

## RADIO AND FRENCH COLONIAL POWER: CHALLENGES IN THE PRODUCTION OF ALGERIAN CULTURAL PROGRAMMES

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**Abstract:** The genesis of Algerian cultural radio programmes can be traced back to the 1940s, when the French administration initiated Arabic and Kabyle language broadcasts. In the context of radio propaganda warfare linked to the Algerian war of national liberation, discursive objectivity was relative. The mechanisms of work organisation within this radio station had a tendency to reinforce the French vision of Algeria's future. In addition, the presenters recognised the challenge of broadcasting this multidimensional issue, including the cultural aspect, in their programmes. The present contribution is thus concerned with the following questions: 1-How were the presenters of these programmes recruited? 2- What motivated them to get involved professionally? 3- Were there any cultural identity struggles in these programmes? In order to address these questions, a qualitative study was conducted. The study is founded on the basis of interviews with approximately twenty presenters from these programmes, and it draws on both sound and bibliographic archives relating to the issue. The results of the data analysis demonstrated that firstly, networking constituted the primary factor in the recruitment of presenters; secondly, the presenters' passion for their culture was a key factor in their professional involvement; thirdly, the production of these programmes was marked by a struggle for identity, highlighting Algerian cultural heritage in a context of war. This research, which falls within the field of general sociology of cultural media production, contributes to the reflection on this type of production during the colonial period. Furthermore, it extends an invitation to researchers to explore this perspective in greater depth.

**Keywords:** Radio broadcasts, Arabic and Kabyle channels, French colonialism, Algeria, culture.

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## 1. Introduction

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by two world wars, followed by the Cold War between the United States of America and Russia. The use of media for the purpose of propaganda was a significant contributing factor to the eruption of these conflicts. A fundamental aspect of these conflicts was the pursuit of cultural hegemony over opposing groups. In 1976, Herbert Schiller published a seminal article on this subject, in which he stated that: Lazard (2004, p. 119) posited that mass communication had become an effective mechanism of cultural domination. In such contexts, radio emerged as a predominant media platform. Analysts who have examined the case of Goebbels and others refer to the war of the airwaves (Parrot, 1987). It has been established that other scholars have previously investigated this category of conflict within the context of French-colonised Algeria. These scholars have emphasised the existence of a cultural confrontation.

The dissemination of Algerian culture through modern mass communication media was initiated during the French colonial period. This phenomenon can be attributed to the introduction of radio, television, and the written press in Algeria. The advent of the printing press resulted in a significant enhancement in the dissemination of written material. Concurrently, technological innovations paved the way for the recording of cinematographic, television, and radio productions. It is evident that, owing to the particularities of that historical period, radio was able to become a medium of significant popularity in Algeria. Suzanne Frère conducted a survey on the utilisation of radio, television and cinema by Algerians in the period between 1959 and 1960. The present study corroborates this situation. She noted that, out of eight hundred and sixty family heads surveyed, including eight hundred women, about one-eighth had watched television, around sixty percent had never seen a film, and half of the respondents had owned a radio set for several years (Frère, 1961, pp. 20–107).

The creation of Algerian cultural radio programmes by the French administration in the 1940s resulted in a cultural production that was both unique in quantity and quality. The establishment of radio studios had a significant impact on the encouragement of musical creativity among both men and women. The advent of indigenous radio theatre, educational cultural programmes for children, and other socio-cultural programmes for society as a whole was thus facilitated. The cultural production in question remained in this state until Algeria regained its sovereignty over radio and television following its independence in 1962.

However, due to the political context of that period, the content of these radio programmes was primarily cultural in nature. The French administration established these institutions with the explicit objective of promoting indigenous culture. To this end, Radio Algiers exclusively broadcast in French, catering exclusively to the French population and settlers. The role of administrative management in this period was a contentious issue, particularly in the context of the national liberation war, during which radio was used for the dissemination of political and cultural identity propaganda.

The present study offers support for the hypothesis that a proportion of the Algerian human resources involved in this production were responsible for ensuring the authenticity of Algerian culture. The evidence presented indicates a clear distinction between the two cultures. However, we posit that even if the organisation of work at the radio aimed to direct production in the opposite direction, we will analyse it through interviews with the presenters of these programmes. It is evident that they played a direct role in the facts of this scientific discussion. In contrast to this hypothesis, an alternative perspective posits that these programmes functioned merely as pro-French cultural propaganda.

