino male migrants to Japan are not very well documented. This paper is a reexamination of the Filipino male's role in Japan from the viewpoint of sports.

Data were taken from several sources, including two major monthly magazines, *Boxing Magazine of Japan* (BM) and *World Boxing of Japan* (WB); a statistical book, *Japan Boxing Year-book*, and the author's participant observation in Japan and in the Philippines since 1994.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

In the following discussion, Joseph Maguire's theory and typological framework on international migration of sports labor is applied. According to Maguire and Bale (1994, 5), "its (sports migration) connection with the issue of globalization is crucial" and "closely interwoven with the broader process of global sports development taking place in the late twentieth century." Its significant features include "an increase in the number of international agencies; the growth of increasingly global forms of communication; the development of global competitions and prizes; and the development of notions of rights and citizenship that are increasingly standardized internationally" (ibid.).

Maguire (1996) provides the following preliminary typology of sports labor migration:

1. "Pioneers" who possess an almost evangelical zeal in extolling the virtues of their respective sports (Bromberger 1994, as quoted in Maguire 1996, 339); e.g., twentieth century YMCA movement.
2. "Settlers" who not only bring their sports with them but are sports migrants who subsequently stay and settle in the society where they ply their labor (Lanfranchi 1994 as quoted in Maguire 1996, 339); e.g., "Gaelic sports."
3. "Mercenaries" who are motivated more by short-term gains and are employed as "hired guns" (Maguire

1993, as quoted in Maguire 1996, 339). These migrants have little or no attachment to the locality, no sense of *Heimat* in relation to the place where they currently reside or do their body work; e.g., World League of American Football.

4. "Nomadic cosmopolitans" who are motivated by a cosmopolitan engagement with migration. They use their sports careers to journey; embark on quests in which they seek the experience of the "other" and indeed of being the "other"; e.g., marathon runners, "extreme" sports participants.
5. "Returnees" who eventually come home as "the lure of home soil can prove too strong" (Maguire 1996, 339).

This typology is effective when comparing sports players of different nationalities. Chiba and Ebihara (1999) applied the above typology and were able to categorize outgoing Japanese players as well as incoming foreign players in Japan and "naturalized" Japanese-citizen players (e.g., Sumo wrestlers) according to their motivation.

The following analysis focuses on Filipino professional boxers in Japan, applying Maguire's typology, to understand the historical transition of their roles in professional sports. This will eventually generate an example for the transition of roles played by a specific ethnic group, Filipinos, in Japan.

FILIPINO PROFESSIONAL BOXERS IN JAPAN: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

According to Anne Tapp (1996), boxing started in the Philippines in 1898 as an activity of American residents. It was also in 1898 when the Americans started to govern the archipelago in place of the Spaniards. The American servicemen introduced boxing to the Philippines "in order to keep the Filipinos away from various forms of gambling like cockfighting" and the Filipinos considered boxing a "symbol of equality of races." The sports proved effective in easing the Western superiority image that the American colonial government generated" (Tapp 1996, 21). Classified by weight, Filipinos and Americans challenged each other through boxing equally, regardless of the difference in body structure. In 1909, Francis Churchill, an American resident in the Philippines, established a promotional business and built Palomar Park in Tondo, West Area, within Manila City. People watched boxing in the amusement park. Initially, the boxing club was called Toroso Club but the name was later changed to Olympic Club. There were some Filipino-owned clubs but the American Olympic Club almost monopolized the boxing market. Later, Churchill brought Filipino boxers to the U.S. mainland. Initially, Filipino agricultural laborers were the main audience of Filipino professional boxers, but later the American general public got interested in watching light-weight Filipino boxers. Pancho Villa, who

became the first world champion of the Orient in 1923, was one of these boxers.

Undoubtedly, Yujiro Watanabe was the person who introduced boxing to Japan. He spent his youth in the United States and returned to Japan in 1922. Watanabe held the very first boxing promotion on 18 May 1922, being the director/manager as well as the main event fighter against American professional boxers. Considering that the Philippines gave birth to world champion Pancho Villa in 1923, at that time the Philippines was far ahead of Japan in terms of boxing skill and manpower. This was the beginning of the boxing relationship between the two countries, when Filipinos and Japanese began to exchange sports players.

Pioneer: Joe Eagle

Susumu Nomura (1996) wrote: "Filipinos taught us (Japanese) jazz and boxing" (*WB* 1996, 2;106).

