



Top 10 Must-See at peranakan MUSEUM

1. Wedding Headdress (Gallery 2 – Wedding)



The beautiful wedding headdress (the blue one with kingfisher feathers featured here) worn by the bride has auspicious Chinese motifs such as the Eight Immortals.

Did you know?

This elaborate headdress was for a Peranakan Chinese bride from Penang. It is composed of several individual gilt silver pieces, many of which are decorated with kingfisher feathers.

The head is considered the most sacred part of the body. As such, it was common to find items that were used on the head to be often made of gold.

2. Wedding Jewellery (Gallery 3 – Wedding)

Be amazed by the glitter of Peranakan jewellery such as the belts and *kerosangs*. *Kerosangs* were used to hold their *kebayas* or blouses together as they did not use buttons. Wealthy *Nonyas* had theirs set in diamonds.



Did you know?

The *kerosang* featured here is known as the *kerosang Melaka*, with a slightly larger central brooch known as the '*Kerosang Ibu*' or 'mother' and the two smaller 'child' brooches are known as '*kerosang anak*'.

3. Beaded & Embroidered items (outside Gallery 4 - Wedding)

Gather at the area outside the wedding chamber. Take a closer look at the exquisitely beaded and embroidered objects made by the *Nonyas* such as shoes and vases using antique beads from Europe.



Can you guess what these are?

These are embroidered kneepads for the bride to protect her knees during the tea ceremony as she had to kneel quite a bit to her parents, in-laws, senior relatives and ancestors as a sign of respect. These knee pads were nicely concealed by their wedding

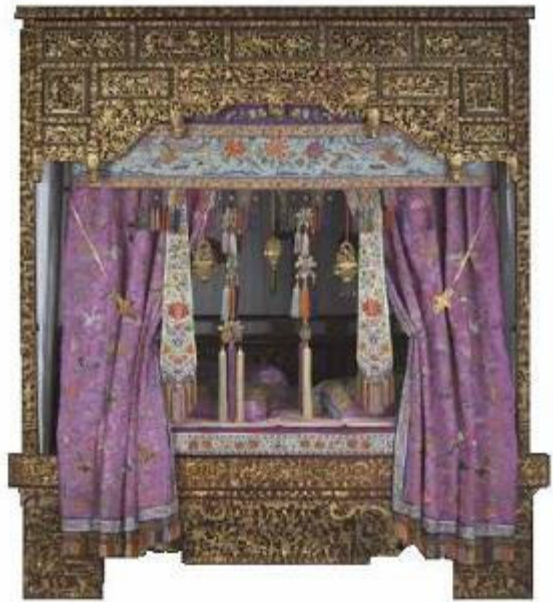
4. Wedding Chamber

(Gallery 4 - Wedding)

This wedding bed features motifs such as birds, flowers and insects, which are fertility symbols associated with the Peranakan Chinese wedding. This type of bed was commissioned when Peranakan Chinese families in Penang, Malacca and Singapore still had traditional 12-day weddings.

Did you know?

This ornately carved Peranakan Chinese wedding bed once belonged to Mrs Quah Hong Chiam of Penang. The bed was commissioned by Mrs Quah's father and was given to her as part of her wedding trousseau. The fertility symbols such as insects and birds apparently worked as Mrs Quah gave birth to seven out of her twelve children on this bed.



5. Bridal Wedding Garment

(Gallery 5 – Wedding)



The bride and groom's wedding garments are Chinese. This rare silk bridal wedding garment features embroidery favoured by the Peranakan community. Gold thread embroidery on silk of phoenix, peony and butterflies in pairs were popular motifs.

Did you know?

This traditional wedding gown actually consists of various pieces such as a top, skirt and a five layer cape. Wearing so many pieces of the garment was so hot in the tropical weather that the bride had to wear a bamboo vest to protect the expensive garment from profuse perspiration.

