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# Pepetela's *Mayombe (1980)* and Jamal Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs (1996)*: Intertextual and dialogic connections

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To:
My beloved parents
My sisters Houda and Fedoua
and my best friend Salima

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**Abstract**

This study has presented a comparative analysis of anti-colonial resistance in Pepetela's *Mayombe* (1980) and Jamal Mahjoub's *ln the hour of signs* (1996). It has examined how both novels depict colonial oppression, revolution, and the complexities of liberation in Angola and Sudan. To achieve this, we have borrowed our methodology from Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, especially the notions of "Ambivalence" and "Transposition", Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of "Polyphony" and "Heteroglossia", and Paulo Freire's *The pedagogy of the oppressed,* which focuses on oppression, dehumanization, and the necessity of liberating praxis. In the first chapter, using Kristeva's notion of "Ambivalence", we have examined the historical context of the novels, to illustrate how they engage with their different historical backgrounds, indicating the complex connection between fiction and national memory. In the second chapter, we have applied Kristeva's notion of "Transposition" and Freire's concept of "Praxis" and "Critical Consciousness" to study thematic parallels between the novels, specifically their portrayal of colonial oppression, and the challenges encountered by revolutionary fighters. In the third chapter, we have analyzed the differences in themes and characterization between the two works, focusing on the ideological foundations that shape each narrative, the nature of leadership, and the constructing motivations for joining the struggle. For this purpose, we applied Bakhtin's notions of polyphony and heteroglossia alongside Freire's Theory of Liberation to explore the diversity of voices and conflicting perspectives in the texts. Throughout the course of the analysis, we have concluded that *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* engage in a sustained intertextual and dialogic relationship with each other and with their historical contexts, providing convergent and divergent critics of colonialism and liberation.

**Key Words:** Colonialism, dialogism, ideology, intertextuality, liberation, resistance, revolution.

**Contents**

**Acknowledgements** ..... i

**Abstract** ..... ii

**I. Introduction** ..... 1

Review of the Literature ..... 2

Issue in Context ..... 7

**II. Methods and Materials**: ..... 8

1- Methods ..... 8

a. Kristeva's intertextuality ..... 8

b. Bakhtin's Dialogism ..... 11

c. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ..... 13

2- Materials ..... 15

**III. Results** ..... 17

**IV.Discussion** ..... 18

Chapter One: Historical Background and its Reflection in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of sings* ..... 18

Chapter Two: Intertextual Parallels in *Mayombe* and *In the hour signs* ..... 34

1-The Violence of the Colonizer ..... 34

2-Resistance and Counter-Violence ..... 38

3-The Everyday Hardship of Anti-Colonial Struggle ..... 44

Chapter Three: Dialogic Connections in Themes and Characterization in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* ..... 48

1-Ideological Foundations of Revolutionary Struggle ..... 49

2-Motivations for Joining the Revolution ..... 55

3-Internal Dynamics within Liberation Movements .....62

**V. Conclusion** .....66

**VI . Refrences** .....67

# I. Introduction

> Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of this contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being; no longer oppressor nor longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom (Freire, 2005, p.49).

The above quote from Freire's *The pedagogy of the oppressed* (2005) opens up the space for understanding decolonization not only as a political rupture, but as a human struggle, a theme that defines both the history and literature of post-colonial Africa. Decolonization in Africa marked one of the most pivotal turning points in the post-war global order. It was characterized by resistance, political activism, and cultural reawakening. For centuries, European colonial powers established their rule across the continent, suppressing indigenous identities and reshaping societies to serve their imperial ambitions. However, colonialism was never a monolithic force. Resistance movements, whether armed revolts or ideological struggles, emerged across the continent, challenging colonial regimes, forcing them to justify their authority, and ultimately paving the way for national independence. These struggles were waged not only on battlefields but also through narratives, with literature serving as a vital tool for reclaiming history, challenging colonial ideology, and amplifying the voices of those marginalized by imperial power.

Despite their historical differences, Angola and Sudan represent two significant and nuanced examples of anti-colonial resistance. Angola's struggle for independence was led by the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), a Marxist Leninist movement that opposed Portuguese colonial rule (Henderson, 1979, p. 8), From 1961 to 1975, the MPLA waged both military and ideological battles, advocating for a socialist revolution that sought to transcend colonial hierarchies and internal ethnic divisions. Sudan's Mahdist revolution (1881-1899) began as a religious uprising against Anglo-Egyptian domination, led by Mohamed

Ahmed, who declared himself "the expected Mahdi" (Churchill, 1902, p. 25). The movement asserted political sovereignty and rejected foreign domination, particularly British and Ottoman influence. Despite differing historical contexts, both movements reveal the complexities of resistance: tensions between unity and division, ideology and pragmatism, nationalism and broader revolutionary goals.

Pepetela's *Mayombe* (1980) and Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs* (1996) engage with revolutionary movements, situated in the context of war, resistance, and decolonization. *Mayombe* portrays guerrilla warfare in Angola, delving into the psychological and ideological struggles faced by the MPLA fighters in their pursuit of liberation. Pepetela, himself a former guerrilla, provides a distinctive viewpoint on the contradictions between individual desire, political ideology, and collective struggle. By contrast, *In the hour of signs* recreates the fervor of the Mahdist rebellion, portraying the sociopolitical and spiritual dimensions of resistance while interrogating the nature of leadership, faith, and colonial power. Although set in distinct historical contexts, the two novels invite reflexion on the internal fractures that can shape revolutionary movements. This dissertation undertakes a comparative analysis of these works, seeking to inevtigate how they engage with themes of conflict, resistance, and decolonization.

**Review of the Literature**

*Mayombe* by Pepetela and *In the hour of signs* by Mahjoub have been the subject of extensive criticism, particularly regarding their portrayals of history, politics, and cultural identity. To begin with, in his analysis titled "Unmasking structures: The dynamics power in Pepetela's *Mayombe*" (2002), Rothwell examined the power dynamics within Pepetela's novel. He used Foucault's theories to explore how power is anchored in masks and how it requires concealment to exist. He suggested that the characters' interactions reflect the complexities of power relations, where authority often requires disguise or manipulation to maintain its influence (2002, p.122). Rothwell reveals the tensions between individuals' ambitions and

collective goals. In addition, the shifting perspectives in the novel reflect how power is never stable; different characters interpret authority and rebellion in their own ways. He argued:

> The relationship between the novelist and his characters provides another example of a power dynamic in the text. As described by Pepetela, the characters are seen to be perpetually conflictive, vying for primacy with the narrative voice. In fact, they serve that contested voice more efficiently through this altercation, since their antagonism foregrounds the power edifice which holds them in place. Under the present reading of the novel, Pepetela is seen to dispute power structures (p.125).

Beyond the novel's exploration of power dynamics, another critical debate surrounding *Mayombe* concerns its place in literary history and its enduring relevance. Gajarawala (2012) examined this issue in her article "The Novel as dictator," by exploring why certain literary works, especially those tied to nationalist movements and socialist realism, tend to fade from global literary recognition. For her, "nationalism becomes destiny, but also a tragic horizon, which is closed to other forms of community and worldliness" (Gajarawala. 2012).

Concerning *Mayombe*, she argued that the novel embodies a type of fiction that was once central to anti-colonial struggles but is now often dismissed as outdated or overly didactic. The novel, deeply rooted in Angola's independence movement, prioritizes ideological commitment over stylistic innovation. Gajarawala connected *Mayombe* to the broader discourse of "literary forgettability" (2012), where nationalist and socialist-realist works struggle to maintain relevance in a literary world that increasingly values experimentation, formal complexity, and detachment from overt political messaging. She also drew on Marxist literary debates, particularly those involving Brecht and Lukács, to show how *Mayombe* fits into a tradition of socialist realism that has historically been criticized for being too rigid, overly message-driven, and lacking in aesthetic complexity. She argued:

> *Mayombe* might thus be read as an example of what Marxist literary critic Frederic Jameson refers to as an "agitational didacticism." In his commentary on the Bertold Brecht–Gyorgy Lukacs debates of the 1940s, Jameson echoes the by now routine dismissal of such governed artistic practices, fiction on a particular mission. The putative bad art of socialist realism has almost always lost out to the more

> spectacular avant-garde aesthetics of a generally understood Marxism (Gajarawala, 2012).

Ultimately, Gajarawala's critique is not simply a dismissal of *Mayombe* but an exploration of how political commitment in literature affects a novel's reception over time.

Another perspective on Mayombe comes from Willis (1987). In his article "Mayombe and the liberation of the Angolan", he critically examined Pepetela's *Mayombe*, shedding light on its portrayal of the Angolan liberation struggle and the ideological tensions within the MPLA guerrilla movement. Willis argued that *Mayombe* presents a nuanced, and at times disillusioning perspective, exposing internal conflict, tribal divisions, and ideological contradictions that challenge the ideal of national unity through a polyphonic narrative structure where multiple narrators provide diverse viewpoints. He argued, "The dichotomy between the Manichaean and anti-Manichaean interpretations of Angolan reality is a source of explicit concern to Pepetela" (1987, p.206).

Furthermore, Willis underscores the way Pepetela presents violence not merely as a necessary tool for liberation, but also as a morally complex and often tragic reality, particularly in moments where combatants recognize that "the Portuguese or 'Tuga' —is so often, at the individual level, no oppressor at all but another of the Oppressed" (1987, p. 207). Additionally, Willis discussed the allegorical elements of the novel, comparing its protagonist, Comandante Sem Medo, to Ogun-Prometheus, a figure who embodies both the heroic ideals and the inevitable disillusionment of revolution. He noted:

> The violence of physical combat figures only at the beginning and conclusion of Mayombe. On each occasion Comandante Sem Medo's combat group are victorious, firstly in sabotage and ambush, then, in the closing encounter, in the destruction of a Portuguese camp. The very horror of violence is sensitively handled: Pepetela, through Sem Medo, recognizes that the colonialist oppressor—the Portuguese or 'Tuga'—is so often, at the individual level, no oppressor at all but another of the oppressed (p.207).

This reflection on violence and struggle in *Mayombe* finds a parallel in *In the hour of signs*, where Mahjoub similarly explores the physical and moral toll of revolutionary conflict.

Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs* has also been the subject of critical analysis, with scholars examining its representation of religion and political upheaval within the context of the Mahdist Revolution. Spaulding's review of *In the hour of signs*, published in H-Africa (1997), offers a thorough critique of Mahjoub's portrayal of history, identity, and colonialism, arguing that the novel simplifies Sudanese history by presenting an overly polarized narrative, he explains that Mahjoub reduces Sudan's complex past to a simple opposition between colonizer and colonized, neglecting the nuances of social and religious divisions. According to Spaulding, Mahjoub constructs a world in which all the faults of Northern Sudan are attributed to foreign influences, whether European, Ottoman, or Arab, while the Sudanese themselves are largely portrayed as innocent, pious, and sanctimonious victims. This binary framing, he suggested, reduces the historical complexity of Sudan's colonial past and ignores internal divisions and power struggles within Sudanese society. He stated:

> All the ills of the northern Sudan are import- ed alien faults inflicted by vicious outsiders upon the pious, sanctimonious native virgins personi- fied by Hawi. Drunkenness, filth and betrayal are European (eg pp. 42-52) ... A more typical South Sudanese vice is criminality (p. 27), while Ottoman Asiatics are lazy, lust after sweetmeats, and reek of uncontrollable flatulence and body odor (pp. 39, 176). The Khalifa 'Abdullahi's excess- es may be attributed to his remote and humble Chadian origins (pp.1-2).

Spaulding also critiqued the novel's handling of religion, particularly through the protagonist, Hawi, who "returns to his homeland a virgin just in time to join the Sudanese Mahdia" (Spaulding, 1997). He explained how Hawi's spiritual journey and ultimate execution for apostasy evoke historical parallels, such as the fate of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha. Ultimately, Spaulding acknowledged Mahjoub's ambition in addressing critical issues such as colonial oppression, religious identity, and cultural displacement. He argued, "Mahjoub allows himself considerable postmodernist literary license" (Spaulding, 1997). Yet, he contended that the novel's historical distortion, reductive characterization, and lack of factual rigor weaken its impact.

From another perspective, Turan, in her article "In the time of empires: Inter-imperiality in Jamal Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs*," examined how Mahjoub's novel presents a unique perspective on imperial power struggles in 19th-century Sudan. She explained how Mahjoub "presents a compelling and rather exceptional narrative about empire(s) given that it portrays British and Ottoman forces as two imperial powers not necessarily competing with each other but joining forces to control the land and suppress the uprising" (2022, p.9). Turan pointed out that this depiction challenges the conventional understanding of colonial rule, as it shifts attention from a simple two-sided conflict to a broader inter-imperial power structure.

Additionally, she highlighted how the novel presents the Sudanese perspective within this framework, exploring how the local population navigated and resisted the dominance of these two imperial forces. Turan argued:

> While the narrative meticulously draws attention to the delicate power relation and the tension between these two forces, it also conveys the perspective of the Sudanese towards them, thus creating a triangular structure within the presence of two imperial powers and the local population of the same territory (2022, p. 9).

A different perspective on *In the hour of signs* is offered in Taib' master dissertation entitled "A Fanonian Reading of Jamal Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs*" (2024). Taib's dissertation provided an in-depth examination of the novel through the lens of Fanon's *The wretched of the earth (1963),* by situating the narrative within the historical context of the Mahdist revolution. Taib explored the novel's depiction of colonial violence and the counter-violence it incites (2024, p. 12). Drawing on Fanon's theory, the dissertation highlighted how the Turco-Egyptian and British colonial regimes relied "on psychological and physical violence to maintain and extend their rule of oppression and exploitation" (Taib, 2024, p. 56), ultimately fueling the Mahdist resistance.

Taib further examined the psychological consequences of colonial subjugation, illustrating how Mahjoub portrays the internalization of inferiority and the struggle for cultural

identity among the Sudanese. Additionally, the study has delved into the novel's subversion of colonial ideologies, emphasizing the way Mahjoub "ironize[s] and satirize[s] the colonialists and their ideologies" (Taib, 2014, p. 57) to dismantle imperial narratives and assert indigenous autonomy. Taib's dissertation offered a nuanced reading of *In the hour of signs*, revealing how the novel encapsulates the tension between colonial power, resistance, and the quest for self-determination.

**Issue in Context**

Given the considerable amount of critical attention that *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* have individually received, it is remarkable that no comparative study has been conducted to analyze both works in relation to one another. Although scholars have examined the subject of colonialism, revolution and historical memory in each novel, to our knowledge, no research has directly compared the two works together, despite their shared thematic focus on anti-colonial resistance in Africa. This gap underlines the significance of our research.

