

Ubin's Fo Shan Ting Da Bo Gong Temple is the main temple of the island. It has been the centre of community life since at least the mid-1800s.

However, visitors may miss the main Hilltop Temple atop 佛山 Fúshān "Buddha Hill." Instead, they tend to visit only the Village Temple, which draws attention largely on account of its wayang stage.

An inscription at the Hilltop Temple dates to 1869, some years after John Turnbull Thomson used Ubin granite to build Horsburgh Lighthouse in 1850. Thomson even sketched Chinese stonecutters dressing the stone. Granite quarrying ended in 1999 on Ubin— a Malay name meaning "granite."

The 148-year-old Village Temple bears architectural traditions from both southern China and the diasporic Chinese in Southeast Asia. While the façade is reminiscent of temples in southern China, the interior layout is designed for the tropics. However, parts of the structure require repair due to termite infestation. The temple

佛

FÚ

山

SHĀN

亭

TÍNG

大

DÀ

伯

BÓ

公

GŌNG

廟

MIÀO

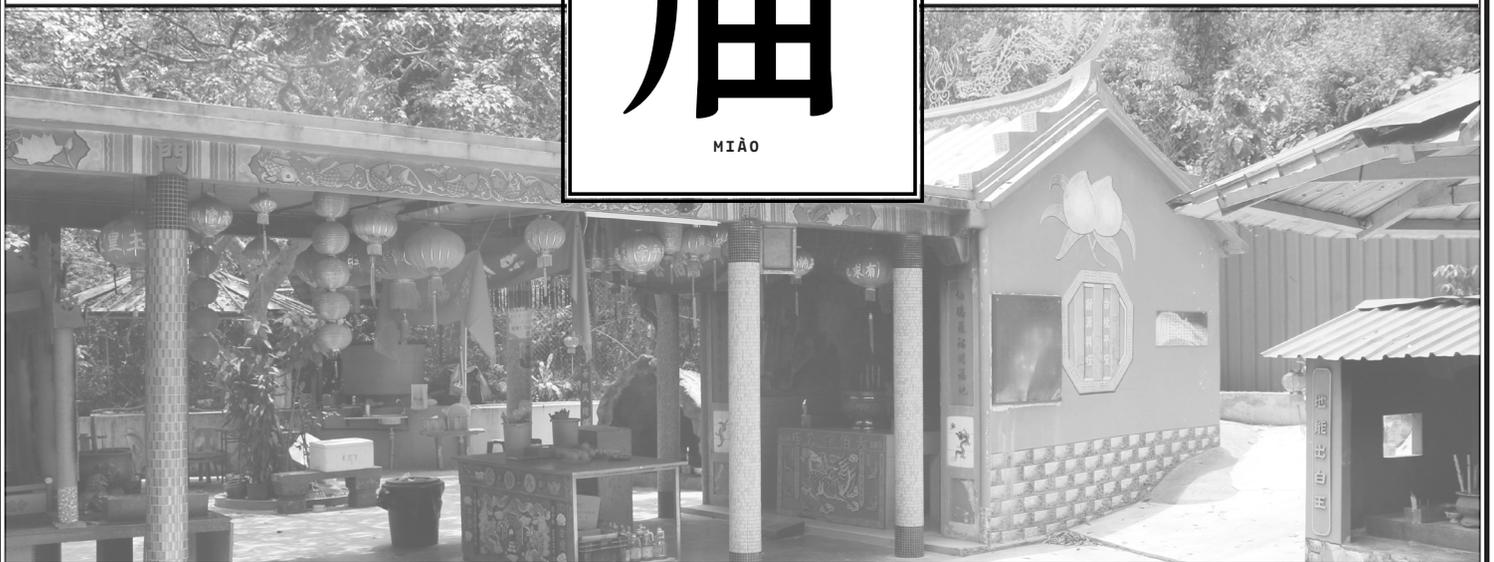
management has thus erected a building behind the Village Temple where the image of Da Bo Gong or Tua Pek Kong (in Hokkien) has been moved temporarily.

Parts of the vacated Village Temple and the wayang stage, one of only three left in Singapore, will then be repaired. These works will commence after the 2018 Tua Pek Kong Festival.

When repair is completed in 2019, an elaborate ceremony will mark Tua Pek Kong moving back to his temple. The building behind will then be used as an office and a store room. The Fo Shan Ting Da Bo Gong Temple is currently calling for donations to fund these repair works, please get in touch with the Temple Committee directly if you wish to contribute to the effort.

Since 2008, the Temple Committee has been recruiting new members from devotees who are not former Ubin residents.

The current committee thus comprises Ubin residents (present and former) as well as mainlanders from Singapore. The Tua Pek Kong Festival is the biggest annual event on Ubin, drawing huge crowds.



