

REPORT ON THE THIRD SOCIAL DEMONSTRATION CONSULT, 1975

Jeju Do

Jeju Do is an island of 400,000 people living southwest of the peninsula of Korea. All of it is mountainous, a chain of volcanic mountains. Mount Halla is the most prominent one, right in the middle of the island, and there are only about thirty-two days a year when it is not shrouded in mist. The longest tunnel in the world is on this island.

Jeju Do is famous for its rocks. They make stone fences out of the rocks. Everywhere you go they make stone fences. It reminds you of New England. They get the rock out of the way and use them to protect the crops and themselves from the wind. Jeju Do is also famous for its wind.

Everywhere you go on Jeju Do you see women working in the fields or walking back and forth from the fields to the village, carrying huge bundles on their back, bundles of brushwood or bundles of straw which they are taking back to the town homes to cook with or bundles of crops or a baby or huge ceramic jars of water, which, when they are filled I found that I could not lift myself, let alone carry on my back. The women do in Jeju Do. They are famous as diving women, and they make up a relatively large portion of their family sustenance by what they pick up off the bottom of the ocean floor. They dive with nothing but a face mask and a floating basket or bouy with a net under it. Some of them can dive sixteen to eighteen feet with no more equipment than that and can stay under for two or three minutes. There are about 40,000 women in Jeju Do who dive regularly. Jeju Do is famous for its rock, wind and women.

One side of Jeju Do is warmed by winds so consistently that they grow pineapples there, and oranges are the primary cash crop up on the mountaintop. But the bulk of the people live either in the two cities, JeJu, which has a population of about 130,000 or Seo Gwi Po which has a population of about 70,000. The remaining 200,000 people are scattered among 200 villages, almost all of them resting right on the coastline so that the people can, as they have for hundreds of years, combine agriculture and fishing for their sustenance. It is still relatively intact as a functioning society that has had little change since about the 14th century.

Life is hard and requires a tremendous amount of energy. The average family's house is built out of lava rock and mud with a thatched roof. Straw woven into rope makes a net to hold the thatch down in the winds, which are very fierce. They live in a family compound, maybe twenty feet by twenty. On one side are the sleeping

quarters. On the outside, three sides may be rock and the fourth a kind of recessed plywood paneling covered with rice paper. There are two layers of paneling, a inner and an outer. To have that clean and neat is almost what it means to be human. You take your shoes off before you go in and put on a pair of sandals. Heat in the winter comes from burning straw in the fire box underneath the bed. Every night you unroll and lay out quilts. That is where you sleep. Perhaps after work you sit there with your friends and drink rice wine. Probably your husband's grandfather built the house.

Also facing on the square is the kitchen, looking very much like the sleeping quarters, a building 15 feet by 10 feet, made of rocks with a thatched roof. The fire goes on the floor and a kind of pillar holds up the pot and the smoke just curls up around the house. There is no chimney. The wife prepares the meal which is mostly millet, barley, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, lots of Chinese cabbage, vegetables out of the garden, and fish. There is a fair amount of rice, but it is not a staple. A man would be embarrassed to be found in the kitchen. It would never happen, just as a man would be embarrassed if he carried water from the water source. I think a man would die of thirst before he would appear in the public water source. That is woman's work.

There is a building for storage and implements. To the side of the living quarters is the pig sty. Maybe there is a garden and a pumpkin and vines. Around the whole place is a fence of lava stone over eight feet high to keep the wind out, and flowering vines goes up it.

From the time the woman gets up in the morning until the time she goes to bed at night she is doing physical labor. Plot are small, too small even to use an ox or a horse. The woman plants and transplants crops, weeds them, picks them when they are through and works the land intensively enough that she can get two or three crops in each year. You get the sense that the economy comes close to 100% efficiency. Crops are planted right up to the edge of the fence, grain is picked a couple of days before it is really ripe and painstakingly stacked along the fence so it will dry enough that it can be threshed, and that gives a couple of extra days to get the next crop in. The buildings are located in a kind of a cluster of huts. Fields will be scattered as much as two miles away and people walk to them and carry on their backs or in a pony cart all the produce of the fields.

