

A Counter 'Image of Africa' in Two Postcolonial Narratives by Tayeb Salih and Chinua Achebe From a Comparative Perspective

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Abstract—This study presents two twentieth-century African narratives from a postcolonial comparative perspective. The study highlights corresponding observations in “Dead Men’s Path” by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe and “The Doum-tree of Wad Hamid” by the Sudanese Tayeb Salih in relation to the colonial strategy of stereotyping Africa as premodern and unprogressive and how this strategy widens the gap between generations and undermines the cultural identity of the young. The study analyzes confrontations between characters representing different generations on whether colonization aims for the betterment of natives’ lives. Finally, the study investigates how the enforced European lifestyles on the rural ‘premodern’ societies of Nigeria and Sudan by the British colonization are met with defiance and resistance. The article draws on postcolonial concepts including autonomy, resistance, and mimicry to demonstrate the conflict between generations under the enduring effects of cultural colonization.

Index Terms—comparative literature, Dead Men’s Path, Doum-tree of Wad Hamid, cultural colonization, resistance

I. INTRODUCTION

Twentieth-century African literature abounds with accounts of cultural confrontations with the Western world during the colonial and postcolonial times. The selected stories for this study are both set in the tumultuous times around independence as people try hard to fight back colonial subjugation and repress the effects of British colonialism on their countries. The short story “The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid” by the prominent Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih (1928-2009) was published few years after Sudan attained its independence in 1956, while Chinua Achebe’s “Dead Men’s Path” was published for the first time in 1953 that is seven years before Nigeria gained its independence in 1960; it was reprinted with no changes to the text in 1972 and 1973. These postcolonial narratives discuss resistance to the impacts of colonialism on the two African countries of Sudan and Nigeria and criticize the colonial stereotyping of African way of life as premodern, backward, and unprogressive. A dominant issue in the two stories is the gap between the old and the young natives. This is revealed by a central character in the two stories who is an old man addressing a young man about the grave consequences of British colonization on the younger generations and about the people’s resistance and struggle against westernization and the disintegration of cultural identity. Other relevant issues investigated in this study are the racist stereotyping of African culture, autonomy, modernization versus westernization, ambivalence, and fear from cultural disintegration, which will be discussed through a close reading of the two stories from a comparative perspective.

II. DISCUSSION

Chinua Achebe’s “Dead Men’s Path” and Tayeb Salih’s “The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid” are allegorical postcolonial narratives which focus on the clash between the traditions of rural nonwestern societies and the foreign influences of British colonization on the culture in amazingly similar ways. The two African writers show through their stories how allegorical structures and meanings can be valuable in postcolonial literature, for they have the power to challenge and defy various forms of dominance and colonial perceptions including, as Ashcroft et al. believe, “notions of orthodox history” and “classical realism” (2005, p. 9). There are many features in the two stories which refer symbolically in striking similarity to the cultural clash between the colonizer and colonized. In “Dead Men’s Path,” the clash between the colonizer and the colonized becomes clear when one understands the symbolism attached to many objects in the story including the path, the heavy sticks, the wedges, the hawks and eagles, barbed wire, etc. as will be shown in the analysis. In Tayeb Salih’s story as well, many symbols are used in the creation of the story and the symbolism attached to the doum tree, the pump, the flies, the stopping place for the steamer all act as motifs that are very revealing of the allegorical nature of the Sudanese story.

