

Comparing Nashrudin Hoja, Juha and Mullah Nashrudin: Finding Out Humor in Middle East Culture

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Abstract

The name of Nashrudin Hoja seems to be recognized by people in the world with their humorous anecdotes. Some research have studied Nashrudin Hoja with historical approach. This article use approach of humor and semiotic of fiction. From the analysis, is concluded that the figure of Nashrudin Hoja and Juha are real while character of Mullah Nashrudin is fictional. All stories of Nashrudin Hoja, Juha and Mullah Nashrudin contain humorous elements with different shapes and types. The stories of Nashrudin Hoja and Juha are anecdotes styled because the characters are real even though the stories do not necessarily exist, while the stories of Mullah Nashrudin are more fictional. The text of Mullah Nashruidin is more complex and difficult to understand, because the text aims to convey certain teachings to the readers through humor. Meanwhile, the texts of Nashrudin Hoja and Juha are merely more entertainment than for the educative purposes.

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20 **Index terms**— Nashrudin Hoja, humor, Arabic culture, Turki, Persia.

1 Introduction

21 Some researcher have studied Nashrudin Hoja with historical approach. They mentioned that Nashrudin Hoja was an adaptation of the character "Juha" known in literature, folklore and culture of Arabs in the 7th century. When the Ottoman Turks controlled the Arab region in the 16 th century, they adapted the characters Juha into Turkish, and rename the character to be Nasruddin Hoja. After that, in medieval times, when the contact between Turkish and Persian cultures existed, the Persians also adapted the character of Arabs and Turks and named it as "Mullah Nashruidin". This article use approach of humor and semiotic of fiction for analyzing texts of humor from these characters, because it is more interesting and suitable than the previous one.

2 II.

22 Who is Nashrudin Hoja? Sawhney (2004) states that every year in Turkey was held a festival called "Nasruddin Hoja International Festival". The festival is held on a large scale on 5-10 July in a city where Nashrudin Hoja allegedly buried. This festival provides an opportunity for writers and artists to display their works on drama, film, music, animation and painting to preserve the memories of legendary Nashrudin Hoja. His grave is often visited by Author: Faculty of Humanity, University of Indonesia. e-mail: malessutiasumarga@yahoo.com many people. Nashrudin stories show the great influence of Sufism, so some people think that he is a Sufi. The stories are humorous stories about the people and their lifestyles in the past. Usually, they contain hidden meaning of moralities and can be interpreted in various levels of human life and are short observation about people from different aspects of life, such as the life of ordinary people, beggars, kings, scholars, politicians, scholars, merchants, soldiers and others. Some stories contain for instance told about him, his wife and a faithful donkey.

23 Meanwhile, Burak Sansal (2010) mentioned that Nasruddin Hoja was born in 1208, in a village near the town Hortu Sivrihisar (near Afyon), in the western part of Central Anatolia. In 1237 he moved to the City Aksehir to study with renowned scholars at that time, namely Sayid Mahmud Hayrani and Sayid Haci Ibrahim. He

43 served as a Muslim judge (qadi) until 1284 which was the date of his death. Hoja Nasruddin was a philosopher,
 44 smart and wise man with a great sense of humor. The story spread almost everywhere in the world, among
 45 the tribes in Turkey itself, as well as in Persia, Arabia, Africa and along the Silk Road to China, India, and
 46 Europe. But, of course, for about 700 years not all of these stories using Hoja attribute. Most of the stories are
 47 collection of humorous stories not only from Turkey, but also from other stories in the World. Hoja in Turkish
 48 means "teacher", also known in the world by various names, for example, the Turks called Nasreddin Hoca, the
 49 Kazakhstan named Koja Nasreddin, the Greeks called Nasreddin Hoja, People of Azerbaijan and Iran called him
 50 Molla or Mulla Nasreddin, the Arabs called Juha and Tajikistan people called him Mushfiqi.

