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## **SOME FEATURES OF ARABIC POSTFOLKLORE IN ONLINE COMMUNICATION**

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Postfolklore contains important information about human emotions. It can be used to express routine excitement, contentment, frustration and/or anger, as well as other emotional responses catalyzed by an individual's psychological state, social or political disposition. Arabic postfolklore is an important area of study as it offers insights to innovative lexical units, vernacular expressions, syntax of oral speech (even if Modern Standard Arabic is used), non-verbal communication means, as well as other communicative facets unique to Arabic tradition, etc.

In this paper, we examine peculiarities of Arabic postfolklore with special attention to the creative elements presented in communication. These peculiarities are found in specific linguistic and extralinguistic features of Arabic postfolklore, and are reinforced in everyday communication. Having analyzed contemporary folkloric studies from various domains, such as ethnography, linguistics, and communicative studies, research provided herein will outline a nexus between these aforementioned disciplines with Arabic postfolklore observed particularly on the Web. While considering text and creolized text as principal forms of postfolklore in online communication, we offer a classification of popular Arabic postfolklore texts according to thematic criteria. In our analysis, we give particular attention to Internet-memes, quotes, jokes, and urban legends.

**Key words:** Arabic postfolklore, creolized text, urban legend, Internet-meme, social media.

### **1. Literature Review**

The Internet has become a popular communicative network with special linguistic and extralinguistic features that reveal its unique nature. Oral and written prose have excited various genres and styles of communication combined in the virtual space (Lutovinova 2008: 58). The Internet has thus given an impetus to folk creativity, which migrated to the web and started functioning there as in the real world (Blank 2009: 17). In the context of defining this new activity on the web, we discover that the

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conversation creativity mutates in different ways contingent on the user's imagination. This phenomenon has been described, and subsequently defined by different scholars in the following ways: "postfolklore", or "netlore", "Internet-folklore", "web folklore", "electronic folklore", so forth and so on, although it can be found both on the Internet and elsewhere in communication. The first notion of postfolklore was offered by Russian scholar Nekludov in the mid-1990s. He defined postfolklore as a cultural phenomenon where the texts are developing according to standard folkloric patterns but acquire some features that are not typical for the traditional folklore (Nekludov 2003: 6).

The term "Internet-folklore" as well as its synonyms ("netlore", "web folklore", and others) has several definitions, but most of them have the same implications. According to Russian folklorist Alekseevkiy, the most suitable approach to define Internet-folklore is the one that considers it as a complex of folkloric texts that are created and utilized in online communication (Alekseevskiy 2009: 157). The notion of electronic folklore is also utilized among scholars and it is generally connected to the folkloric texts transmitted via electronic means of communication.

Despite the existing diversity of terms, the very essence of folk creativity on the Internet is studied in many countries all over the world. It is a focus of various disciplines of study. American folklorists use the term "Internet-folklore" and they deal with the description of its main features in the American virtual space. Alan Dundes, who studied functions of "Internet-folklore", considers it a folklore that "continues to be alive and well in the modern world, due in part to increased transmission via e-mail and the Internet" (Dundes 2005: 406). According to Blank (Blank 2009: 17), B. McClelland notes in his work, that "the boundaries between real and virtual have started blurring", and as the result, the Internet-folklore has been involved in this process. American scholar B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett believes that "electronic communication offers an opportunity to rethink folklore's givens and to envision a fully contemporary subject" (Blank 2009: 19). American ethnographer Bronner notes, that the Internet is usually considered as mass culture (Blank 2009: 19). According to Sherman, Brunvand believes that online creativity is not folkloric, although he admits that urban folklore is represented in the virtual space with urban legends (Sherman 2011: 273). Trevor J. Blank gathered several essays on the Internet-folklore by different authors in his work *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*. He began the history of contemporary folklore studies in the United States as well.

