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The Role of Entertainment Communication in Rituals and Performative Cultural Events:
A Sociological and Communicative Exploration of Student Perceptions at the "Wa'ada of Sidi El Kebir" in Blida

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Abstract
This study investigates entertainment communication as a dynamic cultural practice manifested in rituals, symbolic gatherings, and communal performances within Algerian society. Focusing on the Wa'ada of Sidi El Kebir in Blida, the research analyzes how ritualistic spectacles—such as Zarda, Hadra, Twiza, and similar ceremonial practices—serve as communicative spaces where communities express identity, negotiate meaning, transmit values, and reinforce social cohesion. These events operate as multimodal communication systems combining verbal, non-verbal, symbolic, and performative elements that reflect the cultural memory and lived experiences of local communities. To explore how contemporary youth interpret such events, the study surveyed a purposive sample of media and communication students from the University of Blida2 who attended the Wa'ada. The aim was to investigate their motivations for attending, the communicative elements that captured their attention, and the types of gratification and meaning they derived from the experience. Using a mixed-methods approach consisting of questionnaires, direct observation, and short qualitative reflections, the findings reveal a set of implicit messages conveyed through the ritual experience. These include expressions of social solidarity, the search for spiritual blessing and intercession, healing-related beliefs, communal identity affirmation, and the preservation of cultural memory. The results demonstrate that rituals such as the Wa'ada remain powerful communicative and entertainment practices that continue to resonate with younger generations, despite the pressures of modernization and the disappearance of some traditional customs. The study underscores the importance of empirical research on living cultural practices and provides insights into how students interpret and critically engage with such phenomena within the broader field of communication studies.

Introduction

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Throughout human history, communication has been fundamental to social and cultural expression. Across civilizations, people have developed diverse communication forms to express identity, transfer meaning, and build collective experiences. These communicative practices are particularly evident in rituals and entertainment performances, where symbolic representations intersect with material culture. Such events serve not only as vehicles for spiritual or ideological expression but also fulfil practical social functions, creating shared spaces for community engagement and cultural transmission.

Despite modern development, traditional communication practices through rituals and performances persist across cultures worldwide. Examples include female initiation ceremonies among Amazon peoples, marriage rituals, and spiritual practices like voodoo ceremonies in Benin, Africa. Many communities practice rituals rooted in spiritual or practical needs. For instance, rain-asking rituals are widespread globally, with variations reflecting regional and cultural differences. The Totonac people of Mexico practice the Pepantla festival, a ceremony honoring the sun and rain. Similarly, in Algeria, certain tribal communities maintain the buganja rituals, demonstrating how these ancient communication forms continue to adapt and survive within contemporary societies.

Religious celebration rituals also prevail throughout Algeria, such as the "Sebou" in Adrar province, shrine-related events, and semi-religious ceremonies including "Hadhara," "Zarda," and "Waada" in various shrine and saint sanctuaries across different regions. Understanding the communicative significance of these events requires examining their nature, form, purpose, and impact on attendees. This research focuses specifically on the meanings absorbed by media and communication students who attended a cultural event held at Sidi Kebir shrine in Blida

Primary Research Question:

What meanings and messages did media and communication students absorb by attending the event at Sidi Kebir shrine in Blida?

Secondary Research Questions:

1. What is the organizational form and structure of this event?

2. What are the stated purposes and objectives of this gathering?

3. What are the distinctive or notable characteristics of the event?

4. How does communication function within this event setting?

5. What demographic groups constitute the primary attendees?

Research Importance and Objectives

This research is significant because it examines how communication functions within Algerian cultural and religious gatherings—including vows, shrine visits, and seasonal celebrations—and what role these events play in contemporary Algerian society. These gatherings serve as important occasions for community connection and meaning-making.

Research Objectives: This study aims to:

- Identify and analyze the forms of communication present in these cultural and religious events

- Determine whether such gatherings continue to appeal to contemporary audiences and communities

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-   Understand the motivations and purposes behind attendees' participation in these events

-   Explore the meanings and messages that participants derive from attending such gatherings

-   Contribute to scholarship encouraging media and communication students to conduct empirical research on social and cultural phenomena

Research Methodology

This research employs an exploratory research design to investigate understudied aspects of communication within Algerian cultural and religious gatherings. The study combines survey methodology with descriptive analysis to examine how communication functions within these events and what meanings participants derive from attendance.

