

THE UPRIGHT CANNON
Meriam Tegak

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THE UPRIGHT CANNON

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CERITA DARI KEPULAUAN RIAU

Meriam Tegak



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MERIAM TEGAK

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Foreword

Literature work is not only series of word but it also talks about life, both realistically and idealistically of human. If it is realistic, the literature work usually contains life experiences, good model, and wisdom which have been added various style and imagination along with it. Meanwhile, if it idealistic, the literature work contains moral lecture, good character, advices, philosophical symbols, culture and other things related to human life. The life itself is very diverse, varies, and full of various problems and conflicts faced by humans. The diversity in humans life also affects to the diversity of literature work because the contents are inseparable from civilized and dignified humans life.

The literature works that dealing with life utilizes language as medium of deliverance and imaginative art as its *cultural land*. On the basis of the language medium and imaginative art, literature is multidimensional and multi-interpretative. Using language medium, imginative art and cultural dimension, literature deliver messages to be reviewed or analyzed from various perspectives. The outcome of that perspective depends greatly on who is reviewing and analyzing with various socio-cultural and knowledge background. There is a time when a literary reviewer reviews from the point of view of metaphor, myth, symbol, power, ideology, economy, politics, and culture can be refuted by other reviewers who see from perspective of sound, referent, or irony. Even so, Heraclitus said, "However opposite they work together and from different directions, the most beautiful harmony emerges".

There are many lessons that we can get from reading literature, one of which is reading folktales that are adapted or reprocessed into children's stories. The results of reading literature always inspire and motivate readers to be creative in finding something new. Reading literature can trigger further imagination, open enlightenment, and add insights. For this

reason, we express our gratitude for the processors for the story. We also express our appreciation and gratitude to the Head of the Coaching Center, Head of the Learning Division, and Head of the Subdivision of Modules and Teaching Materials and staffs for all the efforts and hard works carried out until the realization of this book.

Hopefully this storybook is not only useful as a reading material for students and the community to foster a culture of literacy through the National Literacy Movement program, but also useful as an enrichment of our knowledge of past life that can be utilized in addressing current and future life developments.

Jakarta, June 2016

Regards,
Prof. Dr. Dadang Sunendar, M. Hum.

Preface

All praise be to Allah SWT. for his abundance of grace and guidance the author can finish writing folktales entitled The Upright Canon. The story of The Upright Canon is oral literature originating from the Dabo Singkep area, Riau Islands. Actually, this folklore has several versions, but the author chooses one version that the reader can take moral lessons from.

The Upright Canon story is full of noble values that need to be planted in our society's mind. From this story, we can learn that in any condition as great as we are, we should not feel arrogant because it will ultimately harm ourselves in the end. Vice versa, if we are patient and restraint, every problem will have its solution eventually. These values are some of the messages that want to be conveyed in the story.

The author wants to emphasize that folktale writing must be encouraged so that regional literature can develop, especially if you see the current conditions where the reading interest of the younger generation has begun to diminish. Folk stories are stories that develop from regional culture, so it is better for the younger generation to learn the moral values of each culture through the existing folklore.

On this occasion, the author would also like to sincerely thank Prof. Dr. Gufran Ali Ibrahim, M.S. as the Head of the Language Cultivation Center and Dr. Fairul Zabadi as the Head of

the Learning Division who has provided opportunities to the author and also thanks to all staff of the Language Offices located throughout Indonesia, both in the Language Agency and in the Language Offices, which has helped to make this folklore completed. I thank the community for helping to gather these folk tales and other folktales.

Tanjungpinang, May 2016

Faisal Gazali

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THE UPRIGHT CANNON

Once upon a time, there was a village called Laut Jauh. The name literally meant Far Sea in English. The people named it that way because the village was located on seashore, at what is now known as Batu Berdaun, in Dabo Singkep District, Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province.

Since they lived near the sea, the people of Laut Jauh earned their living by being fishermen. The men went to the sea every day, at night, while the women cultivated vegetables on their backyards or their fields.

