

## From Cinematic Memory to Digital Satire: Semiotic Intertextuality in Algerian Facebook Memes

BOUHELLA Chahira <sup>1</sup>, ABDELKRIM Samia <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Blida 2 (Algeria)

Email : c.bouhella@univ-blida2.dz; <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1801-9388>

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Blida 2 (Algeria)

Email: s.abdelkrim.etu@univ-blida2.dz ; <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6796-6882>

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### Abstract:

This study examines Algerian Facebook memes as intertextual semiotic artifacts circulating within the digital public sphere. Drawing on memetic theory, intertextuality (Kristeva), and Martine Joly's semiotic framework, the research analyzes three image-based memes derived from Algerian films and television series. Through qualitative semiotic analysis, the study explores how cinematic scenes are recontextualized, transformed, and digitally circulated to generate new layers of meaning.

The findings reveal that Algerian memes operate as dynamic units of cultural transmission in which cinematic memory is reactivated and reinterpreted within contemporary socio-political contexts. Rather than functioning merely as humorous reproductions, these memes constitute intertextual constructions that negotiate cultural identity while adapting to the communicative logic of social media platforms. The study contributes to digital cultural research by positioning memes as evolving semiotic structures embedded in local cultural memory and networked digital circulation.

**Keywords:** Memetic Theory; Semiotic Analysis; Digital Culture; Memes; Algeria

### 1. Introduction:

The technological revolution, with its rapid and diverse advancements, has introduced new communication methods that are reshaping our production, discourse, and influence. This revolution has expanded the scope of artistic engagement with the data emerging from the knowledge and technological fields, incorporating the aesthetics of information technologies into both linguistic and visual discourses. Consequently, digital, participatory cultural discourse now includes aesthetic standards that were previously unfamiliar in cultural phenomena. One of the most significant outcomes of this digital transformation is the rise of "memes," which have become a key form of global cultural communication. These digital entities, whether carrying cultural, humorous, political, or satirical content, provide profound insights into human expression and social participation, reflecting how we seek to give meaning to our existence in the modern world.

Mememes have transcended their original role as mere entertainment and have evolved into vehicles for social commentary, cultural expression, political discourse, and marketing strategies. In this context, memes are not arbitrary creations; instead, they are deeply embedded in the local cultural fabric, often serving as intertextual references that evoke shared cultural knowledge, history, and identity. The concept of cultural intertextuality, as applied in this study, refers to how memes remix and reference cultural symbols and elements from various sources, such as TV series, movies, and historical narratives. This process allows for the creation of meanings that extend beyond the immediate context of the meme, connecting it to larger social and cultural discourses.

This paper explores the phenomenon of cultural intertextuality through memes within the Algerian digital public sphere, specifically focusing on how these memes engage with and reflect upon the cultural memory and social contexts of Algerian society. By examining how memes reference and remix aspects of Algerian culture, the study offers insights into the dynamics of cultural identity formation in the digital age. Memes, as digital artifacts, engage in a complex process of cultural negotiation, contributing to the representation of cultural narratives and the reinforcement or subversion of cultural norms.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding digital culture and the role of memes in shaping contemporary communication practices. This research further contributes to the evolving understanding of digital communication and the role of social media in the creation and dissemination of cultural meaning. By analyzing a sample of memes posted on Facebook, the study centers on the main research question: **How do Algerian Facebook memes recontextualize cinematic memory through intertextual and semiotic processes, and how does this reconfiguration contribute to the negotiation of cultural identity within the digital public sphere?**

## 2. Study Questions:

Based on the aforementioned, the research was planned to address the following queries:

- How do Algerian Facebook memes employ intertextual strategies to reference cinematic heritage?
- In what ways do these memes re-signify historical and cultural symbols within contemporary socio-political contexts?
- What structural and semantic transformations occur when cinematic content is digitally remediated into meme form?
- How do these transformations shape representations of cultural identity in the Algerian digital sphere ?

## 3. Study Significance:

The importance of this study can be summarized in the following points:

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing field of digital cultural studies by positioning Algerian Facebook memes as complex semiotic and intertextual artifacts rather than mere humorous digital content.

First, the study contributes theoretically by integrating intertextuality, collective memory, and remediation within a unified analytical framework. By doing so, it advances scholarly understanding of how cinematic heritage is digitally reconfigured within participatory platforms, offering a culturally grounded application of these theories in the Algerian context.