戏
XÌ
台
TÁI

THE WAYANG STAGE

It is typical of Southern Chinese temples to have a wayang (performance) stage facing the temple altar across an open space. Wayang is a Malay term for “performance”, referring to the stage where shows are performed to entertain the gods. At present, only three temples in Singapore still have an open plaza space and a wayang stage: Tua Pek Kong Temple on Ubin, Goh Chor Tua Pek Kong Temple on Balestier Road,

and Tan Kong Tian between Sungei Ulu Pandan and Ulu Pandan Road. Most Singapore temples no longer have the space, due to urban redevelopment. Instead, they merely erect temporary canvas and plank stages in any available open space, such as a field or an HDB carpark. Most Chinese temples in Malaysia and Indonesia still have a temple plaza and wayang stage.



大
DÀ
伯
BÓ
公
GŌNG

TUA PEK KONG

Tua Pek Kong is the popular Hokkien name for 福德正神 (Fu De Zheng Shen), the local deity in charge of prosperity. There is a Tua Pek Kong for each location. For instance, the Ubin Tua Pek Kong would be in charge of Pulau Ubin while the Loyang Tua Pek Kong, another famous Tua Pek Kong, is responsible for Loyang. In Singapore, the Tua Pek Kong 千秋 qiānqiū (birthday) is generally celebrated on the second day of the second lunar month. But the Ubin Tua Pek Kong communicated his wish to have it on Vesak Day instead. He gave the reason that since his temple was on Ubin’s Buddha Hill, he wanted to emulate the Buddha and become a Bodhisattva – hence his choice of Vesak Day, Buddha’s birthday, as his festival day.



玉
YÙ
皇
HUÁNG
上
SHÀNG
帝
DÌ
(
天
TIĀN
公
GŌNG
)

THE JADE EMPEROR

The Jade Emperor ranks highest on the pantheon of Chinese gods. All deities report to his court. All temples have urns for him at their entrance which always faces south. All devotees pay their respects by lighting joss-sticks to him. He is included in almost every ceremony.

The Jade Emperor is more popularly called 天公 Tiān Gōng (or Tin Kong in Hokkien), often worshipped daily in people’s homes, with the Tin Kong incense urn hung above the main entrance or main window of their homes. As the Jade Emperor cannot spend the night in the human realm, he is invited to the Tua Pek Kong Temple only at 11 pm (子时), which is the beginning of a new day.

虎
Hŭ
爷
YÉ

THE TIGER DEITY

The Tiger Deity, called Haw Iya in Hokkien, protects against evil influences and dark magic. At Ubin, he has his own cave in the Hilltop Temple. At the Tua Pek Kong Festival, Tiger God is offered pork fat, eggs, dried bean curd and noodles.

地
DÌ
主
ZHŪ
公
GŌNG

THE EARTH DEITY

Like Tua Pek Kong, the Earth God is in charge of a local area but has a specific focus on agricultural fertility. He is common in agricultural villages across China.

(
土
TŪ
地
DÌ
公
GŌNG
)

Another locality deity is Datuk Kong (in Hokkien), whose name indicates Malay origins. The existence of this god implies recognition by the Chinese migrants that they are living in a non-Chinese territory where the indigenous spirits of the land are not Chinese. Shrines to local Datuk Kong are found in the temples of Ubin. Datuk Kong is offered Malay food, as he is believed to be Muslim.

FIVE DAYS OF THE TUA PEK KONG FESTIVAL ON UBIN

韦
陀
法
宫
大
、
二
爷
伯

WÉI
TUÓ
Fǎ
Gōng
Dà

ÈR
YÉ
BÓ



VISIT BY TUA JI YA PEK FROM WEI TUO TEMPLE

Among the gods at the other important temple on Ubin, there are Tua Ji Ya Pek (大二爷伯 Dà Èr Yé bó), a pair of bailiffs from the Underworld. They come to the Tua Pek Kong temple to celebrate his festival, represented by their 童乩 (tangkis or spirit mediums).

恭
请
大
伯
公
圣
驾

Gōng
Qǐng
Dà
Bó
Gōng
Shèng
Jiǎ



INVITATION TO THE FESTIVAL

The Tua Pek Kong Festival begins on Vesak Day but ritual preparations start the day before. These include erecting an altar for the Jade Emperor, inviting the Loyang Tua Pek Kong, represented by ash from the main urn of the Loyang Tua Pek Kong Temple and, crucially, bringing Tua Pek Kong from the main Hilltop Temple to the Village Temple by carrying his image (金身 jinshēn “golden bodies”) on a sedan chair, which sways from side to side due to his energy. Accompanying him are Tiger God and the Landlord God (地主公 Dìzhǐ Gōng).

