

Knowing the Characteristics of Bedouin through the Texts of Classical Arabic Humor

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Abstrak: Bedouins are often used as an object in Classical Arabic humor. This is due to the different behavior with people in general. As mentioned by Rosenthal that in Arabic literature, found a lot of stories about the funny resourceful or stupid of Bedouins. Likewise, Moreh said that the literary of anti Bedouin describes Bedouin as savage and stupid, can not appreciate or understand the way of sedentary and luxurious living, poor and do not know the customs, and have never felt the city life, and who is mentioned by Marzolph that Bedouins portrayed as stereotypical as opposed to life in the city, a simple-minded and ignorant, can be easily deceived and badly. From these opinions, this article aims to analyze the texts of classical Arabic humor to see the truth of the opinion mentioned above.

Keywords: Humor, Arab Bedouins, customs, behavior, classical texts.

I. Introduction

Humor is a striking feature in the socio-cultural life of the Arab nation. This is evidenced by the many anecdotes or funny stories circulating in the society, especially about the caliph, the Bedouins, poet, grammarian, slave women, beggars and others. (Ali, 1998: 91). In this article will discuss about the humor, played by Bedouin Arabs.

The discussion about the image of the Bedouins in the literature has been done by some people. As performed by Rosenthal who considers that in Arabic literature, a lot of stories that contain humor, both the names of the characters mentioned or not, as the story of ingenious or stupid funny Bedouins. (1956: 3)

In addition, also performed by Moreh which says that in the literature about the Bedouins, the tendency is to praise the simple, traditional and healthy lifestyle of Bedouin, extolling the natural wisdom and ingenuity of them, and their virtue than those who live is sedentary, sophisticated and educated. In literature, the Bedouins, with a great gift, i.e. cleverness in speech and his memory was phenomenal, can surpass educated philologists or grammarians from city. Bedouins are described as liberal, free and egalitarian, equitable and refused the hierarchy standard of Persians status, brave and able to resist the rigors of life. Literature anti Bedouin Bedouin describe as savage and stupid, can not appreciate or understand the way of sedentary and luxury living. Bedouin described as poor and do not know the customs, and have never felt the city life. (1988: 136) Meanwhile, according to Mia Gerhardt, Bedouin communities in the Arabian Peninsula in the early Abbasid era is one source of inspiration of Arabic literature. The story of the Bedouin Arabs at the time told about the fate of a person who parted with her boyfriend. Story like this often evokes the lives of Arabs in pre and early Islam. Although the background of Bedouin often changed by life in the city or village in Iraq. The inspiration of story was then modified by the memories of romance from urban population in Syria, Iraq and Persia. One example is the story of self-sacrifice Majnun and his girlfriend Layla. (1990: 136).

Then, in Marzolph, was also mentioned that in classical Arabic literature, Bedouins was portrayed as stereotypical as opposed to life in the city. In contrast to life in the city, the Bedouins lived in the desert. Therefore, the connotation that is used in the desert, associated with the character. On the one hand, included the negative stereotypes, such as uncultured environment, hard and brutal. But, on the other hand, the Bedouins are also described as the custodian of the purity of Classical Arabic. In 1001 Nights story, was depicted on the negative stereotypes of Bedouins, as cruel, often betrayed, robbed the traders who are traveling from one city to another; slaughtered traders mercilessly, kidnapped, raped women and take treasures. However, there are also positive sides are depicted, as loyal, friendly, generous and eloquent. In addition, sometimes the Bedouins was also illustrated a simple-minded and ignorant, can be easily deceived and badly. (2004: 496)

According to Oring, the Arabs often describe the Bedouins by the nature of innocent such as Aboriginal and Indians. (2003: 109) Bedouins, in the legend, known as the person who likes to receive guests and generous reflected in the stories and anecdotes. Forms of solidarity are emphasized by Bedouin man is individual liberty, autonomy, freedom, and dignity. Bedouins also egalitarian and express themselves freely. Bedouin lifestyle is simple, hard, very respectful to those around him. (Barakat, 1993: 53)

In this article will be discussed about the characteristics of the Bedouin which is reflected in the texts of classical Arabic humor.