This study, therefore, aims to compare *Mayombe* to *In the hour of signs* in terms of their similarities and differences. We plan to analyze how the two novels portray revolutionary movements, deal with colonial and post-colonial identity and interact with the change of historical narratives through a theoretical lens that combines Krestiva's "Intertextuality", which examines how both novels reconstruct historical discourses, and Bakhthin's "Dialogism", which allows analyzing the various voices and ideological conflicts within the novels, along with Freire's "*Pedagogy of the oppressed"*, which provides critical perspectives on the representation of liberation movements and consciousness-raising among oppressed groups.

First, we will start with the historical contexts of both novels, by situating them within the broader frameworks of the Angolan War of Independence and the Mahdist Revolution in Sudan, examining how the historical events are reflected through the narratives. Then, we will focus on the main similarities between the two texts, particularly with respect to their depiction

of revolutionary movements, the struggle for liberation, and the psychological impact of oppression. Finally, we will address the key differences between *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs*, particularly in terms of character development, and ideological positions. By doing so, we aim to illustrate how these works, despite their common themes, offer distinct perspectives on revolution, colonialism, and identity formation.

## II. Methods and Materials:

### 1- Methods

This study examined Pepetela's *Mayombe* and Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs* through an intertextual and dialogic lens. It relied primarily on Krestiva's intertextuality and Bakhtin's dialogism as already mentioned, with Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* serving as a secondary theory. Intertextuality will be employed to establish connections between the two texts while dialogism will serve to highlight their contrasting elements. Furthermore, Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* will help articulate key concepts of oppression, the dehumanization process, and the dialectical relationship between oppressor and oppressed.

#### a. Kristeva's intertextuality

The word intertextuality was first introduced in literary linguistics by Bulgarian-born French semiotician and philosopher Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s in her essay "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" (1966). She explains that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1986, p.37). The concept of intertextuality challenges the traditional view of literary creation as the product of an isolated genius. The text is viewed as a site where various pre-existing texts and cultural symbols interact. She asserts that any literary work must be interpreted as a location where multiple voices, discourses, and texts intersect. She wrote, "The literary word is an intersection of textual

surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" (1986, p.36).

Moreover, Kristeva pointed out that a text transposes rather than just alludes to a past work. She described intertextuality as the "Transposition of one or several sign-system(s) into another" (1986, p.111). She argued that the process involves active transportation instead of simple repetition. Therefore, every text reinterprets and reshapes the previous discourses on which it is based, creating new meaning through reconstruction.

This idea is essential for the study of revolutionary and postcolonial literature, which reinterprets prevalent historical narratives to question them. Kristeva also presented a key structural framework for conceptualizing intertextuality. She outlined two axes through which meaning operates within a text, the "horizontal axis" and the "vertical axis." The horizontal axis indicates the link between the author and the reader, and the vertical axis relates the text to other works. She asserted that:

> The addressee, however, is included within a book's discursive universe only as discourse itself. He thus fuses with this other discourse, this other book, in relation to which the writer has written his own text. Hence horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. (1986, p.37).

Thus, the passage illustrates that meaning is not a fixed integrated entity that comes from the text; it is the product of complex interactions across various textual and social contexts.

Another important aspect of Kristeva's theory is her opposition to the traditional notion of authorship. She claimed that:

> The writer's interlocutor then is the writer himself, but as reader of another text. The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text, re-reading itself as it re-writes itself. The dialogic structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text" (1986, pp. 56-57).

We understand that the author becomes a member of a social and linguistic system that surpasses them. The literary subject is 'double-oriented'. It deals with both the language system

that shapes their utterances and the historical and ideological processes that influence them. As a result, the author's voice is constantly shaped by other voices reflecting the dialogic notion first initiated by Bakhtin, which Kristeva integrated into a more systematic model of textuality.

In addition, Kristeva connected intertextuality with the socio-historical context in which texts are produced and read. She wrote, "History and morality are written and read within the infrastructure of texts" (1968, p. 36). This means that literary works are always linked to a broader cultural, ideological, and historical context. Therefore, literature is not a simple and isolated artistic expression. It is a dynamic site of societal interaction and transformation. Intertextuality allows a better understanding of how texts interact with and revise dominant discourses throughout time and space.

Kristeva's concept of intertextuality requires a profound reinterpretation of literary meaning. It reduces the differences between individual texts, decenters the author's creative authority by viewing writing as a process shaped by pre-existing texts, and redefines reading as an act of perceiving and decoding the dynamic interaction within various textual voices. In such a way, Kristeva developed a theory that influences literary criticism and affects the study of ideology, history, and culture through literature.

In the context of analyzing *Mayombe* by Pepetela and *In the hour of signs* by Mahjoub, Kristeva's theory serves as a key methodological element. Both works are deeply connected with historical and political discourses, including colonialism, nationalism, and revolution. With each novel standing as a site for the absorption and transformation of past narratives, Kristeva's framework then offers an analysis of how these novels each in his own way not only narrate new stories, but also reinterpret existing discourses to create alternative historical viewpoints. Intertextuality also allows the study of similarities between the two books, particularly the way they engage with and reshape prevailing historical and ideological narratives through fiction.

**b. Bakhtin's Dialogism**

The concept of "Dialogism" was first introduced by the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin in his influential work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929). Bakhtin provided a dialogical study on the nature of language, art, and the novel, arguing that meaning cannot be produced in isolation but occurs through the interaction between diverse voices and consciousnesses. He explained:

> The idea lives not in one person's isolated individual consciousness-if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of others (1984, pp. 78-88).

Therefore, dialogism offers a perspective on language and literature as naturally contextual, dynamic, and socially integrated. In his analysis of literary texts, Bakhtin highlighted, "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (1984, p.6).

According to Bakhtin, "polyphony" can be seen in Dostoevsky's novels, where characters exhibit ideological autonomy and cannot be regarded as extensions of the author's voice. Bakhtin argued, "In his works, a hero appears whose voice is constructed exactly like the voice of the author himself in a novel of the usual type" (1984. p. 7). Each character has a unique perspective, and the exchanges between them create a dialogic framework in which no single position is considered absolute truth. Bakhtin explained that Dostoevsky's novels reject "monologism," the conventional framework in which the author's ideology dominates all others. Bakhtin stated, "Dostoevsky's novel is dialogic. It is constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several con-sciousnesses" (1984, p.18). In these literary works, the author does not possess total control over meaning. Instead, meaning emerges through the continuous dialogue between characters, readers, and the larger cultural context.

A specific type of characterization is implied by these innovative literary forms. Dostoevsky's heroes are ideologically self-aware, refusing to be categorized as static or rigid types. Their personal lives are connected with major ideological, intellectual, and social discourses. Bakhtin acknowledged Dostoevsky's narrative view, claiming that "Dostoevsky's extraordinary artistic capacity for seeing everything in coexistence and interaction is his greatest strength" (1984, p.30). Thus, the Dostoevskian book functions as a site where several worldviews interact, clash, and evolve without falling into a single viewpoint.

In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Bakhtin elaborated on these concepts further, extending his concept of dialogism beyond Dostoevsky to include the novel as a literary genre. He asserted, "To a greater or lesser extent, every novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of 'languages,' styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation" (1981, p.49). From this perspective, the novel becomes a privileged area to explore the interaction of several linguistic, social, and ideological voices. In addition, Bakhtin introduced the notion of "heteroglossia," which indicates the existence of different forms of speech, ideological viewpoints, and social dialects within a single text. He described the novel as "a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of language) and a diversity of individual voices" (1981, p. 262). Heteroglossia is essential to the dialogic nature of the novel since it ensures that language stays neither neutral nor univocal. According to Bakhtin, "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (1981, p.293). From this perspective, the novel does more than merely express reality through language; it actively engages in a search for meaning within and through language itself. Bakhtin argued, "What is realized in the novel is

the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system" (1981, p.365).

This comparative study will rely on dialogism as a methodological tool to explore how the characters' discourses in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* engage with themes of identity, leadership, and revolution. Rather than presenting a unified image of anti-colonial resistance, the analysis will trace how these voices evolve and interact with their distinct historical and ideological contexts. Both *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* reveal multiple, usually conflicting perspectives that challenge any simplistic interpretation. Through a dialogic lens, one can observe how meaning is formed through the exchange of voices and how each novel reflects the complexity and diversity fundamental to the historical experiences it portrays.

**c. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed***

Paulo Freire's *The pedagogy of the oppressed* (1968) is one of the most influential works in critical pedagogy and liberation. Written in the context of political struggle and systemic inequality, it offers a powerful understanding of the relationship between oppression, education, and human liberation. In chapter one, Freire directly addressed the question of revolution and the relationship of dominance between the oppressor and the oppressed. Freire presented the concept of *Conscientização,* which has no exact translation to English, but he defines it as the awakening of critical consciousness. He stated, "On the contrary, by making it possible for people to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects, *Conscientização* enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism" (2005, p.36). This process of awakening, which transfoms the oppressed into active participants of their own liberation, echoes the moral and ideological struggles often faced by revolutionary movements. He argued that people must first gain awareness of their own role within the situation of oppression in order to be able to break free from it. Freire stated that the oppressor and oppressed share a kind of relation that dehumanizes them. "Dehumanization," Freire wrote,

“marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it” (2005, p.44). Such an idea underlines the psychological consequences of colonial domination and the ethical dilemmas inherent in the fight of liberation. He also presented the issue of confusing freedom with the maintenance of the status quo, explaining that the existing conditions might seem comfortable, that change could be scary, which explains, in a way, people’s fear of the possibility of a revolution, seeing it as traumatic. He noted, “They prefer gregariousness to authentic comradeship; they prefer the security of conformity with their state of unfreedom to the creative communion produced by freedom and even the very pursuit of freedom” (2005, p.48). This tension between fear and transformation speaks to the broader human dimension of liberation struggles, where the desire for freedom often conflicts with the comfort of familiar subjugation.

According to Freire, creating and organizing competing groups and fostering conflicts is not the way towards freedom. He argued that sometimes the oppressed turn on each other, practicing violence on their families and children. This internal violence, born of oppression, reflects the fragmentation and mistrust that often weaken collective resistance. Such agression, which Freire attributes to the consciousness of the oppressed, is caused by the trauma of living under colonial conditions. In order to avoid it and bring about change, one needs, in Freire’s view, to be a radical rather than accept the status quo. He argued, “Sectarianism, fed by fanaticism, is always castrating. Radicalization, nourished by a critical spirit, is always creative” (2005, p. 37). Freire thus envisions liberation as an ongoing act of awareness and creation, an idea that deeply informs the moral and ideological dimensions of revolutionary narratives.

In addition, Freire argued that the problem of humanization departs from the recognition of dehumanization, explaining that people should not occupy the place of the oppressor when seeking their own freedom. Having only known the oppressor’s model of success, they will

ultimately desire to imitate it. “In order for this struggle to have meaning,” Freire asserted, “the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it) become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of humanity of both” (2005, p.44). Freire also described how the fight for the liberation of the oppressed is launched by the oppressed themselves and they will only get there through praxis. He noted, “This can be done only by means of the praxis, reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (2005, p.51). Freire theorized the revolutionary movement and explained how the peasants and workers come to consciousness of their own living conditions. He insisted that any liberatory movement must avoid the hijacking of the people’s movement by an elite through propaganda. If this happens, people would then be objectified by others who claim to liberate them.

Freire’s theory of critical pedagogy, highlights the need for oppressed individuals to reach liberation through critical awareness and self-reflection. His primary focus on praxis and the integration of thoughts and action, provides an essential theoretical framework for understanding revolutionary struggles against oppressive structures. Examining *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs,* two novels that address anti-colonial resistance, can be understood in light of Freire’s perspective. Both works demonstrate his views on the complexities of dehumanization and the risks of sustaining power structures, highlighting not only the exterior conflict against oppression, but also the interior obstacles endured by individuals seeking liberation. Freire’s perspective will help to explain how the two texts represent the quest for authentic freedom.

## 2- Materials

### Summary of *Mayombe* (1980)

The story follows a group of MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) guerrilla who fight in the dense and humid Mayombe forest. The group was tasked with resisting Portuguese loggers who were exploiting the forest for timber. The guerrillas were

also urged to raise political awareness among the workers. The novel explores both the external conflict against colonial forces and the internal tensions within the revolutionary group. Despite their common cause of liberation and socialism, the fighters are divided by ethnic identities, ideological differences, and personal desires. These divisions often lead to suspicion, betrayal, and confrontation. The forest amplifies their emotional and psychological struggles and makes each character confront their own beliefs and weaknesses. Central to the story is Fearless, the group's commander, who balances political strategy and battlefield leadership. He is both respected and feared, embodying strength and vision. He is also capable of morally questionable actions, most notably his relationship with Ondina, the only female voice in the story and the ex-fiancée of his close comrade, the Commissar. This love triangle intensifies the emotional stakes of the novel and causes a deep rupture between Fearless and the Commissar. As the guerrillas face hunger, political disillusionment, and betrayal, such as André's corruption and abandonment of the cause, the story gradually intesifies toward a culminating tragic battle. In the climactic fight against the Portuguese, Fearless dies heroically, saving the Commissar despite their personal conflicts. His passing, along with that of Struggle, another often misunderstood individual, becomes symbolic: a call to abandon tribal divisions and unite as one Angolan nation.

**Summary of *In the hour of signs* (1996)**

The novel tells the story of the Mahdist revolution and the British conquest at the end of the 19th century. The story takes place in Sudan, a land ruled by a ruthless regime of Turco-Egyptian officials, backed by the British, who send soldiers to collect taxes, while a growing number of people in the land are living in abject poverty. It reaches a point where the soldiers themselves are starving, and unlike the past, where they found resistance, the villages are too weak to fight. It is in such circumstances that Muhammad Ahmed, the religious leader, declared himself 'The Mahdi', or the Promised One, sent by God with a message of hope and justice,

and rapidly gained the support of the masses who were already lost and disillusioned. The Mahdi formed an army called ‘the Ansar’ and launched a war against the Turkish regime. Surprisingly, his army defeated garrisons across Sudan and spread the Mahdi's rule. As the revolution intensified, the Mahdi targeted the capital Khartoum, defended by General Gordon who was sent to organize a withdrawal. Nevertheless, he fortified the city and resisted. After a long siege, the Mahdi's forces capture Khartoum, fulfilling his political and religious campaign in 1885, which follows the death of Gordon. Soon after the conquest of Khartoum, the Mahdi died unexpectedly, leaving a fragile and uncertain future in Sudan under the rule of the Khalifa. Parallels to these events, the novel follows Hawi a young Sudanese man, caught between tradition, faith, and revolution. Through his eyes, he witnessed the human cost of the uprising and the tension between spiritual idealism and political reality.

