From old to modern socio-cultural transformation in Oman in the novel of Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-Hārišy

Putri Laluhun
Arabic Language and Literature, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia

Corresponding author: putryialuhun26@gmail.com


This study aims to describe the aspects of socio-cultural transformation from old to modern and to explain the process of socio-cultural change in Oman through Sayyidātul Qomar’s novel by using a socio-cultural approach and socio-cultural theory by Koentjaningrat. The object of this research is the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-hārišy, which was published by the publisher Dār al-Ādāb in 2010 in Beirut, Lebanon. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method using data collection techniques in the form of a literature study. The results showed that the aspects of socio-cultural transformation that occurred in Oman in the novel were the religious/belief system, society, education/knowledge, economy, government and technology, and life equipment. The process of socio-cultural transformation from old to modern is divided into two, namely, the driving factors for the transformation and the problems/conflicts in the transformation process. These driving factors include political factors (changes in the power system), economic crises (trade crises), feminism (women’s struggles for their rights as women), and open society systems (birth of new generations). These problems/conflicts include the conflict between science and the supernatural, the rebels and the Omani government, the human world and the Jinn, and the enslaver and enslaved person.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In life in a country, there are various depictions of social life such as traditions and culture which are reflected in a literary work. As time progresses, the traditions and culture in the country may experience socio-cultural changes from old/traditional to modern culture, which is known as cultural transformation (Sahide et al., n.d.; Yoyo, 2018, 2023). One of the cultural transformations that occurred was in the country of Oman. Since the 1970s, Oman has grown into one of the richest countries supported by petroleum-based raw materials which contribute 80% of the national economy. According to international indicators too, Oman is one of the most developed and stable countries in the Arab world (Al Hadhrami, 2016; Gonzalez, 2008).

Oman is one of the countries experiencing a social transformation from old to modern culture. The changes/transformations that the researcher will study are depicted in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar which is set in Oman which shows life in the Middle East. This novel is the work of Jukhah Al-ḥārisy which was published in 2010 by the Dār al-Ādāb publishing house in Beirut, Lebanon. Omani writer Jukhah Al-ḥārisy's second novel, Sayyidātul Qomar in the English version, Celestial Bodies, published in 2018 by Sandstone Press, made headlines because it won the 2019 Man Booker Prize. This novel is the first novel written by an Omani woman to win the Nobel Prize (The Novels of Jokha Alharthi, n.d.). In this novel, the fact of the transformation of old to modern culture in Oman is indicated through four generations of characters in the novel.

The novel Sayyidātul Qomar is a historical novel which is the main sub-genre of fiction in the Arab world. This novel tells the story of an upper-class Omani family whose characters are expected to maintain traditional culture. shaped by the rapid social changes and consequent changes in outlook that the Omani population experienced throughout the twentieth century and especially since Oman's emergence as an oil-rich country in the 1960s. But, trying to control the effects of social change, the family cannot suppress the unspoken history of unacceptable relationships and master-slave relationships. The impact of a strong patriarchal system on subordinate women and men is not friendly but forms a different generation of individuals, obviously because it leads to suffering and confrontation. The novel tells of a patriarch whose love for a Bedouin woman tears apart his marriage. His wife, following patriarchal strictures, seeks her own authority through rejection of her grandson's challenge to the values inherited through an unacceptable relationship with a man of lower social status.

The novel Sayyidātul Qomar was the author’s choice as a material object because this novel raises the issue of socio-cultural life in Oman which is experiencing cultural transformation. This novel will be analyzed using a literary sociology approach. A literary sociology approach was chosen to determine socio-cultural aspects, socio-cultural values of cultural change/ transformation of old to modern culture in the novel (English,
Sociology is an objective and scientific study of humans in society and social processes (Griswold, 1993; Váňa, 2020).

