

OUR SINGAPORE:

ONE PEOPLE, MANY CULTURES.

Chinese joss paper shop

Joss paper shops like this one are less common than before. Most of their business comes during Qing Ming, when many Chinese pray to their ancestors, and the Festival of the Hungry Ghosts, when some Buddhists and Taoists burn paper offerings for the wandering ghosts that are let out of Hell.

Joss sticks and candles are lit as a symbol of communicating with the gods and the dead. They used to be much longer. Nowadays, people prefer shorter joss sticks so that they don't burn for too long and stain the ceilings.

These clothes are meant for one's dead ancestors. They look real but are made of paper for easy burning.

For ancestors who enjoyed drinking when they were alive, this shop sells paper beer cans to keep them happy in the afterlife.

Paper money is the most common offering. In the past, it was made to look like the coins used in China. Nowadays, there are even paper credit cards and cheques for burning.

The Festival of the Hungry Ghosts, also known as Zhong Yuan Jie, is coming. For the convenience of busy Singaporeans who celebrate the festival, the shop sells all-in-one packets. Each packet contains joss sticks, candles, matchsticks, paper money, paper clothes and even a paper passport for the ghosts to travel with ease.

These paper handbags are for female ancestors. Burning such offerings is a way to honour the dead. The offerings range from small daily necessities such as toothbrushes to big items such as television sets, cars, and even houses.

This series by **WHAT'S UP** - Singapore's newspaper for students - takes a closer look at our country's many colourful cultures. Also online at <http://www.whatsup.sg> >> **'ONE PEOPLE'**.

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