

Tung Wah Museum
Kwong Wah Hospital, 25 Waterloo Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Brief History

Tung Wah Museum (東華三院文物館) was originally the old Main Hall of Kwong Wah Hospital (廣華醫院), the first hospital founded in the Kowloon and the New Territories. Before Kwong Wah Hospital came into existence, the people living in Kowloon had to cross the harbour to be treated in Tung Wah Hospital on Hong Kong Island. In around 1907, the inconvenience was felt with concern, and a request to the Secretary for Chinese Affairs was submitted by a group of Chinese community leaders for land grant, so that a free hospital, i.e. a branch of Tung Wah Hospital could be established on the Kowloon Peninsula. The Chinese community leaders, including Dr Ho Kai (何啟), Wan Po-san (韋寶珊), Lau Chu-pak (劉鑄伯), Tang Chi-ngong (鄧志昂) etc, made crucial contributions in the establishment of Kwong Wah Hospital. Notably, Dr Ho Kai, one of the earliest Chinese members of the Executive Council, was later elected Chairman of the Founding Board of Directors of the Kwong Wah Hospital. Kwong Wah Hospital was established under the “Tung Wa Hospital Extension Ordinance, 1911”¹ (1911 年東華醫院擴充法規) on 24 August 1911. The Opening Ceremony was held on 9 October 1911 and performed by the Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, who personally donated \$100 towards the hospital fund.

2. At the early stage after its inception, Kwong Wah Hospital provided both Western and traditional Chinese medical services to the public with only 72 beds. However, despite the generous supports of the Chinese community leaders, the initial financial situation of the hospital was not healthy due to increasing demand of medical services. The Yau Ma Tei Civil Clinic (油麻地公立醫局) was later placed under the administration of Kwong Wah Hospital, which subsequently aggravated its financial situation. In 1914, it was proposed that the Tin Hau Temple on Temple Street of Kowloon be put under the management of Kwong Wah Hospital. After a deliberation on 17 November among the management committee of the Temple, Secretary of Chinese Affairs and the Directors of Kwong Wah Hospital, a decision in favour of the proposal was made and the temple was taken over by the Hospital. A portion of the temple revenue was given to the Hospital and the financial difficulties were relieved.

3. Worth mentioning is a story as recorded in Kwong Wah Hospital’s archive about the Hospital’s free distribution of herbal medicine at the Outpatient Department. In April 1922, a lady came to the Hospital and donated \$580 which she hoped could be used for providing free herbal medicine to the public. However, the Directors explained that in order to maintain such a continual service, a substantial amount was required but the Hospital could not afford it. The lady came to the Hospital three more times within a few months and donated totally \$50,580. The Directors were moved beyond words by her generosity and decided to raise another \$70,000 for the provision of free herbal medicine. Eventually, in 1923, a sum of \$60,000 from the donation was used to purchase a property at Nos 202 to 220 Reclamation Street and the rent of which was used to subsidize the expenses in providing free herbal medicine at its Outpatient Department.

¹ It is noteworthy that “Tung **Wa** Hospital”, instead of “Tung **Wah** Hospital” was used in the Ordinance in 1911. “Tung Wah Hospital” was later used in the “Tung Wah Hospital Ordinance, 1930”

4. In 1931, the three hospitals, namely Tung Wah Hospital (founded in 1870), Kwong Wah Hospital (founded in 1911) and Tung Wah Eastern Hospital (founded in 1929), were amalgamated into a single entity, and the name “Tung Wah Group of Hospitals” was adopted. The period in between the amalgamation and the end of the Second World War was an ebb-tide period of Kwong Wah Hospital while the amalgamation did not facilitate its finances. During the depression from 1934 to 1939, the Directors are facing enormous difficulties in raising funds. During the Japanese Occupation from 1941 to 1945, the Hospital tried to cut down expenses by reducing staff number and postponing all expansion plans.

5. In 1947, due to termite infestation to the timber roof structure, a major repairs to the Main Hall of Kwong Wah Hospital was conducted at a cost of \$29,750. A stone tablet recording the repair works is found on the façade. In 1958, the Kwong Wah Hospital underwent a thorough reconstruction, leaving only the Main Hall being preserved *in-situ*. In commemoration of the founding of the TWGHs, Mr Leo T. H. Lee (李東海) and his fellow Directors had the Old Main Hall renovated and converted into the Tung Wah Museum in 1971. The Museum was intended to systemically collect and conserve the historic archives and valuable relics of the TWGHs. It was formally opened by Sir Kwan Cho-yiu (關祖堯) on 15 January 1971 and was subsequently opened to the public in 1993. It is worth mentioning that a soul tablet of the God of *Shennong* (炎帝神農氏之神位) who is recognized as the discoverer of medicines is enshrined in the main hall. A ceremony for celebrating the Birthday of *Shennong* (神農寶誕) is launched in the main hall every year on the 28th day of the fourth lunar month. The Tung Wah Museum has witnessed the development of medical services in Hong Kong over the past century, testifying the efforts paid by the Chinese community in improving welfare services.

