



Representations of Algerian Cultural Identity in the Digital Space: A Semiotic Analysis of the Ministry of Culture and Arts' YouTube Channel Posts

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Abstract:

This study explores the representation of Algerian Cultural Identity in the digital space by examining the audiovisual discourse of videos published on the official YouTube channel of the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts. To achieve this, the study adopts a semiotic approach as an analytical tool, aiming to reveal both explicit and implicit meanings through the analysis of a purposive sample of five videos. Roland Barthes' framework is employed to deconstruct the two levels of meaning: denotative (explicit) and connotative (implicit). Additionally, Roman Jakobson's approach is used to analyse the musical dimension. The analysis focuses on cultural and heritage symbols, the nature of the music, representations of gender, and the language used in titles, as well as in both written and musical content.

The study concludes that the videos present Algeria's tangible and intangible heritage within a unified cultural discourse, reflecting regional diversity within a single national identity. The findings also highlight the role of traditional music in activating collective memory, highlight the positive representation of women, and the presence of linguistic diversity through the use of Arabic and Tamazight languages. These elements together strengthen social cohesion and national unity.

Keywords: Algerian Ministry of Culture; Cultural Identity; Cultural Symbols; Semiological Analysis; YouTube.



1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital media landscape, official cultural institutions have increasingly turned to online platforms such as YouTube to share heritage narratives, promote national identity, and reframe traditional cultural values for modern audiences. The Algerian Ministry of Culture's official YouTube channel serves as a prime example of how state-sponsored digital media can become a symbolic space for representing cultural heritage. Through its visual content, including videos on traditional music, historic figures, local festivals, and architectural landmarks, the channel actively constructs and promotes a particular vision of Algerian identity (Abd al-Wahhāb, 2022). In this regard, Hall (1997) emphasises that media representations play a central role in shaping cultural identities and collective memory .

This study aims to explore the representation of Algerian cultural identity in the digital space through the YouTube posts of the Ministry of Culture and Arts. A qualitative analysis, based on the semiotic approach, serves as the primary framework for this investigation. The semiotic approach to cultural studies, as discussed by Abikenov and Kudaibergenov (2021), highlights the role of symbolic systems, cultural texts, and the concept of value as semiotically constructed elements that produce social meaning in both individual and collective consciousness. Building on this perspective, the present study investigates how Algerian cultural heritage is represented through semiotic mechanisms in the official YouTube videos published by the Ministry of Culture. While these videos may appear primarily informative or documentary in style, they are embedded with a complex network of visual, auditory, and textual signs that transcend their literal content. These signs operate within a broader cultural framework, contributing to shaping perceptions of national identity, collective memory, and the ongoing narrative of cultural continuity in the digital space (Abikenov & Kudaibergenov, 2021).

Semiotic analysis, particularly following Roland Barthes' two-level model of signification (denotation and connotation), allows for the dissection of how such meanings are constructed and communicated. Cultural semiotics examines the interaction between language, symbols, and culture, offering a unified and dynamic vision of cultural identity (Long & He, 2021). Through this lens, the study investigates how images of traditional dress, regional music, historic monuments, and national symbols are used not only to showcase heritage but also to convey implicit messages about unity, authenticity, and modernity. The central research question of this study is: How do the videos published by the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts on YouTube contribute to representing and promoting Algerian cultural and heritage identity, and what are the semantic and implicit dimensions of these videos in the context of building national cultural awareness?

- Study Questions:

In doing so, this research attempts to answer the following questions:



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- What are the semantic and implicit dimensions of the videos published by the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts on YouTube with the aim of promoting national cultural identity?
 - How are cultural and heritage symbols used in the Ministry of Culture's videos, and what are the semiotic implications of these symbols in promoting Algerian cultural and heritage identity?
 - What is the nature of the music used in the videos and what is its functional significance in promoting cultural identity?
 - How was gender represented in the published videos, and what are the implications of this semiotic representation in the context of promoting awareness of cultural diversity and inclusivity?
 - What is the nature of the language used in the videos, and does it reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity in Algeria? What are the implications of this semiotic diversity in promoting cultural and heritage identity?

- Study Significance:

This study contributes to the field of cultural and media studies by exploring how digital content produced by state institutions functions as a symbolic space for cultural negotiation. It provides a critical analysis of official heritage discourse in a postcolonial context, utilising a semiotic framework to uncover the implicit messages conveyed through image, sound, and narrative structure. The findings are particularly valuable in understanding how national identity is being reframed and rearticulated in digital public spheres, such as YouTube.

- Objectives of the Study

This study aims to analyze the semiotic dimensions of the videos published on the official YouTube channel of the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts and to examine how these audiovisual productions contribute to the promotion of Algerian cultural identity in the digital space. More specifically, the study seeks to explore the use of cultural and heritage symbols in these videos and to analyze their semiotic implications in constructing and reinforcing representations of Algerian cultural and heritage identity. It also examines the nature of the music used in the videos and evaluates its functional role in enhancing cultural meaning and communicating cultural values. In addition, the study analyzes the representation of gender in the published content and investigates the semiotic implications of this representation in promoting cultural diversity, inclusivity, and social participation.

2. Institutional Representation of Algerian Cultural Heritage on the Ministry of Culture's YouTube Channel

The videos published on the official YouTube channel of the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts fall within the framework of institutional digital communication through which cultural institutions seek to strengthen their presence in the digital space and engage with wider audiences.



