



Wedding Traditions

Planning for a wedding can be an uphill task. Coupled with the strict traditions newlyweds have to follow, it can be a daunting experience. Ipoh Echo through its wedding supplement hopes to let you breeze through your once-in-a-lifetime event. We have compiled from two wedding planners and a *feng shui* consultant who will enlighten us on the various traditions observed by newlyweds. Following are the stories...

By Louise Sim




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Wedding Planners take all the headache out of the occasion

MALAY WEDDING CEREMONY IN PARTS

Zaha Wedding Planner chief executive officer Zaid Sulaiman said there are two parts to the ceremony, the *akad nikah* (marriage contract), which is the legal and religious part and the *bersanding* (enthronement), which is a family celebration.

Adat Merisik

Zaid said when a man was ready to get married, a bride would be identified or he could suggest to his family who he would like them to consider. The man's family would then visit the woman's family to get an idea as to whether their daughter would be interested in the match, said Zaid. "*Adat merisik* is not a formal proposal but after this visit, both sides can ponder the possibility of a marriage," he noted.

Adat Bertunang

After both sides decide to marry, Zaid said an engagement date would be set and the *adat bertunang* was usually held at the bride's home.

Akad Nikah

The proper wedding is the *akad nikah* ceremony before a religious official and accompanied by prayer.

"The groom signs the marriage contract and agrees to provide the bride with a *mas kahwin* (marriage gold in form of money or goods or anything requested by the bride) to show that he is willing and prepared to build a family with her," he added.



Prayers play a pivotal role in Indian weddings especially Hindus, wedding planner Priya Vivek said. She said prayers are held before and during a couple's wedding to bless their matrimony.

For the couple to become husband and wife, their parents need to determine the couple's compatibility by checking with priests. "The priest will then go through the couple's zodiac signs," she said.

When the date is confirmed, a three-day special prayer will be held prior to the wedding. "During the three days, close relatives will be invited to preside over the ceremony and bless the couple," said Priya, adding that a pole would also be erected in the couple's home to inform the neighbourhood that there was a happy occasion in the house.

On the day of the wedding, the bride and groom will enter the wedding hall separately and sit on the "mandap" – a four-pole canopy erected at the centre of the stage. "After prayers are conducted on them, the bride and groom will change into their wedding attire and the ceremony proper will start where the groom will tie the wedding chain – *thali* – on the bride," added Priya.

Traditional or Reception, Simple or Lavish

Nowadays, couples either choose a traditional or reception wedding, said Priya. "For those who choose a traditional affair, the ceremony will be held in a temple and vegetarian meal served," she said.

For those opting a reception wedding, Priya said it could be a normal event or a lavish one. "An Indian reception wedding can cost anything from RM5,000 to RM100,000," she said, explaining it was due to the bridal accoutrements and the event organisation. "Some may opt for a Bollywood theme wedding hence the higher cost," she said.

CHINESE WEDDINGS

Lillian Too's *Feng Shui Symbols of Good Fortune* noted that a couple who wish to tie the knot should have their eight character charts examined to ensure compatibility.

"According to the Book of Rites, the exchange of gifts is to express mutual wishes for fidelity, protection and the successful procreation of children from the union. An auspicious number of gifts is eight. Amongst which should be:

- A piece of gold jewellery for her hair
- A gilt mirror to protect her from bad *chi* and evil spirits
- A box of chocolates or sweetmeats to wish her a sweet life
- A length of red brocade or silk for her material happiness
- A gift of money (coins and notes) for her brothers and parents
- A painting with child and fish to signify successful childbirth
- A bunch of peonies for material happiness
- A sandalwood fan to signify she will have his protection all her life.

Auspicious Dress

Too said in Chinese weddings, the bride is usually elaborately made up and dressed in a red *qua* or ceremonial wedding dress. "This is the ceremonial



Bersanding

The actual wedding day is the *bersanding* where the couple seat on a (wedding) dais and are blessed with yellow rice and scented water by family members, relatives and guests.

"As the ceremony customarily takes place in the afternoon, the groom entertains guests at his house in the morning. The ceremony begins with the groom's procession with friends, relatives, musicians and people waving *bunga manggar* (palm blossom) to meet the bride," he said.

After the ceremony, the couple and their guests will attend a feast called the *makan beradab* (formal meal) which involves the bride and groom feeding each other sweetened rice, added Zaid.

INDIAN WEDDINGS



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wedding dress and it is usually decorated with beads, crystals and sometimes even precious stones," she said, adding that the dress would have elaborate embroidery featuring the auspicious dragon and phoenix or peonies and other symbols of good fortune.

"Wearing the *qua* is very significant and very auspicious for the couple and especially for the bride," she noted, advising Chinese brides, no matter how modern they are, to get married in a *qua*. Too reminded the bride not to wear black as it is too *yin* for what should be a *yang* occasion. "It could cause a senior relative to succumb to serious illness that could prove fatal," she warned.

Red Car and Auspicious Symbols

In the old days, Too said the groom's party would come and collect the bride in a red marriage sedan chair that would be elaborately decorated with auspicious symbols like lanterns and firecrackers.

"In this day and age, the sedan chair is outdated but the red colour continues to have its significance. Thus it is a good idea to get married in a red car," she said. If this proves difficult, Too recommended that some effort be made to decorate the car with auspicious symbols.

"Use red satin ribbons to tie an endless knot that symbolizes eternal love or use a double happiness decal to decorate the two sides of the car," she said.

Tea Ceremony

"Newly-married couples, dressed in their wedding finery, would kneel in front of their parents and offer a cup of tea each, after which the parents would bless them and offer them a red packet filled with money," said Too. The tea offering signifies respect for the parents and an expression of filial gratitude, she added.



In the old days, parents of the bride often presented gold to their daughter after the performance of the tea ceremony, said Too. "This was deemed to be an auspicious offering although in modern times this offering has been replaced with a red packet of cash," she said.

Tea must also be offered to every member of the family one generation above the couple as an indication of respect to family elders, added Too.

"Do not do away with this ceremony no matter how modern you are because it brings good luck to you," Too advises.



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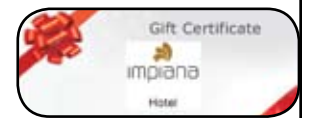
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