



香港的地方廟宇，以天后廟的數目最多，佛堂門天后廟位於香港東面水道之旁，是南中國東面沿海船隻到香港及廣州所必經之水道。農曆三月二十三日天后誕時，這是香港最熱鬧的天后廟之一，善信乘數以百計的船隻前往該廟進香參拜。

Tin Hau, Empress of Heaven, has the largest number of temples dedicated to her in Hong Kong. The Tin Hau Temple in Joss House Bay is located at the eastern estuary of Hong Kong waters, guarding the passage to Hong Kong and Guangzhou from the eastern coast of southern China. On the 23rd day of the third lunar month, hundreds of shing and commercial vessels gathered at Joss House Bay to celebrate the Tin Hau Festival.



花炮會成員共同擁有一個花炮，在天后誕時一起到廟宇進香，然後一起晚宴。這樣，花炮中的天后像，便把花炮會成員連繫起來。十八鄉的村落各組成花炮會參與大樹下天后誕，這樣，天后誕便把鄉內的村落連結起來。

Members of each participating association collectively "own" a ower-cannon. On the Tin Hau Festival, they pay homage to the Empress of Heaven and gather for dinner. As such, the ower-cannon's Tin Hau image serves as a focal point to unite members. Shap Pat Heung (a sub-district) unites the member villages by this annual celebration. All the member villages form their own ower-cannon associations to celebrate the Tin Hau Festival and to exchange their ower-cannons.



每一個花炮會進香時，都有自己的獅子或金龍隊伍，各沿不同路線前往。1963年開始「會景巡遊」，透過巡遊安排，將花炮會集合，依次沿同一路線到廟宇進香。花炮會也各花心思，安排不同的表演項目。(照片1：1967年舞龍表演；照片2：1973年雜技表演；照片3：1977年傳統舞蹈表演；照片4：1978年扮演唐三藏取西經；照片5：1964年天后廟前的熱鬧情景)。

On their way to pay homage to the goddess' birthday, the participating associations each devised its own lion dance and dragon dance and followed different routes to the Tin Hau Temple. The parade was introduced, in 1963, coordinating the activities by a common route. All the associations follow the sequences and put up different performances on their way to the temple yard. (Photo 1, dragon dance in 1967; Photo 2, acrobatics performance in 1973; Photo 3, traditional dance performance in 1977; Photo 4, performance of the story of Tripitaka from Pilgrimage to the West in 1978; Photo 5, bustling scene at the temple yard in 1964)



傳統地方社會上演神功戲及交換花炮來慶祝天后誕。花炮是一個2至3米高以竹枝及彩色紙張製作的裝置，上面再掛上紙糊神像及有吉利含義的飾物，花炮的中央放置一個代表天后的神像或繪畫。今天花炮多以抽籤形式分配，得到花炮的可以把花炮帶回家，到翌年造一個新的花炮，把神像放回去，交還廟宇再重新分配。

Traditional communities celebrate the Tin Hau Festival by staging opera performances and exchanging "ower-cannons." These ower-cannons, two to three metres high, are made of bamboo and coloured paper and decorated with auspicious ornaments. A gurine or painted image of Tin Hau is housed in the middle of the ower-cannon. Nowadays, the ower-cannons are distributed among the participating associations by drawing lots during the festival. The winner takes the ower-cannon home, and a new one is built, with the original deity image, and sent back to the temple for redistribution in the following year.



四十多年來，十八鄉天后誕巡遊都沒有間斷，每年都是地方社會的盛事，1997年的巡遊，規模依然龐大。

The parade in Yuen Long has continued for over 40 years without interruption. It has always been a major communal event, and the one of 1997 was no exception.



巡遊完畢後，天后廟的總理用公開抽籤的形式，將花炮重新分配。在抽籤前，天后廟的總理用神輿把天后的「行身」接到抽籤的現場。

After the parade, ower-cannons are redistributed by means of a draw. Before the lots are drawn, local leaders carry the travel deity image Tin Hau to the venue by sedan chair to monitor the lottery.



西貢飄船灣的居民相信海裡的幽魂會為漁民帶來不幸，在每隔一年的天后誕的前夕，居民把天后的「行身」接到船上，巡遊附近海面，沿途焚燒衣紙，安撫幽魂，「潔淨」海面，讓天后誕為社區帶來一個新的開始。

The villagers of Leung Shuen Wan in Sai Kung believe that evil spirits and ghosts bring misfortune to fishermen. At the eve of every other Tin Hau Festival, the travelling image of Tin Hau is carried onto a boat to parade at sea. Paper offerings are burned to pacify the wandering ghosts and "purify" the sea.