## III. Results

This research has offered comparative analysis of *Mayombe* by Pepetela and *In the hour of signs* by Mahjoub. Through Kristeva’s intertextuality theory, the study revealed that both novels are deeply embedded in their national histories, which, in turn, shapes their narrative structures and thematic focus. In the first chapter, we noticed that each novel reactivates past anti-colonial struggles in a way that allows them to speak across temporal and spatial borders, forming a web of intertextual echoes concerning resistance and the legacy of colonialism. In the second chapter, we examined shared thematic concerns between the two novels. Through the lenses of Kristeva and Freire, we found that both texts foreground the violence of the colonizer, the resistance of the colonized, and the collective hardship endured by the oppressed. These intertextual and ideological parallels demonstrate that the novels share a commitment to portraying the human cost of colonial domination and the revolutionary efforts to overturn it. The Freirean framework explained how each novel emphasizes the awakening of political consciousness among the oppressed, reinforcing their unity through struggle and

sacrifice. In the third chapter, we shifted the focus to divergences. The study showed that while both authors address revolution, their ideological foundations differ significantly. Characters in *Mayombe* engage in polyphonic debates, emphasizing ideological introspection before action, whereas in *In the hour of signs* the author presents a more action-driven revolution grounded in religious symbolism and messianic fervor. These dialogic differences refer to the way each narrative structures the interaction of voices, in Pepetala's text, dialogue becomes a tool for questioning ideals, while in Mahjoub's work, voices merge around a collective faith rather than debate. They extend to the motivations for joining the war, leadership styles, and internal group dynamics. Thus, Mahjoub's and Pepetela's novels diverge on key ideological planes, opening a dialogic space where distinct national voices engage in tension rather than agreement.

## IV. Discussion

### Chapter One: Historical Background and its Reflection in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of sings*

*Mayombe* (1980) by Pepetela, and *In the hour of signs* (1996) by Mahjoub are two novels that emerge from distinctly disparate times and geographies. The first is anchored in the Angolan Liberation War of the 1970s, while the second is set during the Sudanese-Mahdist movement of the late 19th century. Despite their historical and ideological differences, they are deeply concerned with colonial invasion, the birth of collective resistance, and the complex process of decolonization. Their authors employ the lived experiences and tragedies of colonized nations to explore power, ideology, and identity through fiction. This chapter aims to create a comparative historical framework for the analysis of the two works. It emphasizes their shared foundations: the effects of the partition of Africa, the persistent structures of colonial domination, and the violent paths toward decolonization. Examining these works shows how distinct anti-colonial movements, one rooted in Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary

Ideology and the other in Religious Messianism, can be interpreted as parallel responses to imperial power.

Kristeva's concept of "ambivalence" offers a useful lens through which to understand the relationship between historical events and literary representation. This ambivalence suggests that literature is always dialoguing with other texts and with the historical, social, and political forces that shape it. She explained, "The term 'ambivalence' implies the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history; for the writer they are one and the same" (1980, p. 39). This understanding enables us to see how literary texts do not just mirror historical events but actively engage with them, reshaping and reinterpreting their meaning. In both *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs*, the narratives are shaped by, and in turn, reshape the colonial past illustrating how fiction can embody the weight of real historical tensions, ideologies, and divisions.

To understand the shared historical and ideological grounding of *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs*, it is essential to trace the broader forces that shaped the African continent in the late 19th century, one of which was the formal partition of Africa by European powers. This was formalized at the Berlin Conference, held from November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885. Robinson claimed that the participants of the Berlin Conference "made so bold as to plan the destiny of" Africa. (1988, p.1). It aimed to regulate European colonization and trade in Africa primarily as a reaction to increasing conflicts between competing powers, particularly in the Congo Basin. The conference resulted in the General Act of Berlin, in which "the interested powers settled their individual claims in the lobbies and divided the territories concerned among themselves" (Robinson, 1988, p. 1). They established the principles that would regulate the colonization of Africa. One of these principles was the effective occupation, which "was the lever for aspiring rivals to attack the virtual colonial monopoly of the world power of the day"

(Geiss, 1988, p.270). In Article 34 of the 1885 General Act of Berlin Conference, the European powers declared:

> Any Power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Power which assumes a Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own (p.14).

The partition of Africa facilitated the rapid and brutal occupation of African territories by the European nations. The conference also allowed the freedom of navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers, expanding European trade. Moreover, it was stated, "Merchandise imported into these regions shall remain free from import and transit dues" (1885, p.3). The outcomes of the conference profoundly reshaped the political map of Africa, particularly in regions such as Sudan and Angola. Following the agreements made in Berlin, Angola was officially recognized as part of Portugal's imperial sphere. Sudan, on the other hand, gradually fell under British influence. However, it was not formally occupied by Britain until the collapse of the Mahdi State in 1898.

Portugal's claim to Angola goes back to the late 15th century, when Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão reached the Angolan coast. The initial goal was to find a trade route to India, but Portugal quickly discovered Angola's economic potential. Brimingham stated, "The wealth of the kingdom was epitomized by the coastal fisheries of Luanda Island, which produced a regional shell currency" (2015, p. viii). This discovery deepened when Brazil became a Portuguese colony, demanding an enormous labor force for its sugar plantations. Angola was also rich in human resources and governed by local leaders who, in exchange for European goods, particularly weapons, engaged in trade relations that eventually made the region central to the transatlantic slave trade. Thornton wrote, "the conquest of Angola, was the result of economic controversy rather than territorial aspirations" (1996, p.40). Portugal enslaved nearly 6 million Africans, half of whom were trafficked to the Americas.

As the transatlantic slave trade intensified, Portugal began to view Angola not as a labor source but as a colony. Initially, Portuguese control remained limited to coastal areas and was maintained through shifting alliances with local kingdoms. However, in the late 19th century, Portugal began expanding its territorial control in the context of the Berlin Conference, under pressure from other colonial powers, particularly Germany. By the early 20th century, Portugal had established full control over Angola and began exploiting its rich resources like copper and diamonds. Birmingham stated, "The belief that there could be hidden wealth, especially African minerals which imperial rivals might aspire to extract, culminated in the 'Scramble' for Africa of the 1880s" (2015, p. 5). In addition, Portugal was subjected to a harsh colonial system, "Many thousands of imported Angolan slaves spent their lives up to their waists in cold water washing river mud for precious stones" (Birmingham, 2015, p. 6). The colonial regime depended mainly on coercive systems such as *Chibalo,* which obliged Angolans to engage in unpaid labor on plantations and mines.

In *Mayombe,* this historical background provides the backdrop for the guerrilla battle portrayed in the narrative. The characters' resentment and hostility toward the Portuguese originates from decades of systematic oppression and the denial of political and cultural sovereignty. Pepetela wrote, "I suffered colonialism in my flesh. My father was killed by the tuga. How can I bear seeing persons who did not suffer ordering us about, as if they know what we want? This is the injustice against which we must struggle: for the authentic sons of the people, the genuine ones, to take things in hand" (1980, p.34). In this quote, the author's anti colonial attitude is expressed by Miracle, one of the guerrilla fighters, expressed his deep hatred for the Portuguese colonizer. His statement reflects the broader resentment among fighters toward both the colonial oppressors and any leadership which ignores to the people's suffering.

Just as Angola's colonial experience shaped the world of *Mayombe*, Sudan's trajectory under foreign domination offers another perspective on resistance and identity in *In the hour of*

*signs*. Sudan's experience of foreign domination began long before formal European colonization. In 1821, Muhammad Ali Pasha the Ottoman sultan's viceroy in Egypt (Holt, 1958, p.14) initiated a military campaign into Sudan, aiming to expand southward and exploit the region's resources. Despite being nominally under Ottoman sovereignty, Muhammad Ali governed Egypt as an autonomous power, and Sudan became a colony of a colony, administered through Egyptian-appointed administrators. Holt and Daly wrote, "In 1820 Muhammad 'Ali Pasha was the autonomous viceroy of Egypt, and could draw on considerable militan' and economic resources in order to secure his rule over the Sudanese provinces" (2000, p.41).

The Turco-Egyptian regime was marked by brutal extraction, excessive taxation, and organized slave raiding. Holt argued, "The Egyptian taxation system with its accompaniment of violence and extortion was a more permanent grievance and one which would undoubtedly come to the front in any revolt" (1958, p.25). Particularly in the southern territories, by the mid-19th century, Sudan was considered as a significant supplier to both the Red Sea and inland African slave markets, with Khartoum serving as a pivotal base in the trade. Holt explained, "Khartoum developed in the space of sixty years from an insignificant fishing village into the most populous town in the Sudan" (1958, p.13). Mahjoub referred to this period in his novel, highlighting the atrocities and harsh conditions faced by Sudanese civilians under the Turco-Egyptian rule. He wrote, "They had one goat, which was over-milked and limping. The women drew their black wraps across their faces as the company led by Sanjak Juma came across the red plain in a cloud of dust. Horses staggered and reared up" (1996, p. 29). This passage captures the pilgrims' suffering during their journey, marked by exhaustion, scarcity, and disorientation.

In addition, the novel highlights the burdens of taxation and the oppressive economic conditions under Turko-Egyptian rule. Mahjoub wrote:

> In every village they come to it is the same thing: they round the villagers up to form a circle for the registering of names and the listing of property. Most have

> nothing to give. They shuffle forwards with their heads bowed, knowing that the heavy lash of the courbaj awaits them, for this is not the first time (p.26).

Such economic measures increased Egypt's military capacity while severely harming local communities, creating extensive hostility and opposition among Sudanese tribes and religious authorities. Several unsuccessful rebellions during the 1860s and 1870s indicated increased frustration, paving the way for a more organized and ideologically-driven uprising: The Mahdist Revolution (1881–1898). The latter was a religiously motivated uprising led by Muhammad Ahmed, who proclaimed himself the Mahdi. Holt defined the Mahdi as "al-imam, the head of the Islamic community. His function is to restore right governance or, in a traditional phrase, 'to fill the earth with equity and justice" (1958, p.22).

The uprising rapidly gained support among Sudanese tribes, unified by both religious fervor and dissatisfaction with foreign domination and the exploitative practices of the Turco-Egyptian regime. In 1885, Mahdist forces "camped on the south side of Omdurman fort" and started "to direct the siege" of khartum (Ohrwalder, 1893, p.131). It resulted in the death of General Gordon, the British governor-general. These scenes are portrayed by Mahjoub in Chapter 20, titled "Khartoum, The White Nile Defences, 25/26 January 1885", where he stated:

> The horses come on, ragged flags and tassels fluttering, grinding their teeth at the bit. With muscles straining and eyes bulging they charge onwards. The howls of their riders are not for this world, but in anticipation of the next. They are here to cleanse the world. They are the ungrateful orphans poised to cut the bonds imposed by this unholy adoption (p.153).

This passage vividly conveys the spiritual and militant fervor of the Mahdist forces as they advance on Khartoum. Their charge is not just a military maneuver but a symbolic rupture from colonial subjugation, a violent, transcendent act of purification and rebirth. Through its charged religious imagery and intense emotional tone, Mahjoub depicts the uprisings as both a spiritual awakening and a revolutionary assertion of identity.

Following the collapse of Khartoum, a new political order emerged. In the aftermath, the Mahdist movement consolidated power and established an Islamic regime based in

Omdurman. The regime, known as the Mahdist State, ruled Sudan autonomously for thirteen years (1885–1898), establishing its own administrative and military institutions and avoiding European intervention, until its brutal collapse in 1898. Although the Mahdist State was not overthrown until 1898, its rise posed a significant danger to imperial interests in the region and became a symbol of African resistance to European dominance. Mahjoub mirrors this political trajectory through the growing divisions among his characters whose conflicting visions of faith and purpose reflect the internal fractures that ultimately weakened the Mahdist movement. By the late 1890s, the Mahdist State began to weaken due to internal disputes.

At the same time, British imperial interests in the region grew, particularly concerning control of the Nile and the preservation of Egypt and the Suez Canal. In 1896, Britain launched an immense military campaign from Egypt under Lord Kitchener, attempting to crush the Mahdist regime and reassert imperial dominance. Churchill noted, “On the 14th the reserves were called out. On the 15th the Khedive reviewed the Cairo garrison; and at the termination of the parade Sir H. Kitchener informed him that the earliest battalions would start for the front that night” (1902, p.107). The pivotal Battle of Omdurman in 1898 ended in Anglo-Egyptian forces decisively defeating the Mahdi’s army, leading to thousands of Sudanese casualties. When Khalifa Abdullah saw his army defeated, he returned to Omdurman to organize its defense and prepare his escape (Churchill, 1902, p.301). The fighters had given up, and many surrendered as the British cavalry advanced. Churchill stated, “The authority of the Khalifa and the strength of his army were forever broken on the 2nd of September, and the battle of Omdurman is the natural climax of this tale of war” (1902, p.327). Following this victory, Sudan was placed under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899-1956), a colonial system in which Britain had complete authority while Egypt acted as a formal co-ruler. This battle was mentioned at the end of Mahjoub’s novel highlighting the weakness and fear of the Mahdi’s army which end with the collapse of their state. Mahjoub wrote:

> Sixty thousand men all told, ranging from young boys who could barely hold a sword above their heads with both hands to old men like Hawi who could hardly walk. Sixty thousand men walking into the sun: under the light-green flag of Ali wad Hilu marched fifty-five hundred souls, north towards the black rocks of the Kerreri Hills round which they would circle towards the plains (p.243).

Mahjoub's description emphasizes the exhaustion and hopelessness of the Mahdist forces, turning the historical defeat into a moment of collective despair. It shows that the fall of the Mahdist state was not only a military loss but also the collapse of a spiritual and ideological vision.

Although depicted as collaborative governance, the condominium essentially operated as a British colonial authority. It established new administrative systems, reorganized the economy to serve British interests, and imposed indirect rule that intensified ethnic and regional divisions mainly between the North and the South.

Even if Angola and Sudan were colonized by distinct powers, Portugal and Britain, their colonial governments in both countries used coercive techniques, colonial exploitation, and cultural control to maintain their dominance. Yet, the nature and implementation of this coercion differed sharply between the two contexts. Portuguese colonialism was marked by a harsh, centralized system of direct governance, whereas British control over Sudan employed indirect rule, exploiting pre-existing local structures for colonial governance. Despite these differences, both systems had the same purpose: to maintain control over African countries and extract their resources for the exclusive benefit of the metropole. Portugal's rule in Angola was based on the concept of *assimilado*. Harsh and Thomas wrote, "The Portuguese used the term *assimilado* to describe those Africans who had been educated and "assimilated" into the Portuguese culture" (1976, p.34).

