

Globalization in Mongolia: Cultural Evidence from the *UB Post*

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As a communist country from 1924 to 1990, Mongolia was subjected to overwhelming Soviet influence in all areas, including journalism where Mongolia's equivalent to *Pravda* was a newspaper called *Ünen*. However, with the coming of democratization in 1990, Mongolia's freedom of the press has been improved,¹ and a large number of newspapers and journals, including English-language newspapers, have appeared on the market. At the same time, the press and all other facets of Mongolian society have been severely impacted by the forces of globalization.

The purpose of my paper is to examine the impact of globalization in Mongolia by analyzing the information provided by the *UB Post* in a period of about four months, from No. 454 of February 3 to No. 472 of June 9, 2005. Although the *UB Post* is only a weekly newspaper, it does provide the most important news of an entire week to its readers.² Each issue has eight pages and

¹ According to the statistics of Freedom House, Mongolia was a country of no press freedom in the Soviet era, became a country of partly press freedom since 1990, and was even ranked as a country of press freedom in the years of 1992 and 1999-2001. See various publications of the press freedom survey of Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/presssurvey.htm> (accessed 23 June 2005).

² The readership of the *UB Post* is primarily foreigners in Ulaanbaatar, but Mongols interested in learning English such as students of English departments are also its possible readers. The domestic news of the *UB Post* is covered by its reporters or translated from major Mongolian newspapers. Foreign news is usually pieces from major news agencies of the West, China, Russia, or other Asian countries. They are important news pieces that also appear in other major

cost 500 tugrig (about 45 cents) in early 2005. The results will tell us more about the present situation of Mongolia in the era of globalization.



THE UB POST
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TODAY
CITY WEATHER
SNOW
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C

FRIDAY
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C

SAT
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C

SUN
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C
-10°/-22°C
-12°/-38°C

TOP NEWS
MOBICOM DIRECTOR AND MP CLASH OVER PRICING

ANNOUNCEMENT
Next week's UB Post will be on sale on Tuesday February 8, instead of the usual Thursday publication.
This is due to the Tsagaan Sar holiday.

Mongol News chief awarded
PROFESSOR YIN and CHEN of the Mongolian People's Republic (Mongolia) were awarded the Order of the Patriotic War for their contribution to the development of Mongolian journalism and publishing. The award was presented by the Mongolian People's Republic.

Driver found dead in trunk
A 20-year-old man was found dead in the trunk of a car in the city of Ulaanbaatar. The driver was identified as a 20-year-old man who was found dead in the trunk of a car in the city of Ulaanbaatar. The driver was identified as a 20-year-old man who was found dead in the trunk of a car in the city of Ulaanbaatar.

Demonstration against corruption to block road

ABOUT 100 people are expected to participate in a public demonstration against corruption, police corruption and illegal business in Ulaanbaatar. The demonstration is organized by the Mongolian People's Republic. The demonstration is organized by the Mongolian People's Republic.



The Mongolian People's Republic is expected to participate in a public demonstration against corruption, police corruption and illegal business in Ulaanbaatar.

The demonstration is expected to be held in Ulaanbaatar. The demonstration is expected to be held in Ulaanbaatar. The demonstration is expected to be held in Ulaanbaatar. The demonstration is expected to be held in Ulaanbaatar.

Cabinet donates tsunami aid from state reserve

The Mongolian People's Republic Cabinet has decided to donate 100 million tugriks to the Japanese government for tsunami relief. The donation is made from the state reserve. The donation is made from the state reserve. The donation is made from the state reserve.

LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Learning foreign languages is now very popular in Mongolia. It has been my experience that Mongols are good at learning foreign languages. They are not afraid of saying a wrong sentence or using a wrong expression. I am personally acquainted with several scholars who did not learn their English in any formal education but through self-study at home and learning from other English speakers at their job sites, and it is not uncommon to find Mongols who can speak more than one language.

This linguistic facility seems to be deeply rooted in history. In the thirteenth century, during the time of the Mongolian world empire, many Mongols were known to be conversant in the various languages, such as Chinese, Tibetan, Persian, and the many Turkic languages, spoken in history's largest contiguous empire.

newspapers in Mongolia. Although part of the stories or articles appearing in the *UB Post* are chosen for its particular readership and may be not of major concern of ordinary Mongols, they also tell us some aspects of the life in Mongolia and the attitude of the newspaper toward its foreign readers.

When Tibetan Buddhism became a popular religious belief among the Mongols in the sixteenth century, education in Mongolia came under the control of the Buddhist monasteries, and Tibetan became the language of instruction as well as the canonical and liturgical language.

Later, when the Mongols came under Manchu rule, Chinese merchants eventually became economically dominant, and as a consequence Chinese became an important and useful language for the Mongols to learn. Ma Hetian, a Chinese agent who traveled in Mongolia in 1926-27, observed that many Mongol women who served as temporary wives of Chinese merchants learned Chinese, wore semi-Chinese clothes, even played Chinese musical instruments, sang Chinese songs, and arranged their dwellings entirely in a Chinese fashion.³ Mongolian women learned Chinese to serve their temporary husbands, and men learned Chinese for economic, political, and cultural use. During the Soviet era, Mongols began to learn Russian in their elementary schools, and many of them continued their higher education in Russia. It is no surprise, therefore, that during the seven decades of Russian dominance the most spoken foreign language in Mongolia was Russian.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratic reform in Mongolia, the official policy of Russian as the second language was abandoned, and English is now taught at the elementary school level. English is also popular outside the school. When you enter a bookstore in Ulaanbaatar, you can easily find English textbooks, dictionaries, and other learning materials. The replacement of Russian by English as the main foreign language clearly indicates Mongolia's turning from Russia to the United States and its opening to the capitalist world.

The reason for this shift to English is not difficult to find. A language is not only a system for communication or a culture carrier, but also a symbol of power. Knowledge of English has become a necessity mainly because the United States is perceived as the most powerful country in the world. In order to survive or find an adequate position in the new capitalistic and global era,

³ Ma Ho-t'ien, *Chinese agent in Mongolia: A report on the birth of the Mongolian People's Republic*, tr. John De Francis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), 128.