In autumn of 1924, Token Boxing Promotion in Tokyo invited Filipino boxers, Young Gonzalo and Battling Kiko, fighting Tigola and Kit Mamelto from Shanghai in what was the First Japan-Philippines Boxing Promotion (Gunji 1976:46). Gonzalo and Kiko were the first batch of Filipino boxers who came to Japan.

According to Kiku Matsunaga (1992), Joe Eagle was an outstanding Filipino boxer who contributed much to Japan's professional boxing. Popularly called Violent Eagle of the

Philippines, Joe Eagle was invited also by Token Promotion. He went to Japan on 10 October 1936 taking the passenger vessel *Katorimaru*. In January 1937, he wrested the Oriental Boxing Featherweight Championship from Piston Horiguchi, the undefeated, and most popular Japanese fighter of the time. After that, Eagle settled in Japan as a matchmaker. He match-made the first boxing promotion in Tokyo after World War II (WWII), which took place on 25 December 1945 in Ryogoku National Sports Hall hosted by the Korean Youth Alliance for the Promotion of Nation Building. In the immediate postwar years, Koreans and Filipinos like Eagle took the initiative in reconstructing Japan's professional boxing (Matsunaga 1992, 280-81).

On 13 April 1954, Eagle led the first batch of Japanese professional boxers, Susumu Noguchi, Hitoshi Misako, and Keijiro Kazama, to fight in the Philippines. Immediately after World War II, Filipinos had a hostile attitude towards the Japanese and even Japan's bureaucrats had a difficult time with postwar compensation talks between the two governments. When they reached the Philippines, however, the boxers were unexpectedly welcomed by President Magsaysay of the Philippines. He told the three: "I was a flyweight boxer before, but now I am heavyweight already. I really want to see you fight." The president shook hands with them and gave them words of encourage-

ment (Gunji 1976, 299). It was a good start for the following batches of Japanese boxers to the Philippines. Eagle returned to the Philippines after several years. He wrote to his friend Nobuo Gunji, a boxing writer/analyst, that he hoped to return to Japan. But this wish was not realized and Eagle passed away far from his adopted country (Matsunaga 1985, 71).

Settler: Baby Gustillo

Loreto "Baby" Gustillo was twenty years old when he arrived in Kobe Port, western Japan, in February 1941. Invited by Kentokai Boxing Promotion, Gustillo became a main event fighter on his third match in Japan. However, he was unable to repatriate as war broke out between Japan and the United States in the Philippines.

In Osaka, he joined the All Boxing Gym managed by Hachiro Saito, a Korean resident of Japan. According to Saito, "All" meant "a boxing gym which goes beyond ethnicity and nationality" (WB 1999, 11:70). In August 1947, Gustillo became the first flyweight champion of Japan after WWII. He was the only foreigner who became a champion.

Gustillo retained his Japan title until Hideo Goto defeated him in May 1950. After he retired from professional boxing, Gustillo caused trouble by fighting in the streets and joining an underground syndicate. He married a Japanese woman whom he divorced.

Since he came to Japan in 1941 he was not able to go home until he passed away in Osaka in November 2000. At that time Gustillo was living alone in Osaka, assisted by former members of All Gym and his Japanese friends in downtown Osaka.

Mercenary: Suzuki Cabato

Japan and the Philippines frequently exchanged boxers before and after WWII, but the flow of athletes almost stopped in the 1970s. Available statistics show that not many foreign boxers came to Japan in the 1970s. Most of the boxers who did were from Korea. However, the "importation" of Filipino boxers resumed in the mid-1980s. Noboru Arikawa, a Japanese tradesman based in Manila, thought of "exporting" professional boxers to Japan (*BM* 1986, 12:52). Arikawa managed several boxers including Tiger An (discussed below). Later, Garcia Boxing Gym, one of the major boxing gyms in Manila along with L&M Gym and Elorde Gym, became the main source of professional boxers to Japan.

Filipino professional boxers in the 1980s were of two kinds: "Japanese gym's favorite" and "hit-and-run journeymen." A "Japanese gym's favorite" boxer typically entered into a contract of transfer between the Philippine and Japanese managers to stay for more than six months in Japan. In Maguire's typology, this kind of boxer is referred to as "mercenary."