In this regard, and within the context of this issue, the following three questions are posed:

1. What methodology was employed in the recruitment of presenters of cultural programmes?
2. To what extent were the recruits indifferent to the context of war?
3. Could we suggest a struggle for cultural identity in these programmes?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 *Radio and Cultural Imperialism in Contexts of Domination*

Radio was one of the key mechanisms employed in the implementation of cultural domination strategies, particularly during periods of war. Even politically neutral countries sought to export their cultural values abroad. In her book, Raphaëlle Ruppen demonstrates that Switzerland initiated an international radio station between 1932 and 1949 with the objective of promoting its 'cultural influence' internationally (Ruppen, 2017). A number of studies on this issue have yielded definitive conclusions. Schiller (1976) is a seminal figure in the field of cultural imperialism. According to this thesis, "Cultural values imported from other countries, in the form of entertainment or other types of programmes, can pollute local culture, especially in small or developing countries" (Lazard, 2004, p. 119).

Drawing upon the conceptual framework of "culture wars" pioneered by Hunter in the 1990s (Seltini. M, 2024, pp. 73-76), researchers are re-evaluating this phenomenon in the context of contemporary radio usage, exploring its role in both cultural domination (Radio Morphose, (2024) and resistance to such attempts at cultural hegemony. In a 2024 study, Tristan Vassaux demonstrated how Kam' Radio defends a local culture in western French Guiana, in contrast to a political discourse that preaches the national dimension, and how it "contributes to being the spokesperson for a western French Guiana identity that is representative of a pluralistic society". He concludes by adding that Vassaux (2024, p. 9) posits that 'Kam' Radio plays a crucial role in affirming a distinct identity for western French Guiana, particularly the Maroni region'.

Recent studies have explored the positive contribution of radio to cultural change in societies. In China, for instance, scientific analysis of the role of this medium during the Cultural Revolution has yielded very significant conclusions. Indeed, given the prevalence of cultural radio programmes addressing this subject, individuals often find themselves moderating their opinions to a considerable extent. Consequently, adhering to the cultural values espoused in these programmes becomes a prevalent phenomenon (Qian, 2024, p. 18). It is evident that this issue has been explored in recent research conducted in Europe and Africa. For instance, Lekgoathi (2020), Moorman (2019), and the GER (Groupe de Recherches et d'Études sur la Radio) in France have all contributed to the body of knowledge on the subject. Collectively, these studies demonstrate a broad spectrum of radio applications by groups involved in both production and reception (Pinet-Le Bras & Leyris, 2024, p. 2).

### 2-2 *Cultural Confrontation Via Radio Between Algeria and France During The Colonial Era*

The cultural clash under scrutiny is investigated through empirical studies and qualitative analyses. In his analysis, Frantz Fanon employs a symbolic narrative to explore the cultural and ideological conflict between France and Algeria, drawing parallels to the discourse present in radio programmes (Fanon, 1959). It is demonstrated that Radio Algiers, a French-language broadcasting station, promotes European cultural values. Consequently, Algerians were reluctant to listen to it, in contrast to the radio station of the National Liberation Front, entitled *Ici la voix de l'Algérie combattante* (Fanon, 1959, pp. 49-78). Fouad

Benhalla employs qualitative analysis to undertake a comprehensive examination of global radio broadcasting, with a particular focus on that of France during the specified period. The author refers to a French war against transistor radios through various mechanisms, such as the banning of the sale of battery-powered radios. The objective of this legislation was to impose restrictions on Algerian national expression, independent of the context of French colonisation. He concludes that this was a war of the airwaves, capable of destabilising the language, culture and civilisation of a country (Benhalla, 1983, pp. 137-149). Suzanne Frère's field survey, which spanned six months from 1959 to 1960, offered a partial response to this question by examining Algerians' reception of radio programmes. The primary data collection techniques employed in this study involved the administration of questionnaires and indepth interviews, encompassing a sample of 1,860 individuals who possessed radios. Consequently, she concluded that Algerians used radio media to a greater extent than television and cinema (Frère, 1961).