Research Approach:

1. Descriptive Method: This approach systematically describes and analyzes the phenomenon under study using rigorous scientific methodology. The descriptive method enables researchers to provide detailed accounts of events, practices, and contexts without manipulation of variables (Neuman, 2014, p. 38-42). Data is presented through both quantitative metrics and qualitative interpretation, enabling comprehensive understanding of the communication practices observed (Cohen, 2018, p. 287-315).

2. Survey Method: This cross-sectional approach systematically collects, analyzes, interprets, and reports data about the current state of the phenomenon at a specific time and location (Babbie, 2013, p. 254-278). It allows the researcher to gather information about attendee experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding the cultural event.

3. Combined Approach: By integrating these methods, this research provides both descriptive detail about the event's communicative features and survey data capturing participant perspectives and meanings. The mixed-methods approach offers methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of findings through multiple data sources and analytical perspectives (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). As Creswell & Plano Clark argue, "mixed methods research provides a way to harness strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 12). This integration enables a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena than either method alone could achieve

Data Collection Instruments

This research utilized multiple data collection methods to ensure comprehensive and reliable findings:

1. Direct Observation: The researcher attended and systematically observed several cultural events, recording field notes on communication practices, participant behaviors, and event dynamics. Direct observation provided rich, contextual data that formed a primary foundation for this study.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with a prominent figure in the region and participants.

3. Questionnaire Survey: A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the study sample (n = 30). The questionnaire addressed:

Topic: Entertainment Communication in Rituals and Shows - "Wa'ada of Sidi El Kebir, Blida".

Variables: Sex and Residence (The complete instrument is included in Appendix 1.)

4. Secondary Sources: Documentary analysis of relevant websites, academic publications, and archival materials supplemented primary data collection.

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Research Setting and Sampling Strategy

Study Location

This research was conducted in Blida, a region renowned for its distinctive cultural and spiritual traditions, including Zardat (women's spiritual gatherings), Wa'adat (vow fulfillment ceremonies), and various folk celebrations. These cultural events attract not only local residents but also visitors from neighboring areas, making them significant sites for examining communication practices within traditional Algerian contexts.

Sampling Method

Purposive Sampling: Purposive sampling involves strategically selecting information-rich cases to study—cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the research question being investigated (Patton, 2015, p. 402). A purposive (non-probability) sampling strategy was employed for this study. This method was deemed appropriate given the study's focus on individuals who had directly participated in the cultural event under investigation (Etikan, 2016, p. 2-3).

Sample Description: The study sample consisted of thirty (30) students from the Department of Media and Communication Sciences at Blida University 2, all of whom had attended the Sidi Kebir shrine event in Blida. The selection criteria included:

1. Direct participation: All participants had personally attended the cultural event, ensuring firsthand experiential knowledge.

2. Academic background: As media and communication students, participants possessed analytical frameworks for observing and interpreting communicative practices, potentially yielding more nuanced and informed responses.

3. Local community representation: The sample represents a segment of the local community, providing insights into how younger, educated residents perceive and engage with traditional cultural practices.

4. Research capacity building: Engaging communication students in research on local cultural phenomena encourages scholarly investigation of regional traditions and contributes to developing a culture of empirical inquiry among future media professionals.

Sample Size Justification: The sample size of 30 participants is appropriate for exploratory qualitative research and sufficient for preliminary quantitative analysis (Morse, 1994). While this constitutes a relatively small sample, the purposive selection ensures information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015, p. 264-265).

1. Conceptual Definitions

As is customary in academic research, it is essential to establish clear definitions of key concepts at the outset. This section defines the principal terms employed throughout this study: communication, spectacle, rituals, ceremonies, and performances. These core concepts constitute the theoretical framework for analyzing the cultural phenomena under investigation. Following these foundational definitions, supplementary terms related to specific ritual practices and performative displays will be introduced and explained.

1.1 Definition of Communication

1.1.1 Linguistic Definition: In Arabic, the root word for communication (waṣl) means connection, linkage, or joining. It denotes reaching or arriving at something, establishing a bond between entities (THE ACADEMY OF ARABIC LANGUAGE, 2004, p. 1037).