They were treated equally with their Japanese counterparts. They could join Japan's ranking and avoid "home-town decisions." The "hit-and-run journey men," on the other hand, came to Japan only for the fight. They usually arrived several days before, and went home the day after, the fight.

There were several Filipino boxers who became "mercenaries" and Japan's champion as well. Baby Gustillo as mentioned above; Jun Tan Sato (real name Silverio Tan) of World Hitachi Gym, Junior Featherweight champion in 1994; Nelson Harada (Nelson Cabig) of Harada Gym, Junior Bantamweight champion in 1995; and Suzuki Cabato (Nolito Cabato) of Shin Nippon Osaka Gym, Flyweight champion in 1996. There were many other Filipino "mercenaries" who were not able to hold any title. Interestingly enough, current mercenaries or "Japanese gym's favorite" Filipinos, in the terminology used here, were once "hit-and-run journeymen." As they fought in Japan, gym owners got interested in them and asked that they be transferred to their management. Cabato was the last and recent Japan champion. He retired from Japan's ring in December 1999.

Cabato made his debut in 1988 in his home country. He came to Japan in 1993, suffered three consecutive defeats before he transferred to his Japanese manager Taichi Suzuki. A change in his life came when he was in Osaka for three months in 1994 as a sparring partner for former world

champion Hiroki Ioka at Green Tsuda Gym in the vicinity of Suzuki's Shin Nippon Osaka Gym. Suzuki recalls: "I felt he (Cabato) did a good job... he had a professional spirit." At that time Suzuki had no "ranker" who could stand as "advertisement board" of the gym. Japanese young boxers came and went, giving up because of the hard training. When Cabato was about to leave Osaka after the sparring partnership with Ioka, Suzuki negotiated with him to transfer to his management. Cabato, realizing that this was the means to fulfill his wish of buying his own house "to live with his wife and children independently" (they were living with his wife's family), agreed to the contract of transfer. Cabato was under the management of Garcia Gym in Manila. Therefore, Garcia Gym and Shin Nippon Osaka Gym exchanged a five-year contract from October 1994 to let Cabato fight in Japan under the management of Taichi Suzuki. Suzuki paid 500,000 Yen (US\$ 4,166) for the transfer and Suzuki was to pay Garcia 15 percent of Cabato's purse every time the boxer fought in Japan. In Japanese professional boxing the manager typically takes 33 percent of the boxer's purse. Suzuki therefore took 33 percent from Cabato's purse and gave almost half of this (15% of the whole purse) to Garcia.

Cabato's fighting record changed after he transferred to Suzuki's management. His debut as "Japan's boxer" was a five-round knock-out against Choichi Sakimukai of Osaka

on 30 November 1994. After this bout, he suffered no defeats, eventually winning the Japan Flyweight title on 18 November 1996. It was the tenth bout after his transfer and he won by decision against Eiji Shigeyasu in Tokyo's Korakuen Hall. He defended the title six times until the belt was grabbed by Celes Kobayashi of Tokyo on 30 September 1998. He left Japan with a record of 16 wins, 3 losses, and 2 draws.

As a foreigner in Japan, Cabato held an entertainer visa and was prohibited from engaging in any other job but professional boxing. He lived with a stable (gym) mate, living on the allowance provided by Suzuki and the gym's supporters. Most of his fight purse was immediately sent to his wife in the Philippines. He eventually completed his own house in 1998.

Cabato's transfer was a financial advantage for himself, and also to Suzuki. As Cabato became Japan's champion, the small gym in downtown Osaka suddenly became popular and many youngsters joined it. The gym only had ten *Renshusei* (non-professional boxers) but when Cabato was at the top of Japan's ranking, as many as thirty boys' sweat made the wooden gym humid.

Nomad Cosmopolitan: Luisito "Koizumi" Espinosa

Former WBC featherweight champion Luisito Espinosa was a typical nomad cosmopolitan in

Philippine professional boxing. He, first, moved from the Philippines to the U.S., then came back to his home country and stayed away from the boxing ring. Fortunately, he was given another opportunity by Japanese matchmaker and boxing analyst Joe Koizumi to reclaim the world championship, but later he broke up with his manager and again went to the U.S. and, in the end, returned to the Philippines. He had a small head, long arms and legs which are physical treasures for a boxer. He was born in Manila in 1967 and made his professional debut in May 1984. In October 1989, he became WBA bantamweight champion. He was based in the U.S. for two years to retain his title, but after he lost it he returned to the Philippines and had trouble with his manager. Jobless, Espinosa was living with his wife's family, but he got the chance to be managed by Joe Koizumi, an international match-maker on 30 July 1995.