Mongols are trying hard to learn foreign languages, and above all, English. To what extent some Mongols are willing to go to learn English and the culture it represents is reflected in this recent incident. It is reported that in 2005 two Mongolian university students went to London to participate in an international public speaking competition hosted by the English Speaking Union. Although neither student was selected to attend the final, they said that their main aim was not to win first prize, but to “participate and get in contact with people around the world,” and the trip to the United Kingdom “opened their eyes to a very different lifestyle.”⁴

Every issue of the *UB Post* during the period under consideration had a weekly ad for language teachers: “Native speaking English, German, Japanese language teachers wanted,” with English always listed first. There was also a separate ad for recruiting only English teachers.⁵ Ads of two international schools appeared regularly in the newspaper. One was the International School of Ulaanbaatar,⁶ and the other the Ulaanbaatar Elite International School.⁷ Although their students are from several different countries, English dominates these schools’ curricula.⁸ The paper also published news about Mongolian students studying in the United States⁹ and Canada.¹⁰

Another Western language that is currently rising in popularity mostly among young Mongols is German. This popularity is partly due to historical circumstances. During the Soviet era, many Mon-

⁴ “English language competition fosters international connections,” *The UB Post*, 9 June 2005, 2.

⁵ “Classifieds,” “Teacher wanted,” *The UB Post*, 9 June 2005, 3.

⁶ These ads appear in *The UB Post* on February 17 (p. 4), May 5 (p. 3), May 12 (p. 5), May 19 (p. 5), June 1 (p. 3), and June 8 (p. 5) of 2005.

⁷ These ads appear in *The UB Post* on April 28 (p. 3), May 5 (p. 5), May 12 (p. 5), May 19 (p. 5), May 26 (p. 3), June 1 (p. 6), and June 8 (p. 3) of 2005.

⁸ According to the web site of International School of Ulaanbaatar, “ISU offers Mongolia’s only internationally recognized curriculum in English. All classes are taught in English.” See “Curriculum,” International School of Ulaanbaatar, <http://www.isumongolia.org/index.php?option=content&task=blogcategory&id=12&Itemid=38> (accessed 1 December 2005).

⁹ “Trip to Illinois concretes education,” *The UB Post*, 31 March 2005, 5.

¹⁰ “Learning as an international experience: Canadian project crosses borders in education,” *The UB Post*, 1 June 2005, 5.

gols worked and studied in the German Democratic Republic, now the eastern part of a reunited Germany. Another, perhaps even more important reason for German being studied by a growing number of Mongols is Germany's economic power. The Mongolian government considers Germany its leading European partner. So far, about thirty German firms have invested in Mongolia. These include several joint enterprises such as the beer company Khan Bräu, the Mercedes-Benz representative VITSAMO, and Lufthansa Technik's cooperation with the Mongolian national airline MIAT.¹¹ Moreover, since the early 1990s some German-speaking Mongols have gone to Germany in hopes of finding a better life.

The sharp rise since the early 1990s in the use of English, German and other Western languages has resulted in what some Mongols consider a flood of advertising and other signs all over Ulaanbaatar using the Latin alphabet. Opponents of this trend have sought to reverse it by promoting a cause initiated mostly by academics to make the Mongolian script the country's official script.¹² On March 1, 2005, the newspaper *Khumuun Bichig*, which is printed in traditional Mongolian script, made an appeal against the use of the Latin alphabet for business names and signs. The appeal is intended to be a part of the "Traditional Mongol Script Day" on May 1.¹³


Unlike English and other Western languages, Japanese and Korean have witnessed a sharp rise in popularity among Mongols only partly because of economic and political reasons but mostly for their linguistic and cultural similarities. The structure of Mongolian, Japanese, and Korean are so close that people who speak any one of the three languages can easily learn the other two. I recall that in 1993 a Korean student studying in Ulaanbaatar told me that it was almost too easy for him to learn Mongolian, espe-

¹¹ "Mongolia," Federal Foreign Office of Germany, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/laenderinfos/laender/laender_ausgabe_html?type_id=14&land_id=115 (accessed 27 June 2005).

¹² "About Mongolia," Embassy of Mongolia, Washington D.C., http://www.mongolianembassy.us/eng_about_mongolia/land_and_people.php (accessed 26 June 2005).

¹³ "Appeal against Latin alphabet," *The UB Post*, 3 March 2005, 1.

cially conversation. All he needed to do was to substitute the Korean with Mongolian words. In the same year, a Japanese restaurant owner told me that reading Mongolian was not very difficult for him, but that correct pronunciation demanded a lot of effort. Books and other materials for learning Japanese and Korean languages are for sale in most bookstores. There are also radio and television programs teaching the two “related” languages.

HOPE 

DENTAL CLINIC

- ♥ We are the only Dental Clinic run by Japanese management.
- ♥ We open 365 days a year in two shifts
- ♥ We have English speaking dentists and staff
- ♥ We use products from Japan, France, Germany & the Czech Republic
- ♥ We mainly use Japanese equipment

For reservation c
(English)

For further info
(English, Fre

KOMODO VILLAGE

Komodo Co., Ltd, construction company, builder of Korean style housing




Still living in center of the city breathing polluted air?
Do you want the wide steps and an environment of fresh air?
Then welcome to Komodo town.

We are inviting you to buy a private house built in Korean style

The village boasts 19 houses within a fenced area, of which the first three are already finished and waiting for you.
The close support of the construction bureau can be requested to meet your wishes.

Special discount available for customers who make a contract before May 1, 2005.

Tours and advice on site available from KOMODO Co., Ltd






ENTER AREA OF VILLAGE: 26,000 square meters, 100,000,000 won (two hundred million won).

CYCLONE A: entire area 780 square meters, house covers 270 square meters

CYCLONE B: entire area 810 square meters, house covers 270 square meters

CYCLONE C: entire area 810 square meters, house covers 270 square meters



LOCATION: 1.4 km from the city to the way to the National Children's Center, in the valley of Daegu, 1 km from the city center.