This policy claimed to offer Portuguese citizenship to Africans who embraced European customs, language, religion, and lifestyle, though in reality, this citizenship remained strictly limited and unequal. This policy was formalized in the Colonial Act of 1930. However,

only a small number of Angolans obtained this status, and those who did faced significant social and legal discrimination. The majority of the population was classified as indigenous under the Native Statute of 1926. This dual system institutionalized racial hierarchy, reinforcing the divide between colonizer and colonized and ensuring that political and economic power remained exclusively in Portuguese hands. In this matter, Birmingham stated:

> Citizenship was the subject of a core piece of legislation, the Native Statute, introduced into Angola in 1926. The old class gradations of colonial society were legalistically replaced by the simple two-way barrier between 'citizens' and 'natives. Natives were subject to a poll tax which replaced the old hut tax (2015, p.64).

This passage reveals how Portuguese leaders controlled the education system, ensuring that learning was only in Portuguese and served colonial interests. The colonial administration's main objective was to pacify and civilize the population. Birmingham wrote, "an attempt to bridge ethnic boundaries after the war ended, and to create a distinctive cultural unity for the nation, was undertaken when the president declared that Portuguese would be the 'national'—not merely the 'official'—language of all Angolans" (2015, p.122).

The colonial oppressive regime appears clearly in *Mayombe*. Despite their ethnic diversity, the guerrilla fighters communicate primarily in Portuguese, the language of their colonial oppressors. This reliance on the colonizer's language exemplifies one of the subtle signs of assimilation imposed by the Portuguese colonial rule. Pepetela wrote, "The Commissar was going to step in. Fearless gripped him by the arm, and pressed for silence. Fearless went on with the questioning in Portuguese), a language all understood, more or less" (p.20).

In contrast to the Portuguese model, the British colonial rule in Sudan adopted a strategy of indirect rule following the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium in 1899. Holt stated, "The signature of the Condominium Agreement in January 1899 seemed to patriotic Egyptians an abdication to Britain of national claims to the Sudan. The Agreement was followed by the mutiny of a Sudanese battalion in Omdurman, instigated by discontented

Egyptian officers" (1958, p.223). Under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, British officials governed through tribal chiefs, religious leaders, and regional elites. They imposed their authority through the 1922 Native Administration Ordinance, whose "basic principle was that the local administration of colonial peoples should be conducted through indigenous structures of authority, employing indigenous law or custom, as far as this was consistent with British ideas of good government and justice" (Johnson, 2003, p.11).

This helped Britain to maintain authority without substantial governmental presence, hence, limiting costs while reinforcing local hierarchies. In addition, indirect rule deepened and sometimes created ethnic and religious divisions, particularly between the Arab Muslim North and the African animist and Christian South. The British enacted the 1924 Closed Districts Ordinance, which limited interaction between the North and the South, institutionalizing segregation and planting the seeds of long-term conflict. It was applied "to most districts in southern provinces from the mid-1920s" (Johnson, 2003, p.12). In Mahjoub's novel, the ethnic and religious divisions within Sudanese society are portrayed through tensions among the different groups, reflecting the impact of colonial policies that fostered fragmentation and mistrust under British indirect rule. Mahjoub wrote, "The very same men who had pledged their allegiance to the khalifa were now set on beating their own path to the top. Some of them had real grievances; others pointed enviously at the way in which the khalifa favoured his own people over all others" (p.198).

Education under the condominium was similarly fragmented. Christian missionary schools operated mainly in the South, advocating English-language and Christian principles. Johnson mentioned, "Mission education was thought to divorce students from the customs of their own tribe, thus reducing their effectiveness as tribal leaders" (2003, p.15). Islamic education was authorized in the North, but it remained under the control of local Islamic leaders. No cohesive national curriculum or centralized education policy existed. Johnson noted that

this policy was not intended to create a unified Sudanese identity but rather to prevent it by maintaining separate spheres of development (2003, p.184). The British plan resulted in significant regional differences and mistrust that would subsequently disrupt post-colonial Sudan. By setting the novel in the 1880s, Mahjoub questions how religious authority, political ambition, and imperial impact interact to produce Sudanese history.

The legacy of the British colonial system inevitably fed into the emergence of resistance movements and influenced the forms that decolonization would later assume. Although the anti-colonial movements in Angola and Sudan were shaped by distinct colonial legacies and modes of resistance, both countries faced similar post-colonial challenges in their efforts to forge a new national identity. In Angola, "The MPLA arose out of the nationalist currents that developed among the small layer of intellectuals, both African and mestiço (of mixed African and Portuguese parenthood, after World War lI, principally in the capital of Luanda" (Harsch & Thomas, 1976, p.26). The movement combined political ideology with guerrilla strategy and educational initiatives and was supported by the Mbundu ethnic group. Harsh and Thomas wrote, "The MPLA, moreover, was only one of nearly a dozen similar groups in Luanda. It did not become a major force within the nationalist movement until several years later" (1976, p.27).

*Mayombe* vividly portrays the ideological conflicts within the MPLA, revealing how ethnic rivalries and class-based perspectives threaten the movement's cohesion. This is especially evident in the reflections of Miracle, who criticized the hypocrisy of the movement's so-called intellectual elite:

> Intellectuals have an obsession that it is we, the peasants, who are tribalists. But they are as well. The problem is that there is tribalism and tribalism. There is legitimate tribalism, when the tribe is defended as it deserves. And there is illegitimate tribalism, when an effort is made to impose the tribe beyond the rights it deserves. (p.34).

However, Fearless is portrayed by Pepetela as an intellectual who is committed to education and ideological clarity within the Angolan liberation struggle. Fearless understood that the fight for independence is not only physical but also intellectual and political. In a conversation with Struggle, Fearless highlighted the importance of studying. He clearly linked education not only to personal dignity but also to the broader goals of the revolution. Fearless argued:

> Man must know much, ever more and more, to win his freedom, to be able to form judgements. If you don't understand the words I utter, how can you know if I'm speaking soundly or not? You have to ask someone else. You're always dependent on someone else, you are not free. So everyone must study, the principal aim of a genuine Revolution is to make everyone study (p.58).

Fearless's words reveal that education is central to liberation in Mayombe. By linking knowledge to freedom, he suggests that ignorance sustains dependence and hinders critical thought. His insistence on education turns learning into a collective revolutionary duty.

While we began with the MPLA as an entry point into Angola's anti-colonial resistance, we now turn to Sudan, where a distinct form of resistance emerged under the Mahdist movement (1881-1898), led by Mohamed Ahmed, who proclaimed himself the "expected Mahdi" (Churchill, 1902, p.25). He asserted that "he was the Ashraf" (Churchill, 1902, p.21), destined to purify Islam and free Sudan from foreign subjugation. The movement was recognized for its religious fervor, but it was also driven by deep resentment against the socio-economic oppression imposed by the preceding Turko-Egyptian regime. Heavy taxation, widespread corruption, famine, and the slave trade devastated local communities and "extend his influence in all parts of the country" (Churchill, 1902, p.27). These circumstances enabled the Mahdi to assemble an army, engaging fighters from various regions and across Sudan. Churchill stated that he "received everywhere promises of support from all classes. The most distant tribes sent assurances of devotion and reverence" (Churchill, 1902, p.27). The Mahdist army launched a series of military actions that "laid Siege to El Obeid the chief town of

Kordofan" (Churchill, 1902, p.31), and the siege of Khartoum (1884-1885), culminating in a major victory that destroyed Anglo-Egyptian rule and facilitated the formation of the Mahdist state. Churchill wrote, "In 1885, after a long siege and a stubborn resistance, Kassala was taken by the Dervishes. The garrison were massacred, enslaved, or incorporated in the Mahdi's army. 'The town was plundered and the trade destroyed" (1902, p.209).

This historical context is powerfully reimagined in *In the hour of signs*, where Mahjoub fictionalized the Mahdist Revolution through a complex narrative. Throughout the novel, numerous battles are depicted, each contributing to the rise and consolidation of the Mahdist movement. Among the most decisive is the Battle of Shaykan, where the Mahdist forces initiated their assault with "a colossal roar, like the collapse of mountain" (p.102), evoking both sacred anger and fighting spirit. The Mahdist army advanced with remarkable speed and determination. Mahjoub wrote, "The soldiers were firing as fast as they could reload their Remmingtons, but the *ansar* came on more quickly than the soldiers could cut them down" (p.103). Their victory, marked by the death of General Hicks and Governor-General Ala Adin Pasha, not only shifts the balance of power but also affirms the strength of collective belief and resistance in the face of imperial dominance.

Mahjoub added, "They were surrounded. They could move neither forward nor backwards. It was odd, Ala'adin thought to himself. 'They seem to be in no particular hurty. They have no dear of us whatsoever" (pp. 105-106). However, following the victory at Khartoum, the unexpected illness and "sudden death" (p.169) of the Mahdi marked a turning point in the Mahdist movement. In his final days, he designated Khalifa Abdullahi as his successor. The Khalifa struggled to keep the unity of the movement. Tribal rivalries, power struggle among leaders, and disagreement over the interpretation of Islamic law threatened the movement's cohesion. The Mahdist state enforced religious restrictions, marginalizing certain communities and generating discontent among both urban elites and the rural population. Holt

and Daly stated, “The death of the Mahdi brought to a head the tensions underlying the revolutionary movement” (2000. p.86).

Following the death of the Mahdi and the collapse of the Mahdist state, Sudan experienced a new political system under Anglo-Egyptian rule, officially established in 1899. As previously noted, this so-called condominium employed a system of indirect rule that reinforced regional disparities and institutionalized internal divisions. Johnson mentioned, “Thus the administration of the North and the south, already based on different foundations, continued to diverge in practice” (2003, p.12). This long period of joint colonial control gave rise to nationalist aspirations and gradual political transformation. Consequently, Sudan was granted self-government in 1953 and full independence three years later (Johnson, 2003, p.29), a development that, rather than resolving the tensions inherited from colonial governance, brought them into clearer focus within the context of a fragile new sovereignty. Elnur stated, “on August 1955 the first civil war started, less than four months before the official declaration of the newly independent state of the Sudan on 1 January 1956” (2009, p.13).

As a consequence of these deep-rooted divisions, the country’s new parliamentary democracy proved weak, dissolving after Sudan’s first military coup in 1958 led by General Ibrahim Aboud. In the following decades, Sudan alternated between civilian and military governance, and Northern elites enforced Arabization and Islamization policies that fueled Southern discontent, “the short post-popular uprising of October 1964 was brought to an end by Nimeiri in May 1969, which lasted until the second popular uprising of 1985” (Elnur, 2009, p.198). The divided political landscape resulting from colonial legacies encouraged future conflicts, including the emergence of Islamist governance under Jaafar Nimeiri in the late 1970s and under Omar al-Bashir in 1989.

Mahjoub’s *In the hour of signs*, though set in the Mahdi’s late 19th century period foreshadows these post-colonial challenges. The story portrays a fractured Sudanese society in

which religious, ethnic, and ideological tensions prevent unity, a depiction that resonates with the problems faced by the post-independent Sudanese state. For example, the passage, “In the days following the fateful hour, Abdullahi made everyone take a solemn oath of allegiance. Many advised against it, fearing that it was too soon after the death of the man who had inspired and blessed the whole land with his presence” (p.169) reflects the regime’s fragility and the heavy reliance on religion. After the Mahdist Revolution, Sudan achieved independence through gradual political negotiation.

On its part, Angola’s decolonization came only after a violent War of independence. Harsh and Thomas stated, “In March 1961, a massive uprising against Portuguese colonial rule swept northern Angola” (1976, p.16). Plantation workers revolted against forced labor, and nationalists attacked colonial institutions. The Portuguese retaliated with overwhelming force, by launching a war that lasted over a decade. In *Mayombe*, this atmosphere of crisis is ever-present. The forest becomes both a shelter and a prison, a space of solidarity and paranoia. Pepetela wrote, “We are all of us loners,’ Fearless said. ‘The hermits of Mayombe! Because we like to live in the forest? Isn’t it because we like to feel ourselves alone in the midst of the multitude of trees that surround us?” (p.97).

What the novel also conveys through its portrayal of individual dislocation and tension mirrors a larger historical fragmentation taking place outside the forest. The war that had begun as a unified anti-colonial struggle quickly splintered into rival movements with conflicting visions of liberation. A year later, two nationalist movements emerged. The FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), founded in 1962, gained support in the North among the Bakongo people. Meanwhile, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), was formed “UNITA's first guerrilla action was in December 1966” (Harsch & Thomas, 1976, p.46), represented the Ovimbundu, Angola’s largest ethnic group.

By the late 1960s, Angola became a “Cold War battleground”. The MPLA received support from the Soviet Union and Cuba. The FNLA and UNITA gained backing from the United States, Zaire, and South Africa. Despite growing global interest, Portugal refused to relinquish control until “1974 25 April: Dictatorship of Prime Minister Marcello Caetano is bloodlessly overthrown by members of MFA, which immediately signals that independence will be granted to Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, and Sao Tome e Principe” (James, 2011, p.41), an event known as The Carnation Revolution.

The new government moved rapidly to decolonize. In January 1975, Portugal signed the Alvor Agreement with the three main liberation movements, recognizing Angola’s right to independence. Henderson noted that the agreement pledged the three movements to work together with Portugal in a coalition called the Transitional Government during a ten-month period prior to independence (1979, p.21). Yet, the agreement collapsed almost immediately due to mistrust, foreign interference, and conflicting national visions. On November 11, 1975, Angola was declared independent but not unified. Guimaràes was stated that “a civil war broke out between Angolans, struggling among themselves to determine which movement would take the reins of the newly-independent state” (Guimarães, 1998, p.xiv). In this perspective, Pepetela’s novel ends not with triumph, but with silence, a guerrilla fallen, a group fractured, and a future uncertain. Pepetela stated, “Within days, the place would be unrecognizable. The Mayombe would recover what men had dared to take from it” (p. 214). Pepetela shows how the death of the guerrillas leaves no trace, suggesting that their sacrifices may be forgotten and the future of the revolution remains unclear.

To conclude, Angola and Sudan experienced parallel histories of colonial oppression, resistance, and decolonization. Despite different imperial rule, both nations witnessed liberation revolutions while struggling with internal conflicts and the lasting impact of colonial systems. *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* reflect on these historical events, representing resistance as

both important and emotionally complex. Through their portrayal of revolutionary leaders and their struggles with power, identity and ideology, the novels reveal that anti-colonial uprisings, though historically distinct, share deep structural parallels. This chapter has explored the historical roots that shaped both novels using Krestiva's concept of ambivalence. The next chapter will explore how these histories are reimagined through character, plot, and narrative form.

## Chapter Two: Intertextual Parallels in *Mayombe* and *In the hour signs*

In this chapter, we are going to examine the intertextual parallels between Pepetela's *Mayombe* and Mahjoub's *In the hour of signs,* specifically in terms of shared thematic concerns. These concerns include violence and the legacy of colonialism, revolution and resistance, as well as the daily hardship of the fighters. To do so, we will draw on Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, particularly the notion of "transposition", which considers how a text reworks earlier discourses within a new signifying system (1986, p.111). The study is further informed by Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed,* particularly his focus on praxis and the humanization process. This framework has illustrated how both novels surpass national specificity to participate in a broader, intertextual discourse on freedom and revolutionary consciousness.