Architecture

6. Tung Wah Museum is a building of a symmetrical layout, with a main hall at the middle flanked by two side chambers. The “ceremonial character” of the building has a resemblance to those of the ancestral halls in South China. The Museum is a traditional “column-and-beam” structure. Structural columns are made of timber standing on carved granite bases. The walls are constructed with green bricks with very fine pointing. The whole Museum is sitting on a granite platform fronted by granite steps.

7. Originally a single-storey building, the two side chambers were converted into double storey to cope with the increase demand of wards in 1919. The Museum is of Chinese Renaissance style characterized by a composition of Chinese and Western style. The Chinese style is obvious by the ancestral hall setting and Chinese decorations as viewed at the front elevation. Exquisite wood carvings are found on the floral and auspicious motifs of the eaves board, as well as the truss system and camel’s humps along the verandah. Door panels having gilded floral carvings are seen in the main entrance. Checkered and floral patterns of the red window frames are eye catching features of the façade. The pitched roof is laid with green glazed tiles whilst the ridge, which was reconstructed in 1991 imitating the original one in 1910, is decorated with a peal in the middle and two dragon fishes standing on geometric patterns at ridge ends. The name of the factory in *Shiwan* for producing the glazed ridge and the reconstruction year are also inscribed on the ridge.

8. Western influences are found in many parts of the buildings. Bull's eye windows and segmental arched windows with keystones were used. Inside the main hall, the four arch doorways leading to the exhibition rooms are designed with western-style fan-lights. While the roof of the main hall is supported by traditional Chinese purlins and truss system, Queen post trusses are also found at the side rooms.



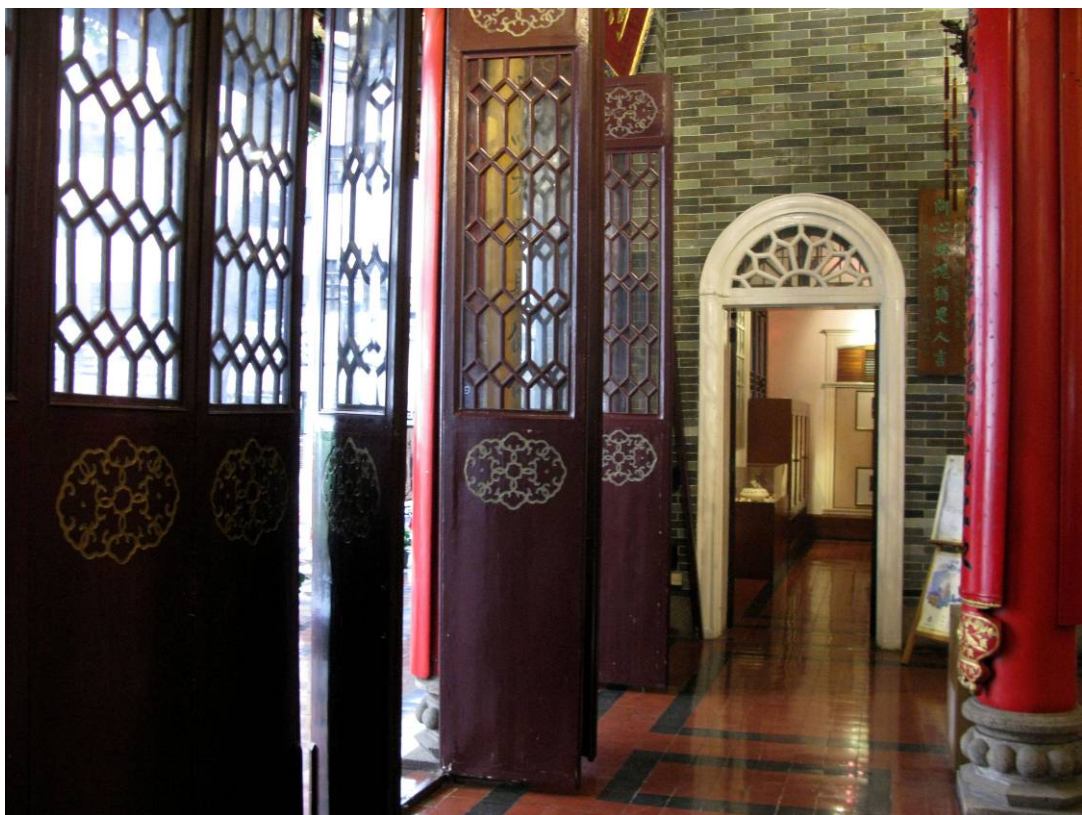
Front elevation of Tung Wah Museum



Historic plaques and couplets are displayed in the Museum



The Chinese truss system inside the main hall



Chinese wooden doors and Western arch doorway



Western-style window openings and wall decorations of the rear elevation