

# peranakan MUSEUM

## ANNEX II

### Star Pieces

#### Gallery 1 – Origins



**Food cover**  
**Palembang , South Sumatra, c.1900**

This food cover was made by craftsmen in the Sumatran town of Palembang, an enclave with one of the oldest Peranakan-Chinese communities in Indonesia. Such food covers were exported across the Straits of Malacca and used by Peranakan households in Malacca and Singapore as well. The intricately beaded top reflects the Peranakans' love for embellishment.

## Gallery 2 – Wedding



### **Pagoda Trays**

**Singapore**

**Late 19th – early 20th century**

**Wood, gold-leaf, lacquer, mother-of-pearl**

**Gift of Mr and Mrs Morris Lee, 2004**

This is a very rare pair of pagoda trays which appear to be a one-off commission from the Lee family of Magenta Cottage, Killiney Road, Singapore. It is believed that such pagoda trays were used by the family to bear important items used in the wedding like jewellery. The exchange of wedding gifts would have been a very lavish affair for wealthy Peranakan families. There would have been a grand procession of servants bearing trays of gifts to be exchanged between the two families.

## Gallery 3 – Wedding



### *Hup Soo Ee* (Blackwood Chair)

Penang

Late 19th century

Wood, porcelain, mother-of-pearl, bamboo

69.5 x 52 x 102 cm

*Hup soo ee* is the Chinese (Hokkien) term referring to a blackwood armchair inlaid with mother-of-pearl. This chair is a rare example as instead of marble, it has a porcelain back panel delicately painted with figures and landscapes. These scenes would normally depict the pleasures of scholarly life and feminine acts of virtue which served as reminders of traditional Chinese values. If a family could afford it, chairs like these were usually given to daughters as part of their wedding trousseau and would have featured as part of the formal furniture setting in the main hall of their homes.

## Gallery 4 – Wedding



### ***Ranjang Kahwain* (Wedding Bed)**

**Penang**

**Late 19th – early 20th century**

**Wood, gilding**

**220 x 220 x 143.5 cm**

**Gift of Mrs Quah Hong Chiam, 1973**

This bed once belonged to Mrs Quah Hong Chiam of Penang. It was commissioned by Mrs Quah's father as part of her wedding trousseau. In addition to being ornately carved, these beds were often lavishly decorated with beadwork and embroidery featuring motifs of birds, flowers, rodents, insects and sea creatures. These were fertility symbols associated with the Peranakan Chinese wedding. Wedding beds were some of the largest pieces of furniture to be found in the homes of Peranakan families.

## Gallery 5 – Wedding



**Bridal Wedding Garment**  
**Malacca, Straits Settlements**  
**Late 19th – early 20th century**  
**Silk, gold thread**  
**117.2 x 200.5 cm**

Bridal wedding garments like this were used by the Peranakans of Malacca and Singapore in the late 19th to the early 20th century. The *Sang Khek Umm* (an elderly lady who acted as the mistress of ceremonies during the main rites of the 12-day Peranakan wedding), helped the bride dress in the ceremonial wedding gown. The colour of this wedding top is the 'red' favoured by the Peranakan Chinese for their weddings. It is heavily embroidered with flowers and birds in gold thread. The phoenix and peony are motifs repeatedly found on Peranakan wedding garments.

## Gallery 6 – Nonya



### **Beaded *daun nipah* case**

Indonesia, late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

This densely-beaded case was used to contain *nipah* leaves, used to make hand-rolled cigarettes which were popular amongst the Indonesian Peranakans. This *daun nipah* case features the whimsical scene of a lady in traditional attire and a *chilin* (a mythical creature). It bears the name of its owner or maker.

## Gallery 7 – Religion



### **Catholic Altar**

**Singapore**

**Early 20th century**

**Gilded Teak**

**332.5 x 186 x 71.5 cm**

**Purchased with funds from Friends of ACM through Gala Dinner 2005**

This piece of furniture was turned into a Catholic altar by a Peranakan Chinese family when they converted from Daoism and ancestor worship. Here, Daoist deities like the stellar gods of happiness, wealth and longevity (Hock, Lock and Siew) and auspicious creatures, are juxtaposed against a central Catholic devotional image of the Holy Family. The painting is signed 'A Wong' and "...28" which is probably the date 1928, thus giving an indication of when the family converted to Catholicism.

This is one of only a few known surviving altar-sideboards and is probably one of the largest in the gilded teak style.

## Gallery 8 – Public Life



### **Order of Temasek Medals of Mr Lim Kim San Singapore, mid-20th century Gift of Mr Lim Kiat Seng**

In 1962, Mr Lim Kim San became the first person to be awarded the Order of Temasek (*Darjah Utama Temasek*) for his contributions as the first Chairman of the Housing and Development Board (one of many posts in his long career of public service.) The Order of Temasek is the highest order of the Singapore National Day Awards, and recognises the outstanding merit and service of individuals to the nation. Since then, other Peranakans who were conferred this honour include former President, Dr Wee Kim Wee and Dr Goh Keng Swee.



## Gallery 9 – Food & Feasting



### **Kamcheng (Covered Container)**

**China**

**Late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

**Porcelain**

**34cm diameter**

**Gift of Mrs Khoo Soo Beow in memory of her husband**

The *kamcheng* is used for storing and serving food. The wide range of sizes - from 4cm to 39cm in diameter – reflect their various uses. Medium and large *kamcheng* were used as water containers, for serving rice, pickles and other foods. Miniature versions were often used as containers for cosmetics.