Polish scholar Krawczyk-Wasilewska considers the problems of globalization in relation to the "electronic folklore" in her article *E-Folklore in the Age of Globalization*. She puts the emphasis on the phenomena of terrorism and online dating (Krawczyk-Wasilewska 2006: 248). Estonian scholars Mare Koiva and Liisa Vesik describe the essence of "contemporary folklore" and its spread via various Internet communities within social and gender factors in Estonia in the article *Contemporary Folklore, Internet and Communities at the beginning of the 21st Century* (Koiva and Vesik 2009: 97).

There were some attempts to study the phenomenon of postfolklore in the Arab world. Ḥālid ar-Ruwayī explains the necessity of online discourse studies in his book *Internet as a Text (al-intirnit biwaṣfiḥā nāṣṣan)* published in Beirut in 2006, and at the same time he describes web as "a new sphere of creativity" (ar-Ruwayī 2006: 3). In the 2014 article *E-folklore and Cyber-communication among Emiraty Youth* by, its author, El-Sayed El-Aswad, explains the emergence of a new mediated social sphere and the articulation of a contemporary Emirati identity that transforms traditional oral heritage into an innovative form of electronic folk heritage (El-Aswad 2014: 150).

Russian scholars, who are generally accustomed to referring to Internet-folklore as a subunit of "postfolklore", discuss the notion of "Internet-folklore" mainly regarding its content. For example, M. Alekseevskiy examines its specification in the study *The Internet in the Folklore or the Folklore in the Internet?*. There are various definitions of postfolklore, its essence, features, genres, and functions among Russian scholars (Bogatyrev, Kargin, Nekludov, Panchenko, etc.). Also, multiple works and articles were published on the matter of its communicative nature: Ksenofontova's *Specificity of Communication Anonymity: memetics, imageboard, trolling*, Dianova's *Sidorenko Effect: Image of the Virtual Individuality in the Network and Manipulation of the Mass Consciousness*, Schurina's *Internet-meme as a Phenomenon of Internet Communication*, etc.

Ukrainian researcher L. Sazanovych explains the difference between traditional folklore and postfolklore. He names three features – "archaism", "collectivity" and "verbalism" – which distinguish the given notions (Sazanovych 2014: 71). Consequently, Internet-folklore becomes a part of a bigger creative network that we have defined as "postfolklore". Other Ukrainian scholars consider postfolklore as a part of contemporary urban culture (Lysyuk's *Post-folklore in Ukraine*"), or they examine it within the communication studies (Bartasheva's *Interaction of Verbal and Non-verbal Components in the Situation of Communicative Dominance in English Discourse*,

*Hetman's Texts with Iconic Component as the Result of Pictorialisation of Communication, Kapturova's Creolized Texts in Social Networking Facebook, etc.*

Scholars in all corners of the world offer different definitions and renditions of postfolklore, but the fact that postfolklore exists on the Internet is, of course, undisputed. The Web serves as a new platform for transmitting and modifying the acquired and newly formed folkloric materials in the digital world. This networked space enables the availability of exchange using impressions, opinions, and reactions that overcome continents, as well as linguistic and cultural barriers. According to American anthropologist J. Brunvand, the notion "folk" is applicable to everyone who possesses folklore (Blank 2009: 21). Thus, this term can be related to any group of people, ethnic, social and religious, etc., with their own customs and traditions. Any national folklore consists of a significant amount of folk art of different folk groups, big or small. Any member of society can be a member of various either permanent or temporary folk groups. In addition, there are public and private communities available on the Internet and, perhaps, we may note that divisions within these communities are in relation to defined social groups. There is an informal division into social, professional, age, and gender groups, which results in creation of communities with exoteric and esoteric traditions. Public communities are more common, though private communities are gaining popularity due to their prestige. They appear to follow the need of members' self-identification in such communities seeking for contradistinction to other members of the society and aiming at cultural isolation (Koiva and Vesik, 2009: 98).

## **2. Themes of Arabic Postfolklore in Social Media**

Arabic postfolklore is a multifaceted phenomenon that combines elements of western folk culture, urban and traditional folklore of the whole Arab world, as well as regional urban folklore and modern folk culture. Modern Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic, Latinized Arabic (Arabizee<sup>3</sup>) and English are mostly used in creation of Arabic postfolkloric texts.