Most Mongols who learn Japanese and Korean wish to study in or find a job related to the two countries.¹⁴ To many Mongols,

¹⁴ There are approximately 20,000 Mongols in South Korea. Many of them work there illegally. According to the *UB Post*, Korean immigration officials said on February 5 that they deported seven Mongols for illegal stay and were seeking seven more from the same group. “Twelve Mongols Deported from South Korea,” *The UB Post*, 8 February, 2005, 5. Since there is a Mongolian community in South Korea, Mongolian artists also go to Korea to perform for their countrymen. For instance, Nomin Talst, a famous Mongolian pop music group, had its first overseas concert in Seoul for the Mongolian audience during the past Tsagaan Sar holidays. Paul Bacon, “Nomin Talst Play Seoul Music,” *The*

Japan and South Korea are role models because they are Asian and therefore culturally closer than Europe and America. This perception has helped popularize certain Japanese and Korean products and styles. Readers can find in the *UB Post* ads of a dental clinic that emphasizes its “Japanese management,”¹⁵ and an ad inviting people to buy private houses built “in Korean style”¹⁶ (see the illustration on the preceding page).

As mentioned by Migeeddorj Batchimeg, a senior researcher at the Institute for Strategic Studies of Mongolia, while Russia still enjoys certain political and economic influence in Mongolia, it is now China which is emerging as the main political and economic partner of Mongolia.¹⁷ Therefore, a growing number of Mongols have come to perceive the learning of Chinese as an important and necessary goal. So far, China’s booming market is probably the main reason for the Mongols to learn Chinese. Anyone who masters Chinese can easily find a decent job in a Mongolian company, as evidenced by some of my Mongolian friends. However, it has proven much more difficult to work for a Chinese company. Almost every Chinese group visiting Mongolia, no matter whether it is official or private, brings along a Mongol from Inner Mongolia as its own interpreter, probably because the members of these groups trust their “own” Mongols more.

INTERNATIONAL CUISINE

In the entertainment section on the back page of the *UB Post*, there are usually recipes or restaurant reviews. Besides, the ads of

UB Post, 17 February, 2005, 6. Because there is an increase in the number of Korean tourists who visit Mongolia, Korean Airlines decided to increase its flights from Seoul to Ulaanbaatar starting June 1, 2005. “Increase in Korean Air Flights,” *The UB Post*, 7 April, 2005, 1.

¹⁵ The same ad of Hope Dental Clinic appeared in every issue of *The UB Post* from February 8 to April 21, 2005. It always appeared on page 3.

¹⁶ “Komodo village,” *The UB Post*, 21 April 2005, 7.

¹⁷ Migeeddorj Batchimeg, “Future challenges for the PRC and Mongolia: A Mongolian perspective,” The Jamestown Foundation, http://jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369704 (accessed 27 June 2005).

some restaurants also appear often in the newspaper. The readers can taste an international flavor via these short essays and ads. During the period of my investigation, recipes appeared of foods from Russia,¹⁸ Korea,¹⁹ Italy,²⁰ China,²¹ and Middle East.²² Ads of the Hazara Indian Restaurant (see illustration on next page), Taj Mahal Indian Restaurant, Los Bandidos Indian and Mexican Restaurant, and the Detroit American Bar (see illustration on next page) were regular features in the newspaper, while an ad of Le Bistrot [sic] Français appeared once.²³ Although only a relatively few Mongols are able to afford eating out at such exotic restaurants, many others may enjoy cooking some foreign dishes at home with the help of the recipes in the *UB Post*. What seems beyond dispute is that the culinary scene in Ulaanbaatar has acquired a more cosmopolitan flavor.

During my trips to Ulaanbaatar in the last decade, I could clearly notice a growing interest in foreign cuisine. There are more choices than the options mentioned above. During the Soviet era, in addition to traditional Mongolian food, only Russian and certain European foods were available, but since the early 1990s cuisines from many other countries have appeared as a symbol of Mongolia's new openness. For example, fried chicken and hamburgers are presented as Mongolia's opening to the United States: an ad for the Detroit American Bar proudly announced that "The Motor City Comes to Ulaanbaatar."²⁴ This establishment is seen not just as a bar, but as an American icon transplanted onto Mongolian soil. Such advertisements are, of course, motivated by the

¹⁸ Iryna Po[e]psel, "A Hunger for Russian Food," *The UB Post*, 3 February 2005, 7; Iryna Poepsel, "No. 5: Kotletas," *The UB Post*, 24 February 2005, 8.

¹⁹ Iryna Poepsel, "Korean Gem Hidden in Deepest Bayanzurkh," *The UB Post*, 17 February 2005, 8; James Brown Park, "Seoul Food," *The UB Post*, 9 June 2005, 8.

²⁰ Iryna Poepsel, "Italian Cuisine in Ulaanbaatar," *The UB Post*, 10 March 2005, 7; Todd Smith, "No. 9: Aglio e Olio," *The UB Post*, 21 April 2005, 7.

²¹ Moe Khol, "Help, I'm Locked Inside a Chinese Cookie Factory," *The UB Post*, 28 April 2005, 7; Howie Ba, "The Chinese Are Coming, the Chinese Are Coming," *The UB Post*, 26 May 2005, 8.

²² Isabela Irra, "A Piece of the Middle East," *The UB Post*, 21 April 2005, 7.

²³ *The UB Post*, 3 March 2005, 3.

²⁴ *The UB Post*, 26 May 2005, 4.

ultimate aim in the new capitalistic market which is to attract customers and thus bring in more money.

