

## HUMOUR AND COMEDY IN ARABIC LITERATURE (From the Birth of Islam to Ottoman Period)

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**Abstract.** Laughing and mocking is natural disposition in human being and it is found in every society in its various manners. It is special human excitation that distinguishes him from other animals and for this natural phenomenon human is known as a laughing animal. Humour is more penetrating when it belongs to a real connection between two things regarded with different attitudes or reversal of values.

This paper deals with the disposition of comedy and humour in Arabic literature from pre-Islamic period to Ottoman Empire. Some modern Arab writers like Muhammad Khalaf Ahmad and orientalist like D. S. Margoliouth are of the view that humour is not found in old Arabic literature.

This paper brings to light this reality that classic Arabic literature is rife with a number of verses, idioms, Bedouin sayings and proverbs that represent the unique taste of Arabs in humour and comedy. Nature of humour in pre-Islamic and Islamic society in 1<sup>st</sup> century of Hijra has been highlighted in this article. With the penetration of effects of Indian, Persian and Greek civilization, new trends emerged in Arabic literature as well as prejudice of non Arab writers like Ibn al-Muqaffa against Arab ruling aristocratic class changed the moods of humour and comedy in Abbasid period. The great figures of humour and comedy in Abbasid, Mamaluke, Fatamid, Ayyubid and Ottoman periods have been introduced shortly and motives — political, social and religious — behind this humour and derision analysed.

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## TERMS

There are many words used in the context of humour and comedy in Arabic language and these are: *muzāh* from the verb *mazaha* means to jest or to make fun,<sup>1</sup> *fukahat* that's origin is *fakaha* means to become cheerful as "fakih" is applied on the person who is cheerful, humorous and amusing.<sup>2</sup> Word *hazal* is opposite in meaning of the word *jidd* in Arabic that applies on the non serious situation.<sup>3</sup> Word *du'āba* is also used in the meaning of humour, jesting and fun making.<sup>4</sup> The other word that is used in the meaning of comedy is "tahakkum"<sup>5</sup> and "sukhriya"<sup>6</sup> means fun making, laughing and jesting.

## WHAT IS HUMOUR?

Humour is a term which may be used in both a wide and a narrow sense. In the wider sense it is applied to all literature and to all informal speech or writing in which the object is to amuse, or rouse laughter in the reader or hearer. In its narrower sense, humour is distinguished from wit, satire and farce. It is less intellectual and more imaginative than wit as it more concerns with character and situation than with plays upon words or upon ideas. On the other side, it shades into fancy and imagination, since it is concerned as they are with exploring the possibilities of unlikely situations or combinations of ideas, but differ from them in being concerned only with laughable aspects of these imagined situations.<sup>7</sup>

Laughing and mockery, being natural disposition in human being, cannot be gained through experience as it is special human excitation that distinguishes him from other animals and for this natural phenomenon human is known as laughing animal. Three elements are components of his natural disposition: (1) impressive or incentive, (2) excitation and (3) objective or function for that he tries to gain.<sup>8</sup>

Some things do make us laugh but it is very hard to say just what it is that these laughable things have in common. We often laugh at mistakes of people or some failing or defects. It means that the pleasure we take in humour derives from our feeling of

superiority over those we laugh at. According to this view, all humour is derisive.<sup>9</sup>

Humour is more penetrating when it brings to light a real connection between two things normally regarded with quite different attitudes or when it faces on us a complete reversal of values.