As a subject of interdisciplinary studies, postfolklore can be examined through different approaches and aspects:

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<sup>3</sup> The term "Arabizee" was formed from two words – "*arabi*" (Arabic) and "*inġlizi*" (English) – to indicate the Latinized form of Arabic language which is utilized in online communication. This "alphabet" consists of Latin letters, numbers, brackets and other signs to express the thoughts of the users in different variants of Colloquial Arabic.

- Ethnocultural (the analysis of ethnocultural specificity of Arabs' postfolklore on the Internet, the effect of Arab ethnicity on the content of postfolkloric samples);
- Folkloristic (the process in which Arabic postfolklore spreads its influence, how it defines new forms and genres, comparative analysis of postfolklore juxtaposed with the traditional folklore);
- Sociolinguistic (the role of social communities on the Internet in creation of postfolkloric samples, the expression of code-switching in postfolkloric texts, the thematic preferences of different social communities and the language varieties utilized in such a process);
- Communicative (the role of verbal and non-verbal means of communication in creation of postfolkloric texts, the analysis of communication where postfolkloric texts are utilized, the content analysis of postfolkloric texts used in various social communities and others).

All the given aspects were utilized to define the principal thematic groups of Arabic postfolklore in social media. Through a qualitative investigation, the author searched for postfolkloric texts in social media content and collected data from various online communities available on Facebook, Twitter and on various social blogs. Although the collected corpus was small, it indicated that the principal forms of Arabic postfolklore in online-communication include texts and creolized texts, "texts that consist of two non-homogeneous components, verbal and non-verbal" (Hetman 2006: 7). An example of verbal and non-verbal messaging might include a text with an image – in other words, we have two components of the message that are involved in the trade of information, one offering verbal cuing with text, and non-verbal cuing with an image.

Through content analysis of texts and creolized texts (as images demonstrate the missing connotation) it has become possible to propose following thematic sets of Arabic postfolklore on the popular social media (for instance, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and blogs like Shabayek.com, etc.):

- Daily life (interpersonal relationships, daily situations, family, sports, health, cooking etc.);
- Social life (social and public issues, online-communication, professional communication and situations at the office, public establishments, problems of social stratification, global issues, environmental pollution, etc.);

- Psychology (interpersonal relationships, intrapersonal psychological challenges, the problem of moral degradation of the human, the society and the humankind as a whole, etc.);
- Politics (the political situation in a particular country or in the Arab world as a whole, global political issues, the criticism of the policy of a particular country, the condemnation of the interference in internal affairs of Arabic countries, etc.);
- Religion (the extolling of Islam, the references to the Quran, quotations from the Quran, the appealing to the faith in various situations, different holiday greetings, etc.).

### 3. Genres of Arabic Postfolklore

As it was previously stated, the principal forms of Arabic postfolklore are texts and creolized texts, and they are mostly represented in the following genres: Internet-meme, quote, joke and urban legend.

Internet-meme is a phenomenon of spontaneous information spread on the web by all possible means, i.e. email, chats, messengers, forums, blogs and social networking, etc. As a precedent phenomenon<sup>4</sup>, the Internet-meme maintains the information about a text, an information source, a cultural or a historical event which enabled the emergence of the meme (Shchurina 2012: 160).

Internet-memes are often represented in the form of comics. Arabic Internet-memes sometimes rely on western Rage Comics with the use of caricature faces expressing human emotions and reactions to some situations or activities (Troll Face, Lol Face, Rage guy, Me Gusta, Yao Ming, etc.), as well as indigenous Arabic caricature faces (*ashābī*, *abū na'āl*, Grandmother, Mother, and others). Western based Internet-memes are often re-styled, making the Western characters look more like a typical Arab in the street (the Yao Ming face with a beard, the Troll face with a kefia, etc.).

Nevertheless, both Arab and Western Rage comics follow a particular scenario, where the humorous effect is achieved through someone's failure in a given situation.