The channel was launched on February 13, 2020, as part of broader efforts to utilize digital platforms for disseminating cultural content and promoting national heritage. As of the date of this study, the channel has approximately 1,300 subscribers and more than 184,563 total views, with 234 uploaded videos covering various domains, including cultural heritage, the arts, and cultural events. This audiovisual content appears to target diverse audiences, primarily the national public, particularly young users of digital platforms, with the aim of raising awareness of cultural heritage and reinforcing representations of national cultural identity. At the same time, the use of a global platform such as YouTube suggests an implicit orientation toward broader audiences beyond national borders, including members of the Algerian diaspora and international viewers interested in discovering Algerian culture. In this sense, these digital initiatives can be situated within broader strategies of cultural promotion, tourism promotion, and forms of cultural diplomacy in the digital sphere. However, the relatively limited number of views recorded for some videos indicates that the reach of this content remains relatively modest. This situation may reflect the challenges faced by cultural institutions in achieving wider digital engagement with audiences and highlights the need to develop more effective institutional digital communication strategies to expand the dissemination and reception of cultural content in the online environment. Since the creation of the channel, the Ministry has been led by three successive ministers Malika Bendouda, Souria Mouloudji, and Zouhir Ballalou whose cultural activities and programs have been reflected in the nature of the content published on the channel. This succession in leadership provides a valuable context for semiotic analysis, allowing researchers to trace transformations in the channel's visual and auditory discourse and to observe how Algerian cultural heritage has been represented across different stages.

3. Previous Studies

3.1 First study :A Semiotic and Indexical Approach to Identity in the Age of YouTube

Andacht (2015) examined identity representation in YouTube content using a semiotic approach based on the theory of signs developed by Charles Sanders Peirce. The study aimed to understand how a sense of authenticity and identity is constructed in digital video clips through the visual and narrative signs used by content creators. The findings revealed that digital content relies heavily on indexical signs, which provide audiences with a sense of realism and authenticity, making YouTube an important space for the production and representation of identity in the digital age. The study also confirms that the semiotic analysis of signs in digital videos helps to understand how meaning and identity are constructed within digital platforms (Andacht, 2015).

3.2 Second study : The Representation of Madurese Islam on YouTube: A Semiotic Analysis

Nurwahid and Safira (2023) conducted a study that analyzed the representation of Madurese Islamic culture in digital media through a semiotic analysis of the satirical comedy series "Dhe'remmah Cong" published on the Tretan Universe YouTube channel. The research adopted a qualitative approach using the netnography method. Data were collected from dialogue narratives



and netizen comments extracted from two episodes of the series and supported by a literature review. The data were then analyzed using the semiotic framework of Charles Sanders Peirce.

The results showed that the comedy series represents a space for cultural acculturation between Islam and Madurese culture, and that YouTube contributes to the dissemination of Madurese Islamic identity within the digital cultural sphere in Indonesia (Nurwahid & Safira, 2023).

3.3 Third study Exploring Cultural Representations in Regional Content on YouTube

Nursilah and Jayadi (2025) conducted a study entitled “Exploring Cultural Representations in Regional Content on YouTube.” The study aimed to examine how regional cultures are represented through YouTube content and how digital platforms contribute to the dissemination of cultural narratives. The research adopted a qualitative approach. Data were collected through content analysis of selected YouTube videos and interviews with content creators, which constituted the main research tools (Nursilah & Jayadi, 2025).

The findings revealed that YouTube plays an important role in facilitating access to cultural content and promoting cross-cultural exchange among diverse audiences. However, the study also identified several challenges related to authenticity, cultural commodification, and the potential distortion of local cultural identities within the global digital environment. The study concluded that although YouTube provides significant opportunities for representing cultures, ensuring accurate and respectful representation of cultural identities remains essential.

3.4 Fourth study: Cultural Journalism and Collective Identity: A Comparative Study of Traditional Culture on Television and YouTube Media

Firmansyah et al. (2025) conducted a study entitled “Cultural Journalism and Collective Identity: A Comparative Study of Traditional Culture on Television and YouTube Media.” The study examined how cultural journalism preserves and represents traditional culture through two media platforms: RTV’s Dubi children’s program and the Ayodya Pala Foundation’s YouTube channel. The research adopted a qualitative comparative case study approach. Data collection tools included in-depth interviews with content producers, participant observation, and semiotic analysis of the media content (Firmansyah, Pratama, & Lestari, 2025).

The study concludes that cultural journalism sustains traditional culture in the digital era and provides guidance for media practitioners and policymakers.

4. Method and tools

Every scientific study must follow a structured and coherent methodological framework that guides both its analytical process and the interpretation of its results. In semiotic analysis, this requires the researcher to be fully aware of the methodological foundations governing the decoding of signs and meanings, ensuring that the research effectively addresses the central problem and research questions (Lazard, 1991).

This study employs a qualitative research methodology grounded in semiotic analysis,



focusing on visual, auditory, and textual signs in official digital content. The selected corpus consists of videos published on the official YouTube channel of the Algerian Ministry of Culture that showcase various aspects of Algerian cultural heritage, including traditional music, historical figures, local festivals, and architecture.

4.1 Study Sample

Given the size of the research population, which consists of 234 videos published on the official YouTube channel of the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts, it was not feasible to analyze all the available content. Therefore, this study adopted a purposive sampling strategy, which is commonly used in qualitative and semiotic research to select cases that are most relevant to the research objectives.

