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Delightful heirlooms going under the hammer



Mohd Radzuan Jamaluddin and Mariani Yahya showing a selection of antiques they had been collecting for the past five years. They will be going under the hammer today in Shah Alam. — Pictures by Sobri Sudin

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KUALA LUMPUR: Ruby-encrusted heirlooms and old gamelan sets that apparently sound their own music at night are among items in a 4,000-piece collection of antiques that go under the hammer today.

The rare collectibles, that include intricately-carved ivory hilt kris and elegant opium pipes, were gathered by licensed auctioneers Heritage Auction House over the last five years.

Most items were sourced from private collectors and antique dealers in Malaysia and Indonesia, said Heritage's owner Mohd Radzuan Jamaluddin.

Radzuan and his wife, Mariani Yahya, who are more used to dealing with property and vehicles for auction, said preparing for this sale had been an exciting and unusual experience. Especially so because each item has a story attached to it.

They will be sad to see them packed up and taken home by their new owners at the end of the auction.

The ruby-studded Peranakan brooches sets, for instance, were sold to the auctioneer by a Malacca family which was about to migrate.

Called *kerongsang ibu-anak*, they are made up of a large heart-shaped brooch, almost 8cm in length, and two smaller round ones that traditionally adorned the *baju kebaya* of Peranakan women.

"These had been in the family for several generations. So, in this case, I



One betel leaf set to go. These curious receptacles were used to carry the sيره and items like lime and areca nuts.

was really lucky to get them. They're quite hard to come by," said the auctioneer.

But it took a great deal more effort to talk a private collector of kris to part with the five special daggers he had stashed away in a display case behind the counter of his store.

"The collector told me to choose any other kris from the thousands in his shop, just not the ones which were part of his own personal collection.

"Trust me. It took a lot of convincing and bargaining before he sold it to me," said Radzuan.

Then, there are other items which have extra appeal because they're a little mysterious — like the gamelan set.

"When I went to collect it, the security guard at the building told me that he'd heard gamelan music playing late at night when everyone had left," Radzuan said, pointing to *bonang* and gongs that looked completely normal under the bright lights of his crammed store.

Antique collectors and the curious are also likely to be wowed by the wide range of items that are up for auction.

"People should just come and take a look at the items.

"Bring the children along because there'll be so much culture and history to see."

Some of the more outstanding pieces are the huge solid silver *kamcheng*.

This is another classic Peranakan collectible that usually takes the form of a round porcelain pot with the *qilin*

— a creature in Chinese mythology that represents a unicorn — at the top of its lid.

But the one that is up for sale today is an enormous 10kg solid silver *kamcheng* that Radzuan bought from a Malacca collector.

Radzuan also expects a set of 350 coins issued by the Dutch in Indonesia between the 1600s and 1945 and a century-old Javanese royal ceremonial kris to attract considerable attention.

An array of antique jewellery and decorative items from Indonesia are also up for auction, as are furniture, musical instruments, sewing machines and old typewriters and finely carved and painted door panels.

The auction is being jointly held with Universiti Putra Malaysia to help its Master's degree programme students learn about antiques and the art of auctioning.

Several other private collectors will also be exhibiting their antiques at the auction which will be held at 2pm at Muzium Sultan Alam Shah in Shah Alam.

■ For a short video on the antiques on auction, visit www.nst.com.my and click on video



This is a J.H. Ebblewhite-made interchangeable disc music box dating back to the 1880s. It allowed owners to listen to different pieces by purchasing new discs like they would records.