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<sup>4</sup> In linguistics, precedent phenomena are defined as phenomena that are well-known in a particular linguo-cultural community, i.e. these are the texts with specific cultural connotations that allow its recipients to recognize culturally marked events provided in the text and to adequately perceive that text as well (Shchurina 2012: 163).



Figure 1. Borrowed frame and faces of the Rage Comics. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.facebook.com/WWW.MOAD.NET/photos/a>

The first part of the Internet-meme in Figure 1 above represents a caricature face with purposeful expression stating: '*I need to save money as of today*'. The second part of this meme depicts the laughing Yao Ming Face that breaks the money jar only thirty minutes after the initial statement. This meme refers to a daily situation. It provides concise phrases that are inherent for the oral discourse. Although the word '*lāzim*' ('needed') exists in a literary variant of the language, it is predominantly used in Colloquial Arabic. The incomplete sentence '*ba'da 30 daqīqa*' (in 30 minutes) serves as an example of intrapersonal communication. Such a spontaneous phrase demonstrates rather one's thoughts than their verbal expression in the conversation. Together with the iconic component, this text helps the recipients envision and understand the reported event.



Figure 2. *Ashābī* face meme. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.facebook.com/1377364855886852/photos/a>

In Figure 2 above, we see the *ashābī* face (the image of a face with a tricky grin) that depicts a typical young Egyptian who wears European clothes but acts like an Arab. This meme expresses wiliness and gumption, and it is used in different Arab countries. The textual part of this joke is presented in the following dialogue in colloquial Arabic:

- My friend, lend me 100 dirhams.
- I have only 70 dirhams...
- Okay, no problem, give them to me and then you owe me 30 dirhams.

Given the fact that the expression on the *ashābī* face does not change in the end of the dialogue, the whole instance could be considered as common in the Arab world.

While the caricature face of mother (the black and white image of a face with hijab) symbolizes a naive Arab mother and shows different funny situations occurring with mothers and children, the caricature face of grandmother (a wise old lady with a kind smile) is usually used to describe a bizarre event with grandmother and her



grandchildren, to tell a witty story about a typical old Arab woman who can use coarse words (see Figure 3 below), to transmit a story about the wisdom of the older generation, or just for fun, etc.



Figure 3. Meme about an old Arab woman. Retrieved from: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%AF-%D9%86%D9%83%D8%AA-%D8%B6%D8%AD%D9%83-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%AD-jokes-123311397169/photos/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%AF-%D9%86%D9%83%D8%AA-%D8%B6%D8%AD%D9%83-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%AD-jokes-123311397169/photos/?ref=page_internal)

Figure 3 above, with the character of Grandmother, says: 'An old Arab woman got lost in London. She addressed everyone who passed by her with, "Shut your trap!". She said, "Shut your trap!" to one man who passed her. He answered, "You shut your trap!". Then she said, "Oh, you came, God brought you here, take me to my home!". She had been lost since that morning.' This meme describes an Arab 'granny' as an opposite to the European type of an old lady. In this meme, we see an 'old school' Arab lady, who does not recognize Englishmen, but tries to get help from an Arab in a very special manner. She uses coarse language to identify the member of her community, i.e. the one who will understand and answer in the same way. The image of her smiling face suggests the condescension and the pride in Arabs' unique method to deal with the challenges. The Grandmother meme therefore obtains another

implication. It follows the hidden contradistinctive pattern “we – them” or “no one but us”, which reveals, the similarity between Oriental and Western postfolklore in the social media.

While previously analyzed faces are common for the entire Arab world, the caricature face of *abū na'āl*, literally ‘Father of the slippers’, is exclusively Iraqi and it is intended to be adequately understood by Iraqis. This character had first appeared on YouTube. A group of teenagers had seen an old man in worn-down slippers at a market. They decided to make fun of him, but when they started, he answered them with coarse and obscene language. Since then, *abū na'āl* had become very popular among the Iraqi Internet users. They drew the caricature face of *abū na'āl*, and he became a national folkloric hero. This character had been used in many videos where *abū na'āl* posed as the president of Iraq (or the savior of Iraq), with the unique knowledge on how to lead the country to prosperity. In 2014, it was reported that more than 90 years old real *abū na'āl* had passed away, and since December 2014, we have not found any new folkloric materials about him.