Second, the research provides an in-depth semiotic examination of memes derived from Algerian films and television series, thereby enriching academic discussions on digital culture in North African and Arab contexts, which remain underrepresented in global meme studies.

Third, the study contributes methodologically by demonstrating how qualitative semiotic analysis can be applied to a small but information-rich sample to reveal structural, contextual, and cultural transformations occurring during digital circulation.

Finally, the research highlights the role of memes as mechanisms of cultural continuity and identity negotiation in the digital public sphere, illustrating how traditional cultural symbols are not erased by

technological transformation but actively reinterpreted within contemporary socio-political discourse.

#### 4. Study Objectives:

This study aimed to achieve several objectives, the most important of which are:

- Examine how Algerian Facebook memes reactivate and transform cinematic memory within digital contexts.
- Analyze the intertextual mechanisms through which memes reconstruct cultural symbols and historical references.
- Identify the structural and semantic mutations that occur during the digital remediation of cinematic scenes.
- Explore how these processes contribute to the negotiation of Algerian cultural identity in the digital public sphere

#### 5. Literature Review: Memes as a Phenomenon in Modern Digital Culture:

##### 5.1. The Concept of a Meme:

Biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term meme in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene* to describe a unit of cultural transmission that replicates and spreads in a manner analogous to biological genes. Dawkins conceptualized memes as cultural replicators subject to processes of variation, selection, and differential fitness, capable of influencing patterns of cultural evolution (Finkelstein, 1998, p. 13). In this sense, memes are pieces of information that persist, spread, and influence human behavior. The Oxford Dictionary defines a meme as “an element of culture or a behavioural pattern transmitted from one person to another by imitation or other non-genetic means” (Michael P., p. 3). Dawkins derived the term from the Greek mimesis, meaning imitation, emphasizing its function as a mechanism of copying and transmission (Cannizzaro, 2016, p. 568). Accordingly, memes operate as information-rich units that circulate through imitation and achieve survival through adaptability within specific cultural environments.

Subsequent scholars expanded this conceptualization. Aunger (2018) explored the relationship between memes and genes, arguing for a complex interaction between biological and cultural evolution. Similarly, Lynch defined memes as units of memory whose persistence depends on replication within cognitive systems (Unger, 2005, p. 69). While transmission often involves variation or distortion, such mutations are central to meme evolution, as competing variants struggle for cognitive attention and survival (Wiggins, 2019, p. 120).

##### 5.2. Characteristics of Memes:

A meme possesses three essential characteristics: variation, heredity, and differential fitness (Rathi & Jain, 2024, p. 15). Like biological organisms, memes replicate, adapt to their environment, compete for attention, and may decline or disappear (Mootz, 2000, p. 949).

Within digital environments, two additional characteristics become particularly significant: Creative replication, which involves remixing, satire, and redistribution of content.

Intertextuality, whereby memes combine and reinterpret elements from different cultural sources (Shifman, 2014).

These features underscore the dynamic and adaptive nature of memes in the networked communication spaces

##### 5.3. Criticisms of Meme Theory:

Despite its influence, memetic theory has faced substantial criticism. Some scholars argue that equating culture with biological evolution oversimplifies complex human behavior and reduces culture to a form of biological determinism (Guillo, 2007, p. 441). Edmonds (2005) questioned the explanatory power of the meme-gene analogy, suggesting that it provided limited analytical advancement beyond metaphorical comparison (Cannizzaro, 2016, p. 569).

Barbrook (1998) further criticized memetics for lacking ontological precision, noting that unlike genes—clearly defined within biological science—memes remain conceptually ambiguous. Nevertheless, interdisciplinary borrowing remains epistemologically legitimate when applied critically. Cannizzaro (2016) synthesizes the concept of a meme as:

- A unit of cultural transmission
- A unit of imitation
- A unit of cultural evolution and selection
- A cognitive unit influencing replication

These dimensions provide a theoretical foundation while acknowledging ongoing debate.

#### **5.4. Digital Memes in the Virtual Network:**

Digital culture refers to transformations in communication, production, and social interaction resulting from the widespread adoption of digital technologies. It encompasses collaborative practices, knowledge sharing, and participatory networks (Shifman, 2014). Within this evolving environment, memes have emerged as a prominent cultural form.