51 Juha,-who refers to the original name which was adapted by the Turks into Nashrudin Hoja-, according to
 52 Jayyusi (2010) is a traditional figure who has countless funny anecdotes. His characters are so diverse, ranging
 53 from a wise people to a foolish one. His humors are also varied, from painful to joyful humors. Helmke (2007) said
 54 that Juha is an interesting folklore figure in North Africa and the Middle East. Some figures are characterized as
 55 a funny people and also a wise leader. He could solve many problems that people were unable to deal with. Some
 56 cases, the story tells about the wisdom and other about the entertainment. However, there are many knowledge
 57 or insight that can be drawn from the stories of Juha.

58 Haqqiyah (2010), Juha mentioned that the real name of Juha was Abu al-Ghushni ibn Thabit al-Dujayni
 59 Fazaari (60-160 AH / 680-777 AD). Many people wonder whether or not that the famous figure of Juha with full
 60 of funny stories is a real person? In fact, Juha is a real funny character, although his name was not mentioned
 61 in the history. In Arabic, the name of Juha has become a symbol in art and humor. Thousands of anecdotes
 62 or humorous stories for centuries came from his mouth. People may forget his historical roots, but they can not
 63 and will never forget him in the context of his humorous characters. Although there are a lot of humor in the
 64 Arab stories and cultures, the Juha is still the most famous figure and still exist today in the Arab literature,
 65 folklore and culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that Juha could live a hundred years. The story of Juha
 66 that is still prominent and influential till today is not only because of his creativity in writing and expression
 67 but rather showing the genuine expression of the Arabs in general. In the past people used to divide the story of
 68 Juha into two major characters; Juha who was stupid and crazy and Juha who was are clever and smart. Now
 69 people categorize it into various themes, according to its content. There are political, social and cultural themes.
 70 However, the influence of Juha is not confined to political and social criticism, but also reflects other aspects,
 71 such as psychology and aesthetics. Juha's stories are about the reality of his situation and other people.

72 At the beginning the funny story of Juha was oral stories and then converted into written form. The story of
 73 Juha is categorized into a popular culture that depicts more stories of ordinary people, not deals with the sexual
 74 and vulgar stories of the upper-class society. The stories of Juha depict everyday life narratives, like going to the
 75 market to buy a head of roasted lamb or spending the night with neighbors. Then, on the 17th and 18th century,
 76 it emerged a collection of stories about the humor of Juha containing obscene languages (sexual exposures) using
 77 local dialects. In addition, there are also stories of Juha inserted into a book of literary and anecdotes without
 78 mentioning the name of the author (Hanna 2003).

79 Through his unique style which combines elements of humor and wisdom at once, Juha was considered as a
 80 spokesperson of Arab people in all aspects of life. He was an adviser, jurist, philosopher, wise man, comedian
 81 and mediator of people's hearts in all events of everyday life. The purposes of these funny stories are to improve
 82 the social and moral decays as much as possible and to give social critiques of society. Juha was smart enough.
 83 It can be seen from the topic he dealt in which he talked about specific problems surrounding him as well as
 84 true and real problems. He opposed those who did not describe something correctly. Many events that occur
 85 in society are not portrayed correctly and surrender to realities and conditions. The stories of Juha are parts of
 86 his personal ideals and purposes of his life. (Barakat 2007) However, mentioned that when the Ottoman Turks
 87 controlled the Arab region in the 16th century AD, they adapted the story Juha into Turkish and change it as
 88 Nasruddin Hoja. Later, in medieval times, when the contact between the Turkish and Persian culture occured,
 89 the Persians also adapted the story from the Arab and Turkish and named it as Mullah Nasruddin.