The selection of the five videos was not based on the number of views, as the channel generally records relatively limited viewership. This may be related to the relatively recent creation of the channel in February 13, 2020, as well as the specialized cultural nature of its content, which primarily targets audiences interested in cultural heritage, including national audiences, cultural elites, and international tourists.

Instead, the selection focused on videos that explicitly represent Algerian cultural identity, particularly those related to national celebrations, cultural events, and symbolic occasions in which elements of traditional culture such as traditional music, traditional clothing, heritage performances, and cultural rituals are prominently featured. These videos were intentionally selected because they provide rich symbolic material suitable for an in-depth semiotic analysis.

The analysis was conducted using two semiotic approaches developed by Roland Barthes and Roman Jakobson, focusing on denotative and connotative meanings, media message functions, and strategies of cultural representation

Details of the selected sample are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Sample of Videos

Video	Title	Video Publish Date	Video Link	Audience Interactions
Video 01	Eidk Fi Baytik (Eidek at Your Home)	May 23, 2020	https://youtu.be/LvZds svcHxc?si=euD9EX4a mx62nVI1	39 views
Video 02	Activities of the National Days of Algerian Clothing from	Sep 23, 2020	https://youtu.be/htpZS y29umk?si=RDDDct9 qo7ytI_jv	185 views

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Opening to Closing				
Video 03	Ahalil Band Classified as World Heritage by UNESCO	Oct 31, 2021	https://youtu.be/FkTGWSwfRnE?si=GUM8q_jvvLR8aayi	132 views
Video 04	Documentary titled "Tangible Achievements and Field Projects"	Mar 13, 2024	https://youtu.be/5TyjVBfIUJM?si=TWp-dte386PGJSD0	4,844 views
Video 05	Minister of Culture and Arts Supervises the Heritage Conference in the Era of Artificial Intelligence	May 25, 2025	https://youtu.be/1NjR7AaSFMQ?si=nSrOyzDO0qoTIsvj	68 views
Source: by 4.2	prepared by researchers			

Research Instruments

This study relied on a semiotic analysis because it is well-suited to the subject and the study's questions. Semiology, a term introduced by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, refers to the 'Science of Signs' and is defined as the study of how signs function within society. It shares similarities with 'Semiotics,' a concept coined by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, which focuses on the use of signs to convey meaning and establish relationships in the human mind. In this article, both Semiotics and Semiology are employed to examine the role and significance of signs in the creation of meaning (Obara, 2022).

Obara outlines the key tools for conducting a thorough media analysis using Semiology and Semiotics; it is crucial first to examine the essential elements that constitute practical media analysis. The necessary tools for this process are presented in the table below.



Table 2. Key Tools for Conducting Media Analysis Using Semiology and Semiotics

Content Analysis	Visual Analysis
The researcher - Neuman (1997) defines content as "words, sounds, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated."	Visual analysis can be used to describe the visual aspects of a video, such as the colors in the video. The clothes worn, scenery, whether indoors or outdoors, and so many more.
For example, how a camera frames someone is important in bringing out the intended mood or tone of the video. Content can be broken down into the following categories: - Sonic / Audible: spoken words, music, sound effects, etc. - Images: pictures, color schemes, camera angles, facial expressions, etc. - Motive: The pace at which things move, the direction they move, etc. The angle at which someone poses for a video.	These different aspects of imagery are used to bring out a certain tone that is intended by the creator. Visual analysis can be broken down into the following categories: - Facial: spoken words, music, sound effects, etc. - Body: pictures, color schemes, camera angles, facial expressions, etc. - Scenery: The pace at which things move, the direction they move, etc.

Source: Media, Analysis: Semiology and Semiotics, (Obara, 2022)

4.3 The Theoretical Approach Applied in the Study

This study is based on two main semiotic approaches, which are as follows:

Roland Barthes' Approach

To conduct the analysis, this study relied on Roland Barthes' semiotic model, which distinguishes between two levels of meaning:

* Denotation: the literal or surface meaning of the signs.

* Connotation: refers to the cultural or symbolic meanings that an image or sound carries beyond its literal appearance. In Barthes' semiotic model, connotation reflects the deeper ideological and cultural associations activated in the viewer's interpretation. In his book *Mythologies*, Barthes writes that 'photography has a power to convert which must be analyzed' (Barthes, 1972).

Ferdinand de Saussure defines the linguistic sign as a dual unit composed of a signifier (the



sound image) and a signified (the concept). Its value derives from its differences from other signs within the linguistic system, and the relationship between them is arbitrary (Ferdinand, 1985) .

Roman Jakobson's Approach

Identified the components of linguistic communication in his book "Papers on general linguistics" in six elements: the sender, the message, the reference, the channel of communication, the receiver, and the status code (Jakobson, 1960).

Additionally, elements of Roman Jakobson's communication model are referenced to explain the audiovisual content's emotional, referential, and persuasive functions. The interaction between visual form, music, language, and institutional authority is also examined as part of the media's role in constructing cultural identity in the digital sphere (Jakobson, 1966).