Shifman (2014) reconceptualizes memes in digital culture as groups of digital items sharing common characteristics, created with awareness of one another, and circulated through imitation and transformation. Building on Dawkins' principles of longevity, fecundity, and faithful copying, Shifman argues that digital infrastructures enhance meme replication through high copying accuracy, rapid dissemination, and archival permanence.

Digital memes typically consist of images accompanied by short textual captions, enabling the condensation of complex social commentary into accessible and shareable formats (Mukhtar, et al., 2024, p. 1446). Their popularity reflects their capacity to combine humor, critique, and cultural reference within participatory digital spaces (Mukhtar, Ghazal, & Javaid, 2025, p. 2).

## **6. Methods and Materials:**

### **6.1. Methodology and Study Type:**

To achieve the study's objectives, a qualitative research design was utilized, focusing on a semiotic analysis of a sample of fixed memes. These objectives are centered on exploring the semantic dimensions and symbolic elements of visual cultural communication discourse circulating in the digital public sphere. Priyaranjan defines semiotics as the academic discipline that studies signs and symbols within culture (Priyaranjan, 2024, p. 78). The semiotic approach seeks to uncover the hidden and underlying meanings within the elements of discourse (Aabi & Asmae, 2016, p. 166). Semiotic analysis delves into the unconscious cultural patterns that influence consumer behavior and responses to various forms of media, including textual messages, thematic content, and both static and dynamic imagery. Also known as semiotic studies, this field systematically examines the processes of signification and the formation of meaning (Priyaranjan, 2024, p. 78).

Semiotic analysis offers a critical methodological framework for uncovering the connotative and cultural significations embedded within visual patterns and symbolic elements, particularly traditional motifs. This approach is essential for decoding the complex symbolic meanings inherent

in such visual language, positioning semiotics as an indispensable tool for comprehending the multifaceted nature of cultural signification within Chinese contexts. Ultimately, it facilitates a nuanced interpretation of both universal and culturally specific dimensions of meaning-making in visual communication design ( Hu, Zelenko, Pinxit, & Buys, 2019, p. 170) .

The process of semiotic analysis typically involves three key steps (Priyaranjan , 2024, p. 78):

- Analyzing verbal signs (both what is seen and heard),
- Analyzing visual signs (what is visually presented),
- Interpreting the symbolic message (the meaning derived from what is observed).

The semiotic analysis method is an important step in linking culture with technological developments, through a deconstructive and interpretive approach, by studying and analysing some examples of Algerian memes shared in the digital public sphere.

**6.2. Study Sample:**

This study relied on a sample of three fixed memes published on Facebook in May 2025, derived from popular Algerian films and television series. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, a widely employed method in qualitative research aimed at identifying information-rich cases, thereby ensuring the optimal use of limited research resources ( Palinkas, et al., 2015, p. 12) .

In this context, the selection sought to ensure alignment with the study’s thematic focus and central research problem: examining cinematic intertextuality in meme practices and the reactivation of cultural memory within specific social contexts.

Although the study analyzes a limited sample of three memes, this choice is consistent with the qualitative and interpretive nature of semiotic research, which prioritizes analytical depth over numerical scope. The selected memes represent emblematic and culturally resonant cases that encapsulate key patterns of cinematic intertextuality and digital remediation within the Algerian digital sphere. The aim of the study is not statistical generalization, but rather theoretical insight into how cultural memory is recontextualized through meme practices.

The following table illustrates the source of the studied sample:

**Table 1: Source of Study Sample**

Page Name	Number of Followers	Page Link
Algerian Memes	15.7K followers	<a href="https://facebook.com/groups/392428375790185">https://facebook.com/groups/392428375790185</a>
Carnival in the Village	6.7K followers	<a href="https://facebook.com/carnavalfibled">https://facebook.com/carnavalfibled</a>
Sultan Razan	5.9K followers	<a href="https://facebook.com/sultanarazan">https://facebook.com/sultanarazan</a>

**Source: Prepared by the researcher**

**7. The Theoretical Approach Applied in the Study:**

**7.1. Memetic Theory:**

The memetic movement was revived in the mid-1980s by Douglas Hofstadter. A key characteristic of this new movement was its departure from traditional social evolutionary theory, and the fact that most of its proponents came from outside the fields of sociology and anthropology, drawn to this fascinating and largely unexplored area of study. In 1992, a popular book, "Consciousness Explained"

by philosopher Daniel Dennett, appeared, which incorporated the concept of memes within a broader theory of consciousness, the brain, and the mind. In 1993, Richard Dawkins revisited the term "memetics" in his essay "Viruses of the Mind" to explain the phenomenon of religious beliefs and the characteristics of organised religions .

