

A Survey of Protagonist Archetypes and Their Symbolic Significance within the Sudanese Village Setting of Tayeb Salih's Literary Corpus

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Abstract

The Sudanese village constitutes a significant and evocative topos within the oeuvre of the esteemed Sudanese novelist Tayeb Salih. This geographical and cultural space transcends the function of mere narrative backdrop, operating as a central, dynamic entity that actively engages with the author's characters and thematic concerns. This survey study undertakes an analysis of protagonist archetypes prevalent in Tayeb Salih's novels and short stories situated within the Sudanese village milieu. The investigation aims to elucidate the symbolic significance of these characters and their intrinsic relationship with the village, conceptualized as a repository of collective memory, a foundational source of identity, and a critical arena for the dialectical interplay between tradition and modernity.

Keywords: Evocative –topos- backdrop- thematic concerns-elucidate- symbolic significance- intrinsic relationship - conceptualized - repository collective memory- identity- dialectical interplay

المستخلص

تبرز القرية السودانية فضاءً حيويًا وملهمًا في أعمال الروائي السوداني الكبير الطيب صالح. هذه البقعة الجغرافية ليست مجرد خلفية للأحداث، بل هي شخصية محورية تتنفس وتتفاعل مع شخوص الكاتب وأفكاره. تتناول هذه الدراسة المسحية تحليل نماذج لشخصيات الأبطال في روايات وقصص الطيب صالح التي تدور أحداثها في القرية السودانية، وتسعى إلى استكشاف دلالات رمزية الشخصيات وعلاقتها الوثيقة بالقرية، بوصفها حاضنة للذاكرة، ومصدرًا للهوية، ومسرحًا للصراع بين التقاليد والحداثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملهم- بقعة جغرافية- خلفية- اهتمامات موضوعية- -أهمية الرمزية-علاقة جوهرية- تصور- استدعاء الذاكرة الجمعية- هوية- التفاعل

الجدلي

An over view of Al Tayib Salih 's life and works:

Tayeb Salih born in Karmakol, a village on the Nile near Al Dabbah, Sudan, in the Northern Province of Sudan, he graduated from University of Khartoum with a Bachelor of Science, before leaving for the University of London in the United Kingdom. Coming from a background of small farmers and religious teachers, his original intention was to work in agriculture. However, excluding a brief spell as a schoolmaster before moving to England, he worked in journalism and the promotion of international cultural exchange (Salih,2021) For more than ten years, Salih wrote a weekly column for the London-based Arabic language newspaper *al Majalla*, in which he explored various literary themes. He worked as a program presenter at the BBC's Arabic Service, in London, where he discovered a considerable ability to address people on the microphone. Salih's writing journey began with a feeling that it wasn't a profession, influenced by the Sudanese environment that respects tangible professions, while writing stories and poetry is not considered work. he later became director general of the Ministry of Information in Doha, Qatar. The last ten years of his working career, he spent at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where he held various posts and was UNESCO's representative for the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.(Alison,2009)

He started his first story in London, *A Palm Tree by the Stream* (1953), in which Najwa is a character who longs for his homeland. He presented it to his friends, and it was well-received, but he stopped writing for seven years. He then wrote "Douma Wad Hamid" in 1960, while he was in Sudan, which Tayeb Salih considers his true starting point. His Orientalist friend, D.M. Johnson-Davies, translated it and sent it to Encounter magazine, where it was accepted.

Salih's writing draws important inspiration from his youth in a Sudanese village; life that is centered on rural people and their complex relationships. "At various levels and with varying degrees of psychoanalytic emphasis, he deals with themes of reality and illusion, the cultural dissonance between the West and the exotic Orient, the harmony and conflict of brotherhood, and the individual's responsibility to find a fusion between his or her contradictions."(Arabworldbooks, 2012) Furthermore, the motifs of his books are derived from his religious experience as a Muslim in 20th-century Sudan, both pre- and post-colonial. Another, more general subject of Salih's writing is the confrontation of the Arab Muslim and the Western European world.(Newton,)

Tayeb Salih writes about the village and his connection to the land in a beautiful portrayal of village life. Is this an expression of nostalgia for someone living in exile, feeling the loss of every precious memory of the homeland? Exile sharpens the awareness of what is lost in the homeland and the feeling of displacement when one is away from their native land. One finds him connecting the

person in exile with the details of the village – the Nile, family, companions, friends, and the dream of a better future, of change for the better. He describes English society as a place of loss for the Sudanese person.

All of Tayeb Salih's novels that followed *Douma Wad Hamid* (1960), take place in the same location: the village with its Nile, banks, cultivated land, desert, and even the end of life there in the cemeteries – where he blends real events with impossible endings, or rather, the realism of events with the implausibility of solutions. From here arose the idea of the dream, so his writings are not bound by logical reality. The story is something unreal, even if it is connected to reality; it is a lie. The characters in it are ideas, not flesh and blood. Within the story's atmosphere, they exist, not outside of it. This might confuse readers due to the existence of similar characters in the village community, such as the character of the grandfather, who exists and remains with the village's existence.