The heavy work a man does will not be the kind of steady work that a woman does. The man builds the fields, which means digging these huge rocks out of the field, digging the little dirt off of the side. He keeps digging rocks until he has a hole in the ground and enough dirt left over to plant something in it. Then he stacks the rocks alongside and that's a field. The man builds the houses and the

fences, unless he is lucky and his grandfather has already done them. The men go out fishing at night, as soon as it gets dark, in boats that are really just rowboats and fish with nets all night long on a cal, night, so that there is a total integration of agriculture and fishing.

The people get by; Diet is marginally adequate. People here are about the same size as Westerners. You get the sense that if there were another thousand people on the island the fish would not go around and people would start to have protein deficiency. It is that close. If a new industry came in and polluted the water and people could not use some of the fishing grounds, they would have protein deficiency. the diet is cut that close. Nobody gets anything extra.

There is a tremendous school system and has been for many generations. There is virtually no one on the entire island who is unable to read or write, and in contrast to the small cottages every village has a school that is two-story, reinforced concrete with a huge patio out front. From the time they are six years old the children wear school uniforms. School is mandatory from grades one to six, but it is not publicly supported, so out of the family income of about ₩400,000 a year they must come up with about ₩70,000 per child for tuition. It is a significant investment. There are about 70 to 100 kids per class in the schools. There is a great emphasis on rote and conformity in the classroom and a great deal of time spent even with the very young in gymnastic exercises and marching in drill formation and big field days when the whole village comes and watches. If the family can afford it and has done reasonably well, the children go to middle school. A boy goes to high school from 9th grade to 12th grade and then graduates into the army. There are five years of mandatory military service for every Korean male, and they go to Seoul and see the big city, so in one sense the education continues.

I can't quite imagine what happens with the move from the village, where the richest man in town has a tin roof on his house rather than a thatched roof, into Seoul which looks like downtown Chicago except that there are mountains in the background. I know something happens because one of the doctors told me that over the last five years suicide has become a significant phenomenon on the island, and last year there were nearly 200 cases of attempted suicide by Korean males. Last year five people were killed on the island, murdered. No one could remember when anyone had ever been murdered before on Jeju Do.

It is a lovely culture in spite of the fact that it is a culture which leaves you no option except to work from dawn to dusk. It is a culture in which people experience themselves as fully engaged. A woman working in the fields who is sixty years old and has been working in the fields since she was fourteen was able to communicate to me her understanding that life is accepted. She was engaged, in the most radical sense of engagement in which these people live their lives.

The shopkeepers sleep under the counters in their shops. The shop opens about 8:00 in the morning and stays open until midnight, and they are there through that whole time. A work week is six and a half days. It is radical engagement with no chance to go anywhere else, and yet people are friendly, open, and ready to talk. You walk into their compound, and they don't ask you "What are you doing in my compound?" They just begin to talk to you. I found myself able to understand for the first time that the middle ages in Europe which was similar to this, was not a time of death and despair but a time of real liveliness.

There is electricity in every village and in a typical village of 800 people there are now twenty television sets. If you talk to people, the young men are farming and have no money to do anything else, no sense of any other option except to go to Seoul, but Korea is a vertical society and in Seoul you enter society at the bottom. It's better to farm on Jeju Do.

This is a society no ripped apart as it was in the Marshalls, but a society facing the fact that it is about to undergo profound change. It is a very exciting place to do a Consult. There is a chance to raise people's consciousness as to what is in fact happening, and enable them to see themselves as having the option of dealing with their own destiny now instead of waiting until they are down and out, without roots or heritage, without waiting until all the ancient stories and traditions are gone.

The Consult itself was held in the new Korea Airlines Hotel in Jeju City. Korea has decided to encourage tourism on Jeju Do and the first sign of that is this western-style hotel. We had all the amenities of Western life--running water, the most fantastic bathtubs you've ever seen, brand new mattresses--it was really more or less like being at home.

Sixty people were at the Consult, roughly divided by thirds, about twenty of whom spoke only English, about twenty spoke only Korean and about 20 spoke both languages. It was a new dynamic in terms of Consults because you continually translated, but that turned out to be no problem. You might have thought it would be a major block but it was much easier to take notes and catch up while the translation was going on and all your charts turned out to be visual art forms. You can't quit imagine anything like seeing the Roman letters and then the Korean letters done in different color magic markers on forty charts all around the room. We compromised on the workshops however. They were in groups of three or four and were either a Korean workshop or an English workshop and were translated when the workshop was finished so the other groups would know what had been done.