The following table illustrates how these theories are applied in the study:

Table 3. Applying semiotic approaches in the study

Theoretical Approach	Key Concepts	Application in the Study
Roland Barthes' Approach	- Denotation: literal or surface meaning. -Connotation: cultural, symbolic meanings beyond the literal.	Barthes' model was used to analyze audiovisual content by examining both the surface and deeper meanings, revealing cultural and ideological codes embedded in the media.
Roman Jakobson's Approach	- Six components of communication: sender, message, reference, channel, receiver, and code. - Emotional, referential, and persuasive functions of communication.	Jakobson's model helped explore how audiovisual content constructs cultural identity, focusing on the interaction between visual forms, music, language, and institutional authority.

Source: prepared by researchers

5. Semiotic Analysis of Algerian Heritage Representation in the Ministry of Culture's YouTube Channel

Roland Barthes' Approach

• Denotative analysis

Our analysis of the visual frames from the Ministry of Culture's videos, according to Roland Barthes' approach, begins with a denotative reading of the visual elements, (Barthes, 1977), such as traditional garments, decorative patterns, heritage-related objects, and cultural settings, followed by a connotative interpretation that uncovers their symbolic role in expressing heritage, identity, and collective cultural memory. This interpretation is then connected to the explicit textual or verbal messages presented in the videos, revealing how visual and textual components work together to reinforce the cultural narrative (Kress, Gunther, & Theo, 1996).



Sample 01: Analysis of the Video “Eid and Traditions in the Time of Corona

Published on the Ministry of Culture’s YouTube channel on May 23, 2020, this 1-minute-17-second video documents the initiative 'Eid and Traditions in the Time of Corona' under the slogan 'Celebrate Eid at Home.' Launched during the Covid-19 lockdown, the video features a virtual photography exhibition showcasing public participation through traditional Algerian attire including the haïk, melhfa, and Tuareg dress and iconic sweets such as tcharek, griwech, and baklava.

The narrative concludes with a young girl in Kabyle dress applying henna, symbolizing cultural continuity despite the pandemic. The experience is sonically anchored by Abdelkrim Dali’s heritage song 'Sah Aidkoum,' which evokes collective memory. Figure 01 specifically captures a visual frame of women wearing the haik, serving as a semiotic marker of Algerian ancestral heritage and its role in social cohesion during global crises."

Fig.1. Represents a visual frame of a group of women wearing the haik as part of the Algerian traditional heritage



Source: <https://youtu.be/LvZdssvcHxc?si=euD9EX4amx62nVI1>

The image shows a group of women standing next to each other, wearing the haik or white melhfa, a loose garment that covers the entire body. Some of the women are wearing the white a'jar or niqab that covers the lower part of the face. Some of them are holding small Algerian flags in green, white, and red.

The surrounding space is outdoors, with palm trees visible in the background. At the bottom center of the image, a large white hashtag reads: #عيدك_في_بيتك (“Spend Eid at Home”). In the top right corner of the image, the logo of the Ministry of Culture is displayed.



Fig.2. Shows a Visual Frame Featuring a young girl in Traditional Kabyle Dress

Source: <https://youtu.be/LvZdssvcHxc?si=euD9EX4amx62nVI1>

At the center of the image appears a young girl wearing a traditional, multicolored Kabyle dress adorned with vibrant embroidery, complemented by silver/metallic jewelry and an ornate crown that reflects the festive nature of the scene. The background features warm, indoor tones, with an earthy-colored wall that enhances the presence of the human subject in the foreground. The girl rests her hand on a traditional pottery vessel, while traces of henna are visible on her fingers, signifying Eid rituals. At the center of the frame, the phrase “Sah Aidkoum” (“Happy Eid”) is displayed in bold yellow lettering, while the logo of the Ministry of Culture occupies the upper right corner, adding an institutional dimension to the image and linking it to the official context in which it was produced.



Fig.3. Shows a visual frame featuring three types of traditional Algerian sweets



Source: <https://youtu.be/LvZdssvcHxc?si=euD9EX4amx62nVI1>

The image is a composite of three separate photographs showcasing different types of traditional Algerian sweets: Baklava (B), presented in diamond shapes and decorated with nuts, with a golden sheen from honey or syrup; Tcharek (C), a crescent-shaped sweet coated with a layer of fine white powdered sugar; and Griwech (A), a golden-colored sweet with an intricate twisted design, covered with a glossy layer of honey. Each sweet is displayed sequentially in serving plates against neutral backgrounds that emphasize their colors and intricate details. The visuals are accompanied by clear Arabic text outlining the conditions for participation in the competition, presented in a readable font style and size, while the official logo of the Ministry of Culture appears in one corner, lending the announcement an institutional character.

Sample 02: Analysis of the Video “Cultural Heritage Month Activities

Published on September 23, 2020, on the Ministry of Culture’s YouTube channel, this 1-minute-17-second video documents the 'National Days of Algerian Dress' under the slogan 'My Clothing, My Memory, My Culture.' The footage captures a high-profile cultural event attended by Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad, featuring a diverse fashion show that showcases regional styles including Kabyle, Constantine, Chaoui, Saharan, Mozabite, and Andalusian.

The visual narrative employs close-up shots to highlight intricate embroidery, serving as a semiotic testament to Algerian craftsmanship and identity preservation. Sonically, the event is layered with Andalusian and popular music, creating an auditory 'Soundscape' that unifies the diverse regional representations. By framing traditional attire within an official state setting complete with national flags and institutional banners the discourse reinforces the role of heritage as 'Symbolic Capital' used by the state to foster national cohesion and cultural continuity.

Fig.4. Represents a sample visual frame from the video “Cultural Heritage Month Activities.”



