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How Chow Chi Kong, one of the pioneer leaders of Hong Kong, was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by a Japanese business acquaintance and encouraged his entire family to start practicing.

Government officials visited Chow Chi Kong's home repeatedly, asking whether there were any Japanese there. Whenever this happened, his mother-in-law would come to the door and declare firmly, "There are no demonic Japanese in this house!" His neighbors had great trust and respect for Chow, and they protected him. No one informed the authorities on him.

But after the Japanese left Guangzhou, there was no more business for him. In addition, civil war broke out in China. There was nothing to do but to move on, so Chow, his wife and his mother-in-law went to Hong Kong, where he started an import-export business between Hong Kong and Okinawa. He hoped that through his work he could serve as a bridge of peace linking the two regions. Determined to continue passing as a Chinese even after coming to Hong Kong, he never spoke Japanese at home or told his children that he was Japanese.

Introduced by a Japanese business acquaintance, Chow received the Gohonzon and began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in October 1961. Even though the acquaintance didn't provide him with a thorough explanation of the practice—beyond saying how wonderful it was—Chow took his words to heart and joined the Soka Gakkai. He received letters from his friend with instructions on how to do gongyo, which he followed exactly to keep faith with his friend. Mrs. Chow started practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism along with her husband, but only because she trusted his judgment.

Ikuyo Oka, Kimie Hirata and Koji Sagawa, who was married to a Chinese woman, began to visit the couple's house regularly to encourage them in their Buddhist practice. As he exerted himself earnestly in Soka Gakkai activities, the chronic gastric ulcer that had bothered Chow for years disappeared. This was his first benefit of taking faith. Observing her husband's experience, Mrs. Chow began to have confidence in the Daishonin's Buddhism, too. The entire family started to practice in earnest. In fact, the young boy wearing the Traffic Control Group armband who had been assisting the event staff was Chow's son.

Chow ordered Soka Gakkai publications from Japan and began to study Buddhist doctrine. He also poured his energies into propagation. It was Chow who introduced Chan Chai Man, the newly appointed Kowloon District leader, to the Daishonin's teachings.

Addressing Chow in Japanese, Shin'ichi Yamamoto said: "I'm glad that I could meet your wife today. I am happy to see that you are married to such a wonderful person. Her mother is also an outstanding individual, isn't she? Please take good care of her.

"After hearing your story, I now have a clear picture of your character. For the happiness of the people of Hong Kong, I hope you'll join me to work wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu for the rest of your life."

"I will!" Chow replied enthusiastically, as Shin'ichi reached out and shook his hand.

Shin'ichi took out a new copy of the Gosho and, writing Chow's name in it, said, "I give

this to you as a memento of our visit today.”

Beaming with joy, Chow accepted the gift. “I will exert myself in study,” he promised.

“Next time,” said Shin’ichi, “let’s meet in Japan. That’s when we’ll appoint you chapter leader.” Chow’s eyes shone with determination.

Shin’ichi felt that the Hong Kong organization was set for the foreseeable future. When he left the hall, it was already past 10:00 p.m. The next day, Jan. 27, he would finally return to Japan. Since leaving on Jan. 8, he had exerted himself completely. His efforts left him feeling pleasantly tired and satisfied.

Early the next morning, Yoshihiko Ohya called the airport to confirm the group’s flight to Japan. It was originating in London, and an airline representative informed Ohya that it would be delayed more than 20 hours due to engine trouble. Ohya immediately notified Kiyoshi Jujo.

“Is that so? That puts us in a bind!” Jujo said. “I’m going to the airport to see if there’s anything we can do.”

Jujo contacted Chow, who met him at the hotel, and they went to the airport together. Because of President Yamamoto’s commitments in Japan, it was crucial that he get back to Tokyo that day. Jujo changed their flight to Japan Airlines Flight 702, on which there happened to be some empty seats. They would arrive in Tokyo at 8:40 p.m. Jujo did not notice, however, that the flight made a stop in Taipei, Taiwan.

Jujo returned to the hotel and informed Shin’ichi of the flight change. “These planes are always having trouble,” Jujo grumbled, unable to hide his irritation.

“I’m sure there’s some deep meaning in this change,” Shin’ichi said.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

The events take place in 1963.