

Singapore HeritageFest 2009
“Arte (factually) Speaking” Story-Writing Competition
Shortlisted Entry (Lower Secondary Category)



Contest ID: 105
Name: Oh Wei Ming Nicholas
Gender: Male
Age: 13-year-old
NRIC: SXXXX554B
Nationality: Singaporean
School: Raffles Institution

Artefact: Iranun Pirate
Museum: National Museum of Singapore

Stained Forever

Drawing his *kampilan* in a vice-like grip, the Iranun king was faced with his ultimate challenge yet. A steam vessel loomed ominously over the starboard side of the boat, with its cannons loaded and ready to fire. Beads of cold sweat trickled down his forehead in clumps as his heart palpitated violently, exploring his options in his head for a way out of this situation with limited resolution potential. All that was left of his magnificent fleet of close to a hundred ships were the charred carcasses of them sinking into the unforgiving ocean, the result of the relentless artillery fire from the British steam vessels. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of a British soldier on that particular ship aiming the cannon directly at the ship's hull. He knew his time was up. Looking at his beloved *kampilan*, his mind flashed back to the days which he had spent with his most prized possession of all.

It was forged on the eve of his seventeenth birthday, and given to him as a present. Made from the highest grade iron available, along with a magnificent ruby studded into its hilt, the *kampilan* was all but fit for a would-be king. For hours at end, he would practise his swordsmanship in the comfortable courtyard of his palace, under the careful coaching of his father. When his father passed away due to a mysterious illness, he ascended the throne. By then, his *kampilan* had become one of his most treasured possessions.

Then he became ambitious, wanting to conquer the entire world, not just attacking merchant ships as pirates for a living. As his entire empire was marooned on an island not much bigger than a neighbouring rival kingdom, Srivijaya, he ordered his people to build vast amounts of boats, and set off to achieve his goal. Within a month, his adeptly-trained military force had captured nearly half of Srivijaya under his leadership. By then, they were known to be "the terrors of the sea", with the existing knowledge that they were pirates, huge vessels, and their notorious *kampilans*. After surviving each horrific battle with the enemy forces, he would always dearly clean his *kampilan* clear of any blood stains, polishing it back into its usual shiny, sparkling state. The jewel studded in the hilt of the sword never lost its brilliant glow of blood red, as if to signify the sword's triumph over each battle.

Perplexed and intensely worried about the imminent threat the Iranuns produced, the British, then having colonized most parts of South East Asia, decided to strike. They joined forces with the King of Srivijaya and making use of the newly invented cannons, the British and the Srivijayans loaded these deadly and fatal weapons of war onto their ships and inflicted a huge

blow on the Iranun army. Many of their teak-made ships could not withstand the heavy artillery fire and sunk under the oceans, never to be seen again. The ships the army had were dwindling fast. Leaving with no choice, the king ordered his army to pull together whatever they had and launched a final massive assault. His *kampilan* had become old and weary, scratched and dented, as if signifying that the end was near.

And now here he stood, and as the impact of the cannon ball hit the ship, two drops of bead-like tears fell from his shut eyelids onto his *kampilan*, staining it forever with a mark that would never be erased.

(583 words)