Friday, Saturday-NOMINJIN

DETROIT

American Bar

*The Motor City comes to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
A converted garage is now one of the hottest
places to be in Ulaanbaatar. American music,
hamburgers, hot dogs, french fries and cold beer.*

OUR ADDRESS:
Under bd's mongolian barbecue
Next to Ayanchin Outfitters on
Seoul Street

Tel: 976-11-320033
Fax: 976-11-311179

*Located above the Detroit Bar
is bd's Mongolian barbecue
where you can create your
own stir-fry and enjoy a unique,
interactive, fun experience.*

Awarded best restaurant for dinner in UB

HAZARA

*North Indian Frontier Restaurant
An authentic Mughlai & Dum-Pukht Experience
Available only at Hazara. Exotic "Mango Lassi"*

Also enjoy new additions in Kebabs, Curries, Biryani, naans along with a large selection of Vegetarian Cuisine in the privacy of your own "Shamiana"

LUNCH 12:00pm - 2:30pm
DINNER 6:00pm - 10:00pm

Agricultural Ministry	Embassy of Vietnam	Embassy of Britain
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For reservations, parties, take-aways & business lunches call
Tel 99195007 480214 Fax 452615

OUR ADDRESS: Behind the Wrestling Palace, Peace Avenue,
16, Bayanzurkh district, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

After official diplomatic relations were established between Mongolia and South Korea in March 1990, the ties of friendship and cooperation between the two countries have steadily developed in various fields, including diplomacy, economics, and culture. Currently thousands of Mongols work legally or illegally in South Korea to send funds to relatives back home. Due to good quality and reasonable prices, Korean products can be easily found on the Mongolian market and Korean soap operas are warmly received by Mongolian audiences. When it comes to food, kimchi, a national Korean spicy vegetable pickled and seasoned with garlic, red pepper, and ginger, now appears on the dining table in many Mongolian households even though traditional Mongolian dishes have been known to be rarely spicy. A Mongolian scholar told me that his family began to enjoy kimchi after his sojourn in Seoul as a visiting scholar. For him kimchi is not only a dish but also something symbolizing his family's tie with Korea.

To me, the most significant change in foreign cuisine is the rapid increase in the number of Chinese restaurants in Ulaanbaatar. When I stayed there for six months in 1993, I could find only a couple of

Chinese restaurants in the city. However, according to a restaurant review in the *UB Post*, the author learned from a recent publication of the Department of Non-Mongolian Foods in the Ministry of Edible and Non-Edible Comestibles that there are now 234 Chinese restaurants in Ulaanbaatar.²⁵ The author of another restaurant review easily listed eleven Chinese restaurants in Ulaanbaatar.²⁶ This marks the reversal of a recent historical trend. Prior to the split between China and the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s, relations between Mongolia and China were friendly and cooperative. There were many Chinese living in Mongolia, Chinese food was popular, and many Chinese restaurants existed in Mongolia. During the split, however, Mongolia had no choice but to stand on the side of the Soviet Union, and its relations with China plummeted. They got so bad that in 1983, Mongolia began to systematically expel some of the 7,000 ethnic Chinese in Mongolia to China. Many of them had lived in Mongolia since the 1950s, when they were sent there to assist in construction projects.²⁷ Another victim of that policy were Chinese restaurants in Mongolia whose numbers greatly decreased.

How authentic the various foreign cuisines in Mongolia are is not important in this discussion. Restaurant owners and managers are modifying the taste of their dishes to attract more Mongolian customers. The important thing is that the large variety of foreign cuisines, especially those from countries currently popular in Mongolia, testifies to the influence of globalization and Mongolia's eagerness to open its doors to the world.

THE ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY

The Mongols were known for their religious tolerance in the thirteenth century. Their practice of religious tolerance was not

²⁵ Moe Khol, "Help, I'm Locked Inside a Chinese Cookie Factory." The number may include all restaurants or eating places where so-called Chinese food is provided. The author of the article complains that one can find bad Chinese food just about anywhere in Ulaanbaatar.

²⁶ Howie Ba, "The Chinese Are Coming, the Chinese Are Coming."

²⁷ "Background Note: Mongolia," U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2779.htm> (accessed 26 June 2005).

only a demonstration of self-confidence on the part of leaders like Chinggis Khan, but also a positive factor that helped them to create the Mongol world empire. Besides shamanism and Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were also practiced among the people within the Mongol empire.

With the return of Buddhism to Mongolia at the end of the sixteenth century, many Mongols became devoted Buddhists. Being a lama became commonplace and the number of Buddhist monasteries and temples increased significantly. Buddhism became an inseparable part of the Mongolian tradition. When the Manchus rose to power in the seventeenth century, they tried to put the religion of the Mongols under their control, but they did not challenge their religious belief and actually became strong promoters of Buddhism. As for the Mongols, they continued to practice religious tolerance and did not try to convert believers of other religions to Buddhism.

While Mongolia came under the sway of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, Russian atheism and materialism started to have a profound effect in the entire country. Religious practice gradually became a taboo which resulted in a decline in the people's commitment to Buddhism, but the religion never entirely vanished from Mongolia. With the coming of democratization in the 1990s, Mongolian traditional culture began to regain its importance, and the revitalization of Buddhism and shamanism is part of this process. The Mongolian government is making use of some traditional metaphors to emphasize Mongolia's genuine independence, and common people embrace their cultural heritage to help themselves cope with the difficulties that followed the enormous changes in the early 1990s.

One of the consequences of democratization and globalization has been the arrival of Christianity in Mongolia. Actually, one could speak of a return because back in the thirteenth century Nestorian Christianity appeared to have had a presence in some parts of Mongolia, but their influence vanished a long time ago. The present influx of Christianity started, according to information supplied by Serving in Mission, an international Christian mission agency, with Christian radio programs, but the churches that have subsequently been established are thoroughly Mongolian,

and an estimated 20,000 believers now live in Mongolia.²⁸ Some Mongols have become Christians because they accept the teachings of that religion while others do so because they want to build a connection to the outside world, especially to the West.

In the *UB Post*, a joint ad of the International English Speaking Christian Fellowship and the Mongolian Bible Teaching Seminar appear almost every week. Christ Fellowship of Mongolia once published an ad for an “English praise and worship evening” in the newspaper.²⁹ Another ad was an invitation for people to participate in a “one-hour non-stop praise and worship.”³⁰ I know some Filipino and Korean missionaries who serve devotedly in Ulaanbaatar while keeping a low profile. The Mongolian government was very suspicious of foreign missionaries in the early 1990s, so the latter had to disguise their true identity and held meetings secretly in private homes. Now conditions for missionaries has considerably improved but is still not without problems.