分
发
供
品

Fēn
Fā
Fā
Gōng
Pǐn

DISTRIBUTION OF OFFERINGS

Offerings to the gods are made by devotees to give thanks for blessings and to seek divine assistance for the future. In the past, the offerings included a sheep, which is no longer allowed by the authorities. Devotees now offer an uncooked pig in lieu of the sheep. The full set of offerings includes 五生 wǔ shēng (“five living things”) – a fish, a crab, a roast pig, a roast chicken and a braised duck – 5 types of fruit, 6 bowls of uncooked vegetarian food and 6 types of sweets. Hundreds of roast chicken and roast duck are ordered for distributing to the devotees. Packets of tea leaves and multi-coloured biscuits are also offered.

传
统
戏
剧

CHUÁN
Tǒng
Xì
Jù



TEOCHEW OPERA (OR WAYANG)

The traditional entertainment during the festival is Teochew opera, performed for four days and evening, usually by Sin Sin Yong Hua (新新荣和潮剧 Xin Xin Rong He) Teochew Opera. Different operas are performed every day.

Look out for the ritual before the daily performance when costumed opera performers descend from the stage, carrying the child god of theatre to the Tua Pek Kong temple, where they offer joss sticks to Tua Pek Kong and put the child god on the altar facing the stage for him to watch the opera. The costumed performers are in the roles of 状元 Zhuàngyuán “the best graduate at the highest imperial examination” and his wife carrying their son who is the child god of theatre. After the performance ends, the child god is carried back to the rear of the stage until the next day when the ritual is repeated.

On the last evening of its four-day performance, the opera troupe stages a ritual called Húlǔ shōu yāo 葫芦收妖, “Capturing evil spirits in a gourd”, said to capture all evil spirits roaming on the island.

歌
台
秀

Gē
Tái
Xiù



GETAI

In response to popular demand, Gětái (literally: “song stage”) is performed on the fifth and last evening of the festival. Enjoy the rousing performance by singers in glitzy costumes, the comic banter in Hokkien by the comperes, and the vocal participation of the audience. Gaining in popularity as Seventh Month entertainment since the 1970s, getai is now increasingly staged during temple festivals too.

CLOSING THE FESTIVAL

At the end of the Festival, Tua Pek Kong and the Tiger God are returned to the hilltop temple. The Loyang Tua Pek Kong, represented by ash from the main urn of the Loyang Tua Pek Kong Temple, is also sent off at sea.

秋 千 公 伯 大 祝 庆 年 八 一 〇 二

QIŪ QIĀN GŌNG BÓ DÀ ZHÙ QĪNG NIĀN BĀ YĪ LÍNG ÈR

PROGRAMME FOR THE 2018 TUA PEK GONG FESTIVAL

MON 28 MAY 2018

- 10:00 AM Inviting the Tua Pek Kong
Dragon and lion dance to invite Tua Pek Kong
- 01:00 PM Prayer ritual starts
- 03:30 PM Ritual to enhance one's luck (First session)
- 07:00 PM Ritual to enhance one's luck (Second session)
Sin Sin Yong Hua Teochew Opera performance
- 11:00 PM Inviting the Jade Emperor

TUE 29 MAY 2018, VESAK DAY

- 10:00 AM Prayer ritual starts
- 02:30 PM Distribution of offerings (while stocks last)
- 03:30 PM Sending off the Jade Emperor
- 07:00 PM Sin Sin Yong Hua Teochew Opera performance
- 07:30 PM Crossing of Peace Bridge
- 08:00 PM Visit from Wei Tuo Temple's Tua Ya Pek and Ji Ya Pek

WED 30 MAY — FRI 01 JUN 2018

- 07:00 PM Sin Sin Yong Hua Teochew Opera performance

SAT 02 JUN 2018

- 10:00 AM Teochew Opera Singing
- 07:00 PM Getai
- 10:30 PM Sending off the Tua Pek Kong

FREE EVENING BUMBOAT FERRY

Free two-way ferry services between Ubin and Changi during the evening will be sponsored throughout the celebration.



TEXT BY
Timothy Pwee

INFORMATION & EDITING BY
Vivienne Wee
Eva Wong
Gloria Seow
Taoism Singapore Stalwarts
Ronni Pinsler
Victor Yue
Margaret Chan

PHOTOGRAPHY
Vivienne Wee
Timothy Pwee

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Zachary Chan



SINGAPORE HERITAGE SOCIETY

50 East Coast Road, #02-73 Roxy Square, S428769

Tel: 63455770

<http://singaporeheritage.org>

enquiries@singaporeheritage.org

Special thanks to Doreen Lim from the Pulau Ubin Fo Shan Ting Da Bo Gong Temple.
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