Source: https://youtu.be/httpZSy29umk?si=RDDDct9qo7ytI_jv

The image shows a close-up shot of an exhibition of luxurious traditional Algerian outfits embroidered with golden threads, including an Algiers-style attire, and both female and male traditional garments. The visible text appears in a clear font on a semi-transparent yellow background: “As part of the activities of the Intangible Heritage Month – The Ministry of Culture and Arts unveils the curtain”, with the ministry’s logo in the upper right corner.

Sample 03: Analysis of the Video “Ahellil Performance from Timimoun – Algerian Saharan Cultural Heritage”

The video, released on October 31, 2021, with a duration of 36 minutes, presents a performance of the traditional Saharan art of Ahellil on the stage of the Algiers Opera House by men and women from Timimoun, dressed in traditional Saharan attire, including jewelry, women’s melhfa, and traditional turbans. The stage is decorated with a Saharan carpet and traditional musical instruments, accompanied by warm lighting and a backdrop screen depicting the Timimoun desert. The video employs a simple documentary style, alternating between wide and close-up shots to highlight facial expressions and body movements, with a visually balanced arrangement of performers and the Ministry of Culture’s logo in the upper-right corner, reflecting the institutional nature of the recording.

Fig.5. Represents a sample visual frame from the video “Ahellil of Timimoun – Traditional Saharan Performance.”



Source: https://youtu.be/FkTGWSwfRnE?si=GUM8q_jvvLR8aayi

Sample 04: Analysis of the Video “Tangible Achievements and Field Projects – Ministry of Culture and Arts, Algeria (2024)”

Published on March 13, 2024, this 15-minute-7-second video documents the National Day of the Artist, attended by the President of the Republic. The narrative structure transitions from official discourse (0:00–1:08) to a strategic outline of presidential commitments, focusing on national identity, cultural diplomacy, and the integration of the arts into economic development (1:08–2:08).

A significant portion of the video (2:08–12:30) functions as a visual report on major field projects, notably the Cinematic City in Timimoun and the Cinema Palace in Tinerkouk, symbolizing a move toward 'Decentralizing Culture.' The final segments (12:30–15:07) highlight symbolic institutional events, such as Revolutionary Song Days and heritage forums, concluding with a ministerial reaffirmation of these initiatives. This video serves as a 'Political-Cultural Manifesto,' utilizing long-form digital content to showcase the state's role as the primary architect and sponsor of the national cultural landscape."

Fig.6. Represents a sample visual frame from the video “Saharan Palace Architecture in Timimoun – Cultural Heritage and Desert Landscape





Source: <https://youtu.be/5TyjVBfIUJM?si=TWp-dte386PGJSD0>

The image presents an aerial view of a palace constructed with local materials in the traditional Saharan architectural style. The scene highlights the high earthen walls and corner towers in an orange-reddish tone, blending harmoniously with the surrounding sand. In the foreground, a spacious courtyard enclosed by the main wall of the palace can be observed, with a small number of cars parked near the entrance, yet without any indication of a large gathering or ceremonial event. Within the inner space of the palace, scattered palm trees are visible, adding an environmental dimension that reflects the integration of architecture with the desert landscape. At the top right corner of the image, the logo of the Ministry of Culture and Arts is displayed, which situates the visual frame within its institutional context.

Figure 7: represents a sample visual frame from the video “Portraits of Emir Abdelkader – National Memory and Cultural Heritage Representation.”



Source: <https://youtu.be/5TyjVBfIUJM?si=TWp-dte386PGJSD0>

Both images are in black and white. In the first image, Emir Abdelkader (A) appears in a half-length portrait from the chest upward, wearing a white burnous covering his shoulders and head, with a thick beard and clearly defined facial features, while the background is dark and neutral to highlight the details of his face and clothing, and the logo of the Ministry of Culture and Arts appears at the top of the image. The second image (B) shows the Emir mounted on a white horse, wearing a flowing burnous, surrounded by a group of men, some on horseback and others



standing, dressed in traditional attire, with a background featuring palm trees and wide desert landscapes. Natural lighting emphasizes the contrast between the Emir's white garment and the surrounding shadows, and the Ministry of Culture and Arts logo appears in a corner of the image.

Sample 05: Analysis of the Video “Cultural Heritage in the Age of Artificial Intelligence – Ministry of Culture and Arts, Algeria (2025)”

Released on May 25, 2025, this 1-minute-12-second video documents the proceedings of the symposium 'Cultural Heritage in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.' The visual narrative opens with a digital interface that establishes Artificial Intelligence as the central semiotic framework. Featuring Minister of Culture Zoheir Bellou and several officials, the footage highlights a hybrid event where national symbolism (flags) intersects with digital connectivity (remote broadcasting from various provinces).

The video concludes with a press conference covered by major channels such as El Hayat and Echorouk, emphasizing the strategic integration of AI into heritage preservation. Formally, this content constructs an 'Institutional Modernity Discourse,' skillfully blending traditional national icons with digital signifiers. This synthesis aims to project an image of a state that is both a guardian of ancestral legacy and a pioneer in adopting cutting-edge technologies to ensure cultural continuity in the digital era."

Fig.8. Represents a visual frame showing a blue-and-white banner with a humanoid figure symbolizing artificial intelligence and the inscription “Cultural Heritage in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.”