90 Then, who is the actual name of Mullah Nashrudin? The oldest story of Mullah Nashrudin contained in the
 91 book "Saltukname", written in 1480, which mixed with other folklores and legends. The book mentions that
 92 Nashrudin was born in a village in Turkey, named Sivrihisar, in 1208. Other sources mention that Nashrudin
 93 was born in the village of Horto, near Sivrihisar. Later, he moved to Aksehir in 1237 and died in 1284. Mullah
 94 Nashrudin was a Sufi who left the worldly life. The word Mullah in Arabic means "priest" or "ulama". Therefore
 95 mullah is a legend in several countries in Central Asia, including Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Tajikistan and other
 96 countries that each claimed that Mullah Nashrudin was born there. Even Uzbekistan people claim that Mullah
 97 Nashrudin was born in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. The story of Mullah Nashrudin is also very popular in North
 98 Africa, Greece, Italy, France, Pakistan, the United States and others. Seeing his places of birth as described
 99 above, therefore Mullah Nashrudin is a different name for Nashrudin Hoja (Sawhney 2004) No one knows where
 100 and when Mullah Nashrudin was born. He was a classic character created by the adherents of Sufis in order
 101 to reach in a certain level of sufi teachings which is a part of Sufi mysticism. Mullah Nashrudin is a character
 102 whose behaviors are difficult to be followed and his personality never dies. He is a message, not a figure for Sufis
 103 so that his history and place of death is unknown. (Yadav 2007). Mullah Nashrudin was the most clever and
 104 smart person in the human history. For centuries, he made people around the world to laugh. ??awhney (2004:7)
 105 mentions that there is a famous writer from Afghanistan, Idris Shah, who collected hundreds of stories of Mullah

106 Nashrudin into a book that consists of three volumes. The Sufis use the story of Mullah Nashrudin as a means
107 to insert the teachings of Sufism in the simple way. Many stories from the great Sufi poets, such as Jalaludin
108 Rumi, Hafiz and Sadi, are retold in the story of Mullah Nashrudin. Many of such stories contain the elements of
109 Mullah Nashrudin humor and usually end by a question. (Sharma 2002) In an article entitled asy -syakhshiyah
110 in Juha asy -syakhshiyah al-Haqiqiyah (2010) it is clearly III. The Humor of Nashrudin Hoja, Juha and Mullah
111 Nashrudin

112 To find the difference of the three anecdotal figures, the sub-chapter will analyze one story from each character.
113 First story that the author will discuss below derived from Burak Sansal (2010):

114 One day, a few people from Aksehir joked to Nashrudin Hodja, "Hey, Hodja, you are said that your level are
115 higher than the saints. Try to prove it! " Of course, Nashrudin Hodja can not answer it, but because he was kept
116 pressed, he finally answered, "Yes, that is, approximately" "The saints got supernatural powers and they ever
117 showed his power to the people. If your level is higher than them, then show your supernatural powers "Asked
118 those people. "Okay, let's try," said Hoja as he walked toward a big tree in front of him. "Hi the big tree quickly
119 came to me and stand in front of me!" Of course, the tree can not follow what is asked by the Hodja. Thus, Hoja
120 immediately walked toward the tree and stood there. Seeing what the Hoja, then The people of Aksehir were
121 laughing and mocking, "Hey, Hoja, what are you doing? You can not make the tree to walk here, but instead
122 you are going there! " "As a person who ranks higher than the saints, we must not be arrogant," said the Hoja.
123 "If that tree could not walk here, yes, then we have to come there."

124 To determine whether this text is fiction or non fiction, of course the text above is fiction. This is evident from
125 the words "one day" at the beginning of the story. In the English version of the story begins with the words "one
126 day" or "dzaat yawm" in Arabic versions. As said by ??oest (2007) that the fictional indication can be divided
127 into two main forms, namely the formal and the referential. In a formal indication of fiction, there are signs
128 in the text that tend to reveal that we are dealing with fiction is more on its form rather than its denotation
129 meaning. For example, we can find many indications, such as the phrase "once upon a time ..." at the beginning
130 of the story and the phrase "they are so happy and have a long life" at the end of the story. These words are a
131 specific indication for a children's fairy tale.

132 However, whether the characters in this story is real or not, we can say that Nashrudin Hoja figures in this
133 story is real because there is no indication of referential fictional, that is the proper name of someone who never
134 existed but is mentioned in the text. The figure Nashrudin Hoja and people from Aksehir really exist. It can
135 be seen from the place of birth and when he was born. Likewise, other characters such as "some people from
136 Aksehir" strengthen the argument that the figures involved in the story is true, because there are similarities
137 between the village's name mentioned in the story with the place where the Nashrudin Hoja studied, namely
138 Aksehir. Therefore, it is certain that the story took the form of anecdotes. As said by Dananjaya in his Foklore
139 Indonesia (1986) that the anecdotes are humorous fictional story of a prominent person or a few characters that
140 actually exist. Meanwhile, regarding the content of the story could have been a fiction or non fiction.