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In foreign lexicons, communication is defined as:

- An act of establishing a relationship with another person

- An act of transmitting or sending something

- Exchange between two people (e.g., by telephone)

- Presentations in groups, seminars, or public forums

- Activities by individuals, institutions, or organizations to promote their work and project a public image

- A connection or link between two entities (LAROUSSE, 2016, p. 273-274).

1.1.2 Operational Definition: For the purposes of this research, communication is operationally defined as: "the process through which ideas, meanings, and information are exchanged and transmitted among individuals within a specific social context that varies in scale and in the nature of relationships it encompasses."(Talaat Mahmud, 2001, p. 18).

1.2 Definition of Al-Furjah (Watching)

1.2.1 Linguistic Definition: According to Al-Mu'jam al-Shāmil (The Comprehensive Dictionary), al-furjah (The Watching) is a noun with multiple meanings:

Primary meanings:

- Gap or opening: A space or opening between two things; a crack or fissure

- Spectacle or viewing: The act of watching or observing something entertaining or captivating

- Relief: Liberation from distress or hardship (Team, 2010d).

- Quranic usage: The term appears in the Quran (Surah Qaf, 50:6): "And [the sky] has no furūj (openings/cracks)." Classical exegetes interpreted furūj as cracks, openings, or fissures, with these meanings being semantically related (Ibn Kathir, 2000, p. 1755).

- Morphological variations: The plural forms include furujāt, furūj, faraj, and furuj.

Extended meanings:

- A void, gap, or space between two entities

- A hole, breach, or defect

- A deep ravine or gorge (geological context)(Team, 2010d).

1.2.2 Operational Definition: For the purposes of this research, al-furjah is defined as observing and experiencing entertaining performances or displays at cultural/social events, encompassing spectatorship as a form of leisure and communal engagement.

1.3 Entertainment Communication: Operational Definition

Spectacle Communication is defined as a form of mass communication realized through the observation and participation in performances and performative practices within cultural, social, and religious events. This type of

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communication involves the exchange of implicit and explicit meanings and messages between performers (actors) and the audience (spectators) through a set of visual, kinetic, auditory, and linguistic symbols and signs, thereby fulfilling multiple functions: entertainment, education, expression, and the enhancement of collective identity and social solidarity.

1.4 Definition of Tuqūs (Rituals)

1.4.1 Etymological and Lexical Analysis:

Arabic Terminology: The Arabic term Tuqūs (Rituals) is the plural form of ṭaqs. According to Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ, the lexeme encompasses two primary semantic domains:

- Meteorological domain: The atmospheric conditions; the state of weather or climate. This represents a modern semantic extension of the term.

- Ritual domain: The systematic order, arrangement, and prescribed structure governing religious services, liturgical practices, ceremonial rites, and sacred observances. This usage originally referred specifically to Christian liturgical systems but has been generalized to denote ritual practices across diverse religious and cultural traditions (THE ACADEMY OF ARABIC LANGUAGE, 2004, p. 561).

The semantic connection between these meanings lies in the notion of order, regularity, and systematic arrangement—whether applied to atmospheric patterns or ceremonial structures.

1.4.2 Durkheim's Functionalist Perspective:

Rituals have been extensively theorized within anthropological and sociological scholarship and Émile Durkheim conceptualized rituals as collective practices, such as circumcision, marriage, mourning, and fire rituals, that reinforce social solidarity and express shared beliefs, thereby maintaining the moral unity of communities (Durkheim & Fields, 1995, p. 216-232).

1.4.3 Contemporary Definition:

Contemporary scholars define ritual as "a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized by formality, stereotypy, condensation, redundancy, and performance" (Tambiah, 1979, p. 119).

1.4.4 Operational Definition: For the analytical purposes of this research, Rituals are formalized, structured, and repetitive sequences of symbolic actions performed within ceremonial or culturally significant contexts. They are characterized by prescribed patterns, recurring performance, encoded meanings, social functions that reinforce collective identity, embodied enactment, and cultural embeddedness.

1.5 Definition of Sha'ā'ir (Religious and Cultural Rites)

1.5.1 Linguistic Definition: The Arabic term sha'ā'ir (plural of sha'īrah) etymologically derives from the root (sh-'-r) meaning "to perceive," "to sense," or "to mark." The term fundamentally denotes signs, symbols, markers, or distinctive features that identify something.