Bedouin's Humor

The characteristics of Bedouins can be found in the various types of Classical Arabic humor, for example in the following humor:

*A man said to a Bedouin, "What is your name?"
The Bedouin said, "Furatibn al-Bahr bin al-Fayyadh."
Then the man asked again, "What's Your nickname?"
"Abu al-Ghayts," said the Bedouin
Then the man said, "Well, we have to find a boat, so we did not drown."
(Al-Hufi, 1956: 53)*

Looking at the words in the above text, a lot of words spoken by the Bedouin have the same component of meaning, i.e. the component of meaning of water, as *Furat*, which means "Euphrates river", *al-Bahr*, which means "sea", *fayyad* which means "flood" and *Abual-Gayts* which means "father of the rain". Then, the man replied with words associated with the same components of meaning, such as "boat" and "sink". Wordplay likes this that makes this text to be funny. This kind of humor by al-Hufi called *al-la'bu bi al-Alfaz*, that humor occurs, due to the ability of a person in a wordplay. (Lesmana, 2014: 38). In a wordplay like this, it takes intelligence to make the answer unexpected, as proposed by psychologists that there are two things that cause people to laugh, that though and unexpectedness. (Lesmana, 2011: 170)

From the above text can be seen on the innocence of the Bedouin people. When asked about his name he answered with sober. Meanwhile, the man who talk to him know that the name of the Bedouin have the same component of meaning, so he responds by using words that are in the same component as well. Such humor can also put in the category of superiority theory as it is called by Monro in his article "Theories of Humor" (1988), that humor occurs when a person sees another person fail to do something, does not have the capacity, in terms of both physical and mental, unfortunate and wrong in acting. (Lesmana, 2014:91).

Bedouin innocence can also be seen in the following text:

*Some Bedouin Arab women used to quarrel with her husband.
One time, someone curious. want to know what causes it happens
"Why do you always fight with your wife?" The man asked for a husband.
Then, the husband replied, "Because the man housed to always arbitrate us have died."
(Ali, 1998:92)*

Why in this text, the Bedouin are considered innocent man? Because, the answer given by the Bedouin man did not answer questions. This makes the text it becomes funny. If such questions be answered with words in general, for example, she did not obey, her husband having an affair with another woman, or else, it will not be funny text. Such humor by al-Hufi, also known as *al-ijabat gayral-matlub*, that humor occurs because someone answers a question with an answer that is not desirable. (Lesmana, 2011,172). In psychology also mentioned that there are several cases that cause people to be laughing, that is because the movement, i.e. the movement of a person who imitate another person or animal movement; speech, namely the speech of a person with his intelligence could play of words, or nature, i.e. the nature of a person who is too exaggerated, so different from the nature of people in general (Lesmana, 2011,170).

The nature of the Bedouin who are too naive, may be regarded as a thing that causes this text to be funny. From the text above, it can be concluded that the Bedouin man quarrels with his wife is common and there is no problem that caused it, so when asked what caused them to quarrel, the husband answered, because the person who often arbitrate them was dead. The answer is an innocence answer, because it does not correspond to the question asked.

Besides innocence, other characteristic reflected in the texts of Classical Arabic humor is impolite, as in the following story:

*Once there is a Bedouin came to the mosque. At that time, preacher were giving the sermon. Then he said to the one of the worshipers, "What the preacher is talking about?"
"About the food," the man said
"What did he say?"
"He said, the Bedouin have not been satisfied if only to eat, without wrapping it to take home."
The Bedouin then walked toward the preacher and said,
"If they believe in what you say, they are fools."
(Al-Hufi, 1956:32)*

Irreverence in this story happened when the Bedouin came to the preacher. Said to be impolite, because there is generally no one who dared to berate a preacher at the mosque. The preacher is the leader of the worshipers that was respected by the congregation. His words are clues for them. The attitude of a person as opposed to the more common ones, will make it into a funny attitude, which by al-Hufi called *al-tanaqud* (Lesmana, 2011: 170). This text will not be funny if the Bedouin was being polite to the priest, as is done by the other worshipers.