### 1-The Violence of the Colonizer

To begin with, both *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* are influenced by the enduring effects of colonization and the oppressive system of control it imposes on the colonized. In both narratives, colonial violence manifests not only physically but also psychologically, culturally, and structurally. The novels portray how colonial regimes primarily rely on fear, vigilance, and oppression to maintain control, transforming the colonized individual into an object, a phenomenon described by Freire as the "oppressed consciousness", which develops when people are denied their humanity and made to internalize inferiority (2005, p. 55). This shared representation of colonial oppression in both works reveals a strong intertextual parallel since

the characters and setting in each work reflect a broader historical structure of imperial dominance. As Kristeva argued, “any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (1986, p.37). In this sense, both novels absorb the colonial discourses they inherit, its language, ideology, and hierarchies, but transform it into a counter-discourse of resistance, opposing the very values it once imposed.

In *Mayombe*, Pepetela depicts colonial violence not as a detached historical event, but as a lived reality reflected in the memories and traumas of the guerrilla fighters. The violence of Portuguese colonialism dominates the story, it appears not only physically, but also extends to the psychological and moral order imposed on the colonized. Pepetela wrote, “They lay in ambush at the side. Every dog that barked made them feel like robbers awaiting a victim. But they were waiting for a man to hand him back his money. An odd situation to lead one to hide, thought New World. Only colonialism could cause such anomalies” (p.43). In this scene, one Angolan worker from the detained employees discovered his money had been stolen. To restore trust and mobilize public support, the MPLA Commander, organized a successful attack on the Portuguese without any losses for his group to return money. Despite their honest intention, the fighters felt compelled to hide for fear of being detected by colonial authorities. By hiding their honest attempt to recover the stolen money, the guerrillas embody the inner contradictions of colonialism, a system in which honesty and fear coexist, and virtue itself becomes suspect.

In addition, one of the most vivid depictions of colonial brutality appears in the backstories of fighters. Miracle, one of the guerrilla fighters, declared:

> But I still remember the spectacle of children bashed against trees, men buried to the neck, with their heads above ground, and a tractor passing to lop off their heads with a blade made to dig up the earth, to provide wealth for mankind. What pleasure I had just now in destroying that bulldozer! It was like the one that took off my father's head. The bulldozer is not to blame, depends who is driving it, it's like taking up a weapon. But I cannot lose my hatred for tractors, forgive me (p. 21).

In this quote, Miracle is not recounting an abstract political grievance. He is reliving terrible acts of violence committed by the colonizers. The tractor becomes a symbol of colonial violence. His father was murdered by such a machine, turning the tractor into a tool of decapitation. In this context, Freire described colonization as a violent contradiction in which the oppressor dehumanizes the oppressed. He wrote, "Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons-not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized" (2005, p. 55). Freire's concept directly corresponds to the events in *Mayombe,* where resistance emerged as a reaction to the denial of humanity for the colonized by the colonial order. The act of taking up arms is viewed not as aggression, but as a reclamation, a means to re-establish the dignity lost under colonial domination.

While *Mayombe* depicts colonial violence through the intimate struggles of guerrilla fighters, *In the hour of signs* transforms this violence into a spiritual and collective experience rooted in Sudan's Mahdist Revolution. Mahjoub addressed the violence of colonization, by situating it within a different historical and religious context. The novel examines the Sudanese Mahdist uprising against Anglo-Egyptian imperial rule in the 19th century, depicting colonialism as both a military and cultural invasion. The violence imposed by the colonizer manifests not only through the physical force of the colonial army, but also through the total destruction of authority, Islamic identity, and Sudanese sovereignty. Mahjoub wrote, "Juma shook his head. 'You won't get anywhere. You will die out here like dogs in the sun. Look at you,' he laughed in amazement. "You have no mules, no horses or camels, only that dog which looks more dead than alive" (p.30).

In this quote, Juma, a soldier in the Bash-Buzuq, encountered a group of pilgrims, who were heading to "the holy mountain". A woman talked without fear and explained, "'The Mahdi has renamed the mountain Massa, after the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. He was told to do that by the Prophet himself,' she added with a nod of conviction, 'in a dream'" (p.30).

Juma mocked them, belittling their faith, their poverty, and their hope. Juma said, “And how many of you are going to fight for this Mahdi of yours, eh? How many of you are going to join the darawish so that you can kill soldiers like us?” (p.31). Here Mahjoub sets up a sharp clash between devotional conviction and cynicism. The woman’s calm and prophetic certainty highlight the mobilizing power of religious belief, while Juma’s mocking language exposes contempt, dehumanization, and the social humiliation produced by prolonged conflict.

Freire’s observation that “the oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination” (2005, p.58), resonates in Juma’s behavior. The Sudanese population is diminished to anonymous subjects of empire until they reclaim their existence through resistance. Another cruel scene depicting colonial violence occurs when Razig, one of the kind-hearted soldiers who resists colonial oppression, gives the starving pilgrims some food, “He carried a small sack which contained all the food he had: some stale bread, a few handfuls of flour, some dried dates. He deposited the sack in front of the pilgrims. He hardly seemed to stop to consider the consequences of his actions” (p.31). Razig’s impulsive act of compassion frustrated Juma, who, “dropped to the ground and began whipping Razig about the head and chest with his riding switch” (p. 31). The Sanjak accused Razig of treason, claiming that “the man is guilty of feeding the enemy” (p.31).

The scene depicting the pilgrims’ suffering becomes even more violent when Juma orders the soldiers to kill two of them. Mahjoub wrote, “The old man and the mute were nailed on by their hands and feet, their waists bound to the stakes with rope to carry some of their weight, so that the nails should not tear through their flesh. The women wailed and screamed, but Juma was unrelenting” (pp. 31–32). The episode of the pilgrims ‘execution exemplifies the internalization of colonial violence by the oppressed, a phenomenon that Freire strongly criticizes in *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. Juma, though not a foreign invader, embodies the internalized mechanisms of colonial oppression. His mockery, torment, and brutal public

execution of weak pilgrims reflect what Freire calls the oppressed becoming “sub-oppressors” (2005, p.45). He asserted:

> But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or “sub-oppressors” The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped (2005, p.45).

Juma’s loyalty to power and control over his own community is not simply obedience to colonial authority but a replication of that same violence, internalized and used then against his fellow victims. The episode illustrates Freire’s idea that without critical consciousness “*conscientização*” oppressed individuals may subconsciously repeat oppressive structures in their search for power. Juma did not resist colonialism. He imitated its cruelty.

*Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* express a common resistance to colonial dominance by revealing how violence serves as a means of domination. In both novels, the brutality of the colonizer is systematic rather than incidental, manifesting through military force, public execution, humiliation, and ideological imposition. Such colonial control inspires revolutionary movements that, despite ideological differences, stem from a shared experience of cruelty. The textual echo between Pepetela’s Marxist guerrilla and Mahjoub’s Mahdist revolution shows a layered intertextuality in which one text speaks through the other not as imitation but as the “absorption and transformation of another”, or what Kristeva defined as “a mosaic of quotations” (1986, p. 37).

**2-Resistance and Counter-Violence**

Another important theme in both *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* is resistance and counter-violence. Resistance manifests, not as an act of revenge, but as a strategic and moral reaction to the widespread violence of colonial oppression. In *Mayombe*, the forest transformed into a battleground for violent resistance, symbolizing both the physical and ideological struggle against Portuguese domination. The guerrilla fighters did not embrace violence for its own sake. Instead, they were driven to fight because the colonizers left no space for peaceful

negotiation. One of the significant scenes of counter-violence is the ambush of Portuguese colonial troops that occurs at the beginning in the novel. In this scene, Fearless, the commander, launches a well-prepared ambush on a column of enemy soldiers. After a long period of tense waiting, during which the fighters nearly lost hope, "the first soldier appeared at the bend of the road, then gradually the rest of the band" (p. 38). The scene indicates the beginning of a coordinated guerrilla attack in which the enemy soldiers were caught off guard, with some being shot down immediately and others rushing for cover in terror. Pepetela wrote

> Beautiful, like sitting ducks! thought Fearless. And he fired, aiming at those who were less than four metres away to his front. Immediately the Pepeshas crackled with the sound of sewing machines. Two seconds later, Miracle rose and neatly bazookaed the forward group. The soldiers, taken totally by surprise, plunged to the ground or somersaulted, after many had already fallen. Moans were lost in the rat-a-tat of Pepeshas and crump of grenades. Finally, the first soldiers began timidly to return fire, to allow those on the road to take shelter in the undergrowth (p.38).

The quote reveals that the fighters' tactical advantage is clearly depicted. They used the terrain, surprise and timing to attack the colonial force that was vulnerable for a moment. At the most brutal point of the ambush scene, Fearless confronts a young, powerless soldier whose weapon jams. Fearless regards killing as natural and inevitable rather than hesitating or showing compassion. Pepetela wrote:

> The soldier was a frightened kid in front of him, some four metres off, with hands gripped to the bolt that would not release the spent round. Both knew what was going to happen. Inevitably, as in a tragedy, Fearless's bullet opened a neat hole in the lad's forehead and the expression of fright vanished. Inevitably, without either of them imagining any alternative" (p.38).

The passage reveals how violence in *Mayombe* turns into an inevitable language of resistance. The ambush indicates the fighters' strong conviction that force is the only way to face the enemy. Nonetheless, the act of Fearless killing the young boy shows violence as tragic and unavoidable, stripping away any glory. It also suggests that counter-violence and resistance, though essential to liberation, leave deep psychological scars on the fighters themselves.

Fearless's moment of victory is marked not by triumph, but by guilt and sorrow showing that even the liberator cannot escape the pain of killing. When VW, one of the fighters, appeared with alarming news, "The base has been invaded!" (p.173). The guerrillas began preparations for a counterattack. They were divided into two groups. Fearless led one by a river, while the Chief of Operations took the mountain path. Fearless said:

> We are going to try to reach the Base, I want volunteers only. Anyone who is afraid should not board the lorry, it isn't worth it. The Base has been attacked, we don't know what is happening to our comrades. No-one who does not want to go is obliged to do so. Those who do want to go should come and collect weapons and ammunition (p.176).

This quote reveals the constant anxiety and vigilance that defines guerrilla life. Fearless's appeal for volunteers reflects not only military discipline but also the ethical dimension of revolutionary struggle. However, it turned out to be a false alarm, yet this is one of the many instances in the novel that reflect the guerrillas' readiness to respond with counter-violence against the aggression imposed by the Portuguese colonial forces. Their immediate organization and willingness to risk their lives reveal a collective commitment to defending their cause and comrades through armed resistance. Their actions align with what Freire called the "struggle for humanization". Freire argued that while the oppressed must resist their dehumanization, they must not reproduce the violence of the oppressor in doing so. He noted, "Because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so" (2005, p.44). It can be understood that revolutionary violence should not replicate the colonial system; rather, it must function as a method to restore humanity.

In his article "Mayombe and the liberation of the Angolan", Clive highlighted how Pepetela draws a crucial distinction between the Portuguese colonialist system and the individual Portuguese soldiers caught up in it, emphasizing that the guerrillas' struggle is ideological rather than racial. The fighters are portrayed as opposing an oppressive structure,

not the Portuguese people themselves. Willis wrote, “The very horror of violence is sensitively handled: Pepetela, through Fearless, recognizes that the colonialist oppressor - the Portuguese or 'Tuga'- is so often, at the individual level, no oppressor at all but another of the oppressed” (1987, p. 207). Thus, the fighters defended the right to freedom, not a nationalist or ethnic agenda. Clive explained how Pepetela frames the war as one of liberation from colonial domination, resisting dehumanization on both sides and asserting that true revolution lies in dismantling systems of oppression, not in fostering hatred between peoples.

Similarly, in *In the hour of signs*, Mahjoub portrays resistance as an embodied response used by the Mahdists and other Sudanese groups against Turko-Egyptian domination and British interference. To begin with, we have selected this passage:

> Wherever they went it was the same: the men of the Bash-Buzuq found themselves unloved in an unforgiving land. They were fired upon, spat at. Wells were sealed up and even, in one instance, poisoned. When they finally reached the sanctuary of the garrison fort at Al Tayarra, they found it in the hands of the Mahdi’s ansar, whose black banner, covered in words of holy devotion, fluttered in the wind. ‘As if our faith were not the same,’ they cursed. ‘We are all of us Muslims, God damn them.’ What had become of the world when soldiers had to sneak through the dark like common thieves?” (1996, p.27).

In the passage above, the Bash-Buzuq soldiers, who are originally ordered to crush the Mahdist uprising and maintain authority of the Turko-Egyptian regime, are fired upon and spat at by the locals after their physical and moral exhaustion. The scene is central to understanding the deep resentment and resistance of the Sudanese people toward colonial forces and their collaborators. The poisoning and sealing of wells show active sabotage to deny resources to the enemy. The people are no longer passive victims; they become active agents of rejection and rebellion. Another pivotal moment that reveals the intensity of anti-colonial resistance is the fall of Khartoum including the dervishes’ assault on the city’s defences and the killing of General Gordon.

Mahjoub described the unexpected and stealthy nature of the assault. While the defenders sleep, unaware of the approach of Ansar forces, Mahjoub wrote:

> They sleep on, dead to the world, dead to their hunger, dead too to the sound of bare feet creeping through the defences. Across the river silt they come now: singly, in pairs, in large disorderly groups, pushing and shoving to be at the front, breathing heavily from the exertion of uttering a thousand prayers (p.152).

This passage illustrates a key moment in which the balance of power is reversed. The soldiers, once agents of empire, are now reduced to a pitiful state, "Their bellies are swollen like drums and ache from the gum pellets, sack-cloth and ashes on which they have been feeding washed down with handfuls of earth and palm bark and cockroaches; bars of carbolic soap; old wood; thorn berries; leaves of any description" (p.152). Their physical collapse transformed them into passive victims unable to defend themselves. Mahjoub wrote, "They even chewed the leather bindings of their beds" (p.152). In contrast, the Mahdist forces advanced with purpose and cohesion, prepared to engage in a violent confrontation, "With swords and spears; ancient ostrich rifles; shields made of rhinoceros hide" (p.152). The shift explains how resistance and armed struggle became not only inevitable but necessary, driven by the enemy's brutality and the profound suffering inflicted on the land and its people.

