

Singapore HeritageFest 2009
“Arte (factually) Speaking” Story Writing Competition
1st Prize Winner (Upper Primary Category)



Contest ID: 203
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Artefact: Kamcheng
Museum: Asian Civilisations Museum

The Three Kamchengs

"My dear, you are now of marriageable age and I have decided to hold a ball to help you choose a *Baba* (a Peranakan man) husband," my father said.

"But...but..." I protested.

"No buts. I have decided and nothing you say will change my mind. Just concentrate on marrying a good *Baba*," my father quickly retorted.

The day of the ball finally came. Many men of fine caliber came at the request of my father, who was a very influential man and had many reputable contacts. They were indeed very good, most were polite, handsome and well educated. However, you really could not tell much about a person's character by just interacting with him, much less for a short period of time. After much consideration, my father and I chose three intelligent and highly successful *Babas*. However, the problem of character was still unsolved. Thus, I decided to set a test for each of the three fine men. The man who impressed me the most with his reply would get to marry me.

I gave each of the three men an empty *Kamcheng* and told them, "Go back and fill this *Kamcheng* with anything you like, and then come back in two days' time to show me what you have put in your *Kamcheng*."

The two days passed in a flash and the three men were back with their *Kamchengs*. One filled his with dumplings, one filled his with *Chendol* and the last returned with an empty *Kamcheng*. When asked why they filled their *Kamchengs* with whatever they filled it with, the first replied, "Dumplings represent my wishes for you to have good health and longevity." The second replied, "My *Chendol* represents the sweet marriage we will have in the future." The last replied, "This *Kamcheng* may look empty to you but in fact, it is filled. Filled to the brim with my love for you."

Upon hearing this, I immediately knew I had found the right man.

(328 words)