

A Visit to Hong Kong
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Most people know by now that at midnight on July 1, Hong Kong reverted to China after having been a British colony since 1842. I had the opportunity to spend three weeks in Hong Kong — my hometown, the place where I grew up — to witness the transition.

I am glad to report that it was very successful and the climate was that of a joyous celebration. In fact, the SGI-HK Fife and Drum Corps, Brass Band and Gymnastics Band were invited to perform in the official ceremonies, underscoring the trust that SGI President Ikeda has nurtured with the Chinese government.

Most of the discussions in Hong Kong revolved around the topics of economics and political shifts. Little light was shed on what, to me, was a significant milestone in history — for the very first time, a territory and its people were transferred from one sovereign to another without a shot being fired. However difficult and long-winded they were, dialogues and negotiations were used as the only methods to gain consensus. It was not easy for Britain to cede one of the world's most vibrant economies to China, and neither was it easy for China to be patient about waiting until 1997 for it to happen.

Today, Hong Kong stands as the economic showcase of Southeast Asia while continuing its remarkable growth. But looking back in history, it has not been spared of mounting obstacles and challenges that could have easily swamped a colony that measured no larger than 1,010 square kilometers. Too many people have discounted its fate: As early as 1844, Hong Kong was declared by the British officials to be “a barren rock, producing nothing.” It was proclaimed dead in 1939 during the Japanese Occupation. And as recently as 1995, *Fortune* magazine attempted to seal its fate with a cover story titled “The Death of Hong Kong.”

Not only did Hong Kong survive, it thrived — it is home to the world's busiest container port as well as the fifth largest foreign exchange market. Its marvelous strength comes solely from its people, who can be best characterized as resilient and hard working.

I have learned in the SGI that it is our precious members who make our community centers magnificent. I have also learned that it is the people who determine the fate of a country. Hong Kong has indeed depicted this concept. In 1988, President Ikeda said that Hong Kong is Asia's gateway (in his poem “Let the Morning Sun of Happiness Shine Over the Harbor of Peace”). In Hong Kong he saw “the dawn of lasting peace for Asia — and the world.” I am confident that the people of Hong Kong will live up to President Ikeda's golden words.

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