Figure 4. *Abū na'āl* meme. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WKrObY4bWE>

*Abū na'āl* meme in Figure 4 contains the text in the top left corner saying: ‘For Iraqis only’. The main text, under the character, says: ‘The speech of *Abū na'āl*, Iraqi

*leader, after the demonstrations on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February*<sup>5</sup>. *The day of Iraqis' rage / the report from the channel for Iraqis only*'. Abū na'āl's character is depicted as a national leader, a hero who might save Iraqis from violence and injustice in their own country. This meme represents a complete imitation of Arabic news, including the symbol of Aljazeera channel in the lower right corner. That is why the text is given in Modern Standard Arabic, to bring the imaginary world as near as possible to reality. This creolized text is composed from video and text. The captured picture was used on various sites to indicate the topic '*Abū na'āl and the Revolution*'.

The main intention of an Internet-meme is to achieve the comic effect by verbal and non-verbal means. Arabic memes use the basic patterns of western Internet-memes and also add some elements typical of Arab online creativity. For example, the neutral western black and white background can be transformed into an enlarged emoticon image. Moreover, the font type, size and color are also to be taken into account. Meme creators use different font types (unlike in western memes, where one font type and color is preferred), enlarge their size and use various bright colors (green, red, pink, blue, etc.) to emphasize the difference between the participants in the communication, the importance of the message, or just to dilute the monotonous speech (as they tend to post texts much longer than texts in the western online discourse). Regarding the form of Arabic Internet-memes, we find the following: meme-comics, demotivators (express what is not to be done), motivators (encourage an individual to do something), *ashābī* (common daily situations with any Arab / typical of an Egyptian event), Herp-Derp (expresses the foolishness, shows foolish people in different situations), *abū na'āl* memes, memes with edited photos, meme-comments on some curious images (of people or animals, some movie or cartoon frame, etc.). It is important to note, that due to the spontaneous emergence of new trends in the web, new forms of Internet-memes can arise and replace the previous examples.

There are also pure Arab-style memes which express either Arabs' life attitude, social or political attitude, or a daily life situation in the common environment. The main character of such memes is represented by an image of a typical Arab with black hair, thick eyebrows, and a beard. Even if his face is smiling, it expresses certain disappointment and frustration. In general, the text in such memes is given in a variant of Colloquial Arabic, indicating once again its pertinence to the real communication.

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<sup>5</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2011, 29 Iraqi citizens were killed and nearly 50 people were injured in clashes with the armed forces that happened following the demonstrations in which people were calling for the improvement of living conditions and the renewal of the political system in Iraq. That day was called '*yaum al-ġaḍab*' – "the day of the rage".

The font type and size are mostly preserved the same within the entire series of these memes, while the color may vary within a single sample. These memes show the tendency for expressing the folk creativity in the Arab web. Other less often used characters are the Arab woman, with coarse facial features, hijab, and the same frustration, as well as the cat, which is depicted as indifferent, sleeping and pacified, or frustrated.



Figure 5. Arabic meme about family relationships. Retrieved from: <https://plus.google.com/+Kharabeesh/posts/MwCMGaA1Xq6>

The design of the meme in Figure 5 is exclusively Arabic. It depicts a daily situation that happens in communication between children and their parents. The mother is portrayed as wearing a hijab, while her son is showed as having a beard. The MSA was used in the first part of the meme while the characters were exchanging their wishes for each other, even though the non-verbal means (emoticons) were used to express their strong intentions:

Son: 'I wish you all the best, the sweetest mommy' (a smiley added).

Mother: 'Right back at you, my sweetheart' (an emoticon of a heart added).