Tayeb Salih considers *Douma Wad Hamid* his most truthful work ever. It depicted the harshness of life in the Northern Province, the failing education system, the simple schools, and the person left to the elements of nature without government intervention. Life depends on the Nile flood; if it doesn't flood, life falters – he expressed this through the factors of underdevelopment in developing countries. Despite this, he portrayed the village person as someone with clear values and potentials that need help to become a great force and high capacities. The idea of change dominates *Douma Wad Hamid*; it is inevitable, but change has a price: the loss of beautiful things, so it must be anticipated, and valuable things that cannot be left to loss must be chosen.

Tayeb Salih is present in all his novels as the presence of the idea, the gathering of events, and the drawing of characters, even though he does not embody a specific character, such as Mustafa Saeed, Al-Zein, or even the narrator. His presence is that of the creative writer who determines the ideas in a certain way and who creates the contradictions in his novels and the entanglement between reality and dream – and not as a confession. Thus, he allows the reader to search for the work's meanings and aims.

Tayeb Salih has readings in Arabic literature, for example, Al-Mutanabbi, and in the literature of praise, enjoying its scattered treasures and quoting from it. From his readings in English literature, he was influenced and imitated it, discovering himself through these readings. He was always in exile but not intellectually distant from Sudan, and this is the basis of originality in his writings, especially since he was never rebellious against his environment or his family. Therefore, it was a formative blend, drawing his characters from the village in an environment harmonious with the surroundings and family. London was always an extension of Karakul within him. The source of his raw material for his conscious

and unconscious novels is the environment, the village, and he writes from the mouths of farmers in the Northern Province.

Focusing on the most important features of Tayeb Salih's writings, we find the village as a depiction of the river, the cultivated lands, the hermitage, and the places of worship, and this triangle extends to the cemeteries as the end of life. Among the connotations of the village are the connection to the origin, roots, and authenticity. All the novels take place in the village of Wad Hamid in the Northern Province. The factor of place extends from it and returns to it. In "Douma Wad Hamid," Tayeb Salih described the Sudanese person as thick-skinned, meaning strong in enduring the difficult surrounding conditions, and content with what God has allotted them, describing the depth of their faith, like the Douma palm and the date palm, firmly rooted in the ground, its trunk towering to the sky, its fronds raised in supplication to heaven with pride and loftiness. *Douma Wad Hamid* represents the old heritage embodied in the village community that relies on and believes in the miracles of Sheikh Wad Hamid, and the grandchildren who aspire to modernity and desire to go to schools, hoping for change. In *A Handful of Dates* (1964), we witness another of Tayeb Salih's creations embodied in the characters of the grandfather, Masoud, the contradictions between them, and the character of the grandson. The three characters captivate the reader's attention when Masoud, that simple farmer with a beautiful voice and a laugh as clear as fresh water, invites the grandfather to attend the harvest of his date palms. The grandfather justifies to his grandson that Masoud is an idle man and threatens to take all his land before he dies. The grandson, who loves his grandfather as an ideal, is bewildered and wishes to be like him when he grows up. The beginning of change is near Masoud, and with every look at him, the grandson feels the injustice of the grandfather towards him. The grandfather sleeps during the harvest moments, while the grandson approaches Masoud to the point of noticing his eyes, as if they were lost fawns who had strayed from their home. Then come the moments of dividing the harvest according to his debts and the grandfather's harsh words that there is still a remainder of the dues they will discuss later, and the sound from Masoud's chest as they take the harvest, like the snore of death. Here, the grandson's pure feelings change when he says, "I hate him." (salih, 1964) He refuses to finish swallowing the handful of dates his grandfather gave him and runs towards the river, hoping to wash away the injustice of customs, the rigidity of traditions, and their inhumanity. The grandson then remembers some of Masoud's words: "Don't cut the heart of the palm tree" (Ibid,) and he likened it to humans, who grieve and rejoice. The grandfather appears as traditional, tyrannical capital that has no mercy and does not interact with circumstances, but he refuses to give up the land. It is worth mentioning here that the grandfather came as a stranger to this land, and Masoud is originally the owner of the land, possessing purity, while the grandson represents the new generation that has the right to choose between rigidity and flexibility, between harsh traditions and

flexible modernity. Here, Tayeb Salih reiterates the right to choose and change, and in an attempt to present change in a different light.

It is noticeable at the level of characters in Tayeb Salih's writings that the father figure is absent; he is non-existent, and the grandfather and grandson are like the sources of power in society, while the father figure is not influential.

Tayeb Salih's writings are characterized by their rapid and free movement from one place to another and shift from one time to another within the paragraphs of the novel, without being bound by a fixed chronological sequence. Between present events, memories of the distant past, and the recollection of what happened just yesterday, the reader enjoys with keen interest and recognizes the brilliance of the genius of the Arabic novel.

As for time, it is the time of the necessity of change, and that this cannot happen without leaving traces and some search for addressing the imbalance. Therefore, we always notice Tayeb Salih's keenness on change while preserving values and all beautiful things. This is evident in the idea that the land is large and vast and can allow for the preservation of the shrine and the Douma palm, and at the same time, the operation of the ferry landing on Wednesday afternoon, the same time as the village people's visit to the shrine of Wad Hamid, and the implementation of the agricultural project and the water pump to serve the village.