The meme theory is considered one of the most important cultural applications of Darwinian evolution. The term was coined by the biologist Richard Dawkins, drawing upon Darwinian principles, with direct parallels and analogous concepts. Dawkins views the meme as the fundamental unit of cultural evolution, analogous to the gene as the basic unit of genetic evolution. He adopts the Darwinian idea, but with different mechanisms. Just as living organisms evolved from single-celled to multicelled organisms, so too have memes evolved and diversified. Just as societies of living organisms are composed of individuals and these societies have become more complex and diverse, the same has occurred with memes (Dakwins, 1976, p. 192). The theory of memes is based on a set of assumptions, the most important of which are (Dakwins, 1976, pp. 192-1995) :

- As genes transmit biological characteristics through reproduction, culture transmits behavioural patterns socially through learning and imitation.
- Genes contain information that plays a decisive role in the development and reproduction of an organism; similarly, memes contain information that plays a significant role in the development of human societies and in defining their identity and ensuring their continuity.
- The principles of Darwinian evolution can be applied to the cultural sphere, and their relevance to cultural units can be explored.
- Memes—cultural units—are analogous to genes—genetic units—in that they replicate and are transmitted from one generation to the next. In that process of transmission, they undergo change and transformation, thus evolving.
- The cultural approach to memes is based on two dimensions: a structural dimension, which involves the imitation of established and widespread information, and an evolutionary dimension, which relates to mutations in memes at the level of their symbolic form or at the level of characters, actions, and words.

## **7.2. Marten Joly's Approach:**

Marten Joly's semiotic analysis approach is adopted in this study because it is based on analysing static images, which better meets the needs of this study, as it focuses on a specific type of meme, namely image memes. This approach relies on two elements: the formal sign and the iconic sign, both of which are reflected in the "sign" itself. This sign can be viewed from two perspectives: the first representing the direct/explicit meaning (intrinsic/sensu stricto), and the second representing the broader/implicit/latent meaning (extrinsic/sensu lato) or the semantic system ( Martine, 2011) . Its analysis focuses on three types of signs: formal, iconic, and linguistic, which are distinct in form but integrated systematically. This approach aims to interpret the image and decipher its symbols in a very detailed manner, following these steps (Martine J. , 2009):

- Description: Translating the visual message into a linguistic description.
- Analysis of the formal message: Identifying the elements that convey the meaning of the visual message.
- Analysis of the iconic message: Exploring the semantic content of the formal elements that constitute the visual message.
- Analysis of the linguistic message: The linguistic message clarifies the meaning of the image and reinforces the visual message.

- Interpretation and second-level reading: Understanding the various meanings and implications related to the subject of the message by connecting the previous elements.

**7.3. Intertextuality Theory:**

Intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980) treats memes as mosaics reusing cinematic elements detached from original contexts for socio-political commentary. This generates layered meanings through cultural recognition, expanding beyond filmic origins in digital discourse.

The application of these two theories in this study can be summarized in the following table:

**Table .02: Theories Applied in the Study**

Theory	Key Points	Application in the Study
Memetic Theory	Cultural evolution via imitation/mutation	Examines memes' replication, adaptation, and role in Algerian identity transmission.
Marten Joly's Approach	Static image signs: formal/iconic/linguistic	Decodes visual/linguistic elements in memes for explicit/implicit cultural meanings.
Intertextuality (Kristeva)	Texts as mosaics of prior discourses	Analyzes reuse of cinematic references, repositioned for contemporary digital discourse.

Source: prepared by researchers

**8. The Semantic and Symbolic Dimensions of Models from the Evolutionary Cultural Meme:**

**8.1.The Evolutionary Cultural Analysis of Meme No. 01:**

**Image No. 01: Meme From the Movie *Carnival fi Dechra***



Source:<https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10156234151460025&set=pb.100069674552975.-2207520000A>- The Genetic Structural Framework of the Meme:

The genetic structure of this meme is based on the imitation technique, through which it aims to enhance its survival as a "selfish gene." The meme utilizes a cinematic shot from the popular Algerian comedy film *Carnival fi Dechra*, which is one of the most famous and widely recognized Algerian films. The film portrays the transformation of Algerian society in the early 1990s, during the transition

from a one-party system to a multi-party system. It is a comedy film produced in 1994, starring the artist Othman Aliouat, who plays the role of an elected village head.