141 Furthermore, the elements of humor in the story above can be found from the following words such as: One
142 day, a few people from Aksehir joked to Nashrudin the saints. Try to prove it! " The phrase your level is higher
143 than the words are joke words that contain elements of humor. Why is it called humor? Because the actual
144 circumstances of Hoja is not the case since the level of Nashrudin Hoja is no higher than the saints but people of
145 Aksehir considered him as such. Al-Hufi (1956) names such humor with the term al-Tahakkum bi occurs because
146 of the ability of someone to mock other people who have less morality and soul.

147 Similarly, the words: of course, Nashrudin Hoja can not answer, but as it continues pressed, he finally was
148 forced to answer, "yes, that's approximately" can be said to contain elements of humor. This text will not be
149 funny, if Nashrudin Hoja answered with the actual words, like "no. My level does not exceed the level of saints."
150 Instead of being funny, if Nashrudin answered this way, then the story will end up uninteresting. However,
151 because he felt pressured and embarrassed because being mocked by his friends, so he went to say to follow what
152 his friends said. Al-Hufi (1956:159) names this kind of humor with the term the humor that occurs when someone
153 is in difficult situation but is very smart in finding an exact answer.

154 Another part of the text that makes this story the large tree in front of him. "Hi, big tree quickly came to
155 me and stand in front of me!" These words can be said to be funny, because the answer is not what we are
156 guessing. We do not suspect that Nashrudin Hoja would do such a thing in which he walked toward the tree,
157 called and told him to come to him. His response is something that we do not expect to occur. If Nashrudin Hoja
158 did something that we already guessed it then the story would not be funny. As said by White (1955) ??1988:
159 40), one of elements to create the foundation of humor is something that is impossible, something that can not
160 happen, such as when trees may be invited to speak and told to come. Something impossible in general contains
161 a high level of funny effect. This matched with the ideas as presented by Claire (1984), that joke can make people
162 laugh if it contains elements that make no sense (illogic). Nashrudin Hoja did something that was illogic, didn't
163 he? Furthermore other words that contain elements of humor can be seen from Nashrudin Hoja's answer when he
164 was asked: "Hey, Hoja, what are you doing? You can not make the tree to walk here, but instead you are going
165 there! "So Nashrudin Hoja simply answer it:" as a person whose level is higher than the saints, we must not be
166 arrogant, "said the Hoja."if that tree could not walk here, yes, then we have to come there." This text is funny,
167 first of all, because Nashrudin Hoja is very smart in looking for answers. We do not think that even Nashrudin

3 ONCE UPON A DAY, JUHA CAME TO THE HOUSE OF HIS FRIEND TO BORROW MONEY. "WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH THAT MONEY?" ASKED A FRIEND OF JUHA. "I'M GOING TO BUY AN ELEPHANT."

JUHA SAID, "AN ELEPHANT?" REPLIED HIS FRIEND QUIZZICALLY.

168 would answer it as such. Hoja's answer is called as unexpectedness Al-Hufi (1956) calls this humor with the term

169 "DO NOT YOU THINK THAT YOU DO EVEN HAVE A PLACE THAT IS

170 sufficient to raise the elephant? Do you have money to

171 BUY FOOD FOR THE ELEPHANT? HEARING THAT ANSWER, THEN

172 called as al- (al-Hufi, 1956) that humor occurs when someone pretends to be a smart person or to have a greater

173 ability than other people, whereas the fact is the opposite. Here Nashrudin Hoja acts as a smart person by

174 saying, "As person whose level is higher than the saints." This is funny, because actually Nashrudin did not have

175 money; instead of asking advice" (al-Hufi, 1956), the humor happens when someone

176 flipped reversal or confront a situation with another situation. This text is funny, because Nashrudin Hoja flipped

177 reversal of circumstances. Supposedly, according to the scenario that the tree that is expected to come to him

178 and not Hoja Nasrudin who come to the tree.