In “Dead Men’s Path,” the cultural clash between the colonizer and the colonized is clearly demonstrated by the confrontation between a young Nigerian man named Michael Obi, who is obsessed with the Western ways and between the chief of the Nigerian tribe of Ani, an old man who insists on safeguarding African traditions. Michael Obi’s hybrid

name (a mixture of a western and an African name) and his actions of mimicry in the story are manifestations of foreign influences on cultures and identity. He is a product of the cultural hybridity that was prevalent under British colonialism in Nigeria which lasted from 1851 until 1960. Michael Obi is the headmaster of a missionary school. He is selected by the British Mission authorities as he is “known for his condemnation of the narrow views of these older and often less educated” people in the tribe (Achebe, 1972). Michael Obi’s obsession with the Western ways leads him to become an extremist who mocks his own traditions in the belief that they are premodern and unprogressive. Concurring with the colonial mentality, Michael Obi declares in the story that his duty at the school is to “to eradicate” traditions on the claim that they drift the people away from the path of modernity and progress. Aided and supported by his young Nigerian wife, Nancy, Mr. Obi exerts big efforts to convert the local school to a modernized one that teaches Nigerian children the colonial language and religion. He and his wife believe that in its current traditional state, “Ndume School was backward in every sense of the word” (Achebe, 1972). Together, they represent the younger generation of the natives who compromise their traditions and identity and underestimate the consequences of cultural colonization. The hedges and fences Michael Obi establishes around the school under the eyes and supervision of the Mission authorities reflect the colonial strategies to isolate the young generation from their beliefs and traditions. In the narrative, Michael becomes infuriated upon witnessing an old woman walking across the school using an old footpath which links the tribal temple with the cemetery on the other side of the village. He closes the path immediately with “heavy sticks” and “barbed wire” even though he learns through the chief of the tribe that the path is of a very spiritual significance for the people. His refusal to reopen the path shows his extremism, violence, and rejection of the other. When the chief of Ani visits the school to discuss the reopening of the ancestral path, Mr. Obi laughs at the beliefs of the villagers especially after he is told that the path was here before he was born and before his father was born. Mr. Obi who mimics the colonizers and validates their strategies and perceptions about the natives replies insolently: “The whole purpose of our school is to eradicate just such beliefs as that.” He makes fun of the old man’s way of thinking saying that at the school they teach the young generation to ignore and laugh at the old ways of living: “Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas.” The wise chief attempts calmly to remind Mr. Obi of the necessity for the children to respect the traditions of their fathers. Though to no effect, he advises him in a very polite tone, saying, “look here, my son, ... If you reopen the path, we shall have nothing to quarrel about” (Achebe, 1972). To retaliate, the villagers attack the missionary school, trample the flower beds, and ravage the hedges and wedges not only those blocking the path but around the whole school. The headmaster is held accountable for the damage and the serious violent clash between the missionary school and the village. The “white Supervisor” wrote a “nasty report” attributing the conflict with the natives to “the misguided zeal of the new headmaster” (Achebe, 1972). The Nigerian young man’s failed attempts to enforce westernization draws attention to the dire consequences of mimicry and betraying one’s culture.

Tayeb Salih’s story, “The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid,” translated into English by Denys Johnson-Davies, is also about the struggle to remain true to one’s cultural roots in the face of cultural colonization. The story is set in a rural Sudanese town seen by the British colonial authorities as premodern and unprogressive. The narrator is an old man addressing a young man about the conflict between the traditions of the natives and the foreign influences on their culture. He reveals how the natives especially the older people in the village persist in safeguarding their customs and Islamic identity. In the story, the old in the village equate modernization with westernization and see the former as a means for interference and domination, and the latter as a threat to their national culture under the colonial government’s insistence that none works well without the other. The clash between the traditions of the Sudanese village and the colonial influences are demonstrated clearly by the villagers’ rejection of the government’s offers to replace the village’s age-old doum-tree with economic projects that can help the natives progress along the path of modernity. Like the old unpaved path in Achebe’s “Dead Men’s Path,” the doum-tree is symbolic. Both objects, which are created and shaped by nature, represent the history of the two villages and are sources of unity on both the cultural and social levels in the two stories. They are treated as heritage landmarks by the natives in the two narratives. In Salih’s story, the narrator describes the tree saying: Resembling a “museum” in European cities, the doum-tree is “the one thing which we insist our visitors should see” (Salih, 2002, p. 160). Similarly, in “Dead Men’s Path,” the priest sums up the spiritual significance of the path to Michael Obi saying, “Look here, my son,” the path that goes across the missionary school is ancestral; it “was here before you were born and before your father was born.” The priest maintains while tapping his walking stick on the floor to emphasize the conviction of the people that life in the Nigerian small village depends on ancestral beliefs including the path. The priest finally says: “But most important, it is the path of children coming in to be born” (Achebe, 1972).