We spent as much time as we could in the field. There is one road in Jeju Do that goes all the way around the island. It was a two hour ride to the community we had chosen as the target city, and we

were riding in government jeeps. After those two hours, it was a fine kind of thing to be able to get out and walk again.

I was impressed with the fact that the Koreans were willing to work with us in a kind of give-and-take system, and they were impressed with that too. That was one of the things they commented on most, that they had never been in a situation in which you could talk over ideas in quite this fashion.

About thirty of the people were from Jeju Do itself and were professional people. For instance, the man who is in charge of the road system was there and the man who is in charge of city planning, and we had authorization from the governor of the province. The Guardian dynamic was wholly expressive every minute. Mr. Choi, a rather young man who happens to be the director of the fifth largest company in Korea was the breathing spirit through the entire Consult. When things got blocked, he got them unblocked. He did all the translation himself. We started at seven in the morning and often went until eleven--and he translated that whole time. He had brought with him his executive secretary and decided that she should go through the Consult since she was going to be handling all his correspondence and should know what the ICA was all about. A man who was a professor of English at the University got up toward the end of the session and said, "All my life I have understood that Jeju contains a forgotten memory, and I am a Jeju man, and my life is one of those memories that has been forgotten. I had begun to forget my life and was living as if I was forgotten. During this consult I have remembered who I am. When I went into the villages it was painful but I remembered who I am, and I will never allow myself to forget again." You saw people nodding their heads to that. That was an event for me.

There is no question the Consult went well. It was a Consult that was held on a relatively administrative level; we did not have enough information to choose a particular target village in Jeju Do, so the Consult was an umbrella Consult. But it provided the authorization and the cooperation. The everyman participation will come, but the authorization had to come first. In Korea President Park has already sponsored what he calls the Semaui--the New Village Movement--and for three years has been doing economic development in the villages, has been trying to create a new story and spirit in the villages. He speaks of a new new spirit in the villages in his literature, and this effort has got the full backing of the Korean government. Knowing that, it seems particularly significant that they have called in a group that says it knows how to create spirit. Three years experience with the Semaui movement has convinced them that they are only going to be frustrated with the economic effort, taken by itself. It has become clear that simply putting new roofs up is not what is called for. The demand is to focus clearly on what it means to create spirit in human beings, and the Consult demonstrates our capacity to do that, without a doubt.

Something happened to me more than once that I want to share with you to convey the kind of human event that the Consult is. I would get on the phone and be calling room service, and they would not understand what I was asking for. My response was to say it more slowly and tell it in other words and a little more loudly. My existential experience was to start thinking that "this guy is stupid," but it would suddenly occur to me that he was the one who was bilingual, or at least making some attempt at being bilingual. That does something to you, particularly when it is the third time in the day that that has happened. I began to understand what it means to be called an American, to assume that the whole world understand English, and that nothing is more important than figure out that I wanted a chicken sandwich.

On the first night of the Consult, I got upset, trying to figure out what I was doing there. Not out of a sense that I should not be there, but trying to figure out what exactly I was doing here. In Majuro the old society had already been torn to shreds, and anything you could do to create a more liveable style was helpful. In Jeju Do there is a society that is functioning. You can see that it is on its way out but it seems to be particularly important that you not do something stupid that rips apart the old society, the old form, the old ways of living before there is created somehow the new forms that people can move into. There is a possibility of doing great harm there, and particularly this sense was formed because I had become romantic, very much enamoured and was ready to move into the beauty of that island tomorrow. I was having trouble because I did not have a clear vision of what I was suggesting that these people move into. I knew that their society was going to fall apart but I could not for the life of me decide what it would mean to put together a society that held the beauty of what was already there but also gave people some kind of options, some chance to be 20th century men and not 18th century men. I finally decided that the reason I couldn't come up with a vision of what that finally was, was because it was not my business to come up with the vision of what that was. My business was to give people useful methods which allowed them to come up with their vision of what their society was going to be about. You know that any time you go into a workshop having decided ahead of time what the result is going to be, it is a Mickey Mouse workshop. It was very helpful for me to get clear that it was not incumbent on me to decide the wave of the future for Jeju Do. The form of the future was going to be decided when corporate methods got acted out. I experienced that all over again as being out over nothing. I had no idea what was going to happen on the other side of these methods. All my rational ways of functioning suddenly weren't worth two pennies. That was good for me.