As for the dream in the village, when the village women dream of Wad Hamid, he sometimes treats illnesses, reduces fever, solves problems, and brings suitors. All the events of the village are linked to the miracles and abilities of Wad Hamid, which surpass imagination and are accepted by the community with deep faith that cannot be easily changed. This takes years, during which generations who believed in Wad Hamid and his miracles die, and generations come who accept modernity and are happy with it. Tayeb Salih clarified this when he said, "When we sleep and don't dream of Wad Hamid, then and only then..." can change occur.

When Tayeb Salih describes Sudanese society, he gives the village a special character. Its soldiers are men, aided by soldiers from nature: mosquitoes, sandflies, horseflies, and others, whose fights make the faces of strangers of the village a battleground for fierce assaults. He once described this through the warnings of the sheikh hosting the narrator, cautioning him not to be late outside after the Maghreb prayer, jokingly saying that he might not withstand the horror of the battle because he was a pampered Khartoum resident. He also used it to define the nature of the Sudanese people: "My son, we are a people whose skin is thick, unlike the skin of other people. We are accustomed to this rough life, indeed we actually love it, but we do not ask anyone to burden themselves with the hardship of living among us. Expressing the strength to endure the harshness and roughness of life, "and we are

content with what God has allotted us." They are fatalists, believers, and content with God's decree and destiny in everything.

He depicted the reality of the village in the story as isolated and far from the main road, emphasizing the villagers' insistence that they have no need for a road. They rarely go to the center, riding donkeys when necessary, but the most important purpose of isolation is that strangers do not pass through the village, not even by chance. The society is religious, conservative, and does not accept strange faces in the village. When the soldiers entered to convince the villagers of the necessity of building a ferry landing instead of the shrine, the villagers threw them into the river after scattering their papers everywhere, and the government later arrested everyone who participated in throwing the government representatives into the river.

Tayeb Salih concluded "Douma Wad Hamid" with a message of accepting change, but change is conditional on certain terms. He said that the spaces are vast enough to accommodate everyone: the shrine, the Douma palm, the agricultural project, the ferry landing, and the water pump. "There will be no need to cut down the Douma... What all these people missed is that the place accommodates all these things. It accommodates the Douma, the shrine, the water pump, and the steamer station. Meaning that if people's minds and hearts were broad enough, change would be accepted, and development would benefit the village. However, the condition set by the old sheikh was that the agricultural project could not be seen, and the ferry could not pass and dock in the village, except after the people sleep and no one dreams of Wad Hamid, no one needs Wad Hamid's treatment, and no one finds within himself a desire to visit the shrine or offer visits... Only at this moment can the shrine be removed and the agricultural project established. "young men with foreign spirits" in the village, suggesting that change will come with the new generation open to the outside world. Or in other words, when a generation that was attached with all its senses to Wad Hamid and his miracles passes away, and a generation arises that does not believe in him and considers him a myth from the myths of the ancestors that have long exhausted and burdened the descendants.

The ending of the story leaves room for interpretation. It can be understood in several ways: Emphasis on the power of tradition: The ending shows the depth of rooted popular beliefs and the difficulty of uprooting them easily. Possibility of reconciliation: The elder hints at the possibility of coexistence between the past and the present, and between heritage and modernization, instead of the complete exclusion of one by the other. Gradual change: The elder's answer suggests that real change may come slowly and through the new generations who carry different ideas.

Critique of hasty modernization: The ending can be seen as a critique of hasty attempts to impose modernization without considering local values and beliefs.

Overall, the ending of "Douma and Wad Hamid" is not a decisive conclusion but rather a contemplation on the nature of change and the conflict between the old and the new, leaving the reader with space to reflect on this ongoing struggle.

Tayeb Salih developed the village community in his portrayal of the village in "A Handful of Dates" when he depicted the village through three sides: the mosque and the hermitage, the vast green fields, and the river, that great giant that bends left and right as it pleases. The symbolism of the handful of dates depicts the customs and traditions that grandparents give to their grandchildren with all love, thinking it is all good. The writer began "A Handful of Dates" with that handful that the grandson took from the grandfather, which represented all the knowledge the boy gains about the village people, and this was through a conversation about Masoud, who, like Tayeb Salih's characters, has a share in his name, for his laughter is a clear laughter that is heard like the gurgling of fresh water, and God has blessed him with a beautiful singing voice. Masoud always talked to the children about the palm trees and advised them not to cut the heart of the palm tree, and that it is like a human being, it rejoices, grieves, and feels pain. Tayeb Salih likened the palm tree to the Sudanese person, with its roots that strike the earth deeply and firmly, its strong, massive trunk rising loftily to the sky, and the palm fronds opening their hands, asking God for forgiveness, mercy, protection, and lawful sustenance.