In colonial and postcolonial literature, modernity and traditions are seen as binary oppositions. In “Dead Men’s Path,” the young Nigerian headmaster sees the traditional footpath which goes across the missionary school as an obstacle to the progress of the village. In Salih’s story, the colonial government can change the natives’ primitive lifestyle and the future of their children provided that they abandon their traditions and living standards. The old man in the story reveals how the water pump, the agricultural scheme, and the stopping place for the steamer can be set up in the village by the government only if the longstanding and historic doum-tree is eradicated. The colonizer fails to see that “the doum-tree represents the spiritual world of the entire village” (Hassan, 2003, p. 32). The old man in the narrative states that this native tree is a valuable source of pride to the people; it also displays and preserves the long history of the village. He insists in front of the young foreign visitor to the Sudanese village that the doum-tree “holds

its head aloft to the skies” and that “its roots strike down into the earth” (Salih, 2002, p. 161). The narrator stresses the point that the tree protects the village by shielding the people from all harms and casting its shadows on every spot of the village. He defiantly likens the doum-tree to “some mythical eagle spreading its wings over the village and everyone in it?” (Salih, 2002, p. 161).

The postcolonial narratives of Tayeb Salih and Chinua Achebe focus on the cultural clash between the colonizer and the colonized and the developing conflict between the natives’ older and newer generations under the effect of cultural colonialization. The two narratives provide counter-tales to the colonial racist perceptions about African people and their cultures. In the two stories, we have a re-reading of history and of the nature of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized people. Chinua Achebe and Tayeb Salih show resistance to the enforced westernization on Africa and critique the colonists’ inability to see the African culture as valuable and equal to the European culture. In his assessment of colonialism on third-world countries, Robert P. Clark defines the colonial relationship as “one between a very strong group and a very weak group in which the weak are dependent and the strong are dominant.” He assumes that “the strong group is formally organized into a national state; the weak, dependent group may or may not be so organized” (Clark, 1991, p. 8). Clark justifies the European Empires’ colonization of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America by portraying precolonial life in these countries as “traditional” and “premodern” (pp. 4-5) and the colonized people as “brutal” and “savage” (Clark, 1991, p. 3). To a large extent, Western literature dealing with the colonial era provides the same rationale for the colonialization of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Colonial expeditions are often described as geographic discoveries of unknown regions and uninhabited areas. Worse yet, colonists are referred to as pioneers, settlers, conquistadores, and explorers denying the fact that the settlers invaded these regions with the intention of establishing permanent colonies and replacing the indigenous people with settler societies. In his book *The History of Plymouth Plantation* (1630), William Bradford refers to the British colonists who sailed from England and landed in Massachusetts to escape the religious persecution in Europe as pilgrims denying firmly that their movement to the Western Hemisphere at the beginning of the seventeenth century is, in fact, exploitation colonialism, which necessitated the domination of the indigenous population and the confiscation and exploitation of their land and resources. William Bradford (1865) refers to this particular group of British colonists as “the Pilgrims” (p. 43), “The Founders of New Plymouth” (p. 411), or as “our Puritan fathers” (p. 6). Worse yet, Bradford describes the territories where they landed as “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men” (Bradford, 1856, p. 78) despite the fact that there were over six hundred tribes and cultures of natives Americans inhabiting the areas which was mistakenly called “The New World” by the early colonists (see Bradford, 1856, p. 16). To justify the British colonization, Bradford (1865) describes the Western Hemisphere as fruitful and uninhabited lands: “Those vast and unpeopled countries of America, are fruitful and fit for habitation” (p. 24). He expresses other colonial impressions and fabrications saying that these territories were “devoid of all civil inhabitants.” Only brutal and savage men lived there: “There are only salvage and brutish men, which range up and down” and they look like beasts, “little otherwise than the wild beasts of the same” (Bradford, 1865, p. 24).

