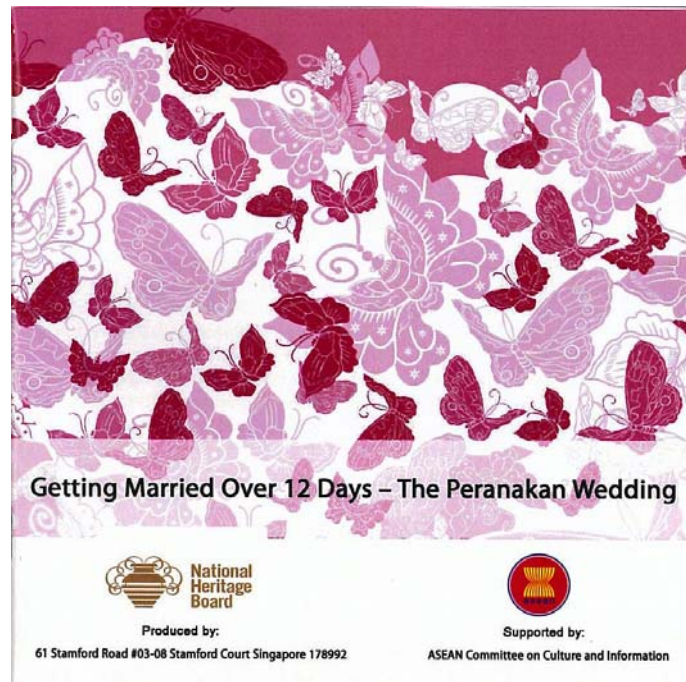


Getting Married Over 12 Days – The Peranakan Wedding

A Catalogue



Who are the Peranakans?

For centuries, Southeast Asia stood at the crossroads of trade, witnessing the exchange of goods, the meeting of people and the confluence of ideas and cultures. From all over the ancient world, traders came to exchange their goods for the region's products. Some of them stayed on in Southeast Asia and married local wives. Over time, a unique and hybrid culture was forged by this union; and their descendents came to know as the Peranakans.

This video features the Peranakan Chinese of “Baba-Nonya” wedding. The Baba Ninyas of Malacca can be traced back to the 17th century, when their ancestors settled there under the Portuguese and later, Dutch colonial rule. By the 18th century, the Baba-Nonyas have developed a distinct, hybrid culture, reflecting influences from both the immigrant Chinese and indigenous Southeast Asian influences. Under the invitation of the British, many went to their new colonies of Penang and Singapore in the 19th century. The Peranakan wedding is an illustrative example of the culture as whole which speaks to us about how cultures interact and blend to create something new and unique.

The Peranakan Wedding

The Peranakan Chinese wedding lasted twelve days during the late 19th and early 20th century and would observe mainly traditional Chinese practices and values in their weddings. The wedding brings together two families and a male offspring was most hoped for to continue the much-valued family name. Several rituals and rites take place during these twelve days to bless the marriage, and they reflect traditional values prized by the Peranakan Chinese including family loyalty, fertility, poise, respect for one's elders and chastity. Some of these rituals are:

About a month before the wedding, the *Lap Chai* ceremony takes place on an auspicious date. This ceremony involves the exchange of gifts, with well-intentioned, symbolic meanings, between the two families and marks the engagement of the couple.

Symbolic wedding rituals also take place in the wedding chamber. The chamber is decorated and rites take place to promote fertility and signify the wish for the first-born to be a boy. During the *Ann Chng* ceremony for example, a young boy will roll back and forth across the bed thrice to symbolically bless the wedding couple's first-born to be a boy.

On the eve of the wedding, the *Chiu Thau* ceremony occurs. This hair-combing ceremony is regarded as the one of most significant wedding rite as this was when the bride and groom would be initiated into adulthood. The ceremony takes place separately for the couple in their respective homes at an auspicious hour. With their hair uncombed, they sit on a symbolic set-up representing their entry into the world of adulthood. Ceremonial objects were waved over their head to remind the bride/groom of the duties and responsibilities of adult life.

On the third day of the wedding, during the *Soja Tiga Hari*, the wedding couple would pay respects to the family deities, elders and ancestors in a formal tea ceremony.

The bride formally becomes a member of her husband's family on the last day of the wedding only after the conclusion of a ceremony that confirmed her virginity prior to the wedding. This is because a woman's chastity was important in traditional Peranakan society and a requirement of marriage placed on traditional Peranakan Chinese brides by their husband's family.

Today, Peranakan Chinese no longer hold the twelve-day weddings due to reasons like modernization and the heavy expenses involved. However, some ceremonies like the tea ceremony and *Lap Chai* ceremony are still integral to the Peranakan Chinese wedding and practiced today.

About the DVD

The production of this DVD is made possible with the support of the Peranakan Museum, Singapore. The Peranakan Museum explores the culture of Peranakan communities in the former Straits Settlements of Singapore, Malacca and Penang and their links with other communities in Southeast Asia. It is a boutique museum with the finest and most comprehensive collection of Peranakan artefacts in the world. Three floors of permanent galleries illustrate important rituals, practices and the material culture of the Peranakans, as well as how this unique fusion culture is viewed today.

The Peranakan Museum provides an enjoyable and educational experience for all, with intricate displays innovatively presented in ten galleries, children's interactive and special merchandising in two shops. Two temporary exhibition galleries present a programme of special exhibitions throughout the year.

The Peranakan Museum is a National Heritage Board Museum under the Asian Civilisations Museum.

For more information on the Peranakan Museum and National Heritage Board, please visit www.peranakanmuseum.sg and www.nhb.gov.sg.

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