

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
The Rising Dragon of the New Hong Kong
By HO GOKU

In February, I flew from the Philippines, the Pearl of the East, to Hong Kong, China's Harbor of the Dawn.

Eight months had passed since last July 1, the day Hong Kong reverted to China. And the expressions on the faces of our Hong Kong members remained unchanged: cheerful, strong, filled with hope and confidence.

That was the best gift they could have given me. It delighted me more than anything else possibly could have.



When negotiations between the United Kingdom and China for the territory's return began in 1982, the people of Hong Kong were deeply disturbed. They felt a complex mix of joy — at returning to their native China — and uncertainty — what would become of their social and economic systems?

I met and spoke with China's leaders many times, and I was absolutely certain that they would respect the rights of the people of Hong Kong. When I visited the territory in December 1983, I said as much to our beloved members there: "There is nothing to worry about. Live out your noble lives without fear — illuminated and protected by the Mystic Law — here in Hong Kong, a place of freedom, peace, culture and international importance."

I also told them that, after the reversion in 1997, the SGI was determined to continue its activities to promote friendship with the people of Hong Kong even more vigorously than in the past.



The return of Hong Kong to China was finally settled upon in 1984. China adopted the so-called one country, two systems policy and made Hong Kong a special administrative district, thus guaranteeing that the territory would retain its social and economic systems unchanged for the next 50 years. Still, the anxieties of the people of Hong Kong were not completely stilled as they faced this historic turning point.

But the teaching of the oneness of life and its environment means that the construction of a happy society depends upon the attitude and resolve of the people who comprise it. And, as Nichiren Daishonin says, "All of the mountains, valleys, and fields where Nichiren and his disciples live and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 781).

During my 1988 visit, I assured our Hong Kong members: "Even if there should be a time of dramatic upheaval, that doesn't mean we can't open the way to a hope-filled future. Without a doubt, you will build a realm of peace and safety and live lives that sparkle with supreme happiness."



Our Hong Kong members, pioneers in the struggle to attain happiness and peace in Asia, rose bravely to the challenge. Their chorus, gymnastic group, Fife and Drum Corps and

dance group participated in the public ceremonies marking Hong Kong's reversion. Their songs and performances, filled with the joy and vitality of life, were like the dawn of hope for a new Hong Kong.

And now our Hong Kong members, each deeply aware of his or her mission, have begun to make energetic efforts to contribute to their society as it embarks on this fresh era. The growth of the Hong Kong youth division, which will carry on the mission of kosen-rufu, has also been astonishing. They are a wonderful symbol of the rising dragon of the new Hong Kong.



In the last 20 years there has been virtually no leader from the district level up who has abandoned faith in the SGI of Hong Kong. I send my heartiest applause and congratulations to this exemplary record of unwavering devotion to faith!

What is the secret to this brilliant circle of never-regressing members? One of the keys is that the members of the founding generation have offered a fine example of strong faith. Women's Division General Leader Chow Yu Pui Jane, Vice General Director Chan Chai Tung, Women's Division Vice General Leader Chan Bou Shui Tung and other pioneering members have never hesitated no matter what obstacle they confronted. They have always been strong and resolute in their faith. Their actions have become a beacon of courage lighting the way for their successors.

I was happy to see on my recent visit that these noble early members are all still alive and well. Kimiko Hirai, the first Hong Kong women's division leader, has overcome a serious illness, thereby offering us all an example of prolonging one's life through faith.



Another secret to the strength of the HK-SGI is the warm friendship that exists among its members. As General Director Lee Kong Sau has said: "We are all disciples of the Buddha, fellow members and friends. We have promised one another that leaders will never behave arrogantly or scold members. That is the tradition of the HK-SGI."

The genuine humanity that such a shared commitment has cultivated has been crucial in creating the warm, tightly knit Buddhist organization of the HK-SGI, an organization in which all members respect one other.

May Japan and the world learn from Hong Kong! A well-known Japanese writer once said, "How beautiful are the ties of friendship." Getting on well together, based on a spirit of genuine friendship and respect for others, is proof of our humanistic philosophy. It also depicts in miniature the wonderful harmony among all human beings that is created through kosen-rufu.

Praise to Hong Kong! Praise to its glorious future!

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