However, the language used in the second part, where the real communication occurs between the mother and her son, is a variant of Colloquial Arabic with some

coarse language (*sīb az-zift, mu'affan*) that expresses the discontent with the situation. Even the cat jumps away from the sofa to confirm the persuasive power of the mother's words: '*Drop it and go wash your stink off, stinker!*'

As we previously mentioned, there are also borrowed memes, in which Arab users strictly follow global trends and rules of the comical setting sometimes even not daring to add Arabic font, but opting for Arabizee. That is how the popular "Keep calm" meme in its Arabic interpretation becomes "Keep calm *habibi*" (Keep calm, dear).<sup>6</sup> The religious folk groups, including extremists (the ISIS propaganda) also use this meme and fill in the variable part in a variant of Arabic with quotes from the Quran, for example: "Keep calm and say *astagfiru allāha*" (Keep calm and say 'I ask God's forgiveness!'), with the picture of a mosque in the background.<sup>7</sup>

Popular and well-known trademarks are also used in the same manner. For example, as presented in Figure 6, the trademark "Nike" with its advertising slogan "Just do it" was transformed into a meme. The image of the caricature face of Yao Ming, expressing nonchalance and indifference, with or without the kefia, depending on the version, is depicted on the advertising image with the company's motto and two additional words, one in English, another in Arabizee. In result, it gives a witty expression "Just do it... tomorrow *inshaallah*" (Just do it... tomorrow, God willing).

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<sup>6</sup> This meme is retrieved from Pinterest: <https://ru.pinterest.com/pin/141581982008495061/>.

<sup>7</sup> The meme "Keep calm and say *astagfiru allāha*" is retrieved from Twitter (<https://twitter.com/llatofji/status/361243374184955905>).

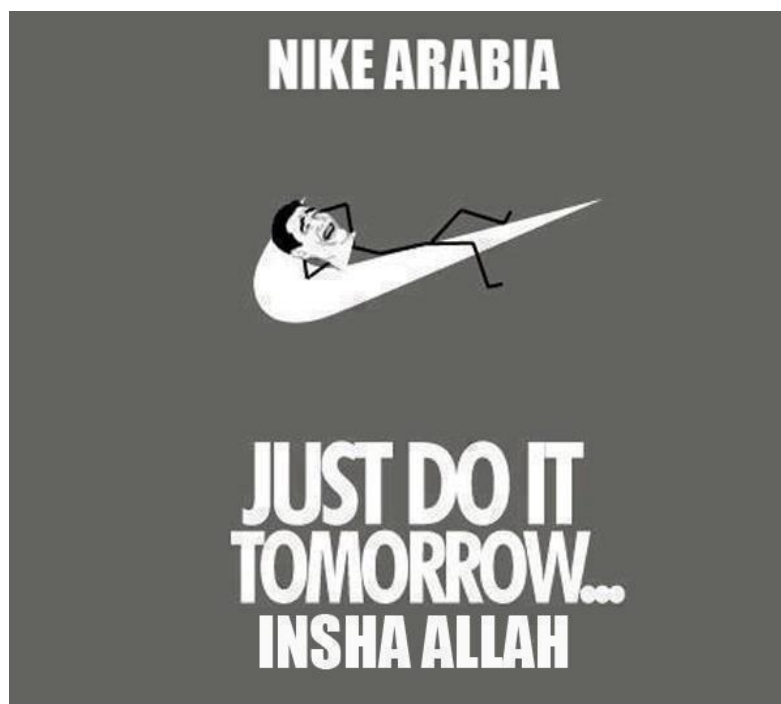


Figure 6. Arabizee meme. Retrieved from: <https://twitter.com/mcherifi/status/211051485893632000>

Social problems in the Arab world are also in the focus of postfolklore. Creolized texts contain photos showing the results of domestic violence and urging not to act like that. They are often represented in the form of chain letters calling on putting the mark "like" and sharing the sample in the social networking. Such creolized texts give an impulse to extensive discussions in the comments that obtain a generous amount of "likes" and sharing. The iconic part of social creolized texts aims to provoke a certain reaction from web users. The images are usually provocative, as they might contain the photos of an injured child or a woman, and thus they do not remain unnoticed. The textual part lies in a phrase *'Iḡaṭ lāyk in kunta ḡidda 'unf'* (Click "like" if you are against violence) as Figure 7 shows. On the one hand, such memes express actual situations urging the society to fix them, but, on the other hand, the given creolized texts serve as successful communicative acts promoting the user's profile due to their chain character.