Besides news about Bible teaching, praise, and worship, other Christian activities, the *UB Post* also included an item about President N. Bagabandi sending a telegram to the Vatican to convey his condolences over the death of Pope John Paul II,³¹ and another item featured his congratulatory message to the newly-elected Pope Benedict XVI and Mongolian Catholics rejoicing for Pope Benedict XVI.³² In another ad in the *UB Post*, I noticed that Korean missionaries established an elementary school to educate Korean children in Ulaanbaatar that offered both a Korean and an English curriculum.³³

Under the influence of democratization and globalization, Christianity returned to Mongolia. If the country continues its democratization efforts, Christianity as well as other religions will

²⁸ “Mongolia,” Serving in Mission, <http://www.sim.co.uk/where/mongolia.htm> (accessed 27 June 2005).

²⁹ *The UB Post*, 19 May 2005, 2.

³⁰ *The UB Post*, 9 June 2005, 4.

³¹ “President Sends Telegram to the Vatican,” *The UB Post*, 7 April 2005, 1.

³² “Mongolian Catholics Rejoice for Pope Benedict XVI,” *The UB Post*, 28 April 2005, 1.

³³ “Ulaanbaatar MK School,” *The UB Post*, 26 May 2005, 5.

continue to gain adherents in Mongolia, but Buddhism and shamanism are like to remain more influential.

PROSTITUTION AND TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN

An article in the March 24 issue, entitled “The Dark Side of Casino Lights” described how Mongolian girls were trafficked to Macao by other Mongolian women to become prostitutes. The article was based on an interview of a 21-year-old woman with the pseudonym Bolor that was originally printed in the newspaper *Mongoliin Medee* on March 18.

According to the interview, Bolor was betrayed by her girl friend and taken to Macao instead of Singapore where she had wanted to study English. She ended up working as a prostitute in a sauna which employed forty women, fully half of them being Mongols. The women worked from eight in the evening until eight in the morning. On average, each woman served at least five customers per night, and sometimes up to fifteen on busy nights. All women signed six-month contracts with the sauna manager who confiscated their passports so they could not escape. After they had worked for six months, each woman was allowed to return home for a few days, but they are obliged to enlist another woman from their homeland. They are offered a large commission for successfully recruiting another woman to the sauna.

Bolor said, “There are a lot of Mongolian women working as prostitutes in Macao, in karaoke venues, bars, swimming pools, saunas, and other places of entertainment.” Most of the women knew in advance they would work as prostitutes, but a few were cheated and trafficked to Macao. She hopes that the Mongolian government will take measures against prostitution and to protect girls who live on the street. She said that street girls as young as fourteen and fifteen years of age are often trafficked to Macao, Singapore and Malaysia.³⁴

Due to the economic hardships that followed the political and economic changes in the early 1990s and more foreigners coming

³⁴ “The Dark Side of Casino Lights,” *The UB Post*, 24 March 2005, 4.

to Mongolia from richer capitalist countries, prostitution as a phenomenon of a market economy began to appear in Mongolia. There were no laws prohibiting sexual harassment until September 2002,³⁵ but even after banning prostitution in that year, the practice has spread among girls and women and there are private individuals and groups who make money from acting as their agents. As early as in 1997, there were one thousand instances of prostitution registered with the police in Ulaanbaatar alone.³⁶ In 2002, the official registration figures came down to sixty-one, but a study conducted by the Mongolian National University in 2001 found that 200-250 girls in Ulaanbaatar were involved in prostitution. Most of them were living away from home without supervision and had previously suffered sexual abuse.³⁷

The increase in child labor and the number of street children owing to poverty and poverty-driven domestic abuse also provided a source for commercial sex. According to a pilot survey conducted in 1998 by the Women's Information and Research Center and Save the Children Fund, there were approximately 400 girls engaged in sex work in Ulaanbaatar. Depending on where they worked, the girls were paid from two to six dollars per hour and from six to fifteen dollars per night.³⁸

Among the eighteen interviewees, 66.7% of the girls answered that they became sex workers to earn money and 38.9% because it was part of the street life. Most of the girls live on the street and some of their families also live on the street. The factors and reasons for the girls to become sex workers were inadequate home

³⁵ "Mongolia," Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2002, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18255.htm> (accessed 4 July 2005).

³⁶ National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia and Centre for Human Rights and Development, "The crime of trafficking of women and children in Mongolia: The current situation," (Ulaanbaatar: November 2002), 9, <http://www.owc.org.mn/chrd/publication/Trafficking%20Report%202002-eng.doc> (accessed 4 July 2005).

³⁷ "Juvenile Justice in Mongolia," 13, UNICEF – Mongolia, http://mirror.undp.org/mongolia/publications/JJ_Eng.pdf (accessed 6 July 2005).

³⁸ "Girls as Sex Workers: Situation and Trends in Mongolia," Gender Center for Sustainable Development, <http://www.wirc.mn/research/page4.htm> (accessed 3 July 2005).

environment, poverty, conflict in the family, and a lack of appropriate relationships between parents and children. For the girls themselves, there were two reasons for being engaged in sex work. They felt the need to earn money in order to support their low-income or unemployed families, and as street girls they regarded prostitution as their only viable option. Another important reason given by these interviewees was their very low self-esteem. Having suffered poverty, hunger, and ultimately being looked down upon by others, especially by other young people, these women saw in prostitution their way to better clothing, food, and other opportunities.³⁹

The country report on human rights of the U.S. Department of State also indicates that some female and teenage citizens of Mongolia worked in the sex trade in Asia and Eastern Europe, and an unknown number of them may have been trafficked. In 2003, the national police documented 148 cases of underage prostitution. In that same year, police investigated seven cases involving nineteen suspects accused of trafficking sixty women to Hong Kong, Macao, and South Korea. During the year, non-governmental organizations reported that seven women were trafficked to Poland from the country. Authorities detained and subsequently denied entry to two foreign nationals (one British and one South Korean) for alleged trafficking of women.⁴⁰ The need of foreigners for commercial sex will be probably on the increase if Mongolia continues to carry on economic reforms towards a market economy.