Source: <https://youtu.be/1NjR7AaSFMQ?si=nSrOyzDO0qoTIsvj>

The image depicts a formal hall with a marble floor and a dominant blue banner under the official supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The central visual element is a white humanoid robot, gazing attentively at a traditional ceramic vase held in its hands, touching it with precision in a manner suggesting examination or restoration. Textual components in both Arabic and English state: 'Cultural Heritage in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,' marking 'Cultural Heritage Month' from April 18 to May 18, 2025. The color palette contrasts the modern black and



white of the robot with the traditional brown of the vase, set within a ceremonial atmosphere marked by red cordons. This composition explicitly frames the contemporary technological element (the robot) within an official institutional context, linking artificial intelligence to the preservation of cultural heritage.

6. Implication analysis of selected passages according to Roland Barthes' theory

- These images go beyond the mere documentation of heritage practices; they participate in the construction of a symbolic representation of national identity, where Algerian culture is presented through carefully selected visual elements. The juxtaposition of Kabyle attire and traditional sweets within the same scene does not only celebrate cultural diversity, but also reflects a process of symbolic selection that integrates various cultural specificities into a unified national narrative. In this sense, the visual discourse tends to frame Algerian identity within a coherent and harmonious cultural image.

- From a gender perspective, the analysis suggests that women are prominently associated with the representation of cultural heritage through practices such as traditional clothing, domestic rituals, and festive preparations. This representation symbolically links femininity with the preservation of tradition and collective memory. However, such imagery may also contribute to reinforcing conventional representations of gender roles within the cultural narrative promoted in the video. In this way, heritage is visually framed as a shared cultural legacy while simultaneously reflecting the institutional discourse that emphasizes continuity, tradition, and national identity.

- Within this broader visual discourse, image No. 04 further illustrates these representations. The visual scene in image No. 04 highlights the richness of Algerian cultural heritage through traditional outfits that symbolize regional diversity and reinforce national identity. Elements such as golden embroidery, the Algiers-style attire, and the burnous evoke historical prestige. The Ahallil of Timimoun in image No. 05 goes beyond artistic display to construct a collective cultural narrative. White garments and the performers' arrangement symbolize purity, harmony, and social cohesion, while framing gender roles within traditional rituals. The desert backdrop and traditional instruments connect past and present, yet also essentialize culture, presenting an idealized vision of Algerian heritage and reinforcing institutional narratives of identity.

- "The visual depiction of the 'Cinema Palace' inauguration in Timimoun reflects a communication strategy that seeks to reconcile architectural authenticity with modern developmental requirements. The dominance of the brown color and the use of local architecture do not merely mimic the environment; rather, they embody the 'cultural continuity' that official institutions strive to establish as a model for Saharan identity.



- From a critical perspective, it can be observed that this visual representation emphasizes the 'symbolic dimension' of the site (Architecture as Identity) more than social dynamics. The scene presents the Sahara as a 'static cultural space' being revitalized through major projects. This visual narrative contributes to constructing a mental image that links development with local visual identity. However, it simultaneously places heritage within an 'aesthetic-referential' framework, making the cultural project appear as a bridge connecting the past with a digital future, within an institutional vision aimed at highlighting the specificity of southern regions in the national cultural landscape."

- The portrait of Emir Abdelkader in Image N°07 functions as a 'visual construct' of national charisma. While the use of black and white adds documentary value, it critically decontextualizes the figure, transforming him into a 'transcendental symbol' preserved in national memory as the leader who spearheaded the resistance against the French colonial occupation. The focus on his steady gaze establishes a 'monumental' representation of leadership, while the neutral background creates a 'de-spatialization' effect to ensure he remains the absolute focal point of the national narrative. Finally, the inclusion of the Ministry's emblem frames this legacy within a 'contemporary institutional discourse,' suggesting a strategic continuity where the past is utilized to legitimize present-day sovereign projects.

- Image N°08, depicting Emir Abdelkader on horseback, employs a 'heroic iconography' deeply rooted in the Arab-Islamic imagination. The white horse and the desert background function as 'mythological signifiers' of purity and resistance, naturalizing the link between the leader and the Algerian land he defended against French colonialism. From a critical perspective, the presence of companions serves to collectivize the struggle, yet the composition maintains a strict hierarchy that centers the Emir as the singular embodiment of the popular will. The visual contrast between light and darkness elevates the historical conflict into a 'symbolic duality' of good versus evil, reconstructing the Emir as a legendary archetype to inspire national pride in the digital age.

- At a deeper connotative level, the video constructs an institutional discourse aimed at the 'digitalization of identity,' framing heritage preservation as a technical process. This visual scene, featuring a robot as a surrogate guardian of collective memory, exercises a form of 'technological substitution' (Postman, 2011) .This symbolism asserts the authority of technology in reshaping heritage, risking the transformation of cultural legacy into a polished 'digital commodity' (Adorno, Theodor & Max, 1997) ,that serves the official communication agenda. Such a narrative reflects the shift towards 'networked memory' (Hoskins, 2016) ,where human and emotional dimensions are mediated through artificial intelligence."

7. The Musical Functions in the Ministry of Culture's YouTube Videos According to Roman



Jakobson

Since the corpus consists of five videos with varying musical depths, Roman Jakobson's communicative functions will be applied exclusively to videos n°1, n°2, and n°3, where the music exhibits clear cultural and symbolic dimensions. The remaining videos, featuring only neutral background music for technical purposes, will be addressed through general descriptive observation rather than a functional framework. This selective approach ensures methodological rigor, avoids over-interpretation, and maintains coherence between the analytical depth and the semiotic nature of the audiovisual material.