Meanwhile, the text about Juha that the author takes from Helmke (2007) is as follows:

179 3 Once upon a day, Juha came to the house of his friend to
180 borrow money. "What would you do with that money?"
181 Asked a friend of Juha. "I'm going to buy an elephant." Juha
182 said. "An elephant?" Replied his friend quizzically. "Do not
183 you think that you do even have a place that is sufficient to
184 raise the elephant? Do you have money to buy food for the
185 elephant? Hearing that answer, then Juha replied, "Do not
186 you think. I come here to borrow money, instead of asking
187 advice. "

188 As in the text of Nashrudin Hoja, this text also begins with the words "Once upon a day". This indicates that
189 the text is in the form of fiction, because there are indications of fictional forms. However, judging aspects of
190 some characters, the characters in this story are real. Juha, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, is real
191 even though it is found in the text some indications of fictional references, namely beside Juha some names
192 found in the text do not really exist. The Figures of Juha's friend is not considered as a real figure because he
193 represents a general name. Therefore, this story can be considered as anecdotal because the main character is a
194 real character, but the story does not necessarily occur.

195 However, when compared with the text of Nashrudin Hoja, the element of humor almost occur in every sentence
196 of Hoja whilst only few elements of humor exist in the text of Juha. This is probably caused by the number of
197 sentences contained in the text of Juha are fewer than the text of Nashrudin Hoja. Elements of humor in the
198 text of Juha can bee seen in a phrase: do not you think. The reason why these words considered funny is because
199 Juha started to imitate his friend's words. If Juha did not use such phrase then this text will be no necessary
200 funny. Al-Hufi (1956) calls this humor as al-La'bi bi 'Alfaz, the humor that occurs because of person's ability in
201 playing some words.

202 Similarly, the words: I came here to borrow money, instead of asking advice. These words can also be
203 considered funny, because the answer is not as desired by the person who asked. People who asked hoping that
204 after he gave his advice, Juha will be aware of his false and will not try to borrow money. However, in contrast,
205 Juha replied with such words. If, Juha did not answer it with such phrase that did not expect by his friend,
206 then there is no the possibility of this text considered as funny. The kind of humor according the Al-Hufi (1956)
207 referred to al-'Ijabat gayri bi al-matlub, the humor that occurs because the person answers the questions with
208 something that are not desirable.

209 The last text is the text about Mullah Nashrudin taken from Yadav (2007):

210 Once upon time, a neighbor was looking Mullah Nashrudin bending searching for something. "What are you
211 looking for, O, Mullah." Ask neighbor. "Key" said Mullah. After a few minutes of searching, another neighbor
212 also asked, "where did it fall in?" "At home." Mullah replied casually. "Then, why do you look for it here," asked
213 neighbor confused. "Because here, the light is better."

214 This text can also be regarded as a fiction text, because there are indications of a formal fiction that is "once
215 upon a time". Meanwhile, viewing from the aspect of characters, a character in this story is real because as kind
216 described in the introduction that the figure of Mullah Nasrudin had the place and date of birth with Nashrudin
217 Hoja. However, it also can be considered unreal because as it is mentioned in the introduction that the figure of
218 Nashrudin Mullah was created by the Sufis to teach their mystical teachings.

219 Meanwhile, judging its elements of humor, the story of Mullah Nashrudin can not be equated with the previous
220 stories in which its humorous elements are easily observed from the phrases used in the text. To see the elements
221 of humor in the story of Mullah Nashrudin, it requires a special and thorough. As mentioned in The Encyclopedia
222 of ??ointless (2008) that the humor has some levels. The first level is abstractness. It is the most basic level of
223 humor, humor that is contradicts with conventional things. Second level is nonsensicalness, humor whose words
224 is quite long and wordy but has no sense except exposing something taboo and improper in the society. The

225 third level is pointlessness which uses concepts of humor that is more intellectual, such as irony, parody and
226 satire. The fourth is a comedy that is most difficult to create it. Someone who creates the humor must design
227 an interesting situation and present characters that are different with the existing characters in general in order
228 to affect the highest attractiveness.