A world champion emerges when an able boxer and an able manager meet. In December 1995, Luisito "Koizumi" Espinosa defeated Manuel Medina and became WBC Featherweight champion. Espinosa made a homecoming defense bout and another defense in Japan with the Koizumi-Espinosa honeymoon lasting until the end of 1997. However, after the fifth defense bout held in

Mindanao Island of the Philippines, Espinosa broke the contract with Koizumi and moved to a U.S. management agency. The reason for the break was that the purse for the defense bout was not paid on time.

The Philippine promoter did not pay the boxers' purse and Koizumi himself suffered a heavy financial loss. Koizumi wrote about the painful experience: "I got mad and told myself, Does he (Espinosa) know who gave him the chance to be world champion,? How come this kind of selfish breach of contract happens? Indeed, Filipinos seem to have less sense of *Gin* (obligation) and *hi* (gratitude) than the Japanese. Most of them prefer immediate financial gain. Yes, I know there are several journalists and people in boxing (in the Philippines) who feel unpleasant about my managing Espinosa because I am Japanese. Filipinos feel bad about the Japanese, and they are not comfortable to see their national hero under a Japanese manager. Such people lit the fire and encouraged the Espinosa family to break away from me" (*BM* 1998, 9:24).

After that, Espinosa went to the U.S. In early 1999 he was named "Athlete of the Year" by the Philippine Sports Association (*Manila Bulletin*, 2 January 1999). However, Cesar Soto of Mexico defeated him and currently he is uncrowned.

Returnee: Tiger Ari

Lion Maeda and Tiger Asakura were among the first batch that Japanese tradesman Nobonu Arikawa sent to Japan in the 1980s. Their real names were Jun and Eder Olivetti. They grew up in a prominent boxing family, their father being Oscar Reyes, a former Oriental Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) Junior Lightweight champion. Manager Asakura of Victory Gym in Saitama, a suburb of Tokyo, got interested in the Olivetti brothers when he went on a search-for-boxers tour of Manila. The two young boxers made their debut in Japan in November 1987. Their skillful fighting style, however, did not appeal to the Japanese audience. Eder fought for the Japan Junior Lightweight title against champion Takeyuki Akagi on 10 April 1989 but was defeated by points.

The "good fight" he exhibited at the title match paved the way for Eder ("Tiger Ari") to recede. Japanese boxers stayed away from Eder out of fear and the following year Asakura told the brothers to, "Go home." They had no choice but to go back to the Philippines. Asakura recalled later, "Eventually, having a *Gaijin* (foreigner) boxer is difficult if that boxer is not a superstar. Eder's style was not appealing to boxing fans. But I have to admit that our gym got popular because of them. Now everyone in Japan knows about Victory Gym" (Takahashi 1992, 290).

Eder, known as "Tiger Ari," a ring name Arikawa gave him when the boxer left Asakura's management, continued to fight in his hometown. On the other hand, Jun retired soon after his return to the Philippines. In 1998, Eder became Philippine champion and on 28 November 1999 he defeated Kenji Ryuki in Osaka to become OPBF champion again. He retains the title to this day.

Eder is an example of what can be referred to as "returnees." Another prominent boxer who returned to the Philippines is Ernest Rubillar formerly known as Erbesto Ibaragi when he was under the management of World Hitachi Gym in Ibaragi Prefecture, Japan. He fought for the Japan title but lost, and went back to the Philippines to become the Philippine minimum weight champion in 1999.

Some Amendments in the Typology

A historical review of Filipino boxers in Japan suggests that Maguire's typology needs to be refined.

First, there were frequent travelers who became popular in Japan, too. There was a popular Filipino under Filipino management who frequently traveled between the two countries in the 1950s and the 1960s. Flash Elorde, a Filipino hero registered with the Boxing Hall of Fame, fought with a number of Japanese counterparts and won the world title. Elorde, from a poor family, was "discovered" by Lope Sarreal, an owner of a Japan-

based company that imported brown sugar from the Philippines. Sarreal invested in Elorde's boxing talent. Elorde fought Teruo Kosaka and other able Japanese boxers, and he held the Oriental Bantamweight title from 1952-1954 as well as the World Junior Lightweight title from 1960-1967. After retirement, Elorde built a large boxing center in the Philippines with a training gym, which he later ceded to his sons. He was a professional boxer from 1951 to 1971 appearing in 113 bouts, 37 of which were with Japanese opponents. He built a Japanese garden in his home and made friends with many Japanese. To this day, the Elorde Gym regularly holds Japan-Philippine Boxing Promotion in cooperation with Yukio Katsumata, manager of Kadoebi Hoseki Katsumata Gym of Tokyo.