Video 01: Eid and Traditions in the Time of Corona (analyzed using Roman Jakobson's model of functions)

Analysis of the Traditional Song "Sah Aidkom" According to Roman Jakobson's Functions. The incorporation of the traditional song "Sah Aidkom" by Abdelkarim Dali in the video "Eid and Traditions in the Time of Corona" represents a deliberate cultural and semiotic choice. As one of the most emblematic sonic markers associated with Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha in the Algerian collective memory, the song functions as a cultural signifier that reinforces the symbolic and emotional dimensions of the video. Applying Roman Jakobson's model allows us to understand how the musical message operates in constructing meaning and identity within the audiovisual discourse.

a. The Referential Function:

The referential function is clearly manifested, as the song directly evokes the cultural context of Eid in Algerian society, with its rituals, gatherings, and festive atmosphere.

The song is not used merely as background music; instead, it acts as a cultural frame of reference that immerses the viewer in the traditional Eid ambiance. It reconstructs the social and cultural scene intended by the video, especially within the exceptional context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

b. The Emotive Function:

The song carries strong emotional resonance due to its deep association with personal and collective memories of Eid among Algerians. It evokes: joy, nostalgia, a sense of belonging, and the warmth of family connections. Thus, the music expresses a shared emotional experience that reinforces the impact of the video and brings it closer to the audience.

c. The Conative Function:



The song implicitly guides the viewer toward engaging with the festive atmosphere despite the difficult health situation; Indirectly, it encourages the audience to preserve the spirit of Eid, hold on to cultural traditions, and recall values of family solidarity. This conative dimension influences the emotional orientation of the viewer and promotes a positive reception of the video's message.

d. The Poetic Function:

The poetic function emerges through the aesthetic qualities of the melody: the calm rhythm, the traditional Andalusian–Bedouin style, and Abdelkarim Dali's characteristic performance. These artistic features enrich the expressive and symbolic value of the scene, turning the music into an aesthetic component that deepens the cultural meaning of the video.

e. The Phatic Function:

The song establishes an immediate channel of connection with the viewer because it is familiar and deeply rooted in Algerian cultural memory. The mere opening notes of “Sah Aidkom” are enough to capture the audience's attention and draw them instantly into the content, creating what can be described as auditory familiarity. This function ensures a smooth communicative link between the video and its viewers, enhancing engagement and reception.

Video N 02: Cultural Heritage Month Activities (analyzed using Roman Jakobson's model of communication functions)

a. Referential Function:

The video highlights elements of Algiers' urban heritage through visual scenes supported by traditional aasimi music, situating the viewer within the cultural atmosphere of the city.

b. Expressive Function:

The nostalgic and warm rhythms of Aasimi music evoke feelings of memory, pride, and cultural attachment, creating an emotional connection despite the absence of a voiceover.

c. Comprehension Function:

The combination of organized visuals and steady musical flow helps the viewer understand the cultural significance of the featured heritage practices and spaces.



d. Outreach (Conative) Function:

The video implicitly encourages appreciation and preservation of Algerian urban traditions by presenting them through aesthetic.

Video N 03: Ahellil Performance from Timimoun – Algerian Saharan Cultural Heritage (Analyzed Using Roman Jakobson's Model of Functions)

a. Referential Function:

The video provides clear cultural–historical information about Ahellil as a ritualized musical practice in Timimoun. Through the depiction of the Saharan environment, traditional clothing, and collective rhythmic performance, it introduces Ahellil as an essential component of Saharan Algerian identity.

b. Expressive Function:

The spiritual and rhythmic nature of Ahellil conveys feelings of serenity, awe, and belonging. The collective chanting and repetitive beats create an emotional experience that deepens the viewer's connection to this heritage.

c. Comprehension Function:

The organization of scenes, visibility of performers, and emphasis on rhythm help the audience understand the structure and ritual nature of Ahellil, even for viewers unfamiliar with this cultural tradition.

d. Outreach (Conative) Function:

The video encourages viewers to value and preserve Saharan cultural heritage. It carries an implicit message from the Ministry of Culture emphasizing the importance of safeguarding traditional practices

e. Reflex (Symbolic) Function:

Beyond explicit meaning, the video conveys symbolic layers: the night setting as spiritual depth, rhythmic repetition as a sign of Saharan temporality, and unified clothing as a marker of communal identity. The visual discourse thus reconstructs Ahellil as a symbol of collective belonging.

8. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

- The results of the analysis demonstrate that these videos do not merely present elements of



Algerian heritage; rather, they perform a 'symbolic construction' of a unified national identity. By interlinking tangible and intangible elements with religious rituals like Eid al-Fitr, the institutional discourse aims to 'naturalize' the connection between the state's modern vision and ancestral customs. This process aligns with what Eric Hobsbawm terms the 'Invention of Tradition,' where historical symbols are selectively curated to foster a sense of continuity and social cohesion in the face of digital transformations (Ranger & Eric J, 1983).

- Furthermore, the results reveal an implicit conception of cultural identity as a 'homogenized' and inclusive construct. While the videos display regional diversity, they do so within a framework of 'unity' that obscures potential cultural contestations. The religious celebration is thus transformed into a pedagogical tool for reproducing national belonging, where rituals act as signs of 'Social Solidarity'. This reflects a strategic move to reposition heritage not as a static past, but as a dynamic 'cultural capital' utilized to strengthen national identity in the globalized digital space.