In religious contexts, sha'ā'ir refers to the prescribed rites, rituals, and symbolic practices ordained by religious law. According to Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ, sha'ā'ir encompasses the religious acts and observances that Islamic law (Sharī'ah) has commanded Muslims to perform. For example, sha'ā'ir al-Ḥajj (the rites of pilgrimage) refers to the specific ritual acts—such as circumambulation (ṭawāf), standing at Arafat (wuqūf), and symbolic stoning (ramī)—that constitute the pilgrimage (THE ACADEMY OF ARABIC LANGUAGE, 2004, p. 485).

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1.5.2 Quranic Reference: The Quran emphasizes the sanctity of religious symbols: "That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [sha'ā'ir] of Allah—indeed, it is from the piety of hearts." (*The Noble Qur'an*, s. d.) (Al-Ḥajj, 32)

Ibn Kathir (2000) interprets sha'ā'ir Allāh as the divine commands and sacred rites whose reverent observance reflects genuine piety (p. 1273).

1.5.3 Extended Meaning: While sha'ā'ir originally denoted Islamic religious rites, the term has been extended in contemporary usage to encompass ritual practices, ceremonial acts, and symbolic observances within various religious and cultural traditions, including popular religious practices such as shrine visitations, vow ceremonies (wa'adāt), and spiritual gatherings (zardat).

1.5.4 Operational Definition: For this research, sha'ā'ir (religious/cultural rites) are operationally defined as: formalized ritual acts, symbolic practices, and ceremonial observances performed within religious or sacred contexts, whether prescribed by formal religious law or embedded in popular religious and cultural traditions. These practices serve as markers of religious identity, expressions of devotion, and means of communal spiritual engagement.

1.6 Definition of 'Ard (Display/Performance/Procession)

1.6.1 Etymological and Lexical Analysis: The Arabic term 'arḍ derives from the trilateral root ('-r-ḍ) which connotes presentation, display, exhibition, and visibility. Lexicographically, 'arḍ encompasses multiple semantic domains:

1. Military/Inspection Domain: 'Arḍ al-junūd: Military review or inspection, whereby soldiers pass before a commanding officer for assessment and evaluation.

2. Al-'arḍ al-'askarī: Military parade, a ceremonial display of armed forces conducted on national occasions

3. Examination/Investigation Domain: 'Araḍa al-amr: To examine, investigate, or scrutinize a matter thoroughly

4. Presentation/Broadcasting Domain: 'Arḍ al-barnāmaj: To preview or introduce a media program to audiences

5. Ceremonial/Performative Domain: Public displays, processions, performances, or exhibitions conducted during cultural, religious, or civic events.

According to Mu'jam al-Kull, al-'arḍ al-'askarī specifically denotes "a ceremonial spectacle (mashhad iḥtifālī) in which the army is displayed on occasions such as National Day and other significant events"(Team, 2010b).

Core semantic feature: The fundamental meaning across all domains is making visible, presenting for observation, or displaying publicly.

Cultural and Performative Dimensions: In the context of popular religious and cultural practices in North Africa, 'urūḍ (plural of 'arḍ) refers to public performances, processions, and displays that constitute essential components of festivals, shrine celebrations (mawāsim), and communal gatherings. These may include:

- Folk performances: Traditional music, dance, storytelling (ḥalqa)

- Processional displays: Ritual processions, parades of devotees

- Equestrian exhibitions: Traditional fantasia performances (lab al-bārūd)

- Theatrical performances: Folk theater, dramatic enactments

- Craft demonstrations: Public displays of traditional arts and crafts

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These 'urūḍ serve multiple functions: entertainment (tasliyah), cultural transmission, social cohesion, and religious expression

1.6.2 Operational Definition: For this research, 'arḍ (performance/display) is operationally defined as:

'Arḍ encompasses public performances and displays—including folk arts, processions, music, and drama—conducted at cultural or religious events to serve communicative, entertainment, and ritual purposes.

2. Communication and Spectatorship in Ritual and Performance Practices

This study explores the communicative activities, practices, and acts of exchange that occur among individuals in their everyday social lives. It aims to uncover the underlying systems and symbolic frameworks that structure these interactions, which constitute forms of social communication within communities.