Figure 7. Chain meme against violence. Retrieved from:  
<https://plus.google.com/11198951326599000152/posts/39Utq6GmK5z>

The phenomenon of quotes has become well-spread in Arabic postfolklore. The quotes can be taken either from ancient and modern literature or from the arsenal of contemporary folk culture creativity. The literary quotes consist of quotations from medieval and modern poetry, various novels, fairy tales both from Arabic heritage and world literature. The samples from traditional folklore are also cited in postfolklore. These can be fragments from folk stories, parables, and proverbs. The author can be omitted due to the socialization tendency of the postfolklore. Such quotes might be statements of famous personalities, not necessarily from literature, but also from philosophy, politics, psychology, etc. Thus, the quotes of Aristotle, Plato, S. Freud, and others are constantly posted, shared and discussed in the social networking.

At the same time, the anonymous quotations represent an essential part of modern folk culture. Such expressions tend to become well-spread and constantly shared modern wise sayings concerning common problems, situations or states that might happen to anyone. The quotes are represented in the simple verbal form or in the form of creolized texts with occasional images concerning the content of the given quotations, as Figure 8 shows. The postfolkloric quotes are simple, and at times, even trivial. However, they are popular because their embedded simplicity is desirable in

the context of adjacent information that has a seemingly endless variability of rote information – governing one’s intimate and undivided attention from other graphics that may be more eye-pleasing.



Figure 8. Creolized text with citation. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.facebook.com/pg/hekmetalyom/photos/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/hekmetalyom/photos/?ref=page_internal)

Figure 8 contains a quote '*It is indecent to tell about absent people things you would not say if they were present!*'. The text has sententious nature, and it tends to become an expression of daily wisdom. Since MSA is utilized, it demonstrates that the text is intended for a big number of Arabic speaking recipients. A dusky but calm background, a dark silhouette of a man at the beach and the light from the moon are all the parts of the composition which demonstrates the enlightenment and the education of the recipients. The words '*ġā'ibīna*' (absent) and '*ḥādirūna*' (present) are highlighted by yellow as the author wanted to stress their importance. As a means of communication, such quote even gets comments in a literary variant of Arabic to demonstrate the education and the intelligence of its recipients.



Another genre of Arabic postfolklore is represented with urban legends in the form of narrative texts: "Urban legends, also known as urban folklore, are fantastic stories that are believed (or at least claimed) to be true. They concern recent events that involved people and places that are fairly familiar to the teller and members of the audience" (Sherman 2011: 479). The details and the narration quality of urban legends depend on the talent of the narrator (Kolistratova 2011: 89).

As Sherman notices, "Unlike traditional folklore, urban legends are formulated and transmitted not only by the general population but by the mass media as well. They may be transmitted orally or spread electronically via e-mail. They are the subject of numerous Web sites and online discussions and are retold visually in film, television, and comic book formats" (Sherman 2011: 479). In Arabic postfolklore, such stories are often transmitted both spontaneously and deliberately through thematic communities, blogs and forums under the titles such as *Qiṣaṣ wa hikāyāt* ('stories and tales'). Urban legends are posted chaotically, which is why it is almost impossible to give a complete and unified classification. They are predominantly arranged in different blogs and forums (vb.roooo3.com, forums.ewaaan.com, shabayek.com, elebda3.com, ahewar.org, forum.hawahome.com, as7apcool.com hayah.cc and others) under the following headings: *Qiṣaṣ mu'sira* ('tragic stories'), *Qiṣaṣ ar-ru'b* ('horror stories'), *Qiṣaṣu l-ḥubb* ('love stories'), *Qiṣaṣu an-nağāh* ('success stories'), *Arwa'u qiṣaṣi l-ḥubb* ('the most beautiful love stories'), *Qiṣaṣ ḥaqīqiyya* ('real stories'), etc. Social networking groups and communities containing such stories are frequently titled in the same way as the given blogs.