The meme targets the information stored in the collective memory of individuals in Algerian society. This means that the meme has a higher acceptance rate among Algerian audiences, as the brain, through the process of recollection, compares the new image presented in the meme with the culturally and socially stored mental maps. This is especially effective when the social and cultural circumstances of the past resemble the current societal events and developments, particularly the economic stagnation that many countries around the world are experiencing. This contributes to the meme's acceptance by its audience, enabling it to reach as many people as possible, especially users of social media networks.

In the process of genetic simulation, the meme replicates its original and core genetic nucleus, then reshapes its final image in accordance with specific social and cultural contexts that ensure its spread and reproduction. Its simple structural design guarantees its widespread diffusion.

#### **B- Meme Mutation:**

The original mutation is a simulation of the core nucleus, a cinematic shot from the film *Carnival fi Dechra*, manifested in the phrase written in Algerian colloquial dialect: "وصلتوا لزيرو" ("You've reached zero"). The writing is placed in the center of the image, using bold white font, accompanied by a hand gesture from the actor forming the shape of a zero, perfectly aligning with the written text in the image. Additionally, the facial expressions convey a sense of regret and frustration, all aimed at capturing the audience's attention and raising awareness of the social circumstances.

In this communicative framework, the meme merges sarcasm, regret, and disappointment to express a reality marked by corruption. The intention is to awaken the audience's consciousness and inspire a desire for success, whether on an individual, collective, or national level. This ensures the meme's ability to spread across a wide range of individuals on social media networks.

#### **C- The Semantic and Symbolic Dimensions:**

The general message of the first meme aims to illustrate the social and economic conditions, conveying clear, easily understandable iconic messages that carry semantic and symbolic dimensions derived from Algerian popular culture. In the image, the actor wears a white turban, symbolizing a connection to Arab identity, especially Algerian identity. Clothing is a symbol that links the Arab individual to their environment and identity.

Regarding language, which serves as a system of shared symbols between the sender and the receiver, the meme relies on the Algerian colloquial dialect, which is a mix of Arabic and French, for instance, in the phrase used in the first meme, "وصلتوا" (which is an Arabic word) and "لزيرو" (which is the French word for the number zero). This blending of languages reflects the cultural and linguistic identity of Algeria.

#### **8.2.Cultural Evolutionary Analysis of Meme No. 02:**

Image No. 02: Meme From the Movie *Dawria Nhwa Echark*



Source: <https://web.facebook.com/carnavalfibled>

#### A- The Genetic Structural Framework of the Meme:

The genetic structure of this meme is based on imitation and simulation, through which it aims to enhance its chances of survival. It is a cinematic shot taken from the film *Douria towards the East*, one of the most popular and well-known Algerian films. The film was produced in 1971 by the National Office for Trade and Cinematographic Industry, directed by Algerian filmmaker Ammar al-'Askari. *Douria towards the East* (**Dawria Nhwa Echark**) depicts a patrol during the Algerian Revolution as it embarks on a mission towards eastern Algeria, facing numerous hardships. The film *Douria towards the East* consists of scenes inspired by historical events that deeply affected Ammar al-'Askari before they reached the viewers. The film represents the glorious liberation revolution and brings historical truths closer through artistic messages, glorifying the Algerian cause and stirring nationalistic fervour among Algerians, regardless of their backgrounds and origins.

These are messages that reflect the identity of a people who endured alienation and erasure throughout the colonial period. The images in the film portray the life of the Algerian people in villages and hamlets, as well as the life of the revolutionaries in the mountains. They embody values rooted in religion and social customs, which have shaped the collective consciousness of the Algerian people. It is noticeable that this meme targets revolutionary images and information that are embedded in the collective memory of the Algerian people. Undoubtedly, its acceptance rate is relatively high among Algerian audiences. This meme includes the image of the revolutionary Ahmed Lounis El Hajjaji, known as El Aiachi, whose image is deeply engraved in the minds of Algerians through his mighty cry, "Yaaouu' alaykoum El Qalima," which translates to "The enemy is coming." He played the role of a guard for the National Liberation Army, warning them with his shouts of the arrival of the French occupying forces, urging them to prepare for battle. It is important to note that these cries served as an encoded communication system with the National Liberation Army.