The character of the grandfather appears with a degree of strength, pride, and purity at the beginning of the short story, surrounded by dignity and splendor, and he tells the grandson that he wishes, when he grows up, to be like his grandfather, whom he sees as a role model. He would do his utmost to please this grandfather, exemplified by reading some verses of the Holy Quran, bringing the ewer for ablution whenever the call to prayer was made in preparation for prayer, and his awareness of when to speak and when to remain silent according to the grandfather's pleasure. It is worth noting that Tayeb Salih did not name these two characters with proper nouns – perhaps because the two characters are typical, representing two generations, and there is no father figure, so between the past and the future, the image of the present fades.

After attending the date harvest from Masoud's field, the grandson's feelings towards the grandfather changed. He was no longer that loving follower of his beloved, nor that one who wished to become like him when he grew up, but rather a feeling within the grandson that he was getting closer to Masoud, so he saw him as helpless, especially at the moment of dividing the harvest according to religious principles. The little boy saw him filling his hands with some dates and smelling them as if they were his children, and he could not bear to part with them. The boy heard a sigh coming from Masoud's chest, as if he were dying at the moment of dividing the sacks of the harvest, and he looked into his eyes and saw them as if they

were lost fawns who had strayed from their home. At this pivotal moment, the grandson ran towards the river, trying to expel what he had eaten of the dates his grandfather had given him. When his grandfather called him, for the first time he did not turn to him. The grandson felt that he hated him and hurried to the river, hoping to be able to extract what he had eaten of the dates and perhaps reach a decision that would help him accept the symbolism of Masoud and accept modernity with all its costly price, and stop accepting customs and traditions with their harshness and injustice at times. Here is Tayeb Salih's message to the young generations to choose all that is beneficial from heritage, customs, and traditions and integrate it with what is beneficial from modernity, even if it is costly, provided that the choice is accompanied by flexibility and awareness.

As for the novella *The Wedding of Zein* (1966), Tayeb Salih's events developed by portraying the characters of the story between Zein and Seif al-Din, Sheikh al-Haneen, the imam of the mosque, and Ni'ma, and each character has a share in their name. The character of the hero, Zein, whose name means beautiful and handsome, has strange features. Zein is the central figure of the novella, an eccentric and physically unattractive man known for his persistent and ultimately successful pursuit of marriage. He possesses a unique charm and an unwavering belief in his desirability, despite societal perceptions. Zein's character highlights the themes of inner worth, the unexpected nature of love, and the way a community can be both amused and ultimately accepting of an unconventional individual. His "ugliness" becomes a source of fascination and, eventually, a catalyst for joy in the village. He is persistent, almost comical in his pursuit, yet ultimately sincere.

The Village as Symbolic Construct and Signifying System:

Tayeb Salih's literary representation of the village extends beyond mere mimetic depiction. It functions as an embodiment of the traditional Sudanese socio-cultural fabric, encompassing its quotidian and spiritual dimensions. The author foregrounds salient spatial elements inherent to the village setting, such as the Nile as a vital circulatory system, the fertile agricultural lands as a source of sustenance and cultural practice, the khalwa as a locus of Sufi contemplation and spiritual resonance, and sites of worship that underscore the community's deep-seated religiosity, culminating in the cemeteries that signify the terminal phase of earthly existence. These tripartite elements – the Nile and the land, the khalwa - the mosque, the cemetery – coalesce to form a profound symbolic triad intrinsically linked to the cyclicity of life and death and the community's enduring belief systems.

Within Tayeb Salih's literary landscape, the village assumes profound symbolic weight concerning notions of belonging, authenticity, and ancestral roots. It serves as both the point of origin and the locus of return, even for characters

experiencing voluntary or involuntary exile. This is demonstrably evident in the narrative of "A Palm Tree by the Stream," where the character Nagwa exhibits a poignant longing for the homeland, and in the author's nuanced portrayal of the alienation experienced by the Sudanese individual within the context of English society. Consequently, the village transcends its geographical definition, functioning as a reservoir of cherished memories that are acutely intensified in the diasporic experience, thereby exacerbating feelings of loss and displacement.

Protagonist Archetypes and Their Symbolic Significance:

The protagonist figures populating Tayeb Salih's works set within the village are characterized by their inherent diversity and profound symbolic resonance. These characters frequently serve as vehicles for exploring specific ideological positions or as representatives of contending socio-cultural forces.

The name "Wad al-Rayyis" carries significant connotations in the novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1966): Wad: In Sudanese colloquial Arabic, this means "son," "young man," or "boy." This indicates his status as one of the village's offspring, someone authentic and from the very fabric of the local community.

al-Rayyis: This term translates to "the chief," "the leader," or "the elder." This title, acquired by the man as he aged, signifies his prominent social standing within the village and the respect he commands as a person of experience and wisdom.

Thus, the name "Wad al-Rayyis" combines authenticity and local belonging ("Wad") with societal respect and leadership ("al-Rayyis"). It represents the quintessential Sudanese man: authentic, strong, rooted in his land and traditions, and one who has naturally risen to a leadership position within his community due to his experience and age.