So far research related to the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy has been found, including that conducted by Madhu (2020) in his journal which examines cultural conflict in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy. Aisha Alhadidiya's (2020) research in her thesis examines ideologically significant shifts in translation by taking Jukhah Al-ḥārisy's translation of Sayyidātul Qomar, nicknamed Celestial Bodies, as a case study. And research by Veetil (2020) in his journal which examines the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy using stylistic analysis.

II. METHOD

The research approach used is a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative research is a research mechanism that produces descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words from people with observed actions (Taylor et al., 2008). The descriptive method is a method that is used to describe and explain data, which is then analyzed using a method that has been adapted to the data (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2021). The material object is in the form of a novel entitled Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy while the formal is the socio-cultural transformation of old to modern in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy.

The primary data used in this research is in the form of narrative texts and dialogues that identify social interactions that show the transformation of old to modern socio-cultural culture in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy. Meanwhile, secondary data used in this research is in the form of books, scientific papers, and articles on internet sites related to the research object. This technique aims to uncover all the problems arranged in the problem formulation. The steps taken in analyzing the data in this research are reading Arabic text and the translation of the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-ḥārisy repeatedly, collecting data in the form of narrative text and dialogue related to the research object, classifying the data based on sociological study of literature, analyzing data that has been classified from reading and matching it from dialogue and narrative texts.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Elements of Old to Modern Social Cultural Transformation

Religious System

Even though Oman is famous for its large population of Muslims, during the time of London's Grandfather and Father, practices related to mystical things which were not actually in line with the concept of Islamic teachings became a culture and tradition that
was very attached to small rural areas in Oman. The novel is set in the village of Al-Awafi, which is a fictional village that is used as a depiction of real life in a small village in Oman.

.. “He remembered the tears and the silver amulet. His mother was eager to take his clothes and amulets.” (Jukhah Al-Ḥārisy, 2010, p. 4)

Customs and Traditions

In the community in Al-Awafi village and Omani society in general, we find many social customs and traditions in the novel Sayyīdūl Qumār which are undergoing transformation towards modernity. Some of the customs and traditions in Oman in the novel that are told include the persistence of slavery and marriage traditions that adhere to ancient traditions.

Education and Knowledge Systems

The novel still tells us that education is not easily accessible to most people. The main reason is that there is still a view that education does not guarantee a person's success in the future. Apart from that, leaving your home country to gain knowledge for most of the Omani people is not easy to do. This can be seen in the following quote:

Based on the text above, there are many restrictions regarding education for the first generation, namely Miya and Abdallah's great-grandparents. They were not allowed to go to school for education. As happened in the era of Miya's grandfather, because
Miya's grandfather's father was a tribal chief. He did not allow his son to pursue his dream of studying at a School in Muscat because he believed that life in Muscat would be dangerous and difficult for future tribal sheikhs. So, Miya's great-grandfather's perception of education was very negative.

Government System

Jukhah Al-ḥārišy appreciates Omani history, by inserting Omani history in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar, which has long been remembered through oral, written, artistic and cultural tourism traditions which are at the heart of Oman's collective identity. The author is indispensable for understanding the Omani people and the country's modern policies. It is history, long remembered and regularly celebrated. The following are things about Oman's special journey towards the era of modernity in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar.

The characters in the novel who lived in this era include Ankabuta, Hilal, and Merchan Sulayman. In their era, Oman was led by Said bin Sultan who had legendary diplomatic skills and considerable political intelligence. In history, Sultan Said led the top of the Omani empire. This can be seen from the following text fragment:

…" Sayyid, Said bin Sultan, signed a second pact with the British to ban the slave trade. In the treaty of 1885, Sayyid Said had agreed to end the slave trade moving between his African and Asian dominions…" (Jukhah Al-Ḥārišy, 2010, pp. 3–6)