All the houses in Laut Jauh were of the same type. They were rectangular and were built on stilts about one meter from the ground. The houses were spread not too far from each other, but not too close either.

Some people in Laut Jauh were related to the old sultanate, giving them the right to use the title '*Encik*'. Among these common people with noble blood were *Encik* Nuh and *Encik* Walek, a married couple. They had lived in Laut Jauh all their life.



Like most men in the village, Encik Nuh was also a fisherman. Every day, when the sun had set, he and the other men of the village sailed away, returning only when the sun had risen. At home, Encik Walek spent her day cultivating their front yard, planting several kinds of vegetables and herbs. In addition, she also feed the chickens they kept. Day by day, that routine never changed.

Although he was only a fisherman, Encik Nuh was believed to possess spiritual power. People believed it because he was a descendant of a royal family and he had spent a long time to learn religion and spiritual arts. The people of Laut Jauh and nearby villages often came to Encik Nuh's house to ask for guidance and solution for various problems, including their health problems. With the power of prayers, Encik Nuh could make someone's illness disappear. However, not all people came to see Encik Nuh with a problem. Some of them just came to his house to listen to his stories and to learn religion from them.

Encik Nuh always welcomed them with open arms. Even though all his neighbors believed in his spiritual power, Encik Nuh never bragged about it. He was always humble and sincere in helping anyone coming to him.

Encik Nuh and Encik Walek were always friendly and humble towards everyone that their neighbors respected them even more.



Almost every day, there was always someone visiting Encik Nuh and Encik Walek's house. Sometimes they sat inside, other times they sat on the terrace, depending on their problems. The house was the most crowded and most busy place in Laut Jauh.

The men of the village often used the house as a place to hang out, to chat about their catch or to discuss more serious problems of their neighborhood. Everyone always pitched in their opinion, but it was Encik Nuh's words that were usually followed. It was because he was knowledgeable in religion and social issues, and he was always able to read the situation well.

In the afternoon, a lot of small children gathered at the house. They came to listen to religious stories and learn religion from Encik Nuh. He was a good storyteller. The children were never bored listening to him. He deliberately chose religious stories and anecdotes to tell because he wanted to instill religious values in the children.

In addition to his power, Encik Nuh was also known for a curious object in his front yard. It was a cannon. His house stood on a piece of land that used to belong to the Sultanate family. The cannon had been put there as a defensive weapon to ward off any attack or threat coming from the sea. As such, the cannon was aiming towards the sea.



The cannon was not too big. It was around a meter and a half long. However, since it was put right in the middle of the front yard, Encik Walek often found it difficult to sweep the ground. “Father!” Encik Walek called her husband. “What do you say if we move the cannon? Nobody uses it anymore, anyway. It’s a pity because it kind of ruins our front yard. Besides, it is a little hard for me to sweep the ground with it stands there. I cannot clear the rubbish under it. In addition, our chickens often hide under it, making it difficult for me to get them to the coop in the afternoon. Can we move it, Father?” Encik Walek tried to persuade her husband.

“Don’t bother, Mother. Just let it be,” Encik Nuh replied.

Every time Encik Walek asked, Encik Nuh always responded along that line. It was not because Encik Nuh was too lazy to move it, or because he thought it was a sacred cannon. It was more because he respected the history of the cannon. His ancestors had put it there.

He believed that they had chosen the spot with many considerations. In addition, he tried to respect the great effort they had to have taken to put the cannon there.



Even though the cannon might put a damper on their comfort and the beauty of their front yard, Encik Nuh's appreciation of its history was always greater than his discomfort.

One day, Encik Nuh went to the sea to fish, as usual. Encik Walek was busy cleaning the front yard and fed the chickens. Unbeknownst to her, a chick went in a hole under the cannon. It was not a big hole, the chick fit just right in it. That was why it could go in but could not get out. Since it was trapped in there, squeezed so tight, the chick died in the hole.

