



**How Convenient Were the “Hospitals of Convenience”? –  
The Connection of the Tung Wah Coffin Home in Hong Kong and Charitable  
Hospitals in South China in the Service of Coffin/Bone Repatriation,  
from the Late 19th Century to 1949**

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Seldom had works on Chinese charity dug into the age-old custom of repatriation of coffins/bones to hometowns of the deceased for burial. While charity hospitals (usually called “hospitals of convenience”) had played a crucial role in the repatriation service, very few researchers endeavored to investigate into the development of the institution and the operation of the service. Taking the opportunity of compiling a collection of selected archival materials of the Tung Wah Coffin Home for the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals in Hong Kong, I have had access to the voluminous relevant archives stored at the Tung Wah Museum and discovered the close connection between the Coffin Home of the Tung Wah Hospital (now Tung Wah Group of Hospitals) and “hospitals of convenience” in south China in facilitating the transport of human remains from all over the world to China through Hong Kong’s Tung Wah Coffin Home from the late 19th century to 1949 when the embargo problems ended the long tradition. Based on this rich body of source materials, being supplemented by information gathered from field trips to the former charitable hospitals in Canton, Xinhui, Nanhai, Panyu, etc. and archival surveys in provincial, municipal, and local archives in Guangdong, this paper is to explore the mechanism of a medical charity network between south China and Hong Kong. It is hoped that this study will shed light on the issues of the charitable function of Chinese medical institution, Chinese medical culture and death culture, and the network of medical charity between mainland China and Hong Kong and for the Chinese diasporic world.