### **3. Methodology**

This investigation was carried out over two time periods. The first extends from 2005 to 2013, during which we conducted interviews with presenters of cultural radio programs. These programs were broadcast on the Kabyle and Arabic radio channels, created by the French administration during the colonial period. We conducted the interviews as part of our professional activity as on-air presenters at Channel II of Algerian Radio. The second time period extends from 2021 to 2025, during which we carried out additional interviews of this kind. During this second period, we also conducted a two-month research stay at the National Library of France in Paris. During this stay, we consulted cultural radio broadcasts dating from the colonial period, which we found in the sound archives of the French National Audiovisual Institute.

The main data collection technique we used was the semi-structured interview. We felt it was appropriate to ask semi-directed questions. From our perspective, this method allowed the interviewee to further inform us about the research subject. The interview guide was organised around three main axes. The first focused on access to radio broadcasting. The second mainly dealt with the social and personal characteristics of the presenters, such as gender, education level, and social background. Finally, the third concerned the organization of work both within and outside the internal sphere of the radio.

As for the interviews, we recorded twelve in total, seven with men and five with women. We noted three key characteristics about this sample. The first was that many had joined the radio before the outbreak of the Algerian revolution in 1954, with the rest joining later. The second was the presence of women among the interviewees. Despite Algeria's conservative cultural context at that time, these women worked as radio presenters. Most of them used pseudonyms to avoid harmful consequences in their personal lives. Thirdly, the total interview duration was significant. Most lasted around two hours.

Regarding radio archives, we consulted the sound collections of the French National Audio-visual Institute, located at the National Library of France in Paris. Our listening focused on three issues of the Kabyle women's singing program, *Urar Lkhalat*, around twenty plays, four children's programs, and three news flashes. We noted that this production drew its themes from Algerian cultural heritage. Many of the plays were adaptations of Algerian folk tales, such as *The Cow of the Orphans*. As for the literary format, it was varied, including theater, poetry, sketches, and songs.

Finally, we relied on original bibliographic sources. The documents consulted included the journalistic review *Ici-Alger*, a monthly compilation of programs broadcast in Kabyle on Radio-Algeria. This review contained program schedules from the two channels, along with articles written by presenters. Another reference was the *Bulletin Officiel de l'Amicale de Radio P.T.T Alger*, which provided technical details of broadcasting and reception. Lastly, the review *Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radiodiffusion*, published by the French Radio History Committee, was also used. Broadly speaking, this review provides contributions from administrative officials of French radio, researchers in the field, and participants in major historical events related to radio. These contributions generally cover the history of radio in France, in the colonies, and worldwide.

This study is qualitative. This means that “the entire process is carried out in a ‘natural’ manner, without sophisticated tools or artificial setups, according to a logic close to the people, their actions, and their testimonies” (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2012, p. 11). It falls within the theoretical framework of the sociology of work, culture, and media (Maigret, 2010, Rieffel, 2010, McQuail, 2010).

A whole line of research on cultural professions (music, cinema, television) has developed across the Atlantic, based on the principle described by Dominique Pasquier: “It is the production processes that determine the emergence of cultural elements and the conditions of their reception” (Rieffel, 2010, p. 150).

Éric Maigret states that “Cultural products can be considered as social movements.” For this reason, he argues that “The game of social analysis, which never ends, resumes the idea that media form true cultural industries, given the contradictions this entails, which later affects interpretations by those who live from them” (Maigret, 2010, pp. 240–241).

#### 4. Results

The following section presents a summary of the research findings. First all, it shows the percentage of cultural programmes on Arabic and Kabyle channels from 1946 to 1957.

**Table 1**

*Arabic Channel*

Type of production	Percentage
Information	19%
Chronicles, magazines and reports	9 %
Religious programmes	5%
Classical religious music	11%
Modern music	16%
Popular music	13%
Variety theatre	18%
Educational and literary programmes	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2**

*Kabyle Channel*

Type of production	Percentage
Information	16%
Chronicles, magazines and reports	12%
Religious programmes	3%
Popular music	33%
Modern music	18%
Variety theatre	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Note.* Adapted from *Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radiodiffusion*, no. 99, p. 49

The visual representation presented above is a reconstruction of the original data, sourced from a reputable bibliography (*Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radiodiffusion*, no. 99, p. 49). The present study has been developed to provide support for the argument that the programmes broadcast on these channels are of a more cultural than informational nature. In the original data, the term ‘cultural programmes’ is defined as encompassing chronicles,

magazines, reports, religious programmes, classical and modern religious music, popular music, variety theatre, and educational and literary programmes. The precise percentage for each type of production is also given.