6. Sireh Set (Tempat Sireh)

(Gallery 5 – Wedding)

Tempat Sireh were traditionally important in Peranakan culture, especially to *Nyonyas*. Besides the pleasure derived from chewing *sireh*, it also played an important role in many important rites such as those in a traditional wedding.

Did you know?

One would offer another *nyonya* her *sireh* as an invitation of marriage between the two families. If the *sireh* offer was accepted, this meant that the other part was also keen on the possible match. Likewise, if the *sireh* offer was rejected politely, this thus meant that the offer of a possible marriage match was turned down as well.





7. Sarong Kebaya (Gallery 6 – Nonya)

Peranakan girls were highly experimental in creating new designs for their *kebayas*. They often looked to picture books for inspiration.



Did you know?

This is one of the more interesting *kebayas* as it features Spanish dancers and matadors which shows that the *Nonyas* of the past were willing to new motifs such as these from the West.

8. Ancestral Altar

(Gallery 7 – Religion)

This ancestral altar once belonged to the family of Tan Kim Seng, a prominent Peranakan Chinese which was installed in the family mansion, Panglima Prang, located in the River Valley Road area..

Did you know?

Tan Jiak Kim, the grandson of Tan Kim Seng, assembled the unique silver service for use on this altar. The altar was carved in namwood and was originally lacquered and gilded.

The altar also had accompanying plaques, with couplets reminding the descendents of the important of their ancestors and of filial piety.



9. Tok Panjang

(Gallery 9 – Food & Feasting)

Tok Panjang refers to the feast laid out on long rectangular tables often found in Peranakan Chinese homes. This special dinner set features the Chinese character Yap and once belonged to *kapitan Cina* Yap Ah Loy – the founder of the city of Kuala Lumpur. They were used on special occasions such as weddings.



Did you know?

Peranakan dining ware consisted of sets of plates, bowls and spoons of various sizes, each having a different use on the dining table. There are 16 different types or shapes laid out on the dining and dessert table.



10. *Porcelain* (Gallery 9 – Food & Feasting)

The Peranakans used porcelain ware from China to serve food. Rare pieces in the museum include *kamchongs*, finger bowls and plates in lively hues of pink and turquoise, decorated with phoenix and peony motifs.

Did you know?

Medium and large *kamchongs* were used as water containers, for serving rice, pickles, soup and other foods while miniature versions were reportedly used as containers for cosmetics.



Suggested Follow-up Activities for Students

- ✍ Get students to **select their favourite artefact during their museum visit and write a short description** of it, highlighting its interesting elements, together with its photo (or drawn picture). Students can come together and guess each other's choices based on the descriptions that they hear.
- ✍ Get students to **relate the above Top 10 artefacts to aspects of Peranakan life/culture** and ask students to create and write a short story behind one of the artefacts.
- ✍ Get students to **identify Peranakan motifs** that can be found on various Peranakan objects and find out their **symbolism**. For example, insect motifs such as butterflies can be found at the wedding chamber and on Peranakan porcelain *nonyaware*. They symbolise abundance and fertility.
- ✍ Find more interesting **Do-It-Yourself Activities (Self-Guided)** at <http://www.peranakanmuseum.org.sg/learning/learning.asp>

Glossary

Peranakan: means 'child of' or 'born of' and is used to refer to people of mixed ethnic origins. Peranakan Chinese forms the biggest number of Peranakans in Southeast Asia. There are other communities of Peranakans such as the Jawi Peranakan (Indian Muslim) and the Chitty Melaka (Indian).

Nonyas: Term used for female Peranakans.

Sireh: Tempat Sireh is the Baba Malay term for a set of items consisting of a box with several receptacles used to contain various ingredients used in betel-chewing, a practise once common in the Peranakan Chinese community.

Kamcheng: A type of covered container used for serving food. The word has been interpreted variously as the Hokkien term for 'covered jar' or more literally, 'covered teacup'.

This resource was jointly created by TPM and Ms Lee Whye Gwan from East View Secondary School during her Teacher Work Attachment (TWA)