229 The text of Mullah Nashrudin may be categorized into a comedy. As mentioned in the introduction that the
230 figure of Mullah Nashrudin was created by Sufis to convey their mystical teachings. According to the author
231 through the character of Mullah Nasrudin the Sufis wanted to convey the messages to readers that human beings
232 always want to get something in easy way. They tend to look at where the "light" appears even though they
233 are looking for something that is actually difficult grasp by naked eye. In addition, the Sufis also tried to remind
234 the people not to look at things from the outside (zahir) but from the inside (batin).

235 This kind of humor by Hufi (1956) firstly it is referred to al-Tanaqud, the humor that occurs when person
236 does something that is contrary to general opinion: the key fall at home, but he looks for it elsewhere. This
237 is contrary to common understandings, isn't this? If the key fall at home, then it should be looked for it at
238 home. Both are al-al-Ma'ani La'bu, the humor that occurs because of different perceptions in understanding
239 the meaning of the word: extrinsic (majaz) or intrinsic (hakiki), denotative or connotative. This Text is funny
240 because there are different perceptions between the reader and the author (Sufis). The readers essentially take
241 the text in denotative meaning: the key falls at home, but look elsewhere, because there is light. Meanwhile, the
242 meanings made by the Sufis are extrinsic and connotative.

243 4 IV.

244 5 Conclusion

245 Based on the description and structural analysis of the text above, it can be concluded that the figure of Nashrudin
246 Hoja and Juha are real while character of Mullah Nashrudin is fictional. It can be analyzed from the information
247 contained in previous research in the introduction and strengthened by indication analysis of non-fictional and
248 fictional in the texts. There is overlap between the figures of Mullah Nasrudin and Hoja Nasrudin. This can be
249 observed from some of stories that at once mention the names of Mullah Nashrudin and Nahsrudin Hoja. There
250 is a reference that classifies a story into the story of Nashrudin Hoja but in one of its dialogues also calls Hoja
251 Nahrudin as Mullah. On the contrary there is another reference stating that Mullah Nashrudin's place and date
252 of birth is same with Nashrudin Hoja. This means, if the figure of Mullah Nashrudin is true then that figure is
253 Nahsrudin Hoja.

254 All stories of Nashrudin Hoja, Juha and Mullah Nashrudin contain humorous elements with different shapes
255 and types. It is indicated in the analysis of the contents of the text that show the different types and forms of
256 humor in these texts. The stories of Nashrudin Hoja and Juha are anecdotes styled because the characters are
257 real even though the stories do not necessarily exist, while the stories of Mullah Nashrudin are more fictional in
258 which there are certain Sufi teachings implicitly expressed. These categories can be seen through structural and
259 content analysis of all three texts. It seems that the text of Mullah Nashruddin is more complex and difficult to
260 understand if it is compared with the texts of Nashrudin Hoja and Juha. It happens because the text of Mullah
261 Nashrudin aims to convey certain teachings to the readers through humor. Meanwhile, the texts of Nashrudin
262 Hoja and Juha are merely more entertainment than for the educative purposes.

263 Among the three, it can concluded that the figure of Nashrudin Hoja is most prominent than two other figures.
264 From this perspective, it creates doubtful among readers, especially the writer himself, whether it is true that the
265 story of Nashrudin Hoja is an adaptation of the character of Juha whose stories are not too famous. Moreover,
266 as Juha, Nashrudin Hoja Juha's date and place of birth is certain that suggests that the character of Nashrudin
267 Hoja is real and can not be equated with the figure of Juha. Of course, this can be proven through analyzing
268 the style and content of the texts. Even Turkish references about Nashruddin Hoja have never mentioned any
269 indication that the figure of Nashruddin Hoja is an adaptation form Juha's story.

270 Thus, the story of Nashrudin Hoja usually is paralyzed with Abunawas' story which is full of humor. Although,
271 there is a story played by Mullah Nashrudin, it is clear that the story is about Nashrudin Hoja, not Juha. Until
272 now, many readers, especially the writer himself consider that both Nashrudin Hoja and Mullah Nashrudin are
273 the same figures. It is because both use the same name, "Nashrudin", whilst the name of Juha is not so familiar
274 to readers outside the Arab world. ¹

5 CONCLUSION



Figure 1:

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