Unfortunately, a similar image is prevalent in Western writing and literature about Africa and its people. As a matter of fact, the negative portrayals of the cultures and people of Africa during the colonial and postcolonial times are discouraging mainly because they are repeated. The images encountered frequently in the representations of the mentality of the people and their way of life imply or state frankly not only Africa’s inferiority, but also the urgent need for Western interference, as Edward Saaid puts it, to bring “civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples” (Saaid, 1994, xi). African twentieth-century critics and writers have sought to deconstruct the racist collective image of the African people as “savages jumping up and down the river having done nothing, having created nothing” (Achebe, 2013) and the African continent as a prehistoric place calling for the ‘civilized’ world’s interference. Chinua Achebe maintains ironically in his seminal article “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” which was published for the first time in 1977, that the “Pilgrims flocked” to Africa (2016, p. 20) to civilize the continent, which they said, is “devoid of recognizable humanity” (Achebe, 2016, p. 21). This is the racist image Chinua Achebe and Tayeb Salih have sought to encounter in their allegorical stories “Dead Men’s Path” and “The Doum-tree of Wad Hamid.” Emmanuel S. Nelson describes Chinua Achebe as a “commanding figure in post-colonial African literature” (1998, p. 28) because the Nigerian novelist and critic has defended Africa significantly against all fabrications which only served to promote Western supremacy over the ‘inferior’ and ‘dark’ continent. Achebe’s anti-colonial literature and writing constitute the most fruitful accomplishments throughout his career because, as Nelson points out, they have reclaimed Africa “from the heart of European darkness” (Nelson, 1998, p. 28). Achebe has criticized binary thinking in Western literature, including above all Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, which defines and represents Africa, as “the other world” or as the exact opposite of civilized cultures (Achebe, 2016, p. 15). Achebe believes that such racist contrasts expose the hidden desire in “Western psychology” to set itself as a supreme civilization with an outstanding “spiritual grace” as opposed to the darkness of Africa (Achebe, 2016, p. 15). Likewise, Tayeb Salih creates characters who stand up against racist binary thinking and hegemonic representations of Africa and its people. In his masterpiece novel, *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), the protagonist is a Sudanese native named Mustafa Sa’eed who can be seen as a figure representative of all colonized people “whose voices” convey the oppression of the colonizers as well as the power of the colonized people to challenge and defy colonialist stereotypes about “the Orient and its inhabitants” (Dapke, 2022, p. 7).

Tayeb Salih and Chinua Achebe's postcolonial narratives counter ethnocentric views of the African culture and resist the compulsory imposition of the Western culture on the natives. Chinua Achebe is known for using African proverbs in his fiction to refute and reverse the racist colonial representations of Africans as inferior and subordinate. Through these proverbs, Achebe stresses the point that African traditions are a valuable source of understanding and wisdom for the whole humanity. In "Dead Men's Path," the tribal chief uses the proverb: "Let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch" (Achebe, 1972) in his argument with the extremist headmaster to preach equality and coexistence. The hawk and the eagle are strong birds of prey with broad wings. The chief means that Africans and Europeans are equals, and none is superior or inferior to the other. His reference to the possibility of perching and settling on the same branch even though they both have broad wings is just a proof of his tolerance, and willingness for building peace with the intolerant colonizer. Similarly, in Salih's "The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid," the narrator uses the simile in his description of the doum-tree "like some mythical eagle spreading its wings over the village and everyone in it" to stress that the African culture is not inferior or weak. The simile echoes the proverb "Let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch" in Achebe's "Dead Men's Path" and counters the colonial racist perceptions about the colonized people confirming that the African culture resembles a strong eagle and can protect the people under its broad wings.