Well, the Consult happened in Jeju Do and the Consult happened to me. The way you let a Consult happen to you is that you decide to show up at one.

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REPORT ON THE SOCIAL DEMONSTRATIONS: 1975
Oombulgurri

Oombulgurri is in the northwest section of Australia. After you have gone as far as you think you can possibly go, you are still 40 miles short of Oombulgurri; you have forty miles of river yet to travel. Furthermore, there is a seventeen foot tide in that river, which comes in from the Timor Sea each day. Because of the tide you can walk across the river half the day, and the other half you can not swim across. The only time you can go up the river is when the tide is in. I worried a little bit about the women in the village who have to go down the river 40 miles to Wyndham to have their babies.

The team from Chicago was leaving for Oombulgurri on a 5:00 plane Wednesday evening. I got a call about 9:30 Tuesday night from George Holcombe. We discussed gardening for a while, and we discussed the new tobacco that George is smoking. Then he said "Incidentally! As long as I have you on the phone..." I said "Sure but I do have a couple of details to take care of." I did have a passport, and you and I have learned to pack in 20 minutes. I asked to talk to someone from Australia to ask if there was anything practical I needed to know, and the answer was to be sure to take snake boots with me. I was told that this is the king brown snake season there, and they get 17 feet long. For the record, we did not see one that was over 15 feet! We slept in four tents in the Aboriginal village in the bush with the snakes, wild dogs, wild donkeys and crocodiles.

We arrived at the Sydney House and our Australian colleagues had a fine reception for us. At the reception, someone said "We are glad to have the people from overseas." I was shocked! It always seemed to me that everybody else was from overseas. I had never before sensed myself as the foreigner.

The next morning we left for Darwin where we were going to gather with the rest of the Guardians. In Darwin we got word that there was one small contradiction. We still had 700 miles to go to Wyndham, Trans-Australian Airlines was on strike, and we were due there the next day. Somebody suggested that we charter a plane which we did. We went out to the airport and they checked us in on the charter plane. There was one more small contradiction. They wanted \$1500 to fly the group to Wyndham (that was \$2000US, \$1500 Australian). To show you how this Guardian dynamic works, one Guardian called his mother and told her our problem. He was going to give her ten reasons why she might help out, and she said "Will you quit talking for a minute. I believe in what you are doing. I will loan you the money and you can worry about paying me back later."

We arrived at Oombulgurri with a hydrologist, three doctors, an architect, a soil scientist, farmers, a veterinarian, and a soybean expert from Malaysia. The group had made some kind of decision when it arrived at the Consult. We showed up deciding to work. There was not one time when the team took its eyes off the mission.

One guardian was already in Oombulgurri before we arrived, an electrician from Darwin who had gone up last Christmas. He had heard about the work going on up there and had found there was absolutely no electricity in the village. The government had furnished a large generator but it was in Wyndham on the dock, and it needed to be connected up before the village could have electric power. Being an electrician, this Guardian had been up there for five weeks before we got there in order to get the place wired for electricity, and had almost completed the job by the time we arrived. He had it completed by the time we got through with the Consult.

Before I got back to the States another Guardian had already gone back to his construction company, and taken a leave of absence to go back to Oombulgurri, where he is going to stay for 18 months to get the home construction going. A doctor got there and was appalled at the lack of equipment and facilities for medical attention. He said some of his colleagues are interested in this sort of work, so he plans to see that the Aborigines have doctor's care twelve months a year. He is going back up there as soon as he can and give everyone in the village a physical examination, to start with. Up to now, they have had medical service only once a month by the flying doctor who can only fly in during the dry season. They have had absolutely no doctor services during the wet months between October and March. The Guardians talked about a support system. It is going on.

We were briefed quickly about the snakes--besides the king browns they have little tiger snakes, which are not very big, but they call them "proper deadly." The others are just deadly. And are they fast! During one of the plenaries one came out of our tent, my tent! They go fast like a sidewinder. The kids chase them, but they do not get near the tiger snake because that is the one that is proper deadly. A young stock hand picked up a rock and with one throw broke its back. When we went to our tents that night, our blankets were lying there, and our clothes. There were five of us, and we took long sticks and carefully lifted up everything. Much relieved, I found I had closed my suitcase that morning so one of those rascals wasn't in there! Every morning we would pick up our shoes very carefully and check them for snakes and centipedes before we put them on.