Similarity Between the Characters of Wad al-Rayyis and Mustafa Sa'eed appears on the surface, that the characters of Wad al-Rayyis and Mustafa Sa'eed are complete opposites. Wad al-Rayyis represents authenticity, simplicity, a deep connection to roots, and a strong attachment to local traditions. He is a spontaneous person with a sensual nature and a direct approach to life and relationships. Mustafa Sa'eed represents complexity, alienation, detachment from roots, and influence by Western culture. He is an educated, intelligent man, but he suffers from a deep internal conflict and distortion in his relationships with others, especially women. However, some subtle similarities can be discerned between them: Sexual attractiveness and masculine power, that both possess a strong allure for women, albeit manifested in different ways. Wad al-Rayyis has a natural charm and traditional masculine power that attracts women in his rural environment. Mustafa Sa'eed possesses an intellectual and sexual allure, both strange and captivating, that

fascinated European women. Both exert a kind of power over women through this attraction. Treating women as "Conquest", despite the difference in context, the way each man deals with women can be seen as a form of "conquest." Wad al-Rayyis, in his multiple marriages and relationships, exercises the authority of the traditional Eastern man. Mustafa Sa'eed, in his destructive relationships with European women, enacts a kind of conscious or unconscious revenge against the Western colonial powers by exploiting and preying on their women.

Feeling of inferiority or deficiency (differently expressed), despite Wad al-Rayyis' status in his community, he may harbor an implicit feeling of inferiority towards the "civilized" world represented by the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed. Mustafa Sa'eed, on the other hand, clearly suffers from a feeling of inferiority towards the West but tries to compensate for it through academic and sexual superiority.

The search for identity, both men, in their own way, are searching for a definition of themselves. Wad al-Rayyis finds his identity in his strong belonging to his community and its traditions. Mustafa Sa'eed suffers from an identity crisis as a result of his colonial experience and detachment from his roots.

The ability to influence others, both are influential figures in their respective environments. Wad al-Rayyis influences his local community through his wisdom and standing. Mustafa Sa'eed influences the life of the narrator and the women he knew, even after his death.

Ultimately, Wad al-Rayyis and Mustafa Sa'eed can be seen as two sides of the same coin, representing the complexities of the relationship between East and West and the impact of colonialism on identity and the self. Wad al-Rayyis represents an authenticity that may seem simple but carries its own power, while Mustafa Sa'eed represents the distortion and alienation resulting from the clash of civilizations. Both, in their own ways, reveal different aspects of the human experience in a post-colonial world.

Douma Wad Hamid:

In the eponymous narrative, Tayeb Salih introduces the character of "Douma Wad Hamid" as an archetype of deeply ingrained traditional heritage within the rural community. "Wad Hamid" embodies a reliance on popular belief systems and faith in the thaumaturgical powers attributed to Sheikh Wad Hamid. Conversely, the emergent generation of grandchildren, displaying a yearning for modernity and an aspiration for educational advancement, functions as a catalyst for social transformation. The central conflict transcends a mere generational divide, representing a fundamental tension between the vestiges of the past and the impetus

for progress, between mystical faith and the pursuit of material advancement.

The Patriarchal Figure in *A Handful of Dates*:

The character of the grandfather in "A Handful of Dates" emerges as an archetype of traditional patriarchal authority, potentially characterized by authoritarianism and a resistance to change. This figure embodies traditional capital that operates with inflexibility and a lack of empathy for evolving circumstances, yet simultaneously exhibits an unwavering attachment to the land. The author's decision to withhold a proper noun for this character underscores his typological function as a representative of an entire generation.

The Indigenous Figure in *A Handful of Dates*:

Masood is positioned as a direct antithesis to the patriarchal figure. He is depicted as a simple agrarian individual possessing spiritual purity and an aesthetically pleasing voice. Masood embodies authenticity and innocence, potentially symbolizing the original custodianship of the land in contrast to the grandfather's status as an external arrival. His didactic counsel to children regarding the sanctity of the palm tree's core, drawing an analogy to human emotional experience, reveals a profound ecological awareness and a nuanced understanding of the human-nature relationship.

The Transitional Figure in *A Handful of Dates*:

The grandson represents the nascent generation situated under the influence of the past (the grandfather) yet beginning to discern its inherent contradictions and injustices. The grandson's affective response to his grandfather undergoes a significant transformation following his witnessing of Masood's date harvest, leading to an acute awareness of the perceived inequity experienced by Masood. His subsequent flight towards the river at the narrative's denouement symbolizes an attempt to liberate himself from the perceived rigidity of tradition and to seek a more humanistic value system.

Zein in *The Wedding of Zein*:

The character of Zein, whose name etymologically signifies beauty and handsomeness, possesses distinctive attributes that position him as an atypical protagonist. Zein, despite his initial oddity, ultimately becomes a source of unity and celebration for the community through his wedding. His primary motivation is the pursuit of marriage, driven by an inner conviction that defies external

appearances. Zein's journey is the central arc of the novella, exploring themes of love, acceptance, and the nature of beauty. Zein and Seif el-Din are distinct individuals with their own personalities and roles.

Sheikh Al-Haneen is depicted in the novel as a spiritual figure with a prominent position in the village. He is regarded with respect and appreciation as a Sufi sheikh, meaning one of the mystics who seek spiritual knowledge and closeness to God through asceticism, contemplation, and remembrance (dhikr). His humble appearance, his abstention from worldly adornments, and his wisdom drawn from his spiritual experience all underscore this aspect of his character. The villagers turn to him seeking advice and blessings, and he represents the spiritual and moral authority in the community.