According to the joint report of the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia and the Center for Human Rights and Development, there are circumstances within Mongolian society today that are suited to the trafficking of humans. These include a direct relationship between negative social phenomena that have arisen as a result of Mongolia's transition to capitalism. Some of these phenomena are increased poverty, unemployment, and prostitution among women as well as drug use among youth, illegal emigration of citizens abroad, illegal labor of Mongolian citizens

³⁹ "Girls as Sex Workers: Situation and Trends in Mongolia."

⁴⁰ "Mongolia," Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2004, U. S. Department of State. In <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41652.htm> (accessed 3 July 2005).

in foreign countries (including the manufacturing of false visas and passports), and an increased interest among girls and women to marry foreigners. All of these factors contribute to an environment in which the crime of trafficking can occur. In addition, a lack of knowledge about life abroad and naive attitudes in trusting different kinds of mediators are some of the factors that have led to trafficking.⁴¹

Prostitutes face a particularly high risk of becoming the object of trafficking, according to a research conducted by the Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD) in 2003. The center interviewed 124 prostitutes in Ulaanbaatar, Darhan, Choibalsan, Zamyn-Uud and the Chinese town of Erlian, as well as seventeen women and girls working in nightclubs and bars in Ulaanbaatar. Almost a quarter of them were ready to accept proposals to go overseas for well-paid work if their expenses were covered. The survey concluded that sales of people take place not only overseas, but also in Mongolia. Bringing girls and young women from rural regions to big cities and towns for prostitution has become a widespread business. 28.2% of the prostitutes responded that they had been sold forcibly, proving that they are under the patronage of pimps.⁴²

In all of the trafficking cases that the CHRD documented, the women were recruited and transported abroad for the purpose of coerced prostitution, after being deceived about the nature and/or conditions of the “employment” awaiting them. Most women were required to sign contracts, but they were not told about the debts they would “owe” nor were they aware of the dangers they were about to face. The recruiters were mostly Mongols, working in cooperation with agents abroad, and the recruits tended to be young, single women who are unemployed, students, and/or already engaged in prostitution. Traffickers lured their victims with promises of high paying jobs, training, education, and/or assistance in marrying foreigners.

⁴¹ “The crime of trafficking of women and children in Mongolia: The current situation,” 7.

⁴² “People Trafficking on the Rise,” *The Mongol Messenger*, <http://www.mongol-messenger.mn/issue/040207.php> (accessed 6 July 2005).

According to the research findings, there are many suspicious recruitment advertisements for women in the Mongolian press including ads for virgins and specifications about women's physical appearance. Although recruiters for overseas employment are required to obtain a licence from the Ministry of Social Welfare, in reality there is no mechanism for monitoring or enforcing this regulation. Ulaanbaatar and other major urban centers such as Darkhan and Erdenet are the main recruitment centers for traffickers, and Macao is the most common destination, although Mongol women are also trafficked to China, other parts of Asia, and even to Europe.⁴³ It is obvious that girls and women make up the majority of humans trafficked abroad, and many of them are engaged in prostitution.

Prostitution is new in post-communist Mongolia, but it is certainly not new in Mongolia. Ma Ho-t'ien mentions in his diary that prostitutes in Urga (today's Ulaanbaatar) were said to total two or three thousand. They included quite a few Russians and Japanese as well as Mongols. Most of the Russians who engaged in prostitution were Buriats, and more than a hundred Japanese women had embraced that profession.⁴⁴ In the 1920s, because the power of Chinese merchants was still overwhelming in Mongolia, many clients of the prostitutes were Chinese merchants. At pre-sent, the clients are not limited to Chinese. They include other foreigners as well as Mongols, but Japanese women are no longer working as sex workers in Mongolia.

MONGOLIAN SUMO WRESTLERS IN JAPAN

The last page of each issue of the *UB Post* features the sports section which is frequently dominated by news concerning Mongolian sumo wrestlers and tournaments. The issue of February 3 reported the outstanding record of Mongolian sumo players in Tokyo. The news read, "All-in-all six men from the steppe posted

⁴³ Centre for Human Rights and Development, "Combating human trafficking in Mongolia: issues and opportunities," Ulaanbaatar 2003-2004, <http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/Mongolia-trafficking.pdf> (accessed 6 July 2005).

⁴⁴ Ma Ho-t'ien, *Chinese agent in Mongolia*, 128-129.

winning records in Tokyo.” It continued, “These contemporary Mongols are succeeding where their thirteenth century compatriots failed -- in completing a successful invasion of Japan. Over seven hundred years ago two violent storms helped repel Mongolian armies from the shores of Kyushu. From there the legend of kamikaze was born. This time, however, there appears to be no divine wind powerful enough to stop the modern Mongolian hordes.” The news also mentioned the anxiety of the Japanese by quoting a Japanese news headline saying, “Foreigners head for total domination of sumo.”⁴⁵ Foreign sumo wrestlers in Japan come not only from Mongolia, but also from Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Hungary, South Korea, China, Brazil, and Tonga. However, more than thirty Mongolian wrestlers are currently participating in sumo tournaments and they constitute more than half of the foreign sumo wrestlers in Japan.⁴⁶ Under the impact of market economy and globalization, sumo wrestling is not only a traditional sport for the Japanese, but also a game of international stature.