In the afternoon, after Encik Walek had swept the ground again and was preparing to get the chickens to their coop, she realized that a chick had gone missing. Encik Walek knew exactly how many chicks and hens they had because she was the one who took care of them every day.

Encik Walek immediately began to search for the chick all around the yard. After looking everywhere else, Encik Walek finally found it trapped inside the little hole under the cannon. She quickly attempted to get it out of the hole.

She was sad knowing that the chick had died. She slumped on the ground, holding the lifeless little chick.

“Father... Father...” Encik Walek called her husband. “Come here, Father, look at this. One of our chicks was trapped in a hole under the cannon. And now it died. I have told you over and over

again, let's just move the cannon," Encik Walek said to her husband.

After that incident, Encik Nuh began to consider moving the cannon away from their front yard. He was sorry that the chick had died. Even though it was just an animal, it was still a living creature. He worried that if he did not immediately move the cannon, it would happen again.

Even though they could fill in the hole, there might be other holes. Encik Nuh began to really consider which was more important, respecting the history of the cannon or preventing the risk of another chick being trapped to death. After thinking for quite some time, he arrived at a decision. "Very well, Mother. Tomorrow, after I come back from the sea, I will move it," Encik Nuh told his wife.

The next day, as he had promised, Encik Nuh tried to move the cannon. Since it was a relatively small cannon, he thought he could do it alone. That was why he did not ask for help from his neighbors. Moreover, Encik Nuh was self-conscious about how his neighbors viewed him. They believed he possessed great spiritual power. It would be embarrassing if he had to ask for help just to pick up such a small cannon. Therefore, he decided to do it alone. Encik Nuh took a stance to lift the cannon.



“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,” he said in Arabic, which meant ‘in the name of Allah, the most gracious and the most merciful’. He began lifting. However, the cannon did not even budge an inch. Encik Nuh was confused.

“Why can’t I lift it? It did not even move. Probably because it is rusty. It has been here for so long, the rust must have made it stick,” he thought to himself.

Encik Nuh tried again. He still failed in the second try. The cannon stood still, not even shifting. However, Encik Nuh did not give up. He kept trying to pick up the cannon and move it. He pushed, pulled, shook, and did whatever he could think of to the cannon. Yet, everything he did was to no avail.

Since it was almost night, Encik Nuh decided to call it a day and went back to the house. “So, how is it, Father? Where did you move it?” Encik Walek asked.

“I haven’t, Mother. I cannot move it yet,” Encik Nuh replied. “I don’t know why I can’t move it. I did everything, it did not even budge. I have tried and tried, but it is still there. I will try again tomorrow. Now, I have to get ready for the sea,” he added. “It’s okay, Father. Just try again tomorrow,” Encik Walek said.

As promised, Encik Nuh tried it again the next day. However, the result was still the same as the day before. The cannon never

budged. The day ended as the previous day. It happened for several days.

Day after day, Encik Nuh tried to move the cannon and he failed every time. He could not move the cannon. Encik Nuh became more and more curious about it.

“Why can’t I move it?” he thought. “Did they install the cannon here with some sort of ritual? Do I need to perform certain ceremony to be able to lift it?”

Encik Nuh thought hard about the cannon and how to move it. He became restless. He tried everything humanely possible to get the job done, with no result.

He tried to recite prayers and perform certain rituals with a hope to get the strength to lift the cannon. However, whatever he did, he still could not do it. The cannon was still standing at its spot in the front yard.

Seeing that, Encik Walek began to feel worry and sorry for her husband. She had noticed some changes in Encik Nuh. Since he failed to move the cannon, Encik Nuh started to become broodier. He seldom spoke, always deep in thought. He began to lose appetite.

At first, Encik Walek was patient waiting for her husband to move the cannon. She even encouraged him, reminding him to be

patient and to keep trying. However, as time passed, Encik Walek began to lose her patience. She felt sorry for her husband.

Encik Walek began to suggest to her husband, at dinner, to stop trying.