The name "Al-Haneen" carries a deep symbolic significance that aligns with his role. "Al-Haneen" means longing, yearning, and deep affection. This name can be interpreted on several levels: **Spiritual Longing:** The Sheikh's name may symbolize his constant yearning for the truth and reaching a higher degree of spiritual purity. **Longing for Goodness:** It could reflect his longing and desire to see goodness and happiness achieved in the lives of the villagers, including Zein. **Longing for Unity and Harmony:** His name might refer to his yearning for a cohesive and compassionate community, which is partially realized by Zein's marriage that unites hearts and brings joy.

Despite Sheikh Al-Haneen's spiritual standing and dignity, he pays special attention to Zein and shows an unconventional friendship towards him. He does not look down on him due to his appearance or strange behavior but treats him with understanding and compassion. The Sheikh's blessings for Zein hold a special power in the novel. They are not merely passing wishes but seem to carry a hidden blessing and an invisible force of influence.

Sheikh Al-Haneen's blessings for Zein have significant consequences that manifest in the course of the novel, the most important of which is Zein's marriage to Ni'ma. This can be interpreted as follows: **Spiritual Blessing:** The Sheikh's blessings are seen as carrying a spiritual grace that transcends apparent material causes. This grace opens doors for Zein that would not have opened otherwise, and facilitates matters that seem impossible, such as winning Ni'ma's heart. **Psychological and Moral Impact:** The Sheikh's friendship and blessings give Zein a sense of acceptance and appreciation, which boosts his self-confidence and makes him more persistent in his pursuit. Knowing that a respected figure like the Sheikh believes in him and prays for him can have a profound psychological impact on Zein. **Symbolism of Social Acceptance:** The Sheikh's support for Zein implicitly represents the community's eventual acceptance of him. When people see that Sheikh

Al-Haneen, a symbol of wisdom and piety, sees value in Zein and blesses him, it changes their perception of him and opens their hearts to accepting him.

Achieving the Impossible: Zein's marriage to Ni'ma, the beautiful and desirable girl, appears in the context of the novel almost like a miracle achieved through Zein's persistence and the blessing of Sheikh's prayers. This marriage represents the triumph of unconditional love and the power of the spirit over external appearances. In conclusion, Sheikh Al-Haneen is not just a passing character in "The Wedding of Zein," but a powerful spiritual force. His name carries deep symbolism, and his friendship and blessings for Zein play a pivotal role in achieving his happiness and marriage to Ni'ma. The Sheikh represents the voice of wisdom, compassion, and acceptance in the community, reminding us that spiritual grace and faith can achieve what seems impossible.

Character Archetypes in *Bandar Shah*, *Dau al-Beit*, *Bandar Shah/Isa* (1971), *Meryoud*:

The novel *Bandar Shah* introduces further archetypal figures associated with the village setting. **Dau al-Beit**, the enigmatic outsider who introduces novel ideas, his son *Bandar Shah*, whose name carries legendary connotations and symbolizes the enduring spirit of the village, and his grandson *Meryoud*, who represents the emergent generation shaped by the legacy of the past.

The Absence of the Paternal and the Prominence of the Ancestral:

A notable characteristic at the level of characterization in Tayeb Salih's literary works, particularly within the village context, is the relative absence of an influential paternal figure. The grandfather and grandson frequently emerge as dominant poles of influence within the social structure, while the father figure appears marginalized or entirely absent. This thematic absence may carry symbolic weight related to a bypassing of the intermediary generation or a direct focus on the intergenerational relationship between the past and the future.

The Dynamics of Temporality and Spatiality in Character Formation:

Tayeb Salih's narrative style is distinguished by its fluid and rapid movement across temporal and spatial planes within individual narrative units. This dynamic interplay of temporality and spatiality significantly contributes to the reader's comprehension of the characters and their intricate relationship with the village and its historical trajectory. The past is not presented as a discrete entity separate from the present; rather, memory functions as a crucial element in understanding the characters' motivations and behavioral patterns.

Change and the Conflict Between Value Systems:

In his works situated within the village setting, Tayeb Salih engages with the concept of change and its inherent necessity, while simultaneously underscoring the notion that such transformation inevitably entails consequences and a disruption of the existing equilibrium. This thematic tension is clearly articulated in *Douma Wad Hamid*, where the rural community confronts the challenge of reconciling the preservation of sacred sites and traditions (the shrine of Wad Hamid and the palm tree) with the adoption of modernizing developments (the agricultural project and the ferry landing).

The Rural Imaginary and its Realities:

Tayeb Salih portrays a rural world where the boundaries between empirical reality and the realm of imagination become blurred, with popular beliefs and dreams playing a significant role in the lives of the inhabitants. The village women's collective dream of Wad Hamid as a healer and problem-solver exemplifies this aspect. However, the author posits that genuine societal transformation can only occur when the community transcends its reliance on such beliefs, moving beyond magical thinking towards a more rational and pragmatic engagement with reality.