Among the three manly sports of the Mongols, wrestling is the most popular. The top wrestlers are national heroes. After Mongolia began its democratic reforms and turned toward a market economy, many Mongols opened their eyes to foreign countries to find their opportunities. For Mongolian wrestlers, Japanese sumo wrestling is a perfect stage for them to try out. Mongolian sumo wrestlers soon earned their place in Japan. Their pictures appear in Mongolia’s newspapers, magazines, posters, calendars, and even political campaign material. Famous sumo wrestlers such as Asashoryu D. Dagvadorj, Kyokushuzan D. Batbayar, and Kyokutenho N. Tsevegnyam became national heroes among the Mongols due to their great achievements and victories in professional sumo wrestling. They were even awarded with medals and honored as “Image Ambassador of Mongolia” by the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry because of their “contributions to promulgating and glorifying Mongolia abroad, extending

⁴⁵ “Gambare Nippon! Native Sumo Subjugated by Foreign Conquerors,” *The UB Post*, 3 February 2005, 8.

⁴⁶ “All sumo foreign rikishi,” <http://moti.sumogames.com/tForeigners.htm> (accessed 11 July 2005).

foreign relations, and promoting business and foreign investments.⁴⁷

D. Batbayar is one of the three pioneer Mongolian wrestlers who went to participate in sumo wrestling back in 1992.⁴⁸ His ring name is Kyokushuzan and highest rank is komusubi, the fourth highest rank in sumo.⁴⁹ He is known as a “supermarket of tricks” among sumo fans. It is said that he has brought innovation and dynamics to the traditional sumo wrestling by using Mongolian wrestling techniques and even tricks long forgotten by Japanese sumo wrestlers. Most Japanese agree that sumo wrestling became different after Batbayar entered the arena. His successful debut in sumo had encouraged many young Mongols to try out this new field and caused a surge in interest in sumo wrestling among the Mongols.⁵⁰ In sumo, sheer size is no substitute for technique. Mongolian sumo wrestlers are witness of this point. A Japanese web proclaims that “the powerfully built Mongolian wrestlers dazzle the eye with their crisply executed throwing techniques and are creating a new trend that favors technique over size.”⁵¹ This is the contribution of Mongolian wrestlers to sumo.

Asashoryu Akinori, born as Dolgorsuren Dagvadorj in Ulaanbaatar, went to Japan in 1997 and made his professional debut in January 1999. When he gained the status of ozeki, the second highest rank in sumo, in July 2002, he was not only the first Mongolian and fourth foreign wrestler ever to reach this rank, but also the fastest to do so since 1958.⁵² Asashoryu also became the first

⁴⁷ “Database: Inspiring Mongolia,” Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, <http://www.mongolchamber.mn/en/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=110> (accessed 11 July 2005).

⁴⁸ “A Sumo Pioneer,” *Kansai Time Out*, no. 333, November 2004, <http://www.kto.co.jp/2004nov/article4.html> (accessed 12 July 2005).

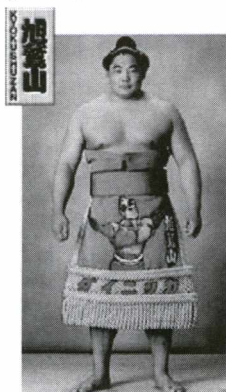
⁴⁹ “Kyokushuzan,” Goo, Grand Sumo, http://sumo.goo.ne.jp/eng/ozumo_meikan/rikishi_joho/rikishi.php?A=38 (accessed 12 July 2005).

⁵⁰ “‘Supermarket’ of Wrest[li]ng Tricks,” *Mongolia Today*, issue no. 3, http://www.mongoliatoday.com/issue/3/supermarket_tricks.html (accessed 12 July 2005).

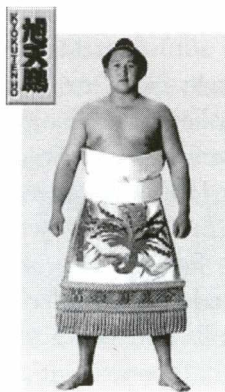
⁵¹ “Sumo Goes International,” Trends in Japan, <http://web-japan.org/trends/sports/spo040204.html> (accessed 13 July 2005).

⁵² “Mongolian Wrestler Promoted to Ozeki,” *The Japan Times*, July 25, 2002, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?ss20020725a1.htm> (access-

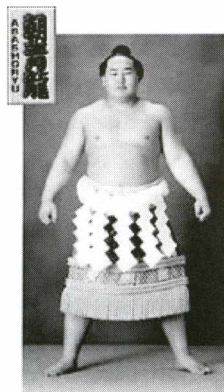
Mongolian sumo wrestler to become a yokozuna, the highest rank in sumo. He was granted the title on January 30, 2003, and is currently the only active yokozuna.⁵³ Asashoryu was trained as a wrestler by his father from childhood. His father and four brothers are all wrestlers. Asashoryu is relatively light for a sumo wrestler, but he toppled Japanese wrestlers far bigger than himself in spectacular fashion on his way to reaching sumo's pinnacle at the 2003 New Year Grand Sumo Tournament. His success is a matter of great pride for his family and his homeland.⁵⁴



Kyokushuzan D. Batbayar



Kyokutenho N. Tsevegnyam



Asashoryu D. Dagvadorj

As a top national hero, Asashoryu's activities attract great attention in Mongolia, and it is not surprising to find information about him in the newspapers. During the period that I studied the *UB Post*, I came across many headlines such as "Asashoryu Sets Up Fund for Mongolian Students,"⁵⁵ "Asashoryu Completes Formalities: Yokozuna Cruises to Victory Despite Late Upset,"⁵⁶ "Asashoryu on Course for Hawaiian Record: Mongolian Set to Take the Plaudits as Sumo's Greatest Foreigner,"⁵⁷ "Asashoryu Racks Up Deadly Dozen: Yokozuna Holds Firm to Take Historic Victo-

ed 11 July 2005).

⁵³ "Asashōryū Akinori," Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asashoryu> (accessed 11 July 2005).

⁵⁴ "Sumo Goes International."

⁵⁵ *The UB Post*, 31 March 2005, 5.

⁵⁶ *The UB Post*, 31 March 2005, 8.