A significant proportion of the Arab Channel's output is dedicated to cultural programmes, accounting for 84% of the total. News programmes constitute a smaller segment, comprising 16% of the channel's content. Music (29%) and theatre (18%) dominate this production. On the Kabyle channel, cultural programmes constitute 81% of content, while news programmes account for a mere 16%. Music and theatre predominate (*Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radiodiffusion*, No. 99, p. 49). With regard to the "Information" category in both tables, it should be noted that these are not taken into consideration due to their being outside the scope of the research.

In the subsequent phase of the study, an original bibliography was used. The journalistic review *Ici-Alger* is the primary source of information. The publication is a monthly bulletin offering detailed programme schedules for each radio station, and is available in both Arabic and Kabyle. A total of fifty-four programme schedules were examined, with the sample divided equally between those of the Kabyle channel and those of the Arabic channel. The issues of the magazine consulted are those from 1952, 1953, 1954, and 1955, depending on the time available for research. Finally, as a partial result, analysis of a sample of the 'Chaîne Kabyle' programme schedule, published in issue fifteen in July 1953, reveals a predominance of cultural production. Cultural programmes are mentioned in the third section of the schedule. The following table provides a comprehensive overview of the productions scheduled for each day of the week, along with their respective broadcast times. For instance, the theatre programme is scheduled for 6:15 p.m. on Thursdays, while 'Les chanteurs amateurs' (Amateur Singers) is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Sundays. Additionally, Les concerts de musique traditionnelle (Traditional Music Concerts), conducted by Cheikh Nour Eddine, are scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Sundays. It is evident that musical and vocal performances are a prominent feature of the programme, with religious content being particularly salient. This observation is supported by the documentation of the Koranic exegesis course led by Chikh Hamouda, which is scheduled for Fridays at 6:15 p.m. (See *Ici-Alger*, July 1953, p. 3).

The results of the interviews are remarkable. Prior to the presentation of the results of the interview analysis, the following table illustrates the composition of the sample of interviewees. The reconstruction of the phenomenon has been conducted on the basis of data obtained solely from the comments.

**Table 3***The Composition of The Sample of Interviewees*

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Year of beginning career in radio</u>	<u>Role</u>
F	1957	- Radio presenter - Singer
F	1949	- Radio presenter - Singer
M	1956	- Programme presenter - Radio theatre actor
M	1953	- Radio presenter
F	1963	- Radio presenter - Singer
F	1951	- Radio presenter - Singer
M	1961	- Radio presenter - Journalist
M	1950	- Administrative Manager - Radio presenter
M	1959	- Radio presenter - Radio theatre actor
M	1961	- Radio presenter - Radio theatre actor
M	1954	- Singer - Composer - Radio presenter - Radio theatre actor
M	1961	- Songwriter - Radio presenter

The majority of respondents indicated that their initial involvement with the radio station was through personal connections, primarily with family or friends. In 1954, Arab Djida was recruited to the radio station. She provided the following testimony regarding the circumstances of his recruitment. "It was my aunt Lla Yamina who introduced me to the world of radio broadcasting. She is one of the founders of the Kabyle radio station " (Arab Djida, personal communication, 2013). Secondly, the interviewees demonstrated a profound interest in discussing their culture on these radio stations. This constituted an inaugural instance of Algerian culture accessing contemporary means of communication. This awareness would serve as their primary motivation for professional commitment throughout their careers. The Algerian Revolution of 1954 led to an escalation of the struggle for cultural identity in radio production. In this sense, it is noteworthy to mention that Mohamed Ameziane Brahimi, known by his stage name Mohamed HILMI, is recognised as one of the pioneers of radio cultural production in question. In his memoirs, he wrote the following:

The French administration relocated the two channels broadcasting in Arabic and Kabyle [...], situating them on the ground floor of the general government building [...], in close proximity to their surveillance system. However, the isolation of the facility proved advantageous, as 90% of the staff were Algerian. The positive rapport that was cultivated has led to the initiation of initiatives aimed at serving our listeners. These initiatives include the permanent maintenance of our culture on our airwaves and the safeguarding of our ancestral values. Active solidarity formed an embryo that facilitated the emergence of men and women capable of responding to the call of duty in all circumstances [...] (M. Hilmi, 2003, p. 105).

