

Underwater Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong

Documenting the Underwater Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong



Hong Kong's Underwater Cultural Heritage

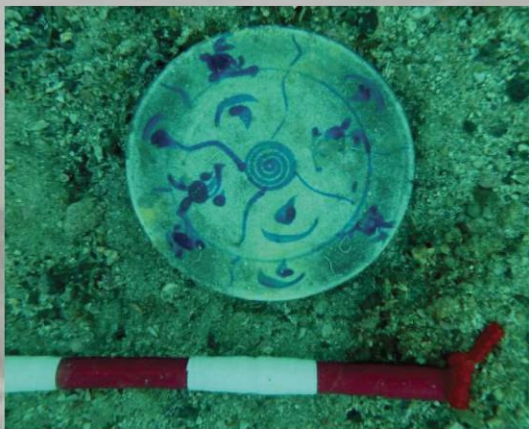
Hong Kong has a long maritime history and it contains many related cultural heritage remains on land and underwater.

Archaeological excavations have revealed that people have been living around the coastline for about 6,000 years.

Early shipping around Hong Kong involved local trade, but more came from its proximity to major trading ports such as Guangzhou and major trading routes like the **Maritime Silk Route**, which commenced in the 3rd century BC, and involved Chinese, Arabic, Persian and Indian people and their vessels.

Right up to the 19th century, many battles were fought, forts built and ships sunk during Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, French, British and pirate competition in these trades.

While there is great potential in finding some remains of these activities in Hong Kong waters, little has been discovered to date. No prehistoric remains have yet been found underwater. The oldest shipwreck uncovered so far has been from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644AD). There have also been ceramics from the Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD), and a number of Chinese and British cannons from the early 1800s, which have been recovered.



Ceramics recorded by HKUHG off one of Hong Kong's islands

Revealing this heritage

Information collected from underwater sites and interpreted can be helpful in understanding how people lived, worked, fought and played, and how they continue to interact with each other, with the water (seas, lake and rivers), and in other maritime activities. The dissemination of this information and the management of this heritage is important so future generations can learn from and appreciate their past, and gain an understanding of an aspect of their cultural identity.

In 2009, the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust supported a group of local people who formed the Hong Kong Underwater Heritage Group (HKUHG) to initiate a coordinated study of underwater cultural heritage sites in Hong Kong waters.

While official sources have been beneficial in building up a database of sites in Hong Kong (about 300 so far), information shared by local villagers, fishermen and divers has proven to be most rewarding.

It is very early days in the work of HKUHG, but a report, book, brochure and website www.hkuhgroup.com will form some of the outcomes in revealing the **Underwater Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong**.

If you know of sites or have stories related to the Hong Kong's maritime and underwater cultural heritage, the HKUHG would be very keen to hear from you at hkuhgroup@gmail.com or call us at **9074 1785**.



Kau Sai Chau — a large rock near Kau Sai Chau village that, according to local folklore, is the ligament of a scallop (pronounced 'Kau' in Cantonese) joining its two shells, the two represented by Kau Sai Chau and nearby Jin Island. It is the origin of the name Kau Sai Chau.