Besides impolite, other characteristic of the Bedouin is stupid, as seen in the text below:

*There are a Bedouin stole a bag in which contains many dirhams,
then he went to the mosque for prayers. Bedouin's name is Moses.
Accidental, at the time, the preacher was reading a verse of al-Qur'an,
"wa ma bi tilkayaminika, O Musa (What's that in your right hand, O Moses).
Hearing the words, the Bedouin said to himself, "The preacher is really great,
He knew what was I brought in my right hand. "Then, in fear, he threw the bag and go.
(Al-Hufi, 1956: 42)*

Bedouin look stupid when he thought that the verses of Al-Quran recited by the preacher addressed to him. This means he can not distinguish which is the verse of the Quran and what is not, so it has to fear and dispose of the loot. This makes the text to be funny. Such humor in al-Hufi called *al-la'ubial-ma'na*, that humor occurs, due to differences in perception in understanding the meaning of words between the maker of humor with the intended target, among real or not real meaning, denotative or connotative meaning. (Lesmana, 2014:94). What is meant by Moses in the reading of preacher was Moses, but the thief expected it was his name. Likewise, the mention of the word: *what is in your right hand*, it is a coincidence. The coincidence also able to make people laugh.

Another characteristic of the Bedouin is he did not want to be humbled by others, as well as in the text of *al-Bayan wa Tabyin*, Volume 4 Page 9:

*There is a Bedouin came to a man carrying a dirham, and the man said,
"This is a false dirham, who gave you?"
Then, the Bedouin replied, "a thief like you."
(Al-Hufi, 1956: 9)*

In this text we are told that there is a Bedouin came to the man with a Dirham. Bedouin's intentions, of course, wants to pride himself on the man that in spite of the Bedouin, he have a Dirham like others in general. Meanwhile, the man did not believe that the Bedouin have Dirham, he suspected that the money was counterfeit, or if it was genuine, it does not belong to him, but the loot. Hearing the man's comments, the Bedouin were annoyed, because they feel humiliated. Then, he replied that question with a more humble. The answer makes this text to be funny. Humor like this by al-Hufi is called *ar-radd bi al-mitsl*, that humor occurs because someone intends to mock his interlocutor, but his interlocutor replied with a more painful ridicule. (Al-Hufi, 1956: 9)

The other characteristic of Bedouin are determined to reach the goal, as in the book of *al-'Udaba Mukhadarat*, Vol 1, p 291, which tells us that

*There was a Bedouin who asked for something to Abdul Malik and Abdul Malik said to him,
"Ask the God."
"I've asked the God, but God diverted it to you.
Hearing the answer, Abdul Malik laughed and gave him something.
(Al-Hufi, 1956: 20)*

The persistence of Bedouin was visible when his request to Abdul Malik rejected by diverting his request to God. But, the Bedouin were not desperate, and he responded with a statement that makes Abdul Malik so touched and granted his request. That makes the above text is funny, i.e. the ingenuity of the Bedouin in making the statement. Because Abdul Malik told him ask to God, then he said that he had asked him to God, but God told him to ask to Abdul Malik. In fact, he has not asked for anything to God, it is just his trick. Such humor by al-Hufi also called *al-Qalbwa al-aks*, that humor occurs because the smart person in turning or contradicting anything. (al-Hufi, 1956: 20).

II. Conclusion

From The above texts, it can be concluded that there are several characters of the Bedouin depicted in texts humor classical Arabic, such innocent behavior of the Bedouin. As mentioned in Monro that there is a theory called Superiority theory (Lesmana, 2014:91), the theory assumes that something would be funny, if one

considers more super than others. People will laugh at others if that person made a mistake or error. Classical Arabic texts that describe the innocence of the Bedouins can be incorporated into this theory. The second is the inappropriate behavior of the Bedouin. These texts can be categorized into the incongruity theory (Lesmana, 2014:91), which assumes that something would be funny, if someone does something inappropriate. People will laugh at others, if the person was doing something different from what is done by people in general. Classical Arabic texts that describe the attitude of the Bedouins who are not polite, can be incorporated into this theory. Meanwhile, the third theory is the behavior of the Bedouins who likes to break the rules. Such humor can be incorporated into Relief Theory (Lesmana, 2014:91), something would be funny, if someone breaks a rule that applies.

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