“Father, it is alright if we cannot move the cannon. Just stop it. . . let it be. You barely eat, you barely sleep. It is not healthy. You have lost weight because of it. Just let the cannon where it is, Father.”

“No, Mother. I have to keep trying. After all I’ve done, how can I stop now? Who knows, maybe I can move it tomorrow?” Encik Nuh still did not give up. His curiosity got the best of him. He had to find a way to move the cannon.

Encik Nuh became more and more resolved to do it. He began with the intention to clear their front yard. Now, he felt embarrassed that he, a husband and a descendant of the Sultan, could not move a stupid cannon. That was why he wanted to prove that he could move the cannon.

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, but Encik Nuh still failed. Encik Walek told him to stop.

Encik Walek realized that this small matter of moving the cannon had taken its toll on their relationship. It had even affected Encik Nuh’s relationship with their neighbors. Encik Nuh became

distant from other people. All his time was spent to solve the problem. He barely had time to see their neighbors. Sometimes, he even refused to see anyone all day, even though people still came to his house. The children who usually listened to his stories every afternoon now could not do it anymore, because Encik Nuh had no time for them.

Encik Walek felt bad and embarrassed because her husband had changed.

She tried to represent him meeting the neighbors and guests coming to their house, even though she did not possess the skills to help them, because her knowledge was not as vast as her husband's.

That was why Encik Walek reminded her husband more and more often to stop trying. They had to save their relationship with the neighbors, and with each other. The more she told him to stop, the more he felt bad. He felt that he was a failure because he could not even move a small cannon. Moreover, his wife had stopped encouraging and supporting him.

Encik Walek felt the same. She was worried and sad because her husband had changed. He never listened to what she said anymore. This had made her angry that sometimes she spoke harshly to him.

“Let it go, Father. If you cannot do it, I will do it for you.”

Hearing such discouraging words, Encik Nuh became more and more restless. Instead of listening to his wife to forget about the cannon, he became more and more angry.

One day, he said, “Ah, I have tried to move it for days without result. How can you do it? Drop it, Mother. Let me do what I have to do. If it worries you, forget about it. Don’t think about it. You will never be able to lift it, let alone move it.”

Every day, the family grew apart. Encik Nuh and Encik Walek became more and more distant from each other. Because of the cannon, the husband and wife began to feel like strangers. On one hand, Encik Nuh who was embarrassed that he could not move the cannon became more and more sensitive and emotional.

On the other hand, Encik Walek became restless and impatient because her husband had changed. She did not understand why he would not just let the matter go.

One day, because he felt that he had enough of Encik Walek’s nagging, Encik Nuh said to his wife, “Mother, you keep commenting on my work every day. If you are so good, go ahead and do it. If you can lift and move this cannon, I admit that you are better than me.”

Even though Encik Nuh said that he would admit that his wife was greater than him if she was able to move the cannon, he never truly believed it.

He was sure that she would not be able to move the cannon.

Encik Walek felt challenged. Even though she knew she was weak; weaker than men, she tried to use her head to find a way.

One day, Encik Walek recognized something strange in her backyard. She saw it on an old mortar they had discarded there. That mortar had been used to pound rice before Encik Walek decided to stop using it. The wood had become weakened and worn with age. That was why Encik Walek discarded the mortar and kept it under their house, in the backyard near the kitchen.

In the last few days, she noticed that the mortar got higher and higher from the ground. This was a strange occurrence. Encik Walek could never guess what was happening.

“It is strange. How come that broken mortar is elevated? What lifts it?”

Filled with curiosity, Encik Walek tried to investigate. She turned the mortar upside down and looked under it. She found that under the mortar, a bunch of mushroom had grown healthily.

“Mushroom? They grow so quickly under here. But, is it possible that these mushrooms lift that heavy mortar? They are soft and small, how can they elevate it?” Encik Walek wondered.



Encik Walek took a closer look on the mushrooms. She noticed that they were not too different from the mushrooms they used to eat. Encik Walek had picked up and cooked mushrooms for years that she knew perfectly which mushrooms were edible and which were poisonous.