The climate of this internal sphere of radio, to which Halimi refers, will determine professional production practices. It is hypothesised that the function of this will be as a primary motivation in the broadcasting of their culture.

## 5. Discussion

Having delineated the methodology and presented the findings, this section focuses on discussing the main results obtained from the different data collection.

### *5.1. Access Pathways to the Presentation of Cultural Programmes*

the genesis of cultural radio production in Algeria is to be traced to the early 1920s. The primary responsibility for this function lay with Radio Alger, a French public media outlet that produced programming specifically for colonial citizens and French nationals. The establishment of this institution was preceded by a series of private initiatives, which constituted its relatively early history. The colonists initiated this type of production with limited technical resources. Specifically, as stated in the Information-Documentation report (1990, p. 10), 'the first broadcasts date back to 1924, when a private company installed a small 100-watt transmitter in Algiers'. With the exception of the use of restricted technical resources, these trailblazers established an organisation that assumed responsibility for the administration of programmes in early 1926 (Information-Documentation, 1990, p. 10). The French government's decision to grant the ORTF a monopoly on radio production was influenced by the historical and political developments that had taken place in Algeria. Furthermore, as stated by Odinet (1990, p. 23), 'On 1 January 1946, broadcasting in Algeria became a regional directorate of the R.T.F. and remained so until 1 July 1962'.

The present study focuses on the recruitment of cultural programme presenters for these radio stations. Recruitment of on-air personnel in the media takes place through competitive examinations presided over by a jury of experts. However, research in the sociology of work has shown that networking plays an important role in this process. This networking can take various forms: family, friends or professional contacts.

In the present study, this factor was found to be of significant importance. One of the questions posed to each of the respondents pertained to the recruitment channels employed by the radio station. The objective of this study is to identify the mechanisms that influence content production. The hypothesis under investigation is that this mechanism exerts an influence on the cultural production process at different stages. Following a thorough examination of the responses to this question, it has been determined that all respondents have reported gaining access to radio through family, friends or, in some cases, professional connections. According to her own account, Djamilia Hassan El Hadj began working in radio in 1949. In response to the question regarding her recruitment, she stated the following:

I found myself in this house (the radio station) without imagining that I would ever work here, because I was very young. I knew absolutely nothing about radio. One day, my older brother Ali took me by the hand to go for a walk [...]. We then met Mr Nait, producer of the children's programme with Mrs Lafarge. Mr Nait said to my brother, 'We're going to take this little girl back to the radio station.' My brother went home and told my older brother about the offer. My older brother asked my father to take my brother Hassen El Hadj and me to the radio station on the appointed day. It was located on Rue Berthouzene. On the day, my father drove us to the radio station and entrusted us to Mrs Lafarge and Mr Nait [...]. That's how I got involved with radio for the first time. (Dj. Hassan El Hadj, personal communication, 2013).

Further consideration is warranted by other cases, such as that of Cheikh Nouredine. He arrived at the radio station fortuitously, yet ultimately achieved prodigious feats in the realm of cultural production. Youcef Nacib provides a detailed account of how a fortuitous encounter with the director of the Pathé Marconi record label in Algiers led to the commencement of a remarkable career in radio cultural production. In his book entitled *Cheikh Nouredine*, Youcef Nacib makes the following written contribution:

In September 1938, Cheikh Nouredine made his first recording with Hadj Menouer. The artist's repertoire comprised a total of twelve songs, including 'Allo trisiti', 'Anfiy'ad ruy', 'A xali xali' and 'Yell-is t-murt'. The record was available for purchase within a fortnight. Subsequently, a period of three months had elapsed before the radio station extended to him an offer of employment in the studio. Initially, the programme was monthly in nature. Consequently, as the artist gained recognition and acclaim from listeners, the programme transitioned to a weekly format. It is during this period that Cheikh Nouredine's inaugural poetic compositions were created. Love poems, poems of youth, poems about life: this is how one of the pillars of Kabyle radio came to join the company, only to leave it for good when he retired in 1981 (Nacib, 2001, p. 24).