Second, we can identify another category that can be referred to as "hit-and-run journeyman" boxers. They are boxers motivated by financial gains. An overwhelming majority of Filipino boxers coming to Japan belong to this category. A 10-round bout would give a boxer a purse of US\$200-300 in the Philippines, while in Japan the purse for a 10-round bout was usually US\$800-1,000. Frequent losers were more likely to be invited again, like Alpong Navaja, who fought and lost nine times in Japan between

November 1994 and December 1998. His record was eight losses and 1 draw (*Japan Boxing Yearbook* 1999, 187).

A third and more recent phenomenon is the "compromise" type of boxer. Two examples of this type, include former OPBF junior bantamweight champion Mangoro Ishimaru (real name: Raffy Montalban) and current OPBF bantamweight champion Jess Maca. Ishimaru used to be managed by Elorde in Manila until he became an OPBF champion. He transferred to Hokuriku Ishimaru Gym in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, in April 1997. He was given the ring name "Mangoro" a heritage name of the Ishimaru family, the gym owners. Usually Ishimaru stayed home in Manila and came to Japan when he had a scheduled bout. In the same manner, Jess Maca entered into a business management contract with Mitsunari Ishizuka, a Japanese tradesman based in Manila. Maca stayed in his hometown in Bohol Island, central Philippines. He would go to Manila for predeparture training, staying at Ishizuka's residence and sparring at Elorde Gym, leaving for Japan several days before his bout. Maca, known as "Japanese killer," had defeated seven Japanese challengers in a row, finding it difficult to draw another opponent.

ISSUES RELATING TO FOREIGN BOXERS IN JAPAN

Boxers in Factories

Discussions relating the presence of foreign boxers in Japan began in the 1990s when a series of "mercenaries" and "hit-and-run journeymen" literally ran away. They used boxing as the means to come to Japan and then ran away from their managers and "overstayed" in the country. An extremely significant event occurred on 15 April 1997, when former International Boxing Federation (IBF) champion Melchor Sasaki (real name: Manny Melchor) of Kashimanada Boxing Gym canceled his fight on the day it was scheduled to be held and ran away.

In response to this shocking event, boxing managers, promoters, and gym owners called for the regulation of foreign boxers coming to Japan. Melchor Sasaki's professional license in Japan was nullified on 17 April 1997 and the owner of Kashimanada Gym was issued a warning by the Japan Boxing Commission for failing to supervise his boxers. On 13 September of the same year, former Japan champion Jun Tan Sato (real name: Silverio Tan), having been missing, was found in northern Tokyo. When interviewed by a writer of *Tokyo Shimbun Newspaper*, Tan Sato stated: "the *Kaicho* (gym owner) paid us a very small percentage of the purse, and I had totally no income when waiting for my next bout. When

my mother was hospitalized, I decided to run away and work at a factory because I needed to send money to my family." World Hitachi Gym had a number of Filipino "mercenary" boxers like Tan Sato, twenty of them running away between 1993 and 1997 (*Tokyo Shimbun Newspaper*, 13 September 1997). To remedy this situation, the Game and Amusement Board (GAB) of the Philippines, a counterpart of the Japan Boxing Commission, released a circular to boxers, trainers, managers, and promoters in the country to requiring outgoing boxers to submit their trainer's license, certificate of medical check-up, and their fight report to the GAB upon returning to the country (*WB* 1997, 7:79).

The above examples were former "mercenaries" but the majority of runaway boxers were of the "hit-and-run" type. Boxing journalists pointed out that foreign boxers were likely to run away because of unreasonable match-making. Boxers with less "quality," therefore, were coming to Japan. Isao Hara, editor of *Boxing Magazine Japan* (at that time) noted: "I have seen a foreign boxer lose four times in a row in Nagoya, Osaka, Kitakyushu and Kurashiki. Another foreign boxer was knocked out when he fought at 63 kilograms. After two months he was knocked out in the sixth round at 71.2 kilograms. These are extreme examples, but I am tired of watching such foreign boxers who left their fighting spirit behind in the dressing room. Yes, they are un-

fortunate, and so are their Japanese opponents" (*BM* 1997, 6:49).