- The findings reveal that cultural symbols ranging from traditional attire and handicrafts to the iconic image of Emir Abdelkader are not merely decorative; they function as 'Signifying Systems' that construct a specialized historical and social depth. From a semiotic perspective, elements like the white garment, the Kabyle dress, and the burnous operate as 'Mythological Signs' (as per Roland Barthes), which naturalize the concept of national dignity and social status.

- Furthermore, the employment of these symbols reflects the mobilization of 'Cultural Capital' (Bourdieu) by institutional actors to assert a 'legitimate' version of Algerian identity (Bourdieu, 2011) . Instead of reflecting everyday traditional practices, these elements are curated as 'Visual Markers' of regional belonging, strategically harmonized to produce a sense of 'Symbolic Unity'. This depth does not just represent the past; it actively reconfigures it into a prestigious digital narrative that serves to validate the modern state's role as the primary custodian of the nation's collective soul.

- The sonic dimension of the Ministry's videos operates as a 'Acoustic Construction' of national identity, moving beyond mere accompaniment to perform a crucial semiotic function. The strategic distinction between 'Heritage-based music' (e.g., Ahellil, Aasimi) and 'Neutral background tracks' reflects a calculated hierarchy of meanings. Heritage music functions as an 'Affective Anchor' (as per Roland Barthes), which fixes the visual's polysemic nature into a specific cultural frame, activating the viewer's collective memory and emotional resonance.

- Furthermore, these soundscapes as conceptualized by Schafer (1993) do not merely 'unify' the experience; they act as a 'Symbolic Glue' that bridges regional specificities from the Saharan Ahellil to the urban Aasimi into a singular, harmonized national narrative. Critically, this auditory branding transforms heritage from a local, lived ritual into a 'Digital Sound-Object'



curated for institutional consumption (Schafer & Murray, 1993). By aestheticizing traditional sounds, the discourse encourages a 'Consumptive Appreciation' of heritage, where music is utilized as a tool for social mobilization and the reinforcement of sovereign identity in a globalized media environment.

- The findings reveal that the representation of women transcends mere visibility to perform a 'Symbolic Custodianship' of heritage. By centering women in traditional attire within musical performances, the discourse constructs the female body as the primary 'Locus of Cultural Authenticity'. From a critical perspective, this aligns with Nira Yuval-Davis's (1997) theory on gender and nation, where women are positioned as 'biological and cultural reproducers' of the national collective (Yuval-Davis & Nira, 1997). Thus, their prominent presence is not just an inclusive gesture, but a strategic utilization of the feminine image to 'anchor' identity in tradition. This 'Gendered Iconography' transforms women into semiotic signs of continuity, bridging the gap between historical memory and contemporary digital representation (Goffman, 1979).

- The linguistic diversity in these videos functions as a 'Semiotic Bridge' designed to manage Algeria's cultural plurality within a unified framework. This 'Institutional Multilingualism' seeks to resolve identity tensions through visual and auditory harmony, aligning with Homi Bhabha's 'Third Space' (1994) to construct a 'negotiated national identity' (Bhabha, 1994). By integrating Arabic and Tamazight, the discourse utilizes linguistic plurality as 'Symbolic Capital' (Bourdieu, 1991) to project a 'Stabilizing Discourse.' This strategic inclusivity aims to present a modern, integrated state image that harmonizes minority cultures within a cohesive sovereign narrative.

9. Digital Heritage as a Tool for Cultural Sovereignty and Defense

Beyond internal identity construction, this digital discourse serves an external sovereign function; the Ministry's digital strategy reflects an urgent move toward 'Defensive Cultural Diplomacy.' This intensive documentation of Algerian heritage on YouTube acts as a preemptive measure against 'Cultural Appropriation' and identity contestations in the Maghreb region. As Silverman and Ruggles (2007) argue, heritage is never a neutral category but a potent tool intertwined with 'identity and territory' where communities often engage in 'outright conflict' over the right to define and control cultural property. By broadcasting traditional attire and rituals, the state aims to establish a 'Digital Precedent' that supports its files submitted to UNESCO, effectively transforming these videos into a 'Visual Archive of Sovereignty.' This digital stewardship is designed to safeguard national legacy from external claims and to assert the 'Geographical Authenticity' of Algerian symbols within a highly polarized regional political landscape (Silverman, Helaine, & Fairchild Ruggles, 2007).



10. Conclusion

"In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the Algerian Ministry of Culture's YouTube content transcends mere digital archiving to function as a 'Strategic Semiotic Engine' for identity construction. By integrating regional symbols, gender inclusivity, and linguistic plurality, these videos produce a 'Synchronized National Narrative' that manages Algeria's cultural complexity within a unified sovereign framework. Beyond internal cohesion, this digital discourse serves an external sovereign function as 'Defensive Cultural Diplomacy'; it establishes a 'Digital Precedent' to safeguard Algerian heritage against cultural appropriation and regional contestations. Furthermore, the transition toward Artificial Intelligence reflects the state's evolution into an innovative architect of a 'Modernized National Identity.' Ultimately, these audiovisual materials act as a 'Visual Shield' for cultural resilience, ensuring that Algerian heritage remains a protected, living force capable of navigating the challenges of a globalized and polarized digital era."

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