Human beings have transmitted ideas, meanings, and information through diverse modalities since time immemorial. Human cultures have developed and evolved through the intergenerational transmission and exchange of cultural knowledge—including values, beliefs, customs, and traditions. Among the most prominent vehicles for this cultural transmission are rituals and performances, which bring together spectators and participants for multiple purposes: celebration, entertainment, value reinforcement, and the preservation of cultural heritage by passing customs and traditions from one generation to the next.

These ritual and performance practices manifest in various forms and differ significantly across regions and communities. The following sections present several key forms and their characteristics.

2.1 Al-Zardah

Note on Terminology: The term al-zardah as used in Algerian and Moroccan contexts refers to a specific religious ritual practice and should not be confused with the homonymous term zardah found in classical Arabic dictionaries, which refers to shield rings (Ibn Manẓūr, s. d., p. 194) or, in Iraqi cuisine, to a rice dish (Team, 2010c). The North African zardah represents a distinct cultural phenomenon.

Cultural and Religious Definition: In Algerian and Moroccan popular religious practices, al-zardah refers to a ritual feast and ceremonial gathering held at the shrines (ḍarīḥ, qubūr) of saints (awliyā', ṣāliḥīn) or Sufi masters (mashāyikh). These events combine elements of commemoration, supplication, communal feasting, and ritual performance.

Key characteristics of zardah practices:

- Location: Conducted at saint shrines, zāwiyāh (Sufi lodges), or sacred sites associated with venerated religious figures

- Occasions: Annual commemorations of a saint's death (mawsim, wafāt) Fulfillment of vows (wa'adāt) Seeking intercession for specific needs (healing, protection, prosperity)

- Zardah components: Communal feasting (distribution of food, especially kuskus or meat dishes). Quranic recitation. Devotional poetry and songs (madīḥ, qaṣā'id). Supplications and prayers. Sometimes Zardah practices such as animal sacrifice (dhabīḥah)

- Functions: Seeking barakah (blessing, spiritual power) from the saint. Healing from illness, affliction, or spiritual harm (jinn, 'ayn, siḥr). Social solidarity and community bonding. Fulfilling vows made in times of distress. Celebrating religious occasions (graduation from Quranic school, etc.)

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- Relationship to Wa'dah: In many Algerian communities, the terms zardah and wa'dah are used interchangeably or refer to closely related practices. Both denote ritual feasts and gatherings at saint shrines, though some communities distinguish between them based on specific ritual emphases or regional variations.

It is clear from the above that Al-Zarda is a ritual ceremony and communal feast conducted at the shrines of saints or Sufi masters, typically held to commemorate the saint's death anniversary, fulfill vows, or seek intercession and blessing (barakah) for healing, protection, or other needs. The practice involves prescribed ritual acts, including feasting, Quranic recitation, devotional performances, supplications, and symbolic gestures of connection to the saint (touching the tomb, tying cloth to the shrine, and lighting candles), serving communicative, spiritual, and social functions within the community.

2.2 Al-Wa'dah (The Votive Promise)

2.2.1 Linguistic Definition: The term al-wa'dah derives from the Arabic root (w-'-d) which fundamentally means "to promise," "to appoint a time," or "to make a commitment." According to classical Arabic lexicography:

Root meaning: Wa'ada means to promise, to give one's word, or to establish an appointed time for something. The noun wa'd denotes a promise or commitment, while maw'id refers to an appointed time or designated meeting place.

Classical linguistic analysis: Ibn Jinnī, the renowned Arab grammarian, classified al-wa'd among the maṣādir (verbal nouns), noting its variant form al-'idah. He cited the proverbial expression mawā'īd 'Urqūb - "the promises of 'Urqub"—referring to false or broken promises from a legendary figure known for making commitments he never fulfilled (Ibn Manẓūr, s. d., p. 461-462).

Quranic usage: The Quran employs derivatives of this root extensively in contexts of divine promise and eschatological fulfillment:

"And they say, 'When will [the fulfillment of] this promise come to pass if you are telling the truth?'" (T.D Al-Hilali & M. Khan, 2021, p. 629). The term wa'd in these verses refers to the promised Day of Judgment or the fulfillment of divine warnings.