Then there were the flies. One of our colleagues had a bit of a problem the first morning when several flies flew into his oatmeal. We had oatmeal every morning, so I thought I would try to help that situation. I talked to the cook, and I asked if there was any chance that we could have a lot of raisins in the cereal. The next morning at breakfast there were a lot of raisins in it, and everybody smiled and ate their oatmeal. I walked over to compliment the cook and she said "I couldn't find the raisins this morning." But she said she was only kidding.

And there were the dogs. These are dingos, and all they do is fight and occasionally sleep. When they fight, they just start going and they are about three deep, yelping, snarling and biting. You get out of their way. I did not realize how protective they are of their space. We would break up into our groups and go any place there was shade to meet. I tried to move the whole pack out of our meeting space, and one dingo taught me who was boss. How

humiliating! I had to go around with a bandage on my arm from the dog bite. I had not had my tetanus shot, either, so the doctor took me over to the tent, opened up his bag and gave me a tetanus shot right then and there, and marked it in my book.

The Consult had sixteen Guardians, fourteen ICA staff and thirty Aborigines from the village. The Aboriginal people are a very proud people, they are a very sensitive people, and they are a great people. They were there from the beginning of the Consult, and stuck through every session to the very end. It was almost as if they had been waiting all their lives for this to happen. I never dreamed that anything like this Consult could happen. It was beyond my fondest expectations. We had taught a LENS course on a trek with a lot of Ph.D.'s from the University of Guam, and during the course we used the Aborigines as an example of how the methods can be applied in a village situation. A woman who was an expert on this said that it was impossible. I thought about her many times while I was there. I do not know how to convey that these methods work. I have seen them work, I have been a part of them, I believe in them.

I suspect that those Guardians left Oombulgurri having decided to be a support system. They are already wanting to get together with Guardians from all over the world. They even picked Hong Kong, and said maybe we could get together sometime and discuss what is going on around the globe. Maybe someday that will happen, and some of us in this room will sit in on that, when the time calls for it, or whenever it is demanded. I began to get a little sense of what it means to be authentically engaged, effectively engaged, while watching those Guardians and watching myself. In LENS we talk about authentic integrity that is over against primary integrity which is necessary and valuable of course, but primary integrity is operating with the values that society places on you and authentic integrity is operating with the values that being human places on you and me. I just begin to get some sense of what that means. It is kind of like the poetry in the Ronin--you remember when the two of them had finally broken through the end of the cave they had been digging for years and years and years. They stuck their heads out--their whole world was going to change and they were going to have it made. They peered down and the way the poetry goes is "what they saw was the face of a cliff deeper, steeper, wider than its mild brother on the other end." It is like that--you and I are never going to be around to see all the innocent suffering in this world eliminated, but I tell you these consults and social demonstrations are beginning to change that. I do not know when it is going to change, whether a hundred years or five hundred years, or what is coming into being with this new society, but I am convinced that the social demonstrations are going to be playing a vital part in those changes.

I made two decisions during the Consult; one, that I would have a clean shirt and a clean pair of pants every day, and the other that I was going to be up ahead of every other Guardian. The last morning I was up early, and out walked one of the educators from Sydney. And she said, "Rodney, before we break up tomorrow I want to tell you something. You are not the same man who came in here Sunday night." I wondered what she meant by that...I had a clean shirt on I had even managed to get shaved. Then she said, "The reason I know that is that I can tell it in your eyes, that there is a seriousness about you that I did not

detect last Sunday." She was speaking about all the guys, I suppose. And the Aborigines. Everyone changed after that Consult. We changed because of the decision of being a sign of possibility. The social demonstration sites were chosen where there seemingly is no hope, out of the main stream of society, where nothing could possibly go on in the eyes of society. The demonstration is a sign of hope, a sign of possibility for the world, not only for that village, but for the world. The only reason I am standing where I am tonight is because you are sitting where you are, and the only reason those men and women are engaged in the demonstrations is because of what you and I are doing. I would go anywhere in the world in any situation with those sixteen Guardians in Australia, and I will go anyplace in the world with any sixteen of you, or any 160, not because of who we are but because we are participating in a dynamic that I do not even know how to talk about yet.

The poetry that keeps coming back to me after being with the Guardians of Oombulgurri goes something like this:

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength
They shall mount up on wings as eagles
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint--
And Lord help us all...

--Rodney Wilson