Most humour from the crudest practical joke to the most elegant witticism or comic anecdote comes from the sudden perception of a relation between two consistent but mutually incompatible contexts. The sudden clash between these two different contexts produces the comic effect because it compels the listener to perceive a given situation in two self-consistent but incompatible frames of reference at the same time. This creative type of mental activity seems to be innately delightful to human beings, at least in the context of humourous appreciation of life. There is bewildering variety of moods involved in different forms of humours, but whatever the mixture it must contain one basic and indispensable ingredient an impulse, however faint of aggression and apprehension.<sup>10</sup>

The modern research shows that the humour of simpler cultures is quite cruel by modern standards. The literature is rife with accounts of tribesmen laughing at the torments of wounded animals and playing painful practical jokes on one another.<sup>11</sup>

### **PRE-ISLAMIC AND ISLAMIC PERIOD**

The ancient poetry may be defined as an illustrative criticism of Pre-Islamic life and thought. Here the Arab has drawn himself at full length without embellishment or extenuation. The famous orientalist D. S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) and Arab writer Muhammad Khalaf Ahmad are of the view that humour is not found in classic Arabic literature.<sup>12</sup> In spite of being stubborn, nomadic and simple by nature, Arab nation were fond of derision and humour. If we follow the historical methodology to analyse the humorous and satirical Arabic literature, we may find hundreds of references in lexical material of pre-Islamic period's poetry as well as in lingual connotation of that period. In pre-Islamic period, poet was considered real translator of his tribe and

defender of their interests. He used to resist and retaliate to other opponent tribes with his poetry by using satirical style to retaliate to his opponents. Humour was prominent feature of satire in poetry of that time. Poet denied his opponent person or tribe in humorous manners and exploited the demerits and weaknesses found in opponent tribe like cowardice, avarice, cupidity, disloyalty, betrayal and treachery.<sup>13</sup>

In the period of Prophet Muhammad (*Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) the disbelievers used to make fun of Holy Prophet in Makkan period to tease him and to stop him from preaching. Ibn Hisham narrated that when Irashi (a stranger in Makka) demanded some Qurishites to help him in returning back his snatched camels, they hinted in humorous way to Prophet saying: “Go to him! He will help you in returning back your camels.”<sup>14</sup> Having fully perceived that Muhammad could never be prevented from his call, Quraish turned to cheap means. Taunting, degrading ridiculing, belying and laughter — instigating were cheap manners, all of which intended towards the now converts in general and the personality of Muhammad (PBUH) in particular with the aim of dragging the spirit of despair into their morale and slowing their continuous struggle.<sup>15</sup> They made fun of prophet by calling him insane person.

“And they say, O you (Muhammad) to whom the Qur’ān has been sent down: verily, you are a mad man.”<sup>16</sup>

“And they wonder that a warner has come to them from among themselves! And the disbelievers say. This is a sorcerer, a liar.”<sup>17</sup>

“Verily! Those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed and whenever they passed by them, used to wink one to another (in mockery), and when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting, and when they saw them, they said: verily! These have indeed gone astray. But they (sinners) had not been sent as watchers over them.”<sup>18</sup>

The Qur’ān also adapted satirical style to retaliate these disbelievers.

Qur'ān uses words of *Istihzā*, *Sukhriya* and *dahk* in this reference. Qur'ān retaliates to disbelievers for their making fun of orders of God as: “Those who slander such of the believers as give themselves freely to (deeds of) charity, as well as such as can find nothing to give except the fruits of their labour — and throw ridicule on them — Allah will throw back their ridicule on them.”<sup>19</sup>

And Qur'ān responded to their *Istihza* (mockery) as: “Allah will throw back their mockery on them, and give them rope in their trespasses.”<sup>20</sup>

Qur'ān derides of hypocrites and disbelievers by using word *bashshir* (announce the glad tidings) instead of threatening as: “So the Hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them a grievous penalty.”<sup>21</sup>

The Prophet and his companions used to make jokes and jestings with each other to make the environment pleasant. A companion of Holy Prophet called Noeeman, was renowned for his humorous behavior and historians narrated many instances about his jesting.<sup>22</sup>