The fact is that "mercenaries" could not live on boxing alone as Silverio Tan mentioned above. Their bodies were "for consumption." Running away and "overstaying" in Japan were their way of protest.

**"Foreigners, don't come":
Against "hit-and-run journeymen"**

Not all members of audiences like to see one-sided matches where Japanese boxers win and their Filipino opponents lose with certainty. Seiichi Ashizawa, a boxing analyst, bitterly wrote an essay entitled "Don't allow spiritless foreign boxers to fight in Japan." He said: "The problem is that foreign boxers are invited for the bouts. Even before, I wanted to raise this question: Are they ready to fight in Japan? Some of them think of how and when to give up the fight, easily falling down to the canvas with a single clean hit" (*WB* 1996, 12:9).

Contrary to this, international matchmaker Joe Koizumi stressed, "It is necessary for a prospective boxer to fight an uncompetitive foreign boxer. To let them keep fighting is an important component of the boxers' training. There are roughly two techniques in international match-making: (a) matchmaking with an uncompetitive foreign counterpart in order that the Japanese hopeful wins and builds self-confidence and (b) matchmaking with competitive,

strong foreign opponent where the Japanese boxer wins by chance and joins the world ranking or loses but gains mental strength...I believe every gym owner/manager wants his boys to challenge competitive opponents and satisfy the audience. However, fighting with strong opponents will damage the boxer's ability and physical strength before he even comes close to the world title match" (*WB* 1999, 10:93).

Professional sports is a business. According to Koizumi, uncompetitive Filipino boxers are part of the necessary investment for Japanese boxers to be given the chance to fight, help build their self-confidence and lead them to the world title match. This seems to be the reason why they tolerate unbalanced match-making and hometown decisions. Even so, Koizumi in his own book admits the stupidity of hometown decisions: "What was striking for me was the bitter criticism of journalists and boxing fans against the Onizuka-Tanomsk world title match in 1992 (where Japanese Onizuka won the title but the decision was called "doubtful"). I told myself, "How the Japanese fans' character has changed! It's a great change from their "*Gambane Nippon* (Fight! Japanese)!" mentality in the 1950-1960s. People in the boxing industry should be aware that our fans are far ahead of us and have overcome nationalism already. ... Fans and journalists will abandon boxing if they find it is "dirty," if we

misread the change in their mentality and we continue to allow hometown decisions" (Koizumi 1998, 462).

Against "Japanese gym's favorite"

In addition to the above, people in the core of the boxing industry started a campaign to exclude "Japanese gym's favorite" or "mercenary" boxers. Generally speaking, professional boxing in Japan is getting less popular over time. Therefore, the Japan Boxing Commission set up a Popularity Promotion Committee and discussed various measures. One of the measures taken was to conduct a survey about foreign mercenary boxers. The survey for gym owners done in August 1996 disclosed that 80 percent of the respondents were against foreign mercenary boxers becoming Japan champions. They were asked about the requirements to be a Japan champion and to choose from four responses: (a) a foreigner can become a Japan champion; (b) holders of Japan titles should be limited to Japanese nationals; (c) a Japan champion should be someone whose fight debut is in Japan (and has no amateur experience abroad); and (d) Others. Of the respondents, 17 percent answered (a), 41 percent (b), 39 percent (c), and 2 percent (d). The committee concluded that it is more desirable that a Japanese national be a Japan champion.

Satoru Iwamoto, secretary of the Japan Boxing Commission, wrote:

"Recently, as the number of 'imported' boxers increased, we often see Japanese title matches between foreign boxers. No doubt, the audience feels dull when watching such title bouts. A questionnaire survey by the Commission disclosed that 80 percent of gym owners think that Japan champions should be Japanese nationals. People with good sense will say. 'What are you thinking? We are now in the borderless age.' However, I hope you understand that the ideal and reality are different" (*BM* 1997, 2:117).

After the survey result was made public, people in boxing stopped talking about foreign boxers. Because of the economic recession in Japan, few gym owners could afford to have foreign "mercenaries" under them (Japanese boxers could support themselves by engaging in part-time jobs, but foreign boxers had no other means but to rely on the financial sustenance provided by gym owners and supporters due to immigration requirements); and gym owners were reluctant to have foreigners under their wings because they fear that they might run away. In other words, people in the boxing industry did not want to come up with a definitive "solution" to the problem.