This meme has been employed to express and inform about the approach of the social return, particularly the return of teachers to work after the summer break. It draws a parallel between the preparation and readiness for battle and the preparation and readiness for the start of work. Through the genetic simulation of its original, authentic core, this meme shapes its final new image in

accordance with specific social and cultural contexts, ensuring its widespread circulation and replication among individuals involved in the social event. This is achieved through the simplicity that characterises its structural framework.

#### **B- The Mutation of the Meme:**

The fundamental mutation, which is an imitation of the original core of the cinematic shot from the film *Douria towards the East*, is reflected in the use of Algerian colloquial dialect: "Yaaouu bala7ed tebkrou" ("On Sunday, wake up early") and "Aaaaaaaaoo bala7ed tebkrou" ("On Sunday, wake up early"), where the text appears over the image in two phrases: the first in bold black font at the top of the image, and the second in bold white font at the bottom of the image. The repetition is evident, aiming to reinforce the important message in the viewer's mind, with a change in the wording, letters, and color to avoid monotonous repetition and to pursue varied repetition in line with communication persuasion strategies.

Additionally, the facial expressions, especially the open mouth which conveys the cry and pain mixed with sorrow, express the end of the summer holiday. This period is typically associated with rest and relaxation, transitioning back to the work environment, which is often characterized by fatigue and effort. Therefore, the shift from a state of rest to one of work serves to grab the viewer's attention and form an awareness of the social circumstances within a communicative context, where historical memory, sorrow, and humor converge. The aim is to raise awareness of the need to prepare for the "battle" of work and effort. This ensures the meme's wide spread among individuals concerned with returning to work via social media networks.

#### **C- The Semantic and Symbolic Dimensions:**

The primary general message of the second meme involves announcing an important event: the end of the summer holidays and the return to work. Clear, easily understandable iconic messages were broadcast, incorporating semantic and symbolic dimensions that stem from the historical memory and popular culture of Algeria. The original form of the meme is a still from a revolutionary film, which, therefore, represents an iconic image with a historical semantic dimension. It evokes the revolutionary symbolism that ended in success and victory over the coloniser, thereby instilling determination in the viewers' minds to prepare for work and achieve success.

Regarding the symbolism of clothing in the meme, the man is shown wearing a white turban on his head, which reinforces the idea of connection to Arab cultural identity, particularly Algerian identity. This is one of the symbols that ties an Arab individual to his environment and identity. Additionally, the man is dressed in military attire, symbolising strength and readiness for battle, which aligns with the connotation of preparation and readiness to face the challenges of life.

In terms of language, as a shared symbolic communication system within a social structure, it is noticeable that Algerian colloquial dialect has been used. This dialect is a mix of Arabic and French words, as seen in the phrase "Yaaouu bala7ed tebkrou" ("On Sunday, wake up early") and "Aaaaaaaaoo bala7ed tebkrou" ("On Sunday, wake up early"). The message is conveyed in a shared language that has a distinct quality, differentiating it from standard written Arabic. Undoubtedly, many digital linguistic phenomena have emerged on social media networks, such as the repetition of letters in this case, and the repetition of the letter "h" at the top of the meme to express laughter (e.g., "Hhhhh..."). Furthermore, the inclusion of digital emoticons, known as emojis, allows for the transmission of messages without the need for written text.

### **8.3. The Evolutionary Cultural Analysis of Meme No. 03:**

#### **Image No. 03: Meme From the Serie *Achour Elachar***



Source:[https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=639929829491715&id=511921795625853&set=a.512591628892203&\\_rdc=1&\\_rdr#](https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=639929829491715&id=511921795625853&set=a.512591628892203&_rdc=1&_rdr#)

#### A- The Genetic Structural Framework of the Meme:

The genetic structure of this meme is also linked to the technique of imitation and simulation, through which it aims to enhance its longevity and persistence. It is a scene from an Algerian comedy series that first aired during Ramadan 2015 on Echourouk TV, with the second season airing during Ramadan 2017 on the same channel, and the third season broadcast on Algerian Television. Produced by Broad Art Film, directed and written by Jaafar Ghasem, the series stars humorist Salah Ougrout. The script was co-written by eight writers, who addressed various aspects of Algerian daily life in fields such as health, education, and politics, while also highlighting serious social issues, such as violence against women and the spread of drugs among the youth (Aljazera, 2017) . The series is set in a fictional kingdom located somewhere in Algeria between the 11th and 12th centuries, called "The Ashouri Kingdom," ruled by Sultan Ashour the Tenth. It tells the story of his daily adventures with his wife, children, people, and neighbouring kingdoms.