⁵⁷ *The UB Post*, 19 May 2005, 8.

ry,”⁵⁸ and “Asashoryu Wins With Both Mind and Body: Champion Exhibits Mental Grip Over Challengers.”⁵⁹ After the May sumo tournament, Asashoryu and other Mongolian professional sumo wrestlers arrived in Ulaanbaatar to play basketball against a team of traditional wrestlers. The sumo wrestlers won by a score of 39 to 35. The *UB Post* reported that “basketball league experts said that this game had changed people’s understanding of sumo wrestlers, who because of their weight, move very slowly like turtles. Asashoryu, who is the team captain, is 184 cm tall and weighs 145 kg. He scored thirteen points in the game.”⁶⁰

Although professional sumo wrestlers, who “are succeeding where their thirteenth century compatriots failed,” are the pride of Mongolia, keeping Mongolian citizenship is not always in their personal interest. Kyokutenho N. Tsevegnyam became the first Mongolian wrestler to get Japanese citizenship on June 22, 2005. This enabled him to stay in the sumo world after he retires and become a sumo elder. His fellow Mongol and stablemate Kyokutenzan B. Enkhbat followed suit and also became a Japanese citizen.⁶¹ Since neither Mongolia and Japan recognize dual citizenship, the wrestlers who received Japanese citizenship have to give up their Mongolian citizenship. Mongols are probably not happy to see their heroes become foreign citizens, as evidenced by a reader’s comment in the *UB Post*. After learning that Tsevegnyam received Japanese citizenship, a Mongolian reader wrote to the editor that “I feel that he is a pretty selfish guy. After all, who cares about him. He is not good. Get out of here...”⁶² In an era of glo-

⁵⁸ *The UB Post*, 26 May 2005, 8.

⁵⁹ *The UB Post*, 1 June 2005, 8.

⁶⁰ “Sumo vs Tradition in Famous Names Basketball Game,” *The UB Post*, 1 June 2005, 8.

⁶¹ “Mongolian Obtains Citizenship,” *The Japan Times*, June 26, 2005, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getsp.pl5?sp20050626a1.htm>; “Sumo Wrestler Tsevegnyam Obtains Japanese Citizenship,” *The UB Post*, June 29, 2005, http://ubpost.mongolnews.mn/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1120042576&archive=&start_from=&ucat=10& (accessed 11 July 2005).

⁶² A reader’s comment to “Sumo Wrestler Tsevegnyam Obtains Japanese Citizenship,” in http://ubpost.mongolnews.mn/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1120042576&archive=&start_from=&ucat=10& (accessed 11 July 2005). When I rechecked the news on November 19, I found this comment removed.

balization, foreign citizenship is welcome by many Mongols even though they are still proud of being Mongols, but for many others traditional pride and practical gain are not always compatible.

CONCLUSION

From the evidence provided by the *UB Post* in the short period of four months, we can clearly see the enormous impact of globalization on the life of the Mongols. They have begun to learn English, Japanese, and Korean, the languages of what they perceive as model countries. Chinese has also become more useful and popular. Thousands of Mongols are working or studying in China, Japan, and South Korea, and many more wish to do so. Mongolian wrestlers have begun to join sumo wrestling in Japan and have brought something new to the sport. Within a little bit more than a decade, they have created a praiseworthy record and become themselves heroes among many Mongols and sumo fans. In addition to languages and sumo, cuisines from other cultures have entered Mongolia and diversified the diet of the Mongols. While shamanism and Buddhism are recovering their hold in Mongolia after a hiatus of more than sixty years, Christianity has also returned, this time as a symbol of the modern developed West. The well-known Mongolian principle of religious tolerance seems to have revived. On the down side, Mongolia's wider opening to the rest of the world has also resulted in some decidedly negative phenomena the worst of which are prostitution and the trafficking of women. Although declared illegal and roundly condemned as immoral, they have become a common practice in Mongolia.

These new developments signify not only language, diet, job, or religious diversification, but a change of value system and identity as well. During the Soviet era, the Mongols were proud of their country as the first socialist country in Asia and a country that "jumped into socialism, bypassing capitalism." They did not consider Mongolia poor because it is a vast country of 1,565,000 square kilometers with a sparse human population and a vast number of herds. However, when Mongolia began its political and

economic reforms in the early 1990s, the Mongols suddenly realized that their country is neither big nor rich. I have heard on many occasions some Mongols say that Mongolia is a poor or even a small country. Since Mongolia has chosen a new road of democracy and market economy, its new role models are the West, Japan, and the so-called four Asian tigers, i.e. South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. While old people remain somewhat conservative, many even missing the "good old days," the younger generations in Mongolia are very flexible and ready to exploit any opportunity to reach out to the world. They may be still proud of the glorious past of their ancestors, but they are pragmatic and looking to the future. They are writing a new history of their own.

Unlike anti-globalization protesters in other countries, Mongols seem not to worry too much about the impact of globalization. On the contrary, reading the news and articles in the *UB Post*, one gets the impression that Mongols welcome globalization and are happy to go with the flow. They want to be part of the modern world. However, whether globalization is a blessing or a curse for Mongolia is worth further discussion.⁶³ The Mongols may be too optimistic or too naive about what globalization will bring them. It is true that globalization is not a new thing. It happened before in history, and the active agents of globalization have often been located far from the West.⁶⁴ The Mongol empire was an agent of this kind in the thirteenth century. However, it is also true that the active agents of the current process of globalization are mainly the Western countries. Therefore, this new form of globalization is largely and unavoidably a process of economic, political, and cultural Westernization. Throughout much of the twentieth century Mongolia had undergone a process of Westernization through Soviet influences, but it was very different from today's kind. Mongolia is now a relatively poor country coping with great social changes and uncertainties due to its political and economic transformation. With the inclusion of globalization as a variable to the

⁶³[Editor's note: See Paul D. Buell and Ngan Le's chapter in this book].

⁶⁴ Amartya Sen, "Does Globalization Equal Westernization?" *The Globalist*, March 25, 2002, <http://www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=2353> (accessed 15 July 2005).

still vulnerable infrastructure, Mongolia without a solid social base will face more difficulties ahead. Since the Mongols have demonstrated their wisdom in the process of post-communist democratization, we expect them to eventually reach a socially acceptable balance between economic prosperity and social justice.

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