Narratives about Foreign Boxers

It was shown in the above sections that easy-losing "hit-and-run" boxers are generally targets of

criticism. The following are narratives about comparatively strong Filipino boxers: Baby Gustillo, a "settler;" Jun Tan Sato (Silverio Tan), a "mercenary;" and Jess Maca, a "compromise type." These narratives give an indication of the public's views about (1) a settled foreign boxer right after WWII, (2) a poor boxer from a poor country in the early 1990s, and (3) a "Japanese killer" in the late 1990s.

Baby Gustillo. Yoshio Tsunoda, secretary of the Japan Boxing Commission Kansai Regional Office, recalls: "Gustillo was the person who revitalized professional boxing in the Kansai Region (after WWII) and even contributed to providing a base for professional boxing in Kansai. Of course, he was very popular" (*WB* 1997, 5:132). The general public welcomed Baby Gustillo. However, during his peak years in the 1950s, the audience had mixed feelings of affection and irritation. Toshiro Kamigata, a journalist who frequently wrote about Gustillo wrote: "People say I only write in favor of Gustillo, but this is because Gustillo has been overwhelmingly strong, far beyond the level of Japanese boxers.... When Gustillo's popularity hit its peak, fans loved him but the attitude was not like the one toward Piston Horiguchi, a Japanese hero because Gustillo is a foreigner. Still, no Japanese boxers have been able to beat Gustillo: how annoying, how irritating! Such mixed feelings are the bases for the popularity of Gustillo" (Kamigata 1953, 4).

There was no systematic barrier for Gustillo to become a Japan champion, but it is interesting to note that the audience had mixed feelings of affection and irritation because he was a foreigner who became a Japan champion.

Jun Tan Sato. Silverio Tan, a young junior featherweight boxer from Leyte of the Philippines, was named Jun Tan Sato when he joined the World Hitachi Gym in Ibaragi Prefecture, north of Tokyo. There were around ten Filipino boxers between 1993 and 1997, most of whom were from the Garcia Gym in Manila and most of them frequently lost in Japan. But they were "revitalized" when Jun Tan Sato won in an upset victory for the Japan title match on 2 March 1994. Katsumi Sato, owner of World Hitachi Gym recalls: "At first he was so weak! He had a glass jaw, so a single hit could easily make him go down. I suggested he should retire from boxing and become a trainer. But everything changed when I told them I would give them a 100,000 Yen bonus if they won. Then they started to do their best and finally he won the title. Yes, they are really motivated by money. They are like a horse that runs after a carrot! I have to tell them that I will give them a bonus if they win. If not, they will not show guts and are easily knocked down" (Kishida 1994, 90). Kishida, writer of the above episode observed Tan and others: "Now that many Japanese young boys are financially comfort-

able, very few of them want to go into boxing for financial reward. ... But they are different. They choose to fight in Japan where the purse is bigger than in their hometown. ... It (the champion's belt that Tan Sato won) is the key for Tan Sato to make bigger money here" (ibid).

Kishida and other writers described "mercenary" boxers like Tan Sato as poor boxers from a poor country with a "fighting spirit" that "Japanese boys no longer possess." Their view of Tan Sato involved a tinge of pity.

Jess Maca. "Japanese killer" Jess Maca changed the image of Filipino boxers. Shigeru Nakazato, a Japanese hopeful, tried to snatch the OPBF title and was beaten on 19 October 1998. "Nakazato is our powerful hope who won thirteen times in a row. He challenged Maca, attempting to win the title and join the world ranking. However, Nakazato lost the fight due to Maca's skill and technique that he underestimated" (WB 1999, 10:26). Maca made his debut in a nontitle bout against Masahiko Nakamura in April 1997. In May 1998, Maca challenged Nakamura who was then OPBF bantamweight champion, and grabbed the title from him. Meanwhile, Nakamura suffered from retinal detachment during the fight and retired from boxing. Some months after the retirement, Nakamura said in an interview, "I hope Toshiaki Nishioka (another hopeful and world ranker in the same weight) will knock

Maca down first and aim for the world title. I cannot stand watching many Japanese boxers beaten up only by Maca. If possible, I would challenge him again but as I cannot, I want Nishioka to beat Maca...When medical progress allows me to recover from my retinal detachment and return to professional boxing, I would want to fight Maca and reclaim the title. I would spend a million yen to realize this" (WB 1999, 11:132).