Moreover, the scene of General Gordon's killing when the Ansar "Take the stairs in one headlong rush" (p.154), is one of the illustrative depictions of the inevitable violence and vengeance resulting from the colonizers' long history of dominance and injustice. Faced with years of oppression, the colonized found themselves forced to respond with violence. Mahjoub wrote, "Knowing that they have no choice, that choice was taken from them before they were born, before they were named" (p.154). It becomes the only way to reclaim dignity and justice. Mahjoub added, "They are possessed by the spirits of the dead and departed, and of those who shall die tonight: the souls of all the sons and daughters, mothers and wives who have died or been carried away by the terror of the sultan, of the khedive, of the sirdar" (p.153).

Freire's idea that the oppressed are forced to respond to the violence of the oppressor through counter-violence as part of their pursuit of liberation can be linked to the necessity of violent resistance depicted in *In the hour of signs*, as Freire wrote, "It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither other nor themselves" (2005, p.56).

Furthermore, in his article "An hour of signs", Garuba (1997) pointed out how religion in *In the hour of signs* is a powerful unifying force that fuels collective rebellion through myth, prophecy, and shared belief. He highlighted how the Mahdi's rise is grounded in mystical signs; comets, stars, a mole on his cheek, and a gap between his teeth, that mark him as the "Expected One", fulfilling religious prophecy and drawing masses to his cause. The combination of myth and faith creates a compelling narrative that mobilizes communities in resistance against colonial domination. For Garuba, "the novel focuses on an imperial moment in Sudanese history when a religious rebellion challenges the colonial hegemony of the Ottoman and British empires" (1997). Thus, religion becomes a binding force that transforms spiritual conviction into political action, shaping a rebellion rooted as much in belief as in resistance.

The understanding of revolutionary necessity in both novels finds an echo in Kristeva notion of intertextuality, as she explained that "the notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read at least double" (1986, p.37). This means that the language of the text conveys not just the voices of its characters or narrators, but also reflects prior cultural, historical, and ideological narratives. The Mahdist movement and the scenes of Sudanese resistance do not simply recount single acts of violence. They invoke, absorb, and reconfigure older discourses of anti-colonial revolt. The suffering, retaliation, and urgency expressed in *In the hour of signs* resonate with other historical and literary responses to imperial domination, *Mayombe* included. Through the lens of Kristeva's theory, both novels engage in

an intertextual framework of revolutionary memory where the responsibility of counter-violence is perpetually revoiced, transformed, and made legible as a historical necessity.

**3-The Everyday Hardship of Anti-Colonial Struggle**

Beyond the battlefield and political conflict, both novels depict the everyday hardship faced by the guerrilla fighters and revolutionaries engaged in anti-colonial resistance. Hunger, exhaustion, illness, and discomfort dominate the daily lives of the fighters. Many scenes in the novels highlight the personal toll of the struggle, showing how the fighters carry the burden of war both physically and ideologically This shared focus on hardship offers another lens through which we understand resistance in both novels.

In *Mayombe,* Pepetela portrays the ongoing struggle encountered by guerrilla fighters living in the forest. Hunger was a frequent issue and the combatants often had very little to eat. One moment captures their hunger clearly in the novel when the fighters prepared for an ambush, “They drank milk only. The food was soaked, and the manioc broke up in the water. All that remained was rice and tinned stuff, and little of that” (p.34). The forest’s harsh climate further intensifies their suffering. The guerrillas “did not close an eye, as they shivered with cold and felt rain in every part of the body” (p.34). As they wait for the enemy to pass, carrying their wounded from the mines, the commissar showed signs of worry. He shared his concerns with Fearless and the operations chief. He said, “The last time we ate was midday yesterday,” and added, “The comrades won’t stand up much longer” (p.35). Such suffering is a daily reality which gradually erods both their morale and physical endurance.

In addition, the arrival of eight new guerrilla fighters at the MPLA base intensified the already difficult living conditions in the forest. Their presence causes additional strain on limited food supplies, making the daily struggle for survival even harder. Fearless said, “They send us more mouths and do not send food. Commissar, you will have to go out there to find

food. Unless one of us goes, we could very well die of hunger, since the civilians abroad are not bothered. That's how this war is!" (p.54).

Consequently, the Commissar is sent to Dolisie, in Congo, to request support from a responsible named André. However, his expectations of obtaining significant help are soon disappointed. As "The latter arrived in a jeep with ten kilos of maize meal and as many again of rice and a little dried fish" (p.70). He claimed, "It's what I could manage. I've assigned three comrades to carry this" (p. 70). Such limited supplies underline the material difficulties faced by the guerrillas and the indifference of some external supporters. The Commissar expressed clear distrust toward André, describing him as unreliable and manipulative. In his conversation with Ondina, he accused André of sending a few untrained fighters without proper food supplies and criticized him for making empty promises and playing tricks. He said, "He's a saboteur! There's starvation at the base, he sent a few young guerrillas, practically untrained, and didn't send food" (p.68).

The encounter with Andre leaves the fighters frustrated and highlights the lack of reliable external support. The limited assistance received from Andre not only exposes the fragility of the guerrilla movement but also intensifies the psychological strain within the group. The Commissar's disappointment reflects a growing sense of isolation and pressure within the group, revealing the gap between revolutionary ideals and the harsh material realities of the struggle. As the narrator expressed it in what follows:

> The cortege of five men went into the forest, at night, at a quick pace, whose rhythm was determined by a Commissar, in flight, like a madman, escaping despair, rushing to his Base, where things were normal, where men did what they could to struggle and to forget the climate that prevailed behind them. Day broke and the Commissar did not stop. At the head of the group, against all the security rules, he flew along the slippery trail, heedless of the pleas from the men who wanted to drink water, heedless of the lianas that struck him in the face, cheated, assaulted, swearing vengeance, seeking the company and assurance of Fearless, who was no longer disillusioned by anything, since he had no illusions (p.72).

This moment shows the exhaustion and emotional tension of the guerrillas. The Commissar's actions reveal how fear and despair can push the fighters beyond their limits.

Similarly, in *In the hour of signs*, the hardships of daily life are also described, although they took a different form. The Mahdist fighters endured hunger, exhaustion, and the brutal conditions of war. As the following passage proves it, "They sense it in every broken saddle-strap, every horse gone lame, every water-hole filled in along the way. They are tired and far away from home. The land has changed, like a scar never spoken of, now laid bare in this hour between darkness and light" (1996, p.28). In this passage, Mahjoub described the Mahdi's followers as they traverse the desert toward Khartoum during their military campaign against the Turco-Egyptian and British soldiers. Exhausted and disoriented after another sleepless night, the distance from home weighs heavily on them. Another scene that powerfully reflects their suffering is when the Khalifa sent Nejumi and his followers to conquer Egypt, "After sixteen days they moved on from Balluja towards the town of Tushki" (p.195). Nejumi and his followers "were weak from lack of proper food and the long journey away from their homes had made them dishonest" (p.195). The conquered, weakened by hunger and scarcity, face extreme hardship. Exploiting their desperation, the Turks used food as a weapon, laying traps in order to capture the starving Sudanese fighters. Mahjoub described this painful moment:

> Their plight was becoming more and more desperate. There were tales of parents who abandoned their children along the road, unable to carry them any further. Having eaten their camels and most of their mules, some of them even ate their slaves. Men vanished from the camp in the night, leaving behind wives and babies (p.196).

In the quote above, Mahjoub highlighted the unbearable suffering and despair that forced people to make heartbreaking choices. The image of mothers leaving their children and men leaving at night shows how deeply hunger and fear have broken their spirits.

Moreover, the novel ends with the final encounter between the Sirdar's army and the Ansar in the Battle of Umdurman. In their confrontation, beyond to the physical suffering faced

by the Khalifa's army, Mahjoub emphasized the severe psychological pain experienced during the war. The crushing defeat not only destroyed the city and claimed countless lives, but it also left a deep sense of hopelessness and trauma, "everything seemed to be falling apart" (p.233). The loss marked more than military defeat; it was a devastating emotional blow to the Ansar, who saw their dreams of liberation shattered. The many scenes of bodily suffering also mark what Freire called "Limit-Situations" (2005, p.99), moments in which the oppressed encounter the absolute boundaries of endurance. People are not just victims of scarcity; they are trapped within historical contradictions so severe that they reveal the impossibility of continued survival without transformation. Freire wrote:

> the "limit-situations." Once perceived by individuals as fetters, as obstacles to their liberation, these situations stand out in relief from the background, revealing their true nature as concrete historical dimensions of a given reality. Men and women respond to the challenge with actions which Vieira Pinto calls "limit-acts": those directed at negating and overcoming, rather than passively accepting, the "given"(2005, p.99).

This concept can be seen in both novels, where the characters face extreme material and moral constraints under colonial domination. In *Mayombe*, hunger and isolation push the guerrillas to their breaking point, forcing them to redefine resistance as a form of survival. Similarly, in *In the hour of signs*, the Mahdist followers reach a psychological and spiritual threshold where rebellion becomes the only possible act of liberation. In both novels, then, the unbearable weight of war is not just devastating; it is what pushes resistance forward. Kristeva argued that every signifying practice is "a field of transpositions of various signifying systems," whose meanings are "never single, […] but always plural, shattered" (1986, p.111). This idea helps explain how the depiction of suffering in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* echoes across both texts, since Kresteva's notion of intertextuality suggests that each narrative reworks pre-existing cultural and historical meanings of pain and endurance. The exhaustion, hunger, and despair experienced by the fighters are not isolated scenes but intertextually mirror one another, each novel amplifying and refracting the other's portrayal of revolutionary hardship. Therefore,

the two writers align with each other in their depiction of revolutionary conflict, both emphasizing violence, resistance, and the everyday hardship of anti-colonial fighters as essential elements of liberation.

We analyzed these intertextual connections by drawing on Kristeva's concept of transposition and Freire's interpretation of liberation through praxis. *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* resonate in their depiction of the psychological and physical weight of resistance. Their common themes are not simply repeated but reconfigured within distinct, though harmonious, systems of meaning. However, as will be explored further, the novels begin to diverge when it comes to characterization, narrative structure, and ideological focus, particularly in their treatment of internal conflict, leadership, and political vision. These differences will be explored in the next chapter through the lens of Bakhtin's "Dialogism" and Freire's notion of "Critical Pedagogy".

## Chapter Three: Dialogic Connections in Themes and Characterization in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs*

After exploring the historical backgrounds and thematic parallels between *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* in the previous chapters, this chapter shifts the focus to the tensions and divergences that arise between the two novels in terms of their ideological foundations, the characters' motivations for joining revolutionary struggle, and the internal dynamics within their liberation movements. Although both books are rooted in anti-colonial struggle, they embody fundamentally different ideological frameworks and narrative perspectives. When read dialogically, the two novels, not only represent distinct historical and cultural contexts but they also engage in and challenge each other, revealing the complexity of revolutionary discourse. According to Bakhtin, "The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's

direction" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.280). In other words, Bakhtin suggests that every text exists in dialogue with other voices and anticipates a response. *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* can be read as speaking to one another, each novel responding to, questioning, or reframing the revolutionary ideals expressed in the other.

**1-Ideological Foundations of Revolutionary Struggle**

In the context of their differing ideological foundations, *Mayombe* emphasizes Marxist organization and political education, while *In the hour of signs* focuses on religious vision and spiritual leadership, revealing conflicting understandings of what legitimizes revolutionary action. The characters' motivations for joining the struggle, as well as their disillusionment with or alienation from their respective movements, further highlight the disparity between "Rational Ideology" and "Emotional Conviction". Freire's concept of critical consciousness provides a valuable lens for analyzing how each novel depicts the political awakening of the colonized society. This chapter underlines how the novels serve as dialogic counterparts, texts that enter into a conversation with each other by articulating and contesting notions of liberation, leadership, and internal unity.

The first significant divergence that emerges when reading *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* lies in the ideological foundations that drive each narrative. *Mayombe* is Rooted in the Marxist-Leninist ideology adopted by the MPLA which was "formed in 1956, when a number of smaller anti-colonial groups joined forces" (Staeger, 2013, p. 26). Led by Agostinho Neto, *Mayombe* by Pepetela captures the political and ideological climate of the 1970s, when anti-colonial resistance was influenced by military strategies, with a core membership "generally of Mbundu ethnic background" and drawn from "the upper class in Luanda and other cities" (Staeger, 2013, p.26). The MPLA positioned itself as a liberation movement inspired by global trends in socialism and communism. Pepetela himself, a member of the MPLA,

integrates this ideological framework into the novel's depiction of guerrilla warfare in which armed struggle against the colonizers is accompanied by intense political education.

One significant episode that illustrates his ideology is the guerrillas' mission to engage the forest workers employed by the colonial forces. Initially, there was a debate among the group. While some fighters advocated for direct confrontation, the Operation Chiefs insisted, "We are soldiers. We must fight the enemy. So I think the first action in this area must be military" (p.14). However, the Commissar had another opinion and argued that "A people's war is not measured by the number of enemy dead. It is measured by the degree of popular support it has" (p.14). He sought to convince the fighters, "If we take the workers, treat them well, discuss with them, and then later, have a good go at the tuga, that way, certainly, the people will begin to believe and to accept us" (pp. 14-15). Eventually, the fighters agreed to do so. The workers were deeply absorbed in their tasks and did not notice the guerrillas until they were suddenly surrounded and captured. The guerrillas then "went on through Mayombe, with the prisoners in the middle, on their way to the rendezvous" (p. 19). They shared their food with the workers and kept them under guard during the march and at the camp without harming them. Later, the commissar explained to the workers the nature of colonial exploitation. He argued:

> Do the trees belong to the boss? No. They are yours, they are ours, because they are in Angolan territory. Do the axes and machetes belong to the boss? No. They are yours. Does the sweat belong to the boss? No, it is yours, because you are doing the work. So, how can he earn many thousands a day and give you twenty escudos? What right has he? This is colonialist exploitation" (p.23).

The quote reflects a basic Marxist understanding of exploitation. The commissar explained to the workers that they were doing all the work, while the bosses, who did nothing, took all the profit. By clarifying the injustice, the commissar helped the workers realize their situation and become politically aware, which is an important aspect of the Marxist revolution. The

commissar further developed his argument to push the workers toward a deeper political understanding. He declared:

> We are not bandits. We are soldiers who are struggling so that the trees you chop down may serve the people and not the foreigner. We are struggling so that the petrol in Cabinda may serve to enrich the people and not the Americans But as we struggle against the colonialists, and they know that, after our victory, they will forfeit the wealth they steal from the people, they tell you we are bandits, so that the people will be afraid of us and denounce us to the army (pp. 23-24).

