

Globalization of Cheju and International Socio-Cultural Communication: For the Building of Cheju People's Global Network in the New Millennium

By

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I would like to thank Dr. Kim and the sponsors of this conference for the opportunity to visit Cheju once again. My last visit was as a participant in the World Island Conference in November of 1997, when the World Association of Island Studies (WAIS) was formed. At that time our focus was the role of Islands in the context of the Globalization of Korea in general, and Cheju in particular.

Even in three short years, the term Globalization has taken on new meaning. The economic crises faced by Asia, and the involvement of international monetary institutions to assist in the reconstruction and recovery of national economies has further emphasized our interconnectedness. In the year 2000, organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the IMF have found they can no longer hold a conference without an internationally-driven debate over its values and policies. Thousands of demonstrators fill the streets demanding that these influential organizations behave more democratically and with greater sensitivity to a global perspective on labor and environmental issues.

As Cheju attempts to position itself to take full advantage of global opportunities, it is essential to identify the mega-trends that will shape Cheju's future. These include:

Demographic tidal waves, such as the growth in the percentage and number of elderly persons with social and health care need, and the impacts of pharmaceuticals and medical technology on prolonging life:

The development of a global culture of democracy, particularly in terms of access and participation in the decisions of corporations and international economic organizations:

The implications of global climate and environmental changes, such as global warming, the destruction of ecosystems, the disappearance of rain forests, and the depletion of fisheries, and the astounding new technologies that attempt to respond to these challenges:

The transition from the industrial age to the information age, particularly the impacts of the Internet on human communication, commerce, culture, and understanding:

The adoption of common institutions, such as insurance for health care, that create challenges associated with the grafting of western structures onto non-western cultures.

I would like to briefly address three of these trends: the growth of the over 65 segment of the population, environmental technologies, and the importance of the Internet.

The first of these mega-trends relates to the changes in the composition of our populations. All over the world we face societies with older and older citizens. In the State of Hawaii, we know that in ten years the number of seniors living in our Islands will triple. As Gerard F. Anderson and Peter Hussey of Johns Hopkins University point out in their multinational

study of eight industrial countries, modern society is allocating from one-third to one-half of total health care expenditures for elderly people. These figures range from 47% in Japan to 34% in Germany. The United States currently spends 38% of its health care dollars for elder care, and this is going to explode due to the so-called Baby Boomers, the huge number of children born immediately following World War II.

In a paper presented to the Asian Productivity Organization's 1999 Study Meeting on Health Care Management, held in Honolulu in December of 1999. Dr. Chang Hyun-Sook of the Korea Health Industry Development Institute pointed out that Korea's over 65 population stood at 6.6% in 1998, and is estimated to be 7.1% in 2001 and 14.3% in 2023. According to the United Nation's definition, an aging society has more than 7% of its population aged 65 and over, while an aged society has 14%. Dr. Chang observed that it will take only 22 years for Korea to move from an *aging* to an *aged* society, and this is the most rapid aging compared to other developed countries. Indeed, between 1950 and 1995, men and women age 65 and older were the fastest-growing age group in Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand.

For these reasons, Hawaii's East-West Center will be conducting a month-long seminar in June 2000 entitled: Health Planning for Aging Populations. The seminar is based, in part, on the reality that in many Asian and Pacific cultures care for the elderly has shifted from reliance on the village or the extended family to institutional substitutes. Urbanization has created smaller family units, with young adults emigrating from rural areas to cities or even to other nations. Newly arrived city-dwellers typically move to smaller quarters, such as high-rise apartments, where space is not available for extended families. If families can no longer care for the elderly, can governments step in? Should they? The shift from a family-centered service-delivery system to a multi-organizational or government-supported system presents a major challenge to policy makers.

Opportunity Number One: Can Cheju, with its relatively rural character, in conjunction with a growing tourist industry, capitalize in some way on this demographic growth in aging populations?

There are three obvious possibilities. First, Cheju might position itself as a fairly contained geographical location for research and pilot programs developed to cope with rural aging populations and the delivery of care. Of special importance are the programs that might be tested to assist elders in remaining in their homes as long as possible, particularly if the children have left home and moved to the mainland. To accomplish this would require a vigorous effort to attract private foundation and government grants for pilot projects on Cheju.

Second, because the climate is generally milder on Cheju than in the northern parts of the Korean peninsula, Cheju might well become a popular site for retirement communities, where elders could come and spend their later years with access to the best health care, and the best weather. These communities might seek residents from a broader, international market place. To first attract the elders, you must first attract nationally and internationally respected medical facilities to care for them.

Third, the Cheju visitor industry might position itself as a New Millennium pioneer for *elder tourism*. Cheju is already known as a honeymoon destination, but what about senior citizens all over Asia? In Hawaii, we know that there is interest by many elder Japanese to spend several months a year in one location, then move on to another. Hawaii, however, has yet to respond to this opportunity.