In the daily life of the "Achouri Kingdom," there are dramatic allegories that combine humour and drama to reflect on the current social and political reality of Algeria. Some see these allegories as bold and crossing the permissible limits, while others perceive them as serious messages for the viewer presented in a humorous format (Aljazera, 2017).

As the baccalaureate exams approach, this comedic series is often invoked through memes that feature scenes from "Ashour the Tenth." The use of this meme expresses the profound value transformations taking place in our Arab societies, especially in light of rapid technological advancements and the shift towards the virtual establishment of digital communities. These deep transformations are evident in the structural changes of social value systems, attempting to connect the past with its values and morals to the present, marked by a rebellion against those very values and morals.

#### B- The Mutation of the Meme:

The core mutation in this meme lies in mimicking the original scene from the comedy series "Ashour the Tenth." In the scene, we see two characters: Sultan Ashour the Tenth and General Faris. The first character is dressed in historically significant attire, indicating a person of authority or power. The second character appears less important in the context. A phrase in Algerian colloquial dialect accompanies the meme. The text in the image contains a dialogue between the two characters. It includes the line: "مولاي، قرب الباك واش نديرولهم مواضيع؟" (translated as "Your Majesty, with the baccalaureate exams approaching, what topics should we assign to them?"). This raises a question about how to handle the baccalaureate exam topic. The response, however, is given in a light-hearted, non-serious tone: "جماعة الباك هدوك غاضوني على خاطر تعبوا بزاف، مالا روح أعطيهم الباك كامل وخليهم يفرحوا الميمة" (translated as "The baccalaureate students are really tired, so just give them the full exam and let their mothers be happy"). The tone of the response is humorous and satirical, portraying a casual, almost dismissive approach to an important matter like the baccalaureate exam.

This exchange demonstrates a contradiction between the seriousness of the initial question, "مولاي" (Your Majesty), which conveys respect and gravity, and the playful, mocking reply. This contrast between seriousness and humour highlights a tension between the traditional formality of authority and the everyday attitudes that a lack of seriousness may mark. The meme features the text in bold white font, designed to attract the viewer's attention.

### C- The Semantic and Symbolic Dimensions:

The third meme carries multiple semantic and symbolic messages that reflect a complex cultural and social context. First, it is evident that the series addresses sensitive social issues, and in one of its episodes, it tackled the topic of the baccalaureate exam, which holds significant importance in Algerian society. The baccalaureate is seen as a critical social marker, closely tied to determining the future academic and professional paths of young people.

The physical expressions in the image play a crucial role in conveying the comedic message. The character responding to the question with the phrase "أعطهم الباك كلهم ودعهم يفرحون بالأم" (translated as "Give them the full exam and let their mothers be happy") displays a humorous expression and a face full of sarcasm, reinforcing the non-serious and exaggerated response. This ironically reflects the experience of students during exam periods, while highlighting the casual way of dealing with the pressures of life.

Through this meme, there is an indirect critique of the social and political situation, as the officials in the series seem preoccupied with trivial matters unrelated to the real issues facing society. The sarcasm in the response to "مولاي" (Your Majesty) exposes the criticism of dealing with serious issues superficially and unseriously, drawing attention to the neglect of social crises, reducing them to simple solutions, rather than confronting them with effective and genuine resolutions.

In this meme, the cultural-linguistic dimension is evident through the use of Algerian colloquial language, which represents the daily discourse of society. The expression "جماعة الباك" (translated as "The baccalaureate group") is used to refer to students who are facing the baccalaureate exams. This is a common phrase that reflects the social and cultural reality experienced by Algerian youth during this important academic stage. The word "الميمة" (translated as "mother") is an Algerian colloquial term that serves as a metaphor for the emotional and supportive role played by the mother. It indicates the comfort or moral support provided by the family, especially during stressful times like exams. These metaphors not only reflect aspects of Algerian social reality but also highlight cultural values such as the importance of family and the relationship between students and their mothers,

strengthening national cultural identity and making the meaning more relatable to the Algerian audience.