Encik Walek often found mushrooms on damp, weakened woods in the forests. Today, seeing that there was a bunch of edible mushrooms in front of her, she was glad. It meant that she did not have to go far to get mushrooms to eat. She quickly plucked the biggest of the bunch and several others. She would cook them into delicious dish.

The next morning, when dawn had just broken, Encik Walek remembered the mushrooms she had picked the day before. The mushrooms had elevated the broken mortar. She thought that if the mushrooms were strong enough to do that, they might give similar effect to anyone eating them. Encik Walek decided to try her theory.

She quickly cooked the mushrooms and ate it.

When she finished eating, Encik Walek walked briskly towards the cannon in front of her house. Encik Walek had a moment of doubt, but she decided that she would never know if she did not try. She recited a prayer.

“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,” she said and began to lift the cannon with both hands.

Amazingly, Encik Walek managed to easily get it off the ground.

“Oh my God! Those mushrooms I ate are magic. They have given me the strength to lift the cannon,” Encik Walek thought, feeling wonderful.

With a happy feeling, and disbelief, Encik Walek remembered that she had to move the cannon quickly, before her husband came back from the sea. She decided to move it inland, away from the beach.

Indeed, the mushrooms had given her superhuman strength. Encik Walek did not have any difficulty taking the cannon. The heavy cannon felt like a wooden stick on her hand. She even used it like a walking stick.

Encik Walek finally arrived at the spot she had picked. She then put the cannon down on the ground, sticking it upright. The mouth of the cannon was now pointing to the sky. She put it that way because she was still resentful. The cannon had cost her a long time and had put a strain on her relationship with Encik Nuh.



“I never knew I can be this strong. The mushrooms are amazing. They have allowed a weak woman like me to lift and move such a heavy cannon,” Encik Walek said.

After she was done moving the cannon, Encik Walek went back to her house and continued doing her daily chores. A few moments later, her husband arrived from the sea. He was dumbfounded when he saw that the cannon was no longer in their front yard. “Mother... Mother... where is the cannon?” he asked.

“I have moved it there,” Encik Walek replied, pointing towards the direction of the cannon.

Encik Nuh quickly ran in that direction. He had to see for himself that the cannon, which had made his life hard, had truly been moved.

Encik Walek, who had followed him, said, “If you can lift it, go ahead and try, Father.” Encik Nuh shook his head. They went back to the house and he admitted that his wife was better than him.

She had managed to move the cannon while he could not.



Encik Walek smiled with satisfaction. She was satisfied because she had proven that woman could be stronger than man. However, Encik Walek kept the power of the mushrooms a secret.

On the other hand, Encik Nuh finally realized that he had been arrogant. He was arrogant because he thought he had great knowledge and power. He could not see that there was something or someone better than him. His arrogance had blinded him from seeing reason. That was why he became emotional and ignored his wife's advice. Encik Nuh apologized to his wife for his behaviors. He had underestimated her. Encik Walek forgave him. The relationship between the two returned normal. They began to open the house again for guests and neighbors.

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Informasi Lain

Lahir di Pekanbaru, 4 April 1983. Anak kedua dari tiga bersaudara dari orangtua seorang PNS dan seorang ibu rumah tangga. Menikah, dan bersama istri saat ini menetap di Tanjungpinang, Kepulauan Riau. Sehari-hari bekerja sebagai ASN di Kantor Bahasa Kepulauan Riau. Dalam menjalankan tupoksi kantor seringkali terlibat dalam beberapa kegiatan di kabupaten dan kota di Kepulauan Riau maupun di daerah lain. Beberapakali menjadi juri dan narasumber dalam kegiatan yang diselenggarakan di Kepulauan Riau.

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Informasi Lain

Aktivitas penyuntingan yang pernah diikuti selama sepuluh tahun terakhir, antara lain penyuntingan naskah pedoman, peraturan kerja, dan notula sidang pilkada.