Representation of the Rural Community:

In his descriptive passages, Tayeb Salih imbues the village with a distinct character. He depicts its inhabitants as resilient individuals "thick-skinned" capable of enduring harsh environmental conditions and content with their divinely ordained lot. This portrayal underscores their capacity for endurance and their deep-seated faith, while also potentially suggesting a degree of fatalistic acceptance. The author further emphasizes the village's relative isolation from the external world and the inhabitants' insistence on their lack of need for a connecting road, reflecting their conservatism, adherence to tradition, and resistance to external influences.

The Conditional Imperative of Change:

At the conclusion of *Douma Wad Hamid*, Tayeb Salih offers an implicit message asserting the possibility of change, contingent upon the intellectual and emotional preparedness of the community to embrace it. The author suggests that the available space is sufficiently expansive to accommodate both the old and the new; however, the fundamental prerequisite for progress lies in transcending an uncritical attachment to the past and entrenched belief systems.

The Symbolism of Nomenclature:

The proper nouns assigned to characters in Tayeb Salih's works, particularly in the novel *Bandar Shah*, carry significant symbolic weight that contributes to a deeper understanding of the characters' dimensions and the central thematic concerns of the narrative. The name "Dau al-Beit" evokes connotations of hope, renewal, and

integration, while "Meryoud" signifies continuity and affection. The name "Isa," which evolves into the epithet "Bandar Shah," carries religious and historical allusions that underscore the character's significance and his quasi-mythical status within the collective memory of the village. Similarly, the female names, Husna and Ni'ma, convey meanings of beauty, blessing, and a profound connection to the social fabric of the village.

The Representation of Women in Tayeb Salih's Rural Settings:

Despite the prevalent depiction of traditional patriarchal structures in Tayeb Salih's works, a closer examination reveals a frequently nuanced and empathetic portrayal of female experiences. Characters such as Bint-Majazoub in *Season of Migration to the North* exhibit strength and a profound understanding of their social positioning. Even the female figures in *Bandar Shah*, despite a comparatively limited narrative focus, possess distinct personalities and contribute to the social tapestry of the community. The author subtly alludes to their desires and frustrations within societal constraints and their capacity for resilience. His depiction of intergenerational relationships between mothers, daughters, and grandmothers is often characterized by warmth and significance.

Exploration of Women's Perspectives, While the narratives are often male-centric, Salih subtly weaves in the perspectives and experiences of women. He touches upon their desires, their frustrations within societal constraints, and their resilience. In *Season of Migration to the North*, the narrator reflects on the limited understanding men have of women's inner lives.

Salih's portrayal of traditional Sudanese society often implicitly critiques the limitations and injustices imposed on women. The expectations placed upon them, the restrictions on their freedom, and the consequences they face for transgressing social norms are often depicted with a sense of understanding and even sorrow.

In *Wedding of Zein (1968)* Tayeb Salih describes Ni'ma, the female protagonist, with an innate beauty that captivates hearts without affectation or pretense. She is not beautiful in the conventional, dazzling sense, but rather with an authentic beauty that stems from her gracious nature and pure spirit. The writer focuses on her dark complexion, her wide eyes, and her graceful movements that reflect a natural vitality and femininity." And then Nihma arrived with a slow, dignified gait, her black tobe wrapped around her, revealing only her face, which was the colour of dark honey, and her large, luminous eyes." This beauty is not merely an external appearance, but rather a reflection of her kind inner essence.

Ni'ma is characterized by her simplicity and spontaneity in dealing with others and in her outlook on life. She is a genuine village girl, unspoiled by the complexities of urban life. She expresses her feelings with sincerity and impulsiveness, whether it is joy, sadness, or astonishment. This simplicity makes her close to the heart and loved by everyone in the village. Despite her apparent simplicity, Ni'ma possesses an inner strength and resilience that enables her to endure life's difficulties. When others speak of her, there's an implication of her allure:" They said she was quiet, that she spoke little, but that her glance was enough to make a man forget his worries." (Ibid) We see this in her patience and her waiting for Al-Zein, the man her heart chose despite his different appearance and people's perception of him. She does not succumb to societal pressures or the stereotypical image of the ideal husband, but rather follows her deep intuition. Ni'ma enjoys an innate wisdom and a strong intuition that allows her to understand matters with keen insight, even if she is not formally educated. She can read people and situations with discernment, and her opinions are often correct. This practical intelligence and delicate sensibility distinguish her character.

Ni'ma is considered an integral part of the fabric of the Sudanese village. She is rooted in its traditions and customs, respects the elders, and participates in social events. This strong connection to her roots gives her a firm identity and makes her an authentic representative of genuine Sudanese values. Ni'ma can be considered a symbol of the good, giving earth, and of the pure Sudanese spirit that retains its beauty and simplicity despite changes. Her marriage to Al-Zein, the person who represents unconditional love and acceptance of the other as they are, carries deep connotations about societal values and the possibility of transcending external appearances to reach the human essence.

Tayeb Salih portrays the character of Ni'ma with exceptional skill, endowing her with spiritual and physical beauty, simplicity and depth, strength and patience. She is an embodiment of the authentic Sudanese girl in her finest form, a woman who retains her inner and outer beauty, adheres to her values, and chooses her heart with wisdom and courage.