Franz Fanon believes that there is some kind of "perverted logic" underlying the colonial mentality, for after the colonizers subjugate the people and dominate their lives, they look back at the traditions and history of the colonized people to deface and ruin them (Fanon, 1963, p. 210). The doum-tree and the ancestral footpath represent the deeply rooted history and traditions of the villagers. In both stories, the African natives are shown as peaceful, ambivalent, and tolerant until the colonizer tampers with their beliefs and traditions. In the story, the villagers see no problem in sending their children to the missionary school to learn. When Michael Obi refuses to reopen the ancestral path, the natives respond violently by damaging the school after they realize that it teaches the children to deride their culture and the traditions of their fathers. Similarly, in Salih's story, the Sudanese people rebel for the first time in their lives when the colonial government informs them that the doum-tree must be eradicated. The narrator maintains that during the colonial rule, after the natives heard the news of cutting down the tree, "they all rose up as one man" against the British commissioner and blocked his way (Salih, 2002, p. 161).

In Salih's story, the narrator speaks in detail about the Sudanese village's defense mechanism to resist foreign rule and interference. At the beginning of the story, the narrator explains to the young man how "village life is lethal" to the British colonizers, "not simply because it lacks hospitals, electricity, paved streets and comfortable vehicles, but because nature itself chases them away with its troops of sand flies and horse flies" (Hassan, 2003, p. 44). When the villagers are informed of the government's plan to put through an agricultural scheme in the place of the doum-tree, they rebel; they surround the British district commissioner and shout at him stressing that if the government cuts down the doum-tree, they will fight it "to the last man." The narrator confirms that the flies assisted them in voicing their demand by playing havoc with the commissioner's face (Salih, 2002, p. 161). In the story, even the natives' own sons are repelled from the village after they have become strangers under the influence of westernization and the hybridization of culture through missionary education. The old man narrates a story which relates to a friend and school mate of his own son who was once invited to stay with them in the village last year. He says, "His people come from the town." After spending only one night in the village and under the effect of the flies, he woke up "feverish, with a running nose and swollen face" (Salih, 2002, p. 159), swearing that he would not stay any longer in the village.

Tayeb Salih offers several anecdotes in his story about the natives' spirit of resistance to westernization and foreign interference in their affairs. One anecdote narrates that an official visits the village to inform the people of the government's wish to see them progress by setting up a stopping place for the steamer under the doum-tree. He said that instead of riding their donkeys to the neighbouring village, they can travel to the city by boarding the steamer directly from under the tree. The natives protest after learning from the commissioner that the steamer will stop under the tree in the village every Wednesday at four in the afternoon. They explain to the commissioner that this is the same time for them "to visit the tomb of Wad Hamid" and gather under the tree as part of worship (Salih, 2002, p. 163). When the official replies "laughingly": "then change the day," the villagers turn violent. The narrator says, they gathered together and "bore down upon him, and would certainly have killed him" (Salih, 2002, p. 163) had the old man not come forth to save him from their wrath. This incidence shows that the people understand the colonial government's real intentions behind improving the means of transportation to and from the village. They realize that the stopping place for the steamer would only facilitate the colonists' arrival and departure from the village. The narrator reveals that the natives had seen many influential and powerful foreigners arrive at their village. There were multitudes of men whose names "rang through the country like drums" (Salih, 2002, pp. 160-61), who only came to interfere in and dominate people's lives. This is why the old man puts the official who shows no respect for the villagers' religious beliefs "on a donkey and told him to make good his escape" (Salih, 2002, p. 163). He confirms to the young man that the Sudanese natives of this village "are not people who travel very much", and that when they have to, they "ride off on [their] donkeys for a whole morning and take the steamer from the neighbouring village" (Salih, 2002, p. 163). They insist on riding their donkeys to thwart the colonial ambitions of dominating the village. In his assessment of the introduction of modern technology into what he calls the "traditional countries" i.e., the colonized countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Peter Clark (1991) admits, "Because Third-World areas usually served the industrialized world as sources of raw materials and exotic tropical food products, the transportation facilities were built primarily to

facilitate the exportation of these commodities.” Clark confirms that “The remaining needs of the colony for internal lines of communication and transportation, for instance, were ignored” (Clark, 1991, p. 9).