By explaining how the Portuguese colonizers exploit Angola's land and people, the commissar presented a clear vision of Marxist theory. This movement of political education is not isolated; it reflects *Mayombe*'s deeper ideological commitment to raising class consciousness among the oppressed. This same revolutionary thinking is reflected by characters like New World, who believed that individual action means little without the power of the group. He declared:

> As if it were possible to make a Revolution only with selfish men, egotists! I am not egotistic, Marxism-leninism showed me that man as an individual is nothing, only the masses can make History. If I were egotistic, I would be in Europe now, like so many others, working and earning good money. Why did I come to struggle? Because I am unselfish (p.61).

This passage by New World reflects core Marxist-Leninist ideals: the importance of the collective property over the individual, the revolutionary purity and the proletariat and peasantry, and the ideological struggle required for intellectuals to abandon bourgeois ideas. His rejection of personal gain in favor of social struggle strongly resonates with Marxism's focus on class solidarity and "Revolutionary Selflessness". He argued, "I freed myself, thanks to Marxism" (p.61)

Yet, *Mayombe* does not present Marxism in purely idealistic terms; Pepetela also engages critically with how Marxist ideals can be compromised by political reality. He wrote:

> For that, socialist structures must be made, I agree. Nationalization of the mines, land reform, nationalization of the banks, of foreign trade, etc., etc. I know that, it is the only solution. And at the end of a certain time, as long as there are not many mistakes nor much embezzlement of funds, the living standard will rise, does not need much to rise. Without doubt that is an advance, and so far we agree, no need for further argument. But let us not call that socialism, because it is not necessarily so. Let us not call it a proletarian State, because it is not (p.95).

In this passage, the commissar and the commander discuss the future direction of the revolution and the political system that may emerge. The commander expressed ideological doubt, claiming that nationalization and land reform might undermine the revolution's original objectives. While both agreed on the need for socialist reforms, the commander warned against using strong revolutionary terms to describe a system that may, in fact, constitute authoritarian control. He argued that calling it "socialism" or "democracy" does not make it so. This is a moment of self-criticism of the movement, admitting that the revolution could end up creating the same kind of oppression it seeks to dismantle.

The Marxist principles presented in *Mayombe,* notably the emphasis on political awareness, collective actions, and the rejection of individualism, align with Freire's vision in *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. The author insisted that liberation must be rooted in the consciousness of the oppressed themselves, not imposed from above. Freire stated, "No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption" (2005, p.54). This quote captures the essence of both Freire's and Pepetela's revolutionary logic. Liberation cannot be given; it must be gained by the oppressed through critical consciousness and collective effort. In other words, genuine liberation can only arise when the oppressed become active subjects of their own transformation, rather than passive imitators of the colonizer.

Furthermore, in *Mayombe*, dialogism arises from ideological plurality, with voices engaging not in isolation but across conflictual threshold. Bakhtin explained the boundary "between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold," (1984, p.287) where meaning forms not in solitude but in tension. In the novel, this "threshold" defines the guerrilla struggle not only against colonial power, but within the movement itself, whose members are divided by ethnic, ideological, and personal tensions. No single ideology prevails; instead, each

voice pushes against others, refusing absorption, enacting the very "encounter with another", that Bakhtin claimed, gives human experience its "entire essence" (p. 287).

In contrast, in *In the hour of signs,* resistance is rooted in religious revelation rather than political ideology. The Mahdi's authority emerged through distinctive physical and spiritual signs. Mahjoub portrayed him as a figure who fulfills religious prophecies, embodying a messianic role chosen to lead his people to liberation. He wrote, "Yes, he smiled with his eyes, with his soul, and the signs were there: the mole on the right cheek and the gap between the front teeth. Abdullahi was speechless" (p. 5). These features are more than just superficial traits; they are filled with spiritual significance, indicating that his mission is divinely ordained. Abdullahi, who would later become one of his most faithful followers, was overwhelmed with emotion when he fell to his knees and called the man "Master". He found himself saying, "I have seen it written in my dreams that you are the Expected One" (p. 5).

This moment reveals the novel's strong spiritual tone, as both dreams and physical signs confirm the Mahdi's divine role. Building on this spiritual recognition, the Mahdi's authority is reinforced by his direct challenge to Muhammad Abu Al Saud Bey, "The assistant governor of the Soudan" (p.7). He walked through Aba Island, "with only a handful of men to guard him" (p.11). When they arrived, a crowd had already gathered, "around a small straw hut, outside which was a low, roughly made angareeb" (p.11). There, the Mahdi did not only recall the Prophet's message but also proclaimed his own divine selection, further elevating his role from follower to chosen. He said, "the Prophet has spoken to me and through me to them" (p.12). He argued that the Prophet chose him as the Mahdi, the guide who will restore justice, thereby reinforcing his spiritual legitimacy in the eyes of the people. With calm and certainty, the Mahdi attacked the "ulama", accusing them of false devotion and empty learning, corrupted by their connection with worldly leaders. He stated, "The people whom you represent have

squandered their dignity and corrupted the meaning of the word 'Islam'. You drink wine and smoke tobacco. You have been consumed by the vanities of the world" (p.12).

He described the Turko-Egyptian dictatorship as a hollow power, propped up by oppression, in contrast to the divine authority he claimed. Mahjoub wrote:

> The serene prophet looked apologetic. 'I am the proof that the Final Hour has arrived,' he said simply. 'I shall lead the devoted in the holy struggle, the war against the corruption of power and faith which you and all the Turks represent. Victory shall be ours. The Prophet himself came to me in a dream (p.12).

This passage blends apocalyptic urgency with the promise of sacred resistance. Thus, by declaring himself the Mahdi, he did more than claiming a title; he offered a new spiritual order that challenged colonial power. As a result, religion became a way to resist and speak out against colonial authority. The Mahdi's words clearly evoked something strong in the crowd, among them an old man called Wad Awad, who paid close attention to the Mahdi's declaration, even when Saud Bey warned him that the soldiers would punish him and he could lose everything. Wad Awad said, "he speaks the word of the Prophet Himself. It is the will of God" (p.13).

Moreover, as his final hour approached, the Mahdi's death was seen as part of a divine plan. People believed that God called him back, as if his mission on earth was accomplished. They did not simply wait for a political leader to take his place; they looked for a continuation for the divine will. One of them, Muhammad Sharif, asked after a time, "whom did he name?" (p.164). It was revealed that the Mahdi himself before his passing, had named Khalifa Abdullah. Upon hearing the declaration, people eagerly praised the new successor and accepted his authority without hesitation. For them, it was a sacred matter, believing that if the Mahdi had made this decision, it must come from God: "God must have a reason for doing this, the voices whispered" (p.164). When the Mahdi's choice of Khalifa Abdullah became known, Mahjoub showed how Abdullahi rushed into his new duty with certainty. The moment

highlights how deeply religion shaped their understanding of power and leadership. Abdullahi declared:

> I heard him tell, he began, of a dream in which the Prophet came to him and told him that he was needed urgently in the next world and that he must leave off his duties here. And the words flowed clearly and without hesitation, coming from somewhere within. 'And the Prophet, may God bless Him and keep Him, said that just as Muhammad Ahmad was the successor of the apostle of God, so would Abdullah al Ta'aishi be the wakil of the Expected One" (pp. 164-165).

This moment reveals how Abdullah legitimizes his authority through divine validation rather than political or military means. The dream functions as a sacred narrative that transforms power into religious duty suggesting that leadership in *In the hour of signs* is grounded in spiritual revelation. By interpreting the Mahdi's message as divine instruction, Abdullah merges faith and governance, turning belief into revolutionary mandate.

According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia refers to the coexistence and interaction of diverse voices and ideological perspectives within and among texts, establishing a dialogic space where meanings are contested and negotiated (1981, p. xix). This dialogic exchange becomes visible in the way each novel voices a distinct response to oppression and liberation. In this context, *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* function as dialogic counterparts, each representing distinct revolutionary discourses; one grounded in Marxist political ideology, the other in spiritual-religious vision that engage one another across a shared anti-colonial framework. The ideological tension between the two novels does not cancel each other out but allows each to analyze, challenge, and complicate the other's revolutionary claims. This dialogic relation reveals the plural and contested nature of liberation discourse. Bakhtin stated, "The dialogic contrast of languages (but not of meanings within the limits of a single language) delineates the boundaries of languages, creates a feeling for these boundaries" (1981, p.364).

**2-Motivations for Joining the Revolution**

After establishing the ideological divergence between the two novels, another key difference between the two novels lies in the motivation that drives characters to join the

revolutionary struggle. In *Mayombe*, the revolutionary cause is deeply linked with the fighters' personal histories, traumas, and the quest for meaning. These motivations are explained through backstories, actions in the forest, and introspective monologues that expose the human dimension behind political resistance. For instance, the character Theory, who "was born in Gabela" and, "received the dark color of coffee" from his mother's side "mixed with off-white" from his father, "a Portuguese trader" (p. 1). Theory joined the MPLA to overcome his alienation and identity crisis caused by his mixed origin. He stated, "When I was still a child, I wanted to be white, so that the whites would not call me black. As a man, I wanted to be black, so that the blacks would not hate me. Where do I stand then?" (p.6). He tried to show his loyalty and devotion to the Angolan cause despite his white background. Fighting in the war was his way to assert his identity and reject the racial divisions. Pepetela wrote, "Theory was of mixed blood and now no-one seemed to notice this about him. It was his secret. A sad secret, which the Commissar had not perceived, to which the Operations Chief had paid no attention" (p. 4). In his life, he wanted the medium line, what he called the "Maybe". Theory added, "my life is the task of showing to all and sundry that there is always room for maybe" (p. 6). Clearly, this was the real reason why he insisted that he had to join the other guerrillas even when he was injured.

As for Fearless, he gave up the study of economics to join the struggle. He stated, "As I was not the type to remain just making up stories, I had only two courses open in life: to write them or to live them. The Revolution gave me an opportunity to create them in action" (pp. 98-99). He is, therefore, driven by experience, realism, and leadership. He thought that the struggle is not just about defeating the Portuguese; it also involves addressing internal tensions and human weaknesses. Fearless predicted that an independent Angola will have its challenges. He thought that liberation is going to be a process, and that many would betray Angola after the war. He argued, "the principal aim of a genuine Revolution is to make everyone study" (p. 58).

One scene that shows that he wanted to guide this process with practical wisdom rather than idealism, is when he was asked about why he was training the new recruits. Fearless answered:

> I could tell you I feel sorry for them, so poorly trained and in danger of dying soon in the first battle. There could be some truth in that. Likewise I could tell you it is to train more guerrillas, for the struggle to advance. That's it! But why do I want the struggle to advance? Isn't it just to live better in an independent Angola? (p. 58).

The quote reveals Fearless's profound sense of responsibility and self-awareness. His response moves beyond military duty to philosophical understanding of revolution as a means of transforming life itself. He views the struggle not as a quest for glory or vengeance, but as a moral and intellectual project aimed at building a society. Another fighter, Muatianvua, joined the war to fight for justice and dignity for people like his father, who died of tuberculosis, contracted while working in the diamond mines. He said, "My father took with his bare hands diamonds worth thousands of escudos. To us he did not leave one, not even a month's salary. The diamond went into his chest, sucked his strength, sucked until he was dead" (p.101). Muatianvua was driven by the painful memory of his father's death caused by colonial exploitation, the injustice of wealth stolen from his family and community, and a determination to resist the oppressive system that dehumanizes and destroys his people. His participation in the war was motivated by a dream of a future Angola where diversity is a strength, not a cause of division. He added, "From what tribe? I ask. From what tribe, if I am from all tribes, not only of Angola, but of Africa too? Do I not speak Swahili, did I not learn Hausa like a Nigerian?" (p. 102). Thus, Muatianvua was detribalized and dreamt of a united Angola in which all people live together.

Moreover, Miracle was motivated by tribal loyalty and desire for revenge against the Portuguese colonizers. In a specific scene, when the fighters launched an ambush and destroyed the enemy's machines and equipment, Miracle said, "What pleasure I had just now in destroying that bulldozer! It was like the one that took off my father's head" (p.21). His personal history

of witnessing colonial violence fueled his commitment to the struggle. Thus, he fought to avenge the massacre of his people. Miracle strongly believed in the superiority of his Kimbundu tribe. He argued, “It is true that all men are equal, and should all have the same rights. But all men are not at the same level; some are more advanced than others. Those who are more advanced should rule the others, they are the ones with knowledge” (p.34). He thought that his tribe must lead because it is the most advanced.

Another comrade, Struggle, who came from Kabinda, fought in the front line to prove that he is not a traitor, since the Kabinda people have refused to ally themselves with the guerrillas He said, “Fallen Branch occupied by the enemy is another knife in the people of Cabinda. And where are these people? They allow themselves to be dominated, don't support us. Is it their fault? No, it is the fault of whoever has been unable to convince them” (pp. 204-205). Unlike the others, Struggle fought simply because it was what he knew. He had neither political ambition nor ideological depth. He stated, “I was born in the forest, what I like is hunting, to go from one place to another, to make war” (p. 56). In this sense, he is a symbol of the ordinary peasant soldiers who join out of necessity.

Thus, rather than being driven by the motives of a liberated collectivity, the guerrillas often acted out of deeply personal motives, ranging from a desire to overcome personal pain or rejection to ambition for power, the quest for acceptance or vengeance. These desires often overshadow the larger goals of liberation movement, resulting in internal disputes and mistrust. In this context, the guerrillas’ actions reflect Freire’s concept of false generosity. Freire explained false generosity as the act of giving that fails to challenge the root causes of oppression. Freire wrote, “Any attempt to "soften" the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this” (2005, p. 44).

The novel, Bakhtin argued, is based on "the diversity of social speech types" (1981, p. 262), a structure that enables it to absorb and reflect diverse ideological perspectives within a single framework. This heteroglossia nature is precisely what allows *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* to resist univocality. Pepetela's polyphonic depiction of ideological tension and Mahjoub's dramatization of spiritual authority demonstrate how revolutionary discourse becomes multiple and contested. According to Bakhtin, the novel is constituted by "a diversity of individual voices, artistically organised" (1981, p.262). Each of these novels, in different ways, brings distinct revolutionary ideologies into dialogic relation, offering not a unified truth but a confrontation between worldviews that are both socially grounded and internally complex.

Therefore, *In the hour of signs* presents a very different dynamic. The Mahdi's followers are portrayed as motivated not by personal gain but by strong spiritual faith and devotion to the Mahdi. Their actions, rooted in belief rather than ambition, reflect a deep dedication to a cause perceived as divinely ordained. During the pilgrims' journey to meet the Mahdi at the holy mountain and after their encounter with the soldiers of the Bash-Buzuq, one of the pilgrims, a young boy, "stepped forwards from behind the flock of crow-like women squatting on the ground" (p. 32). He stood there in front of Juma with more courage than age had ever taught. He pointed a finger and said, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet, Muhammad Ahmad is the Apostle, who will deliver us from the tyranny and vanity of the Turk. You cannot resist the power of God, not with guns nor any kind of sword" (p. 32). This declaration, made in the face of danger, exemplifies not only the boy's courage but also the intense belief that drives the entire movement. The fact that even a child expressed such firm and profound faith demonstrates how deeply the Mahdist cause resonates across generations.