Husna bit Mahmoud is a pivotal character in Tayeb Salih's novel "**Season of Migration to the North**," distinguished by her striking beauty and remarkable presence in the village. Tayeb Salih portrays Husna as a woman with an authentic and captivating Sudanese beauty. Salih depicted her saying:" She was a woman of noble carriage and a foreign type of beauty." (Salih,1966) Yet "...a slight smell of perfume hung about her. Her lips were naturally dark red and her teeth strong, white and even. She had a handsome face with wide black eyes in which sadness mingled with shyness". The narrator describes her as having a "beauty of a foreign style," perhaps because it differs from the traditional concept of beauty in the village. She

is characterized by her dark complexion, naturally dark red lips, and strong, even white teeth. Her eyes are wide and black, carrying a mixture of sadness and shyness. The description indicates that her beauty is neither artificial nor contrived but stems from her nature. There is a mention that she does not use henna on her hands and feet, which might have been considered unconventional at that time and place, adding to the "strangeness" of her beauty in the narrator's eyes. In addition to her outward beauty, Husna possesses a strong presence and a stubborn personality. In her childhood, she was a wild girl who climbed trees, fought boys, and swam naked in the river, indicating her liberated and strong nature from a young age. The narrator calls her as a child: "Do you remember her as a wild young girl climbing trees and fighting with boys? As a child she used to swim naked with us in the river. What's happened to change that now? (Ibid)

Husna's marriage to Mustafa Sa'eed represents a significant turning point in her life. His influence on her can be observed in several aspects:

Liberation from Traditions: It seems that Mustafa Sa'eed, with his liberated personality and experience in the West, influenced Husna in a way that made her more daring in challenging some traditions. He may have encouraged her to think differently and view the world from a broader perspective. **Formation of an Independent Personality:** Some believe that her marriage to Mustafa Sa'eed contributed to the development of her independent personality, capable of standing courageously against traditional tribal customs. He granted her rights that she might not have been accustomed to in her environment. **Resistance to Forced Marriage:** After Mustafa's death, Husna showed a firm refusal to marry Wad al-Rayyes, the older man whom her father insisted she marry. This violent rejection can be seen as a consequence of her experience with Mustafa, where she may have felt the value of her choice and her right to determine her own destiny. **Tragic Fate:** Ultimately, Husna's insistence on refusing the forced marriage leads to her murder along with Wad al-Rayyes. This tragic fate highlights the challenges faced by women seeking independence in a conservative society and can be considered partly a result of her rebellion, which may have been influenced by her experience with Mustafa Sa'eed.

To sum up, Husna bit Mahmoud was a woman of captivating beauty and a strong personality. Her marriage to Mustafa Sa'eed, despite its brevity, seems to have left a profound impact on the development of her awareness and her willingness to resist traditions that no longer suited her, even if the price was her life. Mustafa's influence on her may be indirect but is evident in her determination to choose her own destiny.

Highlighting Women's Strength and Resilience, despite the challenges they face, Salih's female characters often demonstrate remarkable strength, resilience, and the ability to navigate and even subvert societal expectations in subtle ways. They are not always passive victims but active participants in their own lives and the lives

of their communities. Focus on Intergenerational Relationships, Salih often explores the crucial roles women play in maintaining family bonds and transmitting cultural values across generations. The relationships between mothers, daughters, and grandmothers are often depicted with warmth and significance.

Male-Dominated Narratives:

The central perspectives and main storylines often revolve around male characters. The inner lives and struggles of women are not always given the same level of explicit exploration. Salih's works largely reflect the traditional gender roles prevalent in the Sudan of his time. While he shows the impact of these roles on women, he doesn't necessarily advocate for a radical overturning of these structures within the narratives themselves.

Occasional Depictions of Harmful Traditional Practices:

While not his central focus, some of his works might touch upon practices that are harmful to women, depicted within the context of the society without explicit condemnation.

Tayeb Salih cannot be neatly categorized as a modern feminist writer. However, his portrayal of women is often characterized by empathy, complexity, and a recognition of their strength and the constraints they face within traditional societies. He offers a nuanced perspective that acknowledges the power dynamics at play and hints at the inner lives and resilience of his female characters.

Instead of labeling him a women supporter in the contemporary sense, it's more accurate to say that Tayeb Salih was a keen observer of his society, and his writings offer valuable insights into the experiences of women within that context, often prompting reflection on their roles and the limitations they faced. His work provides fertile ground for discussions about gender dynamics in post-colonial Arab societies.

In conclusion, this survey of protagonist archetypes within the Sudanese village setting of Tayeb Salih's literary corpus reveals that these characters transcend the function of mere plot devices, operating as potent symbols that reflect the conflict of values, the past's enduring influence on the present, and the aspirations for the future. Through these figures, Tayeb Salih crafts a vivid portrayal of the Sudanese village as world rich in contradictions and aesthetic nuances, and as a foundational locus of identity and memory that cannot be easily transcended or forgotten. The interactions of these characters with the village, encompassing its historical trajectory, cultural heritage, and evolving present, constitute the core of the human experience that Tayeb Salih seeks to explore and present to the reader.

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