Following their induction to the radio station, the individuals underwent voice tests to ascertain the most suitable area of work for each: singing, hosting, sketches, radio theatre, news or other. French officials demonstrated a degree of caution with regard to the recruitment of radio personnel. In this regard, well before 1 November 1954, 'For greater security, the recruitment and appointment of radio personnel are subject to police investigation, and any individual suspected of sympathising with the P.P.A. or M.T.L.D. is dismissed' (Overseas National Archives).

### *5.2. The Dissemination of Algerian Culture and the Stimulation of Professional Commitment*

The motivation for individuals to choose a profession can be influenced by a variety of factors. These are generally material in nature, such as high remuneration, or emotional, such as a love for the profession. In the field of journalism, research has demonstrated that emotion can serve as a catalyst for professional motivation. As Ruellan (2018, p. 38) asserts, "In a sense, loving journalism or being a journalist is a synthetic expression of satisfaction that ranges from the moment to commitment, from the moment to a career." He further elaborates on this premise, stating, "The notion of studying emotions among journalists stems from the premise that there exists a dynamic interconnection between the manner in which journalists construct meaning in their professional endeavours and the emotions they encounter, seek out, and derive from them" (Ruellan, 2018, p. 39).

The responses given by interviewees to the question regarding their motivations for continuing to produce cultural radio programmes serve to confirm the hypothesis that their relationship with this profession is characterised by emotion. The vocabulary employed by respondents in order to justify their choice of a career in radio contains lexical clues that

reveal a definite love for the profession. However, an analysis of these comments has identified three reasons for the emotional commitment of the presenters in the present study sample. The following are provided for reference:

The primary motivation is to promote Algerian culture using modern means of mass communication. This involves explaining the richness of the culture by presenting its customs, traditions, linguistic features, oral heritage, and historical roots in specific geographical regions. It also means demonstrating that it is more than just a traditional language by successfully describing modern inventions using certain linguistic practices employed by presenters. For this type of radio professional, describing modern cultural life in a traditionally oral language is a major challenge.

The second motivation lies in the fact that these presenters perceive the radio station's production environment to be similar to a family setting. This means that the working relationships governing professional production practices are free of conflict. El-Djida Tamectouh (whose real name is Arabe Djida) describes the dynamics that govern the internal sphere of the radio station with emotion. During the interview, she says:

We spent more time at the radio station than at home [...] the most important thing at that time was that the radio family was a real family: we worked hand in hand. If, for example, a colleague didn't arrive at work on time, I would replace her to avoid any problems. There was no conflict between us. We complemented each other perfectly. (Dj. Arabe, personal communication, 2013).

The third motivation is rooted in a profound love of radio broadcasting. The transmission of the cultural heritage of ancestors was found to be a positive emotional experience for the professionals involved. From this standpoint, the formation of individual and/or collective identity is predicated on these emotions:

Adopting a sociological perspective, it is argued that individuals in the workplace are also shaped by and through emotions. While these emotions are individual, personal and subjective phenomena, they refer to "deeply social, cultural, political and historical dimensions that can determine the expression and even the experience of individual and collective emotions" (Bernard, 2014, p. 7). It has been posited by other researchers that there is a correlation between the emotional responses engendered by the production and exposure to these phenomena, and the overall socio-cultural cohesion of the community as a whole. The proponents of this theory posit that this medium exerts a positive influence on: As posited by Gokula Krishnan and Bhargavi D. Hemmig (2025, p. 10), the concept of 'empowerment and cultural continuity' serves to reinforce its value as a catalyst for socio-economic development and cultural preservation.