Moreover, throughout the novel, belief in the Mahdi developed as a profound and deeply rooted force, shaping the thoughts and actions of the people. His name reverberated

through conversations and traveled through villages. Mahjoub wrote, “he [the Mahdi] had established a name for himself as a wanted man, an outlaw who had dared to defy the hated Turk. In this he could claim to represent the poor and the dispossessed” (p.53). The Mahdi was not viewed as a political leader but as a prophetic figure, an almost sacred presence whose spiritual authority inspires unwavering devotion. Mahjoub added:

> He brought relief to sad faces, dried the tears of those in despair, drew serious looks from the light-hearted fellows who joked in the market squares. People invoked the name of the Prophet and called for the blessing of the Lord at the mention of his name. They pointed out places in the sand where he had stood (p. 53).

The quote illustrates how Mahjoub transforms the Mahdi from a mere historical rebel into a spiritual symbol of redemption. The sacred gestures of the people suggest that faith itself becomes a revolutionary language, one that unites the oppressed through devotion rather than political ideology. This widespread devotion is so powerful since the Mahdi's agents were everywhere, “travelling widely, spreading the fever throughout the land” (p.53). Even Hawi, the itinerate scholar, returned from Cairo after sixteen years in search of truth. When Sheikh Rahman asked him about the reason if his return, he replied, “I heard that something had happened. You must know, this man who calls himself ... the Mahdi” (p.21). Sheikh Rahman dismissed the Mahdi as a fool, mocking his claim and said, “He will pay the price when his time comes” (p.22). But Hawi remained guided by something deeper, an intuition, a stirring of faith, that drew him back, determined to see for himself the truth behind the man everyone was speaking about. “But if it is true,” Hawi insisted, “then surely he will bring a new age, a piety and purity to the land; cleanse it of corruption and vanity, as he says in his proclamations. No one can say that the taxes are fair, that the people are not poor, surely?” (p.22). Hawi set out on his journey, and when he reached Jebel Shekedah, he encountered a merchant who spoke of the Mahdi as a divine being sent by God. He said:

> They listened to him speak of injustice and the true meaning of the faith. He was a gifted speaker. And although he never revealed his true purpose, they waited.

> Then the star came,' he waved a hand above his head, 'burning across the sky, filling the darkness with light, and so they knew that he had come to the world. We have been waiting for a long time" (p.56).

In his Review of *In the hour of signs* by Jamal Mahjoub, Spaulding pointed out that while Hawi's journey began with a sincere search for truth, his story became more ambiguous and unsettling as the novel progresses. After years of serving the Mahdist regime, he grew disillusioned with its violent methods and apparent betrayal of its spiritual ideals. At the end, he attempted to speak publicly again, this time with a new message, one that the novel never revealed. Instead of being heard, Hawi is killed by a mob, and his voice is permanently silenced (Spaulding, 1997). This omission raises questions about what he might have wanted to say and why it was so threatening. According to Spaulding, the fact that the novel withholds his final message suggests a deeper critique of how political and religious systems, especially those born from revolutionary movements can turn against the people who once believed in their ideals.

Nejumi was also firmly dedicated to the Mahdi's cause. His commitment is based on an unwavering conviction and faith in the Mahdi's divine purpose. During the siege of Khartoum, Nejumi proved himself to be a capable and loyal commander, someone the Mahdi could rely on. He talked with his men when he saw them taking a prisoner in chains, "All craftsmen and anyone of any use to us at all is to be taken out of the town to the camp. Take this man there and get him some food if he is hungry" (p. 157). His leadership reflected not only strategic skills but also a deep sense of duty to the Mahdi's cause. Even the Mahdi placed great trust in Nejumi, sending him a messenger during the siege before making a decisive move, who told him, "The Mahdi would wait for his word before crossing the river" (p. 157).

In addition, Abdullahi showed a faith that goes beyond devotion. Mahjoub described him as, "The most trusted" (p. 95). He wrote, "Abdullahi al Ta'aishi, the nomad whose journey from the western lands to find his chosen master was already legendary. Some said he was the first man to understand the importance of the Mahdi's mission" (p. 95). After the Mahdi's death,

Abdullahi became his successor and continued the mission, showing his commitment to the divine legitimacy of the movement. In this context, faith became the vehicle of awakening, reflecting Freire's concept of *conscientização,* reimagined here as a faith-driven process in which belief in the Mahdi becomes a catalyst for revolutionary commitment. Freire stated, "Human beings are not built in silence but in word, in work, in action reflection" (1967, p. 88).

The revolutionary struggles depicted in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* are framed through what Bakhtin (1984) called a "hidden polemic," where one discourse responds to another without overt reference. Mahjoub's novel seems to engage with the ideological weight of *Mayombe*'s revolution, not by naming it, but by offering a contrasting vision shaped by mysticism and immediacy. In this sense, *Mayombe'*s political discourse indirectly influences Mahjoub's representation of resistance. While Pepetala grounds revolution in Marxist organization and collective discipline, Mahjoub reimagines it through faith and revelation, transforming the material struggle into a spiritual quest. Thus, *Mayombe* "in one way or another determines the author's discourse," even as Mahjoub "remains at a distance from it" (1984, p. 195). The dialogue is submerged, yet present, "such is the nature of discourse in the hidden polemic" (p. 195).

**3-Internal Dynamics within Liberation Movements**

Moreover, the internal dynamics within liberation movements differ significantly between *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs*, particularly when viewed through the lens of ethnic and tribal identity. In *Mayombe,* ethnic and tribal divisions are the primary sources of conflict among the fighters, threatening the unity of the guerilla movement. Miracle, for instance, who "was born in Quibaxe, a Kimbundu area" (p. 21), is deeply committed to his tribe. He interpreted every decision in the forest through an ethnic lens. To him, the commander's insistence on returning stolen money to the worker stemmed from their shared Cabinda origin.

He interpreted the commander's anger toward Ungrateful for the theft as a targeted attack on the Kimbundu people. He stated:

> The Commander is Kikongo; although he went to Luanda as an infant, the truth is that his family comes from Uije. Now, Fiote and Kikongo are relatives, and basically the same people. That is why he was so angry at a theft from one of his cousins. That is why he protects Struggle, another traitor. Did you see his rage when he grabbed Ungrateful? Why? Ungrateful is Kimbundu, there you have the whole story (pp. 33-34).

Miracle believed that "There is legitimate tribalism, when the tribe is defended as it deserves. And there is illegitimate tribalism, when an effort is made to impose the tribe beyond the rights it deserves" (p. 34).

In contrast, Fearless, the Commander pointed out how ethnic loyalties weaken the collective struggle. He was the one who had dealt with these conflicts and figured out how to resolve them. When the fighters prepared to ambush a group of Cabinda workers collaborating with the Tuga, some insisted that the workers deserve to be shot because they were traitors. Struggle, who was from Cabinda, did not agree. Muatianvua said, "These workers are Cabindas, and that's why you're angry. But they're still traitors, even if they were Lundas or Kimbundus" (p. 10). The commander and the commissar firmly warned them against using tribalism to dictate their actions. Fearless said, "Anyone who tries to use tribalism against the Cabinda people will be shot. Shot. We are not joking" (p.10).

Muatianvua and New World also rejected tribalism. Pepetela wrote, "the detribalised such as Muatianvua, born in Lunda of an Umbundu father and Kimbundu mother. New World was from Luanda, from a Kimbundu back¬ ground, but studying or perhaps the stay in Europe had freed him from tribalism" (p. 24). When Muatianvua was captured, the fighters hesitated to rescue him because he was detribalized, only "Struggle and Ekuikui came forward" (p. 39). The commander was angered by their hesitation. He warned them that with such tribal thinking, true liberation will remain out of reach. He said:

> No-one wanted to volunteer, because Muatianvua is detribalised. Were he Kikongo or Kimbundu four or five would soon have come forward . . . Who did? Struggle, who is Cabinda, and Ekuikui, who is Umbundu. Detribalised, like him, since here there are no more Cabinda or Umbundu ... Is that how we are going to win the war? (p. 39).

Eventually, in their final mission, during the last advance to Fallen Branch, that the fighters transcend the ethnic divisions that had long plagued them. Fearless and Struggle sacrificed their lives to save the Commissar. Ops was devastated by this loss, and he said, "Struggle, who was Cabinda, died to save a Kimbundu. Fearless, who was Kikongo, died to save a Kimbundu. It is a great lesson for us, comrades" (p.213).

Although *Mayombe* ends with a hopeful message about overcoming tribal divisions, the novel's realistic depiction of internal ethnic tensions within the liberation movement was politically sensitive. Rothwell explained, "It [the novel] deals directly with the problem of tribalism within a movement that claimed to be based on ideology and not race" (p.122). But even more controversial was Pepetela's deeper critique, he draws a subtle comparison between the way power was used in the liberation struggle and the way it was used by the colonial regime. The novel suggests that, like Christianity during colonial rule, Marxist ideology could also be used to control people. This way of thinking challenges the idea that independence would automatically bring justice (Rothwell, p.123). Instead, *Mayombe* warns that if the new leaders repeat the same structures of power, they risk continuing the same kinds of oppression they fought against.

In marked contrast to the tribal tensions and negotiated leadership seen in *Mayombe*, *In the hour of signs* presents a movement unified under the absolute spiritual authority of the Mahdi. His power was rooted in religious devotion and his commands were perceived as divine will. This is evident in the scene where Nejumi seized Khartoum and talked with Medani about the Mahdi's direct and unquestioned command regarding General Gordon. He said, "The Mahdi told me to bring him alive" (p. 159), showing the Mahdi's absolute authority over his followers.

This unquestioning faith extended to Khalifa Abdullahi, whose rule became highly authoritarian. When Hawi recognized the danger of this unchecked authority, he became disillusioned and tried to urge the people to think critically. At the mosque, he declared:

> Islam started as a stranger and it shall return as such. We have seen something that could be described as the Final Hour. It is written that when the woman gives birth to her mistress, when you see barefoot and naked shepherds living the life of extravagance, then the Signs are with us and the Hour has come.' He appealed to them. 'Is this not what we witnessed in the later years of the Khalifa Abdullahi's rule? Did those around him not begin to grow fat and rich (p. 245).

But their blind devotion prevented them from seeing the truth. They accused Hawi of apostasy: "Apostate!' they roared, and he did not argue, for in that moment he knew it was true. He raised his eyes towards the sky, searching, begging" (p. 248). Under Khalifa Abdullahi's orders, he was crucified, revealing how dissent was silenced not through dialogue or reasoning, but through brutal punishment in the name of divine obedience.

Where *Mayombe* exposes a polyphonic struggle between conflicting ethnic identities and evolving leadership, *In the hour of signs* presents a monologic system, where only the voice of divine authority is permitted. According to Bakhtin (1984), monologism occurs when "a single consciousness" claims "a finalizing definition of the world," leaving no room for genuine dialogue or internal contradiction (p. 81). The Mahdist state embodies this: it silences dissenters like Hawi and upholds an absolute, unified truth. Yet, when read alongside *Mayombe,* Mahjoub's novel becomes part of a broader intertextual and dialogic exchange, as its portrayal of spiritual unity challenges and responds to Pepetala's secular, Marxist vision of revolution.

The divergences in ideology, motivation and characterization between *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* reveal how each novel provides a distinct yet interconnected reflection on revolutionary experience. Their contrasts between Marxist ideology and religious conviction, and between collective debate and spiritual authority engage in dialogue, revealing varied reactions to colonial oppression. Through this interaction, each text refracts the other, deepening our understanding of resistance and its internal complexities.

## V. Conclusion

In this dissertation, we have compared *Mayombe* (1980) by Pepetela and *In the hour of signs* (1996) by Mahjoub through an intertextual and dialogic lens, with the aim of revealing how both novels depict anti-colonial resistance. To achieve this, we have employed key theoretical tools, primarily Krestiva's "intertextuality", Bakhtin's "dialogism", and Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed". Each chapter was built upon elements borrowed from these theories to explore how the two texts are shaped by, respond to, and challenge both their colonial histories and the shared questions of resistance they explore.

In the first chapter, we have examined the historical background of both novels. We have emphasized how *Mayombe* embodies Angola's Marxist-inspired armed struggle during the 1970s, while *In the hour of signs* draws on the Mahdist uprising in the 19th-century Sudan. Using Krestiva's concept of ambivalence, we have demonstrated how each novel reinterprets historical materials, transforming past resistance movements into areas of fictional and ideological reconstruction. In the second chapter, we have focused on thematic intertextual parallels and how the novels address common issues such as resistance, the violence of the colonizer, and the lived hardship of revolutionaries. Through Krestiva's transposition and Freire's perspectives on consciousness and liberation, we have demonstrated how *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* can be analyzed in relation to each other, despite their distinct geographical and temporal contexts. Both texts present a complementary perspective on the struggle against colonial oppression and the transformative potential of the oppressed. Chapter three has examined the divergences between the two works. We have begun by analyzing the ideological divide between Marxist-Leninist ideology in *Mayombe* and Islamic belief in *In the hour of signs*, highlighting how basic frameworks shape each narrative's approach to resistance. We have, then, examined how *Mayombe* often reveals personal ambitions and internal conflicts within its revolutionary groups, while *In the hour of signs* depicts a more unified religiously-

driven movement with centralized authoritative leadership. To support this examination, we have applied Bakhtin's dialogism, particularly the concepts of "heteroglossia" and "polyphony". We have shown how each novel not only creates its own ideological discourse, but also subtly questions the ideological assumptions of the other. Freire's concept of dialogue and critical consciousness also helped us to understand how each text frames the oppressed subject and their role in historical change.

This study has demonstrated that *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs* are involved in a literary and ideological dialogue that reveals both similarities and differences in their portrayal of anti-colonial resistance. Each novel is a product of its period and context, but both contribute to a larger intertextual connection that reflects the nature of revolution, leadership, and the legacy of the colonizer. While *Mayombe* emphasizes internal critique and the politicization of the armed struggle, *In the hour of signs* evokes a spiritual and collective commitment rooted in religious prophecy.

While this dissertation has focused on the revolutionary moments in *Mayombe* and *In the hour of signs*, future research could extend this discussion by examining how Pepetela and Mahjoub address the aftermath of revolution and the continuing legacy of colonialism in their later works. Pepetela's The return of the water spirit (1995) revisits post-independence Angola marked by disillusionment and corruption, while Mahjoub's Travelling with Djinns (2003) explores the enduring effects of colonial history through questions of identity and belonging.

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