Moreover, urban legends represent an important component of mixed communities with typical titles *Ḥikmatu l-ḥayā* ('the wisdom of life'), *Ḥikmatu l-yawm* ('today's wisdom'). The content of such communities combines both quotes and stories from all over the world. At the same time, some groups and communities were named after the country of origin of their creators, for example, *Qiṣaṣ sūriyya* ('Syrian stories'), *Ḥayā mağribiyya* ('Moroccan life'), etc.

In general, the classification of Arabic postfolkloric urban legends can be represented as follows:

- Love stories (didactic, exemplary, sad, tragic);
- Tragic stories (loss of parents or children, results of terrorist activities, domestic violence, etc.);

- Wisdom stories (dealing with transcendental concepts of morality and ethics, such as friendship, love, respect, honor, etc., the moral of different life events illustrated by a "teacher-disciple" situation);
- Historical parables (dealing with the great past of Arabs, about wise men, caliphs, and others);
- Real stories transmitted to folklore;
- Translated and borrowed stories (different stories taken from Western urban postfolklore, translated or arabized narrative texts belonging mostly to real stories transmitted to folklore);
- Success stories (translated or borrowed stories about ways of achieving success with the help of intellectual abilities of a human, the ability to find the necessary solution, and unusual approaches in difficult situations, etc.);
- Humorous stories (both modern stories and texts from traditional folklore, for example, about *Ġuḥā*<sup>8</sup>).

Since the ways of narration are not unified in Arabic postfolklore, we find both texts of strong esthetic quality written in Modern Standard Arabic, and texts written in various Arabic dialects with inconsistent narration. The latter texts are sometimes characterized by a musty style of writing, probably due to the lack of (higher) education. The non-verbal means of communication, such as the pitch, intonation, or general attitude toward the message are often expressed with the help of graphic codes (multiple round brackets, duplicated letters, emoticons, etc.).

#### 4. Conclusion

Arabic postfolklore, as a multifaceted phenomenon that constantly evolves within the interactions and conversations of people, is widely used in online communication. It reflects contemporary tendencies of the Arab world's progress and movement towards globalization. Arabic postfolklore comprises both intercultural and exclusively Arab folk creativity. This includes the culture of a particular country, or a particular community, e.g. a folk-group. Arabic postfolklore shows the interconnection of traditional, urban and modern folklore. In its online presence, it is principally represented in two forms: texts and creolized texts. Major genres of Arabic postfolklore used in social media are memes, quotes, urban legends and jokes. They cover a wide

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<sup>8</sup> *Ġuḥā* is a character of Arabic Medieval witty folkloric stories, represented as a fool who gets in different curious situations. The content of social media uses ancient jokes about *Ġuḥā*, but the new ones where *Ġuḥā* is a modern character, are created as well.

range of topics concerning different aspects of Arabs' lives. The qualitative analysis demonstrated that Arabic postfolklore encompasses some borrowed schemes and topics, but more importantly, we observe that there are exclusive Oriental i.e. Arab images that are created independently and dispersed within Arab interactions.

Linguistically speaking, Modern Standard Arabic, Arabizee, English, and different variants of Colloquial Arabic are used in the postfolkloric texts. Modern Standard Arabic is generally used for educational or religious texts, while Arabizee and Colloquial Arabic are more common in the informal communication. Both verbal and non-verbal components are used to express emotions, intonations, pitch and other aspects of speech. Iconic elements of creolized texts play a crucial role for the interpretation of the context and the ultimate comprehension of Arabic postfolkloric texts.

Of course, this paper is just a modest attempt to examine some peculiarities of Arabic postfolklore with special attention to the creative elements presented in communication. There are many aspects that need further and more in-depth attention in the future. For example, further research may include sociolinguistic approach to communicative situations described in Arabic postfolklore, and the use of the variants of the Arabic language. Apart from investigating what affects the cases of code-switching, lexical, grammatical and syntactic features can be studied in the context of spontaneous speech in creolized texts. We also believe that there is plenty of room to examine Arabic postfolklore from the perspective of ethnolinguistic, and communicative studies, corpus linguistics, semiotics, etc.

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