

# Al-Tayyib Saleh



Al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ (born 1929, Al-Shamaliyah province, Sudan—died February 18, 2009, London, England) was an Arabic-language novelist and short-story writer whose works explore the intersections of traditional and modern life in Africa.

Ṣāliḥ attended universities in Sudan (in Khartoum) and in London and devoted much of his professional life to radio broadcasting, for many years as head of drama for the BBC Arabic Service. Coming from a rural background of small farmers and orthodox religious teachers, he attempted in his work to harmonize the traditions of the past with the worldliness of the “traveled man,” the African who has returned from schooling abroad. His novel *Mawsim al-hijrah ilā al-shamāl* (1969)<sup>1</sup> is a prose poem that reflects the conflicts of modern Africa: traditions and common sense versus education, rural versus urban, men versus women, and the specific versus the universal. Ṣāliḥ’s prose is polyrhythmic and haunting.

The tales in *ʿUrs al-Zayn* (1969)<sup>2</sup> evoke the warmth, compassion, humour, and sadness of traditional Sudanese Arabic life, examining authority and unwritten codes through its beautifully structured narrative rhythms. In the 1970s he wrote two short volumes, translated into English as *Bandarshah*, and later published a multivolume autobiography.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> الطيب صالح، موسم الهجرة إلى الشمال، ط. ٢ (بيروت: دار العودة، ١٩٦٩).  
<sup>2</sup> الطيب صالح، عرس الزين (بيروت: دار العودة، ١٩٦٩).

<sup>3</sup> “Al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ: Sudanese Writer”, *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Tayyib-Salih>

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