Once a trading caravan came in Madina with different things of common usage. He bought one of them without paying its price and offered it to Prophet. When merchant demanded to him its price, he came to Holy Prophet with him and said: “O Prophet of Allah! Pay him the price of that thing.” Prophet asked surprisingly, “Have not you gifted me?” He said: “I have no money in my pocket and I was longing that Prophet should use this, so I bought for you.” He laughed and paid for it.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes, believers also retaliated to disbelievers and Bedouins by making fun of them. It is narrated that a Bedouin came to Prophet during the occasion of Badar and said to him: “If you are Prophet of Allah, tell me either what is in the uterus of my she camel.” Salāma bin Slama one of the companions of Prophet said to him: “come on! I shall tell you about it, you jumped upon it and resultly, there is a lamb in its uterus.” But Prophet disliked this derision.<sup>24</sup>

### **HUMOUR AND COMEDY IN MEDIEVAL ARABIC LITERATURE**

In Abbasid period, effects of foreign civilization like Indian, Persian and Roman penetrated into simple nomadic culture of Arabs. The foreign effects and ideas gained wide acceptance in literary circles and gradually biased the popular taste. With the prosperity and luxuries that took place in Muslim society, new trends emerged in literary world. It was natural that humour and irony emerged in new style in this society in different manners and modes from that of nomadic style.<sup>25</sup> No doubt many poets and writers are distinguished with humour and irony in this period like Bashshar bin Burd, Abu Nawās, Hammād ‘Ajrād, Abdul Samad, al-‘Atabi, al-Hamdumi, Ibn al-Rūmi, Ibn sakra and many other poets like them. Many prose writers like al-Jāhiz, Abu al-‘Aina, Badiul-Zaman al-Hamdani produced substantial work in humour and comedy.<sup>26</sup> Another group of lunatic poets appeared who mixed up the ridicule and mockery with madness. These poets were called “al-Shu‘ra al majān” and prominent figures of this group were; Abu al‘Ibar, Abu Galāla al-Makhzumī renowned for his elegiac poem of his donkey, Abu Hakīma renowned for elegy of his property.<sup>27</sup>

The humour in style was inclined to sedateness and purity that was nearer to a style used by masses in their common conversation. So we can apply the title of “simple folk style” on it.<sup>28</sup>

We mention here some prominent figures of this time in humour and comedy and evaluate their work. The tradition of humour took its roots deeply in Arabic literature by the hand of al-Jāhiz (777-869) in the second century of Hijrah.<sup>29</sup>

His enormous output included not only work of “artistic prose proper but also theological tracts, works on rhetoric, philological works and a number of books that today might be described as ‘social criticism’.”<sup>30</sup>

Al-Jahiz had a distinguished view about the nature of art and literature. He says: “some time that is taken as perfection by someone is not perfect and that is considered sacred loses its status within the rising of sun in coming day and such is the whole life.”<sup>31</sup>

He was born in Basra in 159 AH or 160 AH, took his primary lessons with children of butchers and then started to sell bread and fish to earn his livelihood by his own hands in Basra and he keenly observed the miseries of lower class of that time and their way of life. It helped him in modeling the real sketch of the life of these people in his words later on. Basra was great centre of learning after Baghdad at that time where great scholars and intellectuals used to gather for mutual discussion and al-Jahiz visited these circles and benefited greatly due to his fertile mind and God-gifted intellect.<sup>32</sup>

Al-Jāhiz attached with great personalities of his time like Al-‘Asma‘ī, Abu Zaid al-Ansāri, Akhfash and Abu Ishaq al-Nazām.<sup>33</sup>

He introduced modern trends in Arabic literature and founded new style of humour and satire in prose.<sup>34</sup> He was neither inclined to the method of traditionists, as Ahmad Zaki comments about him,<sup>35</sup> nor he was pious and virtuous like them but he was strongly inclined to the “Mutakallimūn” and interested in their controversies. But, on other hand, he could not refrain from speaking nonsense to whom he acquainted with or not.<sup>36</sup> He left a valuable work in Arabic literary inheritance. His more famous and valuable work is his two books *Kitabul bayān wal tabyeen* (Book of Eloquence and Exposition) and *Kitab al hayawan* (Book of Animals).

He was the first Arab writer who wrote on jesting, joking and humour and edited many books in this genre.

And their names had been mentioned by many old historians, some of them are as: *Kitab al bukhalā* (Book of Misers), “*Kitab al nawadir*” (Book of Jokes), *kitab nawadar al Hasan* (Book of Hasan’s jokes), *kitab al mulahi wa alturaf* (Book of funny stories and cosmic anecdotes), *kitab ul muzahik* (Book of laughing stock), *kitab al muzāh wa al jidd* (Book of humour and fun). His famous book in humour and irony that is available commonly is *kitab al bukhalā*. His style in humour and fun-making is clear and simple. He appears in this book as the pioneer of humour and comedy narrating the various stories of avarice and about niggards. Although his other books are on serious topics,

however, various aspects of humour are found in them in various styles.<sup>37</sup> His joking and jesting was not for mere laughing and entertainment but it was tool for thinking over the depth of things and it threw light on the shortcomings of individuals and defects of society. He used to say: “No one becomes angry on humour but who is rigid and no one avoids comedy but who is narrow minded.” He more added: seriousness is hateful and humour is loveable.<sup>38</sup>

Ibn al-Muqaffa’ was one of prominent writers of this period who mixed up humour and satire in serious writings. The historians of Arabic literature are not agreed on the exact year of his birth and murder as very little is known about his early life.<sup>39</sup> We only know that he was shifted to Basra city in childhood that was metropolitan and centre of Arab scholars and intellectuals at that time. He learnt there many things from Arabic language and literature so that he became mature in writing style and gained popularity in intellectual and scholastic circles. He tried to gain approach in the courts of governors and chiefs and was appointed on many posts. On the collapse of Umayyad dynasty (132 AH), he attached to the chiefs of Abassid caliphate.<sup>40</sup> He embraced Islam in this period and many historians doubted about his Islam.<sup>41</sup> He was murdered in the period of al-Mansūr, second caliph of Abassid family.<sup>42</sup> His book *Kalila wa Dimna* a translation from Persian of a series of maxims and anecdotes put into the mouths of animals that is regarded by most critics as a model of elegant style and is still widely read to this day, have had a substantial influence on succeeding developments.<sup>43</sup> Ibn al Muqaffa’s work had many imitators and he is generally regarded as the founder of what is sometimes called the secretarial schools’ of Arabic literature.<sup>44</sup>

Ibn al-Muqaffa’s hatred and repugnance for Arabs diverted him toward humour and making fun of Arabs in indirect style. The historians like Ibn ‘Abdi Rabbihi narrated many stories of Arabs dislikeness of Persians. So as a retaliation, the humour and satire against Arabs emerged in the writing of Persians like Ibn al-Muqaffa’ in indirect style as it was impossible to write directly against the Arabs — the ruler nation. So the lava of disgust and hate against Arabs appeared in the form of ridicule and humour

and all that was enclosed in the depth of his heart disclosed in his writings.<sup>45</sup> Two were special target of his satire and humour; one was the governor of his time, Sufyān bin Mu'aviya and second target was Arab community generally. Ibn al-Muqaffa', sometimes, attacked personally on Sufyān. He used to make fun of his big nose in size by saying while entering on him: "aslamō alaikumā" (peace be upon both of you), he meant Sufyan and his nose.<sup>46</sup> He also made fun of many *Muwali* poets and writers as well as Arabs like Bashshār and Abu Nawās.<sup>47</sup>

The trend of satire by jesting and humour also penetrated in poetry and a revolt against nomadic tradition in poetry took place. Abu Nawās often threw ridicules upon the custom of pagan poets of apostrophizing the deserted encampment in the opening lines of an ode and pours contempt on the fashionable glorification of antiquity.<sup>48</sup> The following verses are good example in this reference:

"Let the South-wind moisten with rain the desolate scene:  
And time efface what once was so fresh and green!  
Make the camel rider free of a desert space;  
Where high-bred camels trot with unwear pace;  
Where only mimosas and thistles flourish and where,  
For hunting, wolves and byenas are nowise rare!  
Amongst the Bedouins seek not enjoyment out;  
What do they enjoy? They live in hunger and drought  
Let them drink their bowls of milk and leave them alone,  
To whom life's finer pleasures are all unknown."<sup>49</sup>

Another person who is famous for his humour sense in this period, is Abu al-'Ainā Muhammad bin al Qasim bin Khalād bin Yasir.<sup>50</sup> No more is known about his early life' parents and environment. We only know that he spent his early life in the period of caliph al-Ameen in city of Ahwāz then shifted to Basra where he spent his boyhood.<sup>51</sup> He enjoyed the meeting of many great scholars of his time like Abu 'Ubaida Ma'mar bin Mathnā, al-Asmai' and al'Atbai. He was a transmitter and narrator of Arab stories and reports. Sense of humour is so dominant in his writing and he is so mature in this art that Ibn Khalli kan wrote about him: "He was wittiest of the world."<sup>52</sup> Ibn Duraid, famous writer

and narrator of reports, was mentioned promenades of world. He said: these are the promenades for eyes; where are the promenades of hearts? He was asked: what they are? He replied: “the books of al-Jāhiz, verses of modernists and jokes of Abu al’Ainā.”<sup>53</sup>

Abu al’Ainā uses various sources to create humour as he sometimes inserts verses of Holy Qur’ān to make rarity in his talk. Once a friend from court officials came to him and invited him to his home and offered splendid dinner in his honour. The host was exaggerating in telling lie. Abu al’Aina turned his attention toward whom was with him saying: we are in the situation that Allah Almighty mentions about: “sammaa uuna lil-kazibi ‘Akkaa-luuna lis-suht.”<sup>54</sup>

“They are fond of listening to falsehood, of devouring any thing forbidden.”<sup>55</sup>

Once caliph Mutawakkil said him “Saeed bin Abdul Malik laugh at you.”

He responded by reciting verse of Qur’ān using same verb “zahak”: “innallazīna ajramū Kānū minallizīna amanu yazhakūn.”<sup>56</sup> (Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed.)<sup>57</sup>

Once he asked a person who saluted him “who are you?”

“One of from the Adam’s sons” he said. Abu al’Aina promptly responded to him: “O! come near to me, embrace me, I was of the view that no one remains on the earth from this race.”<sup>58</sup>

It is narrated that once he came to court of al-Mutawakkil’ during taking the meal, he dipped a bite in vinegar that was bitterly sour and it hurted him after eating. Mutawakkil guessed it and started to laugh on him. He said: “Do not scold me O! Leader of believers! It wiped out the sweetness of belief from my heart.”<sup>59</sup>

His letters that he wrote to his friends are the beautiful collection of humour and comedy. Another poet of Abassid period who earned name in humour was Isma’eel bin Ibrahim al Hamduni.<sup>60</sup>

The special and pessimistic tendencies of an age of social decay and political anarchy are unmistakably revealed in the writings of the poet, philosopher, and man of letters, Abū al ‘Ala al Ma‘arrī.<sup>61</sup> He was born in town named Nu‘mān in Syria. In childhood he had an attack of small-pox resulting in partial and eventually in complete blindness. After being educated at home under the eyes of his father, he proceeded to Aleppo and enjoyed the company of brilliant scholars of his time there. Later on he went to Baghdad and met a number of distinguished writers and scholars who welcomed him as one of themselves. The capital of Islam, thronged with travelers and merchants from all part of the East, harboring flowers of every creed and sect — Christians and Jews, Budhists and Zoroastrians, Sabians and Sufis. These religious and philosophical ideas with which he was now first thrown into contact gradually took root and ripened.<sup>62</sup>

Pessimist and septic Abū al ‘Ala denied the more prevalent religious ideas and rejected the dogmas of Islam. He insisted repeatedly that virtue is its own reward.<sup>63</sup>

“Oh, purge the good thon dost from hope of recompense, or profit, as if thon wert one that sells his wares.” He makes fun of religion theologians satirically and denied their views in humorous manner. His famous work that sorely offended orthodox Muslims is the *Risālatu al Gufrān* (Epistle of Forgiveness). Here the paradise of the faithful becomes a glorified salon tenanted by various heathen poets who have been forgiven. The poets are presented in a series of imaginary conversations with a certain Shayikh Ali bin Mansūr to whom the work is addressed, reciting and explaining their verses, quarrelling with one another and generally behaving as literary Bohemians. The second part contains a numbers of anecdotes relating to the zindiqs or freethinkers of Islam interspersed with quotations from their poetry and reflections on the nature of their belief, which Abū al ‘Ala condemns while expressing a pious hope that they are not so black as they paint themselves. Like so many wise men of the East, he practiced dissimulation as a fine art: “I lift my voice to utter lies absurd. But when I speak the truth, my hushed tones scarce are heard.”<sup>64</sup>

### FATIMID, MAMALUKE AND OTTOMAN PERIODS

In the period of Ibn Toulūn, a star of humorist poet named al-Jamal al-Akbar rised up. He was companion of chieftains, narrated jokes, humorous stories about the niggards, short statured persons and parasites. Another humorist poet appears in period of al Ikhsheed surnamed by al-Jamal al-Asgar as he enjoyed the same charm of humour.<sup>65</sup> The most brilliant and prominent person of this period is the humorist poet called by name of Sebawae al-Misri who pretended to be fool and lunatic to criticize the foreign rule and its mercenary officials and explain all brutality and cruelty that was happning upon people in that period. Sebawae al-Misri did not use foul language nor he satirized with disgraceful words. The people used to gather around him in bazaar laughing, scolding, rebuking and brushing off one another. He used Quaranic verses, sayings of prophet or rhymed prose created promptly.<sup>66</sup> His humour emerged from the mixture of words and meanings so that it becomes the manifestation of magical tricks. He did not mean by humour to make people laughing or entertain them but he was serious and strict in his criticism against Ikhsheed and his officials.<sup>67</sup> His political awarness after maturity made him able to create sober and sharp humour and ridiculous criticism that was wrapped oftenly in cloths of preaching and guidance as he was orthodox jurist.<sup>68</sup> Once he surprised his listeners during his preaching address by saying: *hasalat al dunyā 'alā aqta' wa aqra' wa arqa'*. "This world came into possession of *aqta'*, (dum and mute), *aqra'* (bared and bald headed) and *arqa'* (shameless foolish)." He meant by dum Ibn Buwai al-Dailmi governor of Baghdad, by bald headed Saiful Dula al-Hamdani governor of Halb and by shameless kafūr al-Ikhsheedi governor of Egypt at that time.<sup>69</sup> He used to call al-Ikhsheedi as eunuch and a castrate so his ridiculous remarks for him were more hard and sharp than that of al-Mutanabbī used for him.<sup>70</sup>

In Fatimid period, Egyptian poets show versatility to ridicule the Fatimid Caliphs as they doubted in their relation to Fatima (daughter of the Prophet) for whom they were called Fatimids. The poets made the fun of their proclamation of having the knowledge of invisible and being divine power with them. Such

their ridicule and satire extended to their way of governing in cities and recruiting Jews for key positions.<sup>71</sup>

Ibn Qādūs al-Dimyāti, chief secretary of last Fatimid period was the prominent humorist poet of this period, assaulted on the political hypocrisy, social disorder and defects live opportunism and flattering with his sharp ridiculous style. One day he portrayed the hypocrites of the court as in these verses:

حوله اليوم أناس  
كلهم يزهي برائه  
وهو مثل الماء فيهم  
لونه انائه

“Today people are gathered around the Caliph, they all give his opinion air. And he is amongst them like the water into pots, its colour looks like the colour of pots.”<sup>72</sup>

In Ayyubid dynasty, humour and comedy emerged in new style in Arabic literature inspite of continuity of crusade wars throughout all this period. Qāzī al-Fādīl, minister of Salāh-ud-Deen and his secretary Ibn Sinā introduced the new style of humour which can be called educational humour that depends on dissemblance and concealment and it motivate less to laugh and more to think. Al-Bahā’ Zuhair who succeeded these two poets returned art of humour to mockery and jesting again. The really star of humour and comedy in this period was al As’ad bin Mamāti, secretary of defence and revenue in Salāh-ud-Deen’s period. He edited book titled *al fashūsh fi hukmi Qraqūsh* in which he made fun of Qraqūsh, one of Turkish leaders of Salāh-ud-Deen. Sultan put him in charge of Egypt when he was engaged in crusades for sometime. Ibn Mamāti depicted him and his orders in ridiculous style ridiculously and portrayed him as he was ediot, negligent and narrow minded.<sup>73</sup>

After crusade war a new period of abundance and prosperity started in Mameluke period and Arabic literature acquainted with new kinds of humour, ridicule, jesting and comedy, where as humorist poets and writers introduced various styles of humour and comedy. As a routine, humour and comedy of this period

revolves around the politics and politicians especially Turks and it varied between disgusting dissemblance and open vivid stern satire. The Sultan Baibrus was specially victim of these poets as viceroy of Tartars. One of Mamaluke governors called Tushtumar was named *himmis akhzar* (green chick-pea) by people.<sup>74</sup> Poets used his title ridiculously making fun of his personality. Poets extended humour pertaining on verbal dissemblance and their purpose of playing upon words was not only creating joke and jesting but its real purpose was to criticize sharply. This period is distinguished with two new types in the field of chanting humorous poetry. Stationers, barbers and butchers reputed in this field for their poetical art in this period. Thus, humorist poem of strophic form (al-zajjal) profounding with joke and jesting in colloquial language pervaded and dominated in this period. Ibn Sudūn, writer of *nuzhatul nafūs wa muzhiq il 'abūs* was one of the famous composers of strophic poem in this period and large part of his collection is pertaining on the poems written in colloquial language that is not more different from the modern local language spoken in Egypt.<sup>75</sup>

In same period Arab world acquainted with a new type public entertainment and that was public theater that was known by the name of shadow play (khayāl al-Zill) and diverted to *arajūze* (odes composed in meter of *rajaz* in Arabic). It is believed that word “arajoz” is changing form of *Karakoze* that was applied on image of shadow play in Syria and Turkey and it was taken from the word of “Qaraqoosh” that Ibn Mamāti used for jesting in his book *al fashūsh fi hukmi qraqūsh*.<sup>76</sup> It is also believed that theater’s image of shade flew off from China to Arab world in sixth century after Hijra and flourished in the same century to such extent that a great humorist poet of this period, Ibn Daniel, devoted his all life for humorist joking theater and composed three dramas: *Taif ul Khayal* (spectrum of image), *Ajeeb wa Gareeb* (strange and wondrous) and *Mutayyam* (infatuated) in the period of al Zahir Baibrus. He depicted social and cultural life ridiculously in his first play, made fun of various professional in second and derided of lovers and their tricks in third play.<sup>77</sup>

Under the auspices of Ottoman Empire, political humour developed in the circle of masses. For instance, famous poet Yousaf Sharbeeni composed a long ode in colloquial language in his book *hazzul quhūf* (shaking of skulls) and derided the poverty of Arab masses criticizing the Ottoman administrations.<sup>78</sup>

The vast collection of verses and prose narrated by historians of Arabic literature shows that Arabs were fun loving, jolly in mood and comical by nature. The opinion of Orientalist D. S. Margoliuth and Egyptian writer Muhammad Khalaf Ahmad that humour is not found in Old Arabic literature, is not correct. Collection of al-Jahiz, Ibn al-Muqaafa and Abu al-‘Aina, etc. represents the trends of Arabs in humour and fun. It shows the standers of their taste in mockery, fun making, jesting and humour.

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