As for the clothing in the image, it carries a deep cultural and historical symbolic dimension. One of the characters is dressed in luxurious, ornate clothing, symbolising authority and high social status. This reflects the Arab cultural identity of ancient times, where extravagant clothing and decorations were used as a means of distinguishing between social classes and enhancing prestige and power. In contrast, the second character wears simpler attire, emphasising the class disparity between the characters and highlighting the superiority of the first character in the social context. This contrast in clothing represents the traditional struggle between those in power and those experiencing social weakness.

Through all these symbols, it becomes clear that the image focuses on satirising the educational and social systems through characters that represent class disparity and the indifference perceived by society in facing serious challenges. The use of humour and social irony draws attention to larger issues related to education, authority, and social classes in Algeria. The juxtaposition of serious themes like the baccalaureate exam with light-hearted, sarcastic responses highlights the superficial handling of important matters, while also criticising the societal apathy towards addressing fundamental issues such as educational inequalities and social divisions. By blending comedy with critical commentary, the meme invites the viewer to reflect on the deeper societal problems that are often ignored or oversimplified.

## 9. DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study suggest that Algerian Facebook memes cannot be reduced to mere humorous reproductions of cinematic scenes. Rather, they function as intertextual semiotic sites in which cultural memory is actively renegotiated within digital environments. In line with Kristeva's (1980) conceptualization of intertextuality, the analyzed memes operate as mosaics of quotations, reactivating fragments of Algerian cinematic heritage and repositioning them within contemporary socio-political discourse.

However, intertextuality in this context does not merely imply textual referencing. Instead, it constitutes a dynamic cultural practice through which collective memory ( Halbwachs , 2011) is reconstructed and updated. The selected memes demonstrate that cinematic memory is not nostalgically preserved but strategically mobilized. Revolutionary imagery, comedic gestures, and historically embedded symbols are digitally reframed to comment on present-day economic frustration, institutional inefficiency, or educational pressure.

This process can be further understood through Bolter and Grusin's (1999) notion of remediation. The memes do not simply reproduce older media forms; they refashion them within participatory digital infrastructures. Algerian films and television series are transformed from fixed cultural artifacts into circulating, mutable, and collectively negotiated digital signs. Through this remediation, meaning becomes layered: the original cinematic context remains visible, yet it is simultaneously overwritten by contemporary irony and social critique.

Importantly, the mutation observed in these memes is not purely formal. It operates at three interrelated levels:

- Structural transformation (visual and linguistic modification),
- Contextual re-signification (shift from historical to contemporary reference),

- Cultural re-positioning (negotiation of identity and social values).

The persistence of colloquial Algerian dialect, hybrid Arabic-French expressions, and symbolic clothing (e.g., turbans, military attire) reinforces the embeddedness of these memes in localized identity structures. Yet their circulation through Facebook situates them within globalized digital culture. Thus, Algerian memes embody a dual movement: they are locally rooted but digitally networked.

This tension between locality and digital circulation reveals that memes serve as mechanisms of cultural continuity under conditions of technological transformation. They do not signal cultural rupture; rather, they illustrate adaptive cultural memory. The intertextual reactivation of cinema becomes a strategy for negotiating identity in a fragmented digital public sphere.

Therefore, Algerian Facebook memes should be understood not as trivial artifacts but as micro-sites of cultural production where memory, satire, and political commentary converge. Their semiotic power lies precisely in their ability to condense complex historical narratives into shareable visual-linguistic units that resonate emotionally and socially.

## 10. Conclusion:

This study illustrates the transformative role of memes in the Algerian digital space, emphasizing their capacity to merge cultural history with contemporary social discourse. Through a semiotic analysis of selected memes, the research demonstrates how these digital artifacts serve as vessels for cultural intertextuality, blending historical references, social media, and current societal issues. Memes, while originating from cultural symbols, adapt and mutate to fit the evolving social and political contexts, providing a powerful tool for cultural expression and critique. The findings highlight how memes function not only as entertainment but also as significant cultural artifacts that shape and reinforce their symbolic dimensions and semiotic meaning. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of digital platforms in the ongoing negotiation of cultural values, identity, and memory in the digital age.

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