Cultural and Religious Dimensions: In North African (particularly Algerian and Moroccan) popular religious contexts, al-wa'dah has evolved to denote a votive festival or ritual gathering held in fulfillment of a promise made to God or a saint. The semantic development connects the concept of "promise" to the ritual practice of fulfilling vows at sacred sites.

Al-Wa'dah is associated with a tribe from the tribes, where men and women often gather. It is usually held on a vast plain, and other tribes join in. They set up tents in two opposing rows with a wide field between them where horses run and they play with gunpowder. You see the owner of the (mizmar) and the owner of the (qallal); one plays the mizmar and the other beats the qallal, similar to beating drums, as they circle around the doors of the tents: from one tent to another, from one shelter to another. The people of generosity refresh them with what pleases their souls. Sometimes people compete in giving to these two, but there are many of them in every (Wa'dah), so these two hardly leave one shelter before two others stand at its door, and so on, more and more come. When night falls, they gather around the tents and under the erected domes in groups, groups. Each group is led by one of the singers whom they call (the sheikh), who chants improvised poetry. Whenever it is time for lunch or dinner, they advance to these large crowds with bowls of couscous, which they call (the food), topped with a layer of dates and sweets. With each bowl, there is a basket of grapes, a portion of meat, and a large container filled with plenty of ghee. When they intend to leave, they play (al-rahbah), a type of foot duel or sparring (Al Zahiri, 2010).

It is clear from the above that the promise an annual or occasional ritual festival held at the shrine of a saint or sacred site, where community members gather to fulfill vows (nudhūr), seek blessings (barakah), and participate in communal celebrations including feasting, religious performances, and devotional activities. The term derives

from the concept of fulfilling a promise (wa'd) made to God through the intercession of the saint, typically in exchange for divine assistance during times of need or crisis.

Some famous Zardas that we hear about

1-Zarda (Sidi Abed) in Ghelizan, also Sidi Abed is a municipality affiliated with the Amari district in the Tissemsilt province, and it may have been named after this sheikh, the owner of the great Zarda held in western Algeria, attended by people from various parts of Algeria and reportedly even from Tunisia and Morocco. This promise or Zarda was established during the French colonial era. I remember when we were kids, we used to hear this chant: "Ya Ma wa Sidi Abed, Yama wa 'atani Doru, Ya Ma wa Sidi Abed, Ya Ma wa Sha'sha' Noro..."

2-Zarda (Sidi Ahmed Al-Kabir) in Blida, where Sidi Ahmed Al-Kabir is considered the founder of the city of Blida and was, above all, a religious man and an engineer. (EPTV, 2006) In the year 1540 AD, Sidi Ahmed Al-Kabir, a shrine was built for him above the valley, in a calm, beautiful mountainous area—Al-Sharia— which was once a park for the residents(Allal, 2020). It became a gathering place or pilgrimage site for people from the municipalities of Blida province or even beyond during holidays and occasions, for reunion and seeking blessings. They meet over couscous and reshita; it is considered a shrine for brides. "Women come to light candles and apply henna, hoping for marriage and childbirth." (Allal, 2020)

3-Wa'da (Sidi Mohamed Belkabir) in Adrar, Zarda (Sidi Boumediene) in Tlemcen, Zarda (Sidi Abderrahman) and (Sidi Mohamed) in Algiers, Zarda (Sidi El-Houari) in Oran, (Sidi Saïd) in Tebessa, (Sidi Rachid) in Constantine, (Sidi Ben Hamlaoui) in Telaghma, (Sidi El-Kheir) in Setif, (Sidi Mansour) in Tizi Ouzou, and (Sidi Ben Youssef) in Miliana...

2.3 Al-Hadra

According to the Comprehensive Dictionary of Meanings, Al-Hadra refers to presence and proximity to something. A man's hadra is his assembly or gathering place where he is present. The term is also used honorifically to address persons of high status, as in: "Your Excellency has granted you this." Al-Hadra can also mean the city or urban area (Team, 2010a).