### *5.3. The struggle for Cultural Identity in the Context of Production Broadcasts*

The endeavour to establish a distinct cultural identity within the domain of broadcast programming is a subject that has been the focus of considerable scholarly attention. Media production is subject to significant political and economic influences, as evidenced by the prevailing context (Champagne, 2016). Media production policies are inextricably linked to the overarching policy directives established by the supervisory authority. The cultural missions of radio were first contested following the broadcast of educational programmes on radio stations in France and its colonial empire (Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radio diffusion, 2006, pp. 116-118). As asserted in the 2006 publication of the Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radio diffusion (p. 117), the establishment of a cultural cooperation organisation, the International Radio University (URI), in 1949 was a commitment undertaken by France. France also implemented a radio policy in its colonies. Maintaining contact with the metropolis was a key

concern for the French presence in the colonial territories of the French Empire (Cahiers d'Histoire de la Radio diffusion, 2006, p. 87).

As a result of such policies, the discourse of presenters has been affected. Censorship is therefore practised at several levels of the media production process. This is evident from several reflections on the history of radio productions on the Arabic and Kabyle channels during the French colonial era in Algeria (Abrous, 1999). In such a context, those directly involved in production become aware of the situation. They then choose professional practices to resist a work organisation that prevents them from making their own decisions. Was this the case for some of those involved in the cultural production in question? EL-Boudali Safir, head of the Artistic and Literary Department for the programmes in question, describes the existence of these programmes as 'The presence of the endearing faces of our countries, with the voices and distinctive accents of their native regions: the Sahel of Mahieddine, the Tlemcen of Ben Sari, the Djurdjura of Nourredine and the Paris of Slimane Azem and Salim Hellal' (El-Boudali, 1956, p. 7).

Indeed, the context of the war of national liberation meant that these programmes aimed at indigenous peoples were subject to attempts to exploit them for propaganda purposes. Language censorship practices were therefore implemented by their administrative supervisors, which had an impact on the discourse of the presenters. Several testimonies from cultural programme presenters corroborate our assumptions. Djamila Hassan El Hadj recounts an incident that supports the above hypothesis. She states:

On one occasion, I was requested to attend a meeting with my superiors in their office. I was invited to provide an explanation of a poem I had previously encountered on the radio. In this poem, an unhappily married woman is depicted reading a poem about Eid, a Muslim holiday. My superiors interpreted this as an allusion to the war situation that was then prevailing in Algeria (Dj. Hassan El Hadj, personal communication, 2013).

French researchers hypothesise that these programmes may have been exploited for propaganda purposes, with the aim of imposing a cultural identity war. Despite the implementation of censorship procedures, content deemed undesirable by the French colonial administration was not eliminated by the editorial machinery. Research of this kind has ultimately reached a conclusion that is almost identical. The study, entitled *Contemporary Art from a City at War*, is of particular interest in this context. The conclusion drawn by the author in relation to the case of Gaza (Palestine) is as follows:

The case of contemporary art in Gaza is a striking example of a crisis situation that does not necessarily lead to a break or a disturbance, but one that reveals the creativity of a society as a whole. It is precisely this situation of crisis that explains the artistic dynamism of this prison breeding ground" of Gaza (Stiline, 2018, p. 58).

Regarding propaganda on Radio Alger, Antoine Sabbagh cites an example: a short sketch broadcast in the evening on the Kabyle channel. The resemblance to the war situation between France and Algeria is clear. He writes:

The narrative concerns Hourya, who inadvertently leased her residence to Aicha, a woman of unsound mind. Notwithstanding the termination of the lease, Aicha remains in occupation of the premises. Hourya ultimately succeeded in removing her, with the assistance of a friend residing in the United States. The narrative, ostensibly innocuous, provoked a strong reaction among psychological warfare officers due to the name Hourya's connotations. The term is often associated with freedom, and the allegorical interpretation of the story suggests a symbolic representation of France being expelled in favour of America. This

interpretation is supported by the research of Bussière, Méadel, and Ulmann-Mauriat (1999, p. 28).

Indeed, the presenters of cultural programmes were aware of this issue. In response, they adopted linguistic strategies drawn from their local cultural heritage to address their fellow citizens. The dissemination of awareness messages to support the Algerian Revolution. The analysis of interviewees' comments indicates that the production of cultural radio programmes, as part of broadcasts in Arabic and Kabyle, was a significant factor in the development of French propaganda. Furthermore, it has been documented that several radio presenters were discreetly affiliated with the National Liberation Front whilst employed at Radio Alger, which was subject to the oversight of the French Broadcasting Authority (Hilmi, 2006, p. 30).