To address the growing senior tourist market would mean ensuring that the frailties of elders were explicitly accommodated in visitor facilities and programs. A certain percentage of hotel rooms might be specially equipped with so-called Assistive Technologies to compensate for disabilities. Obviously, elevators must be present in all buildings. Sidewalks need to have ramps for wheel chairs. Tourist buses need to be easily boarded without steep stairs. Special tours with guides need to have amplification or at least the availability of earphone head sets for better hearing. At the hotels, special dietary considerations would need to be incorporated into the menus, especially for diabetics and those with other nutritional and dietary requirements. And the availability of health care clinics and professionals located in hotel and visitor destination areas would be of importance as well.

Clearly, we can look upon our aging populations as a drain on our resources, or, we can look upon them as a special segment of the population whose disposable incomes are within reach of any society that responds to their needs. They are an opportunity that few societies have recognized.

Opportunity Number Two: Can Cheju become a laboratory for the applications of new environmental technology?

In September of 1997, the Green Enerptopia International Forum was held at Cheju National University. The Cheju Declaration of 1997 was presented and ratified by the 23 participants. It read:

Sustainable resources provide the most promising option toward formation of a progressive society in harmony with the environment. We, the undersigned, pledge to cooperate in the establishment of national Green Enerptopia centers for enhancing

public education, expanding technology transfer, advancing externality mechanisms, and developing economic incentives for clean energy systems.

One *Green Idea* waiting to be implemented is the use of cold ocean water, pumped through pipes, to provide air conditioning for hotels. In Hawaii an ocean engineering company, Maki Ocean Engineering, has been developing this concept. The initial costs for installing the system are estimated to be completely recovered in from four to eight years.

The benefits, according to a paper published in October of 1991, include:

No freshwater loss with the seawater A/C system, as is true with conventional systems:

Tremendous aquaculture benefits. The pathogen-free, nutrient-rich cold seawater has been instrumental in the development of aquaculture programs for abalone, lobster, a variety of algae, salmon, trout, and founder:

Reduction of your dependence on electricity and fossil fuels:

Fewer pollutants, including freon, which has been implicated in destruction of the ozone layer.

It takes approximately one ton of air conditioning per hotel room. The engineers say that if you have 1000 rooms, either in a single hotel, or in a hotel district, such as Chungmoon, you can make this idea work. If Cheju's tourist industry became the first in the world to incorporate this sensible, environmental technology, Cheju would become famous as an innovator.

Opportunity Number Three: *Can Cheju utilize the new communications technologies to become a more integral part of the global economy?*

Certainly one mega-trend that is on everyone's mind is the Internet. As I sit writing this paper, I know I can instantly send it by email to Cheju. Cheju is just as accessible as the number of helpful web sites it posts on the Internet. I was particularly interested in acquiring government statistics on Cheju Island. Yet, nearly all the web pages I was able to access were devoted to tourist information. Cheju National University has a good web site, but many of its elements are still in Korean Language. Even if I speak some Korean, I don't have a program that can read it on my computer. Like it or not, the Internet is oriented toward a western alphabet, not Hangul, not Kanji, not Chinese Characters, not Arabic.

I also wanted to learn more about the research being done by scholars at the University, but I could find nothing accessible. To be a society in a cyber world, you must put everything you can on the Internet. You must be a presence. If I type in CHEJU on my Internet browser, I want to find information in English on who is Governor today, the elected officials, reports on Cheju, etc. I want to know who is Principal of Chung-Ang Chung Hakkyo. I want to know where my international contacts on Cheju are working *today*. In the Korean system, there is a regular rotation of professionals from one institutional position to another. Because of this, just *finding* people is a significant challenge. If Cheju is to be a place recognized for new ideas, for its University, for its innovations in any field, the contacts made by those outside of Cheju need to be cultivated.

Someone said recently, if you don't have email, you probably are not important enough to contact. The world is moving at a blinding pace. We all need to keep up with it, and the way we do this is, in part, through the Internet.

More government offices need to be connected. And the visitor industry needs to ensure that visitors can access their email accounts while in Cheju. Unfortunately, you can't be well connected if you are not well-wired. Hawaii's public schools often have many computers, but cannot use them all because of the ancient electrical wiring systems. Thus, to be a citizen of cyberspace, you need to make sure that the electrical infrastructure is in place. And if you are going to be the host for more senior citizens, you need to invest in the high resolution so-called T-1 lines or greater to allow for real-time video conferences and the use of Tele-medicine. Why shouldn't the best health professionals feel they can spend time in Cheju, and still be consulted for patient needs far away? The world is going to create a new gap between those who have access to the Internet, and those who don't. Now is the time to invest, or be left behind.

Island cultures, by virtue of their relative isolation, can retain their special character, and still participate in the global economy. However, to attempt to do this without investing in the Internet is only a fantasy.

I am very optimistic about Cheju's future. Nearly every year I learn of more and more professional conferences held here to explore this future. I have great faith in the leaders you have among you, from the University to the elected officials, to those native Chejudoans who now live in Seoul, but still return, again and aging, committed to protecting what is special about Cheju, and making this Island a place where their grandchildren can reside as full participants in the global social, cultural, and economic life of the world.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts. As we say in Hawaii, Mahalo or Kam sa Ham ni da. And Alooooooha Ahn-nyung Ha sa yo.