In Sufi terminology, Sheikh Abdul Ghani Al-Nabulsi explains: "Al-Hadra is a station of nearness and witnessing. When a servant stands at the threshold of truth witnessing His Divine Attributes, this station is called the Presence of Attributes (Hadrat al-Sifat). When witnessing the Divine Actions, it is called the Presence of Actions (Hadrat al-Af'al)." (nafahat-tarik, 2025)

Al-Hadra is also the name given to a form of collective dhikr performed by Sufi orders, consisting of repeated litanies, invocations, prayers upon the Prophet and his family, and seeking their spiritual intercession. Each Sufi order performs these rituals in circular formations, with a lead reciter standing at the center. These sessions are typically held in Sufi mosques on Monday and Thursday evenings each week. They are also conducted at shrines and cemeteries, as the author observed in numerous villages throughout the Wilaya of Médéa.

The practice of Al-Hadra is rooted in chanting and remembrance, involving invocations related to Islamic spirituality and the teachings of Sufi masters. It relies on poems praising the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Sufi devotional poetry based on the Burda (Mantle) poem, Halabi poems, poems of the noble Prophet's birth (Mawlid), and various local religious poems and verses that invoke blessings from righteous saints and seek their spiritual assistance (Abdulrahman, 2020).

So, Al-Hadra refers to the gathering held at the shrines of righteous saints, particularly those located within cemeteries, where Sufi circles of remembrance (dhikr) are conducted and spirits are invoked for healing purposes.

2.4 Buganja/Bouganja

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The word derives from the root "Ganj." According to the Dictionary of Meanings, Ganj means: (verb) to coo, to speak affectionately. "Ganajat al-mar'ah" (the woman cooed): she spoke tenderly to her husband with gestures, as if disagreeing with him while harboring no actual disagreement. "Ghunj" (noun): a woman's voice or tone that enhances her charm and appeal (Team, 2010e).

Ganja is also the name of a city in Azerbaijan. Also "Bouganja is a locality administratively subordinate to the municipality of Oulad Saber, located in the District of Guidjel, in the Algerian province of Sétif." (Areq, 2025)

The Bougnaga tradition—a social custom deeply rooted in Algerian heritage—is revived by the inhabitants of several regions in various ways with the aim of invoking rain. The villagers or local residents gather flour and semolina through a custom carried out by village girls no older than 12 years of age, who go around the village houses and neighborhoods carrying a large spoon called "al-ghraf" (the ladle), dressed as a bride.

What I observed firsthand is that the ghraf (ladle) is placed on a long cane and dressed in a coat to resemble a person. It is decorated with colorful ribbons and carried by someone around whom people—young men and boys—gather, reciting the aforementioned rhymed verses. They make rounds to nearby houses and hamlets, and at each house they visit, they are given something (flour, oil, pepper, tomatoes)—ingredients used to prepare a type of soup or bread. This food is then served in the village square or in front of the village mosque, where everyone who partakes of this simple meal eats from it and prays to God to bless them with rain. The girls drag the bride through the alleyways, repeating: "Bougnaga, Bougnaga, bride of the rain..." while singing poems and folk songs (M. Zahia, 2013). The author of this article describes himself as having attended this tradition when he was young, where the village women gather in the mosque courtyard, prepare food, and serve it to the attendees and participants in this tradition. Indeed, it rained at that time!

2.5 Al-Wazee'a

Linguistic definition: yuwazziʿu, tawzīʿan, fa-huwa muwazziʿ, wal-mafʿūl muwazzaʿ To distribute something: to divide and separate it (Team, 2010f). It is a custom practiced by rural inhabitants for the purpose of social solidarity assistance, such as helping with marriage, plowing, harvesting fruits, or other forms of solidarity.

Al-Wazee'a or "Tamshart" in Amazigh is a social tradition in the Kabylie region and other areas. It exists in most rural and regional parts of Algeria, such as in the provinces of Médéa, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Aurès, Tipaza, and others. However, generally, the Kabylie region is unique in this tradition and preserves it not only as a cultural heritage expressing Amazigh identity but also as a tool for social solidarity and mutual support, especially during the blessed month of Ramadan, as well as during holidays and occasions. Often, cows are purchased, and in other areas, goats and sheep, and their meat is distributed free of charge to the villagers, including the poor and needy. This custom is called "Tawiza" in the Kabylie region or "Tawizi" in Amazigh. It is a tradition symbolizing cooperation and solidarity among