In the aftermath of the Algerian Revolution, Arabic and Kabyle language broadcasts emerged as a significant cultural issue, exerting a substantial influence on prevailing political developments. These practices were employed as part of a broader cultural cultivation strategy (Lazard, 2004, pp. 51-52), with the objective of presenting French culture as the sole civilised culture, while at the same time diminishing the status of indigenous cultural practices to a state of incivility. In this regard, Ourida Mezaguerre, one of the pioneering presenters of the Kabyle channel during the French colonial era, states that: As Mezaguerre (2009) has observed, these women produced programmes with the objective of instructing the public in the French language and culture.

As the prospect of Algerian independence grew increasingly imminent, the prevailing circumstances underwent a marked deterioration, giving rise to an escalating climate of conflict and, it must be noted, considerable risk to these presenters. In 1958, the military assumed control of Arabic and Kabyle language broadcasts (Bussière, Méadel & Ulmann-Mauriat, 1999, p. 32). Consequently, due to prevailing circumstances, several presenters associated with the Algerian National Liberation Front were apprehended by French security services and subsequently incarcerated. In 1953, Toubalbi Zoubir commenced his tenure at the radio station. He contributed to radio productions in Kabyle and Arabic, including radio theatre. It was asserted that the cultural productions had been designed with the intention of raising awareness among the Algerian populace of their culture and identity. He stated:

The act of creation in art is the conveyance of a message. This phenomenon can be defined as activism. This phenomenon can be conceptualised as a form of struggle. The author of a tale has a goal. The fundamental objective of the tale is to function as a remedy for a wound. The narratives employed, such as Scheherazade and Sahara, were significant in their capacity to convey crucial messages, with the objective of fostering awareness among the populace and prompting introspection regarding their nation. (Toualbi, personal communication, 11 June 2013).

It has been established that, at the time, the existence of a cultural divide in these radio programmes was noted by observers. The initial radio productions broadcast by Radio Alger were intended exclusively for settlers and French citizens. These programmes failed to address subjects of interest to Algerians, which resulted in their exclusion from the radio station's programming. In this regard, Frantz Fanon wrote:

Algerian society, the dominated society, never participates in this world of signs. The content disseminated by Radio Algiers is exclusively received by nationals of the dominant power, seemingly circumventing members of the 'indigenous' society (Fanon, 2013, p. 53).

It is evident that Algerians also boycotted listening to this radio station for a number of obvious reasons, which can be summarised as follows: firstly, the fact that these programmes dealt with subjects that were taboo for Algerians at the time, such as love and eroticism; secondly, Radio Française symbolised the French colonial presence in Algeria, and listening to it meant condoning colonisation; thirdly, many Algerians had a limited command of the French language, which made it difficult for them to access the radio messages.

## 6. Conclusion

Cultural radio productions during the French colonial era played a significant role in raising mass awareness of the authenticity of Algerian culture. In the context of Arabic and Kabyle language broadcasts, which are the subject of this study, this type of production was one of the most prevalent. It has been asserted by certain observers that these programmes function as a form of French cultural propaganda.

The study demonstrated that generalising certain judgements has the potential to mislead. The illustration of family and friend networking is informative on a number of levels. The programme had a discernible impact on the selection of presenters, yet this did not translate into any detrimental repercussions for the standard of production or the trajectory of cultural producers. During this period, the production of high-quality works reached its zenith. The example of Kabyle radio theatre in Arabic is particularly pertinent. This production played a significant role in preserving the authentic Algerian identity during the war between Algeria and France, largely due to its focus on oral heritage. The act of singing played a pivotal role in the promotion of the Arabic language, with a particular emphasis on the preservation and promotion of the Kabyle language.

The second observation also confirmed the emotional attachment of many presenters to their authentic Algerian cultures. Furthermore, the promotion of their culture of origin was a pivotal factor in their ability to cope with the multifarious challenges associated with working in radio, including the extremely harsh socio-professional conditions and the political situation in the context of the war. In this case, it can be hypothesised that these individuals became aware of the historical significance of their work in raising general awareness among the national public.

In the final analysis, an examination of the presenters' comments revealed the existence of a relative struggle for Algerian national cultural identity. The fundamental mechanism underpinning this phenomenon was identified as language practices.

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