Nakamura had a considerable grudge against Maca, asking his fellow boxers to beat the Filipino on behalf of himself. What happened to Maca was similar to Baby Gustillo, when the settler was challenged by a number of Japanese boxers until finally Hideo Goto grabbed the title from him. Tan Sato in the early 1990s was described as a symbol of Japan as a wealthy country and the Philippines as a poor country. When mercenaries like Tan Sato left Japan, people went on boxing and a strong, long-reigning Filipino champion emerged. For Japanese Bantamweight boxers, Maca's OPBF title was the gateway to success, but not many dared to challenge him.

CONCLUDING NOTES

A historical review of Filipino boxers in Japan indicates that the roles have not been marked by consistency but, over time, involved a variety, as Maguire's typology suggests. Filipinos played a pioneer

role, with some of the "pioneers" deciding to "settle" in Japan. The economic recession of the Philippines and Japan's economic boom in the 1980s then gave birth to "mercenary" boxers. Some of the mercenaries had to go home and become "returnees." No other ethnic group in Japan took on such a variety of roles in professional boxing. While Maguire's typology is useful in the analysis of foreign sports labor in Japan, there are several kinds of boxers that do not fit his categories. Special attention can be made of the majority of Filipino boxers in Japan, who can be considered "hit-and-run journeymen." In an age of globalization, sports players can choose to move to another country for better labor conditions and to try to break existing records. This is the brighter side of the situation, but it should also be noted that it leaves a shadow, a group of "athletes for consumption" like the majority of Filipino boxers.

Let us get back to the two original questions raised above. How can we understand the reality that (1) Filipino boxers are commodities, on the one hand, and (2) they are welcome to join Japanese gyms on the other? To understand the former, we should remember the classic study in sports sociology by Weinberg and Arond who, as summarized in the beginning of this paper, argued that the ethnic composition of boxers reflected the American urban poor of that time. Communities with vulnerable financial

foundations are more likely to engage in boxing. Thus, there were a number of Irish boxers in 1916, a majority of Jewish boxers in 1936, and Blacks in 1948 (Weinberg and Arond 1952, 460). Since it was in the 1980s that a sizable ethnic population emerged in Japan, their second generation has not yet reached the right age to engage in boxing. An alternative was the new foreigners (from urban poor populations) and one of the most vulnerable people and source of professional boxers were "hit-and-run" Filipinos in the 1980s. (Of course, it should be noted that immediately prior to and after WWII first- and second-generation Koreans taking on Japanese names chose to be boxers in Japan)

On the other hand, mercenary Filipino boxers appeared in response to supply and demand in the boxing industry. The World Hitachi Gym in Hitachi City, Ibaragi Prefecture, had many Filipino boxers like Jun Tan Sato. The gym was short of prospective boxers all the time, as young boys in rural or suburban areas tended to move to the Tokyo metropolitan area and join boxing gyms as they thought there were more "chances" there. In the same manner, Shin Nippon Osaka Gym in Osaka which Suzuki Cabato joined was in severe competition for getting young boys as it was surrounded by a number of larger boxing gyms. Deprivation on both sides, shortage of manpower in Japanese gyms and shortage of

financial gain in the Philippines, made the Japanese and the Filipinos cooperate with each other.

Globalization influenced the Philippines and they "exported" boxers to economically wealthier countries. There is another kind of consequence: the birth of the "compromise" boxer, a fruit of the cooperation between Japanese and Filipino managers. We can observe a global/local disjuncture in professional boxing: Gym owners prefer to have as Japan champions Japanese nationals. They try to achieve this by avoiding competitive foreign opponents. This preference for "locals" still pervasive among Japanese gym owners and managers. Some of the

Japanese hopefuls challenge the world title-holder only after three or four consecutive victories against "hit-and-run" Filipinos. Many would like to watch competitive, equally balanced matches between Japanese and foreigners but the reality is that many promoters like to make their boys' non-title bouts "nice-looking." Until when will this go on? Can we watch balanced, thrilling, and exciting matches between Japanese and Filipinos again like when Elorde fought in Japan in the 1960s? I argue that this depends on how people in Japanese boxing will treat competitive boxers like Maca; thus the outcome is still open to question.

NOTE

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