Driving Factors for the Emergence of Transformation

Political Factors

The changes in the power system that occur in Oman in the Novel Sayyidātul Qomar are one of the results of the socio-cultural transformation process. There was a change in Oman's power with changes in regulations according to those implemented by the rulers until finally when Sultan Qaboos ascended the throne, major changes towards a modern state were carried out. Before the era of Sultan Qaboos' leadership, namely the era of Said bin Taymur (the era of his father, Abdallah), when he was the leader of Oman, there were regulations that determined which of his citizens could marry and receive an education, such as in the era of Salima's children, when girls older than ten years were not allowed to enter. They will only be accepted into basic adult literacy classes. As in the following text fragment:

"أسماء لا تحب الكتابة المتعرجة ، تتذكر دائما اليوم الذي افتتحت فيه المدرسة في العوافي قبل بضع سنوات، لم يسمح للبنات الأكبر من عشر سنوات بالدخول إلا في فصول محو الأمية التي افتتحت لاحقا..."
...” Asma doesn't like handwriting. It always reminded him of the day school opened in al-Awafi, several years ago. Schools have opened but girls older than ten years are not allowed to enter. They will only be accepted into basic adult literacy classes…” (Jukhah Al-Ḥārisy, 2010, Chapter 8)

Economy Crisis

The economic crisis experienced by Oman triggered changes in Omani society as in the novel, for example, when Oman emerged from the economic crisis due to oil exports, it spread to the stock market and the fall in share prices to real estate businesses during the London period. As in the following text fragment about falling stock prices and real estate businesses:

لم أستمع لابن عقي ولم أشتري عمارة. اشترىت أسهما فانهارت البورصة.

…”I didn't listen to my cousin. I didn't buy a building. I bought shares and then the stock market crashed…” (Jukhah Al-Ḥārisy, 2010, Chapter 7)

Feminism

The most prominent thing is the movement carried out by the female characters in the novel Sayyidatul Qomar when Salima was a child, the struggle of women who fought for their rights as women, by asking for education, choosing their own life partner or wanting to become a career woman like Mrs. London. One example of a text fragment about a character in the novel, namely Khawla, who rebels against disagreeing with her parents' choice of marriage, is as follows:

وأله ولله والله تنقض رقبتي شطفة، لو أصر أهلي على تزويجي من ولد عيسى المهاجر هذا لقتلت

…”WAllahi wAllahi wAllahi! May my throat be slit, my neck carved like a lamb, stunned by a piece, if my family insists on marrying me to the son of Emigrant Issa. I will kill myself, I swear to God I will…” (Jukhah Al-Ḥārisy, 2010, Chapter 21)

Open Society System

The birth of a new generation that appears in small villages in Oman in the novel brings a breath of fresh air to the open system of society, they are more tolerant of differences, more open to change and learning new social culture, such as in the era of the Salima child women who wanted to go to school because at that time schools had begun to open for the illiterate or Al-Quran schools even though their parents did not approve of them. As in the following text fragment:

تذكرون دائما اليوم الذي افتتحت فيه المدرسة في العوافي قبل بضع سنين، لم يسمح للبنات الأكبر من عشر سنوات بالدخول إلا في فصول محو الأمية التي افتتحت لاحقا
…”It always reminded him of the day school opened in al-Awafi, several years ago. Schools have opened but girls older than ten years are not allowed to enter. They will only be accepted into basic adult literacy classes…” (Jukhah Al-Ḥāriṣy, 2010, p. 8)

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted on objects through the process of studying the sociology of literature in the novel Sayyidātul Qomar by Jukhah Al-Ḥāriṣy regarding aspects of the old to modern socio-cultural transformation in Oman, the factors that influenced the socio-cultural transformation and the problems that occurred in the process of this transformation, conclusions can be drawn from this research, as follows: First, the aspects of the socio-cultural transformation from old to modern that occur in the novel are in the religious/belief system, society, education and knowledge, economy, government, technology and equipment. life. Second, the process of transformation of old to modern socio-cultural culture in the novel is the driving factor for socio-cultural transformation; political factors, (changes in the power system), economic crisis (trade crisis), feminism (the struggle of women fighting for their rights as women), open society systems (the birth of a new generation).

DECLARATION

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