

2. The Fragrance of Hong Kong

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One could say that Hong Kong does not fail to live up to its name. "Hong Kong" means "fragrant harbor" and it is derived from the fact that fragrant wood products and fragrant incense were once actively traded at this place. Just as incense is made by mixing such aromas as sandalwood, juniper and lemon grass, so too does Hong Kong flourish through the blending of various economic, political, and cultural aromas. This art of making a vibrant city has created the special fragrance called "Hong Kong."

When I think of Hong Kong, I always see it bursting with energy, dynamism and style. The city hums with global economic activities; it welcomes and entertains many with a wealth of opportunities, hopes and dreams. The Hong Kong skyline seems to symbolize the glories of urban ambition and prosperity. Having been under British rule until just recently, Hong Kong not only distinguishes itself by its Asian roots and rich Chinese culture, but also with its Western connections and modernity. The renowned Chek Lap Kok Airport was designed by the acclaimed British architect, Lord Norman Foster. The HSBC Main Building in Hong Kong also embodies Lord Foster's talents and passions for innovation, thus contributing to the chic and constant buzz of the city.

The city's energy and dynamism is boosted and strengthened through the ambitions and skills of those who seek and hope and act within the greatness of Hong Kong. Last year, I took part in the World Universities Debating Championship and met a girl from Hong Kong. She delivered persuasive arguments and sharp-witted rebuttals in impeccable English. She calls Hong Kong her "base" where she learns and enjoys the fruits of the city. I was proud that she and I were both representing Asia at the international stage.

An irreplaceable hub of global economics, evolving politics, and Eastern and Western culture, Hong Kong is a kind of magnet; it is "the place to be."

In March of last year, a group of four male singers called F4 held concerts at the Hong Kong coliseum. This group is made up of the actors who appeared in "Meteor Garden," the Taiwanese drama based on the Japanese comic "Hana yori Dango," and they have enthusiastic fans in Hong Kong, Japan and other East Asian countries. The Hong Kong coliseum was filled with young ladies from Taiwan, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, China, and Singapore, and they shrieked and professed their love for F4 in unison. Hong Kong acted as the stage on which these fans could meet and engage in a happy sing along. Hong Kong attracts diverse passions, not only economic but also cultural, not only western but also eastern. This is why the "Hong Kong" fragrance continues to fascinate me so greatly.

I believe recognizing that a place has a kaleidoscope of features or "aromas" is very important when we interact with people from another place. Hong Kong and Japan have deepened their ties increasingly, especially through economics. In 2006, Japan was Hong Kong's third largest trading partner and Hong Kong was Japan's sixth largest trading partner. Further, not only money and resources and companies, but ordinary citizens and culture flow in and out between the two places. I want to say to the Japanese, to not only enjoy the hum of Hong Kong economics, dim sum and street markets, but also to delve deeper to see what kind of aromas still awaits to excite them. I hope that Hong Kong will do the same to what Japan has to offer.

10 years after the reunion with China, what kind of fragrance will Hong Kong create next? The excitement builds. Let the "Hong Kong" fragrance invigorate and awe us all. Let Hong Kong walk hand in hand with Japan, as Asia brings new aromas to the international stage.