Colonialism leaves behind enduring social, cultural, and psychological consequences on the colonized people. Utsey et al. maintain that Western colonizers have dispossessed the colonized African people “of their land and traditions” and have abused and degraded their beliefs, leaving the majority “in a cultural abyss” trying hard to save their “fragmented identities” (Utsey et al., 2015, p. 196). Resistance in the narratives of Tayeb Salih and Chinua Achebe is motivated by the old natives’ fears and anxiety from cultural disintegration and the potential threats of westernization on their children and grandchildren. The younger generation in the colonized Sudanese village is shown as more susceptible to losing their cultural identity and compromising traditions for the sake of modernization. Similar to the young headmaster in “Dead Men’s Path”, who has become obsessed with modernity and the western lifestyle, the young are shown by Salih as more liable to mimic and copy the behaviour of the colonizer unlike the old who persist in their resistance to the colonial effects on their culture. As a matter of fact, both Tayeb Salih and Chinua Achebe acknowledge the role of missionary education in facilitating cultural colonization and foreign rule. In “Dead Men’s Path,” Michael Obi uses the missionary school as a tool for teaching the children to abandon their traditions. They are made to feel that their culture is inferior to the Western culture which they learn to adore and mimic being superior and more civilized. In their article “Missionary Colonial Mentality and the Expansion of Christianity in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1800 to 1900”, Nkomazana and Setume (2016) investigate the connection between missionary work and colonialism in Batswana, southern Africa over the nineteenth century. They argue that missionary workers of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Batswana “adopted a western superiority complex,” and held many “misconceptions” about the indigenous people; ultimately, they worked hard to “impose their Western cultural values” on the natives (p. 29). While trying to bring the Christian values close to the native people, the British missionary priests made a mistake by insisting that the natives in Batswana had to “abandon their indigenous cultures” so as to become Christians. Surprisingly, they held all religions in Africa “as evil” and as inferior to Western beliefs. They degraded even the best religious values and traditions and did their best to obliterate them. “However, this was vehemently resisted” (Nkomazana & Setume, 2016, p. 30).

Nassima Amirouche (2021) further points out that colonialism alters “the collective identity of the colonized” through the support of the colonial institutions in education, religion and other systems which promote the supremacy of the West over the colonized people to justify colonization and “sanction the continuance of the colonial rule” (Amirouche, 2021, p. 521). In Achebe’s story, the old priest develops fears over the younger generation’s fluctuating cultural identity after he discovers the detrimental way of thinking of the headmaster and that the missionary school itself is an ideological tool meant to destabilize the social structure of the village and reduce its adherence to national culture by making the children deride their traditions. He visits the school in an attempt to explain the grave consequences of suppressing the children’s national and cultural identity. Likewise, in the “Doom Tree of Wad Hamid,” the old narrator condemns the corrupting influences of colonialism and cultural hybridity on the younger generation who mimics the colonizer revealing that his own son ran away from the village and is now receiving education in the city’s foreign institutions. The father does not wish that his son would ever return to the village because the young man has become obsessed with the Western mentality and living standards and has learnt only to devalue his own culture. The old man remarks in the story that he did not plan to send his son to study at a foreign school. He implies that his son has become contaminated with foreign beliefs, therefore, he hopes that the young man would “stay where he is and not return to village” after he had abandoned the traditions of his fathers (Salih, 2002, p. 168).

In their postcolonial stories, both Tayeb Salih and Chinua Achebe warn against cultural disintegration and what Ashcroft calls “cultural schizophrenia” (Ashcroft et al., 2005, p. 19) i.e., the young people’s feelings of divided identities after receiving education in missionary institutions. Michael Obi, in “Dead Men’s Path,” and the narrator’s son in “The Doom-tree of Wad Hamid” have become mimic men. In Salih’s story, the narrator’s wish that his son would not come back shows that mimic men are rejected by their own people. Worse still, in “Dead Men’s Path,” the blaming of Michael Obi by the Mission authorities for the physical damage and Mr. Obi’s consequent loss of his position at the end shows that, ultimately, mimic men will never be fully accepted by the colonizer. Iskarna contends that the colonized subjects’ imitation of the colonizer “will always be hampered by the essential or innate nature, namely the nature of non-Westerners who are naturally different from Westerners” i.e., the colonial racist image constructed by the colonizer of the colonized people (Iskarna, 2023, p. 16). From Homi Bhabha’s view, mimic men are the product of ambivalence and hybrid cultures and will be treated by the colonizer as “almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 1984, p. 126). The two African writers acknowledge the psychological suffering resulting from mimicry when reaching the final stage. The young headmaster, Michael Obi, and the narrator’s young son will remain in borderlands similar to “the colonized subject” who, according to Franz Fanon, “can never attain the whiteness” that he was made to yearn for, nor can he rid himself of “the blackness” that he had been conditioned to despise (cited in Loomba, 1998, p. 176). Suriyah Bi maintains that the “disintegration” of culture and identity becomes inevitable if the colonized subjects are torn between conflicting cultures, without being able to balance the demands of these cultures; this eventually results in grave consequences for the colonized societies. Salih concludes “The Doom-tree of Wad Hamid” by stating that the colonial strategies will succeed in replacing people’s traditions and beliefs with Western standards only if the number of the young natives who suffer from “cultural schizophrenia” (Ashcroft et al., 2005, p. 19) increases. The

colonial projects which are supposed to modernize the village involve wiping out the culture and traditions of the natives. This, the narrator contends, can only happen if the newer generations learn to mimic the colonizer and deride their own culture.

III. CONCLUSION

While the African novelists Chinua Achebe and Tayeb Salih sought to produce nationalistic literatures which reflect their cultural and national identities, their works and literary values have succeeded in crossing local and regional borders. The two postcolonial writers are critically acclaimed and are well-received by western and nonwestern readers alike because they stress freedom, coexistence, and equality, and condemn discrimination and bias on the basis of race and color.

“Dead Men’s Path” by Chinua Achebe and “The Doum-tree of Wad Hamid” by Tayeb Salih are two postcolonial counter-stories that warn against the consequences of cultural colonization on the younger generations. In the narratives, the Sudanese village and the Nigerian village are both beset by cultural instability under the influence of westernization and the racist stereotyping of African traditions. Both stories are told through the eyes of an old man. The stories are essentially about the struggle to remain true to one’s cultural roots and the need to counter the racist image of Africa as premodern and uncivilized in order to limit the consequences of cultural colonization on the younger generations who are inclined to mimicry and the loss of their national identities through missionary and foreign education.

Eventually, both Chinua Achebe and Tayeb Salih confirm the triumph of resistance in the face of cultural colonization and national identity loss. In the two stories, cultural disintegration is an alarming issue. The downfall of the headmaster and the damage of the missionary school in “Dead Men’s Path” and the Sudanese village’s rejection of the young natives who have become strangers in “The Doum-tree of Wad Hamid” epitomize Chinua Achebe’s and Tayeb Salih’s strong warning against mimicry, the devaluation of native African cultures, and the enforced westernization on the colonized people of Sudan and Africa. The old people’s anxiety and fear from cultural disintegration in the two stories refute the West’s alleged benefits and contribution of colonialism. The natives’ initial ambivalence and their acceptance of the missionary school or the economic projects do not mean that they have assimilated the Western culture. On the contrary, the confrontations and clash with the colonial authorities in the two stories show their opposition to westernization. Their paramount fears for the younger generations’ cultural identity motivate their resistance to the detrimental impacts of colonization on their culture through the introduction of economic projects in their villages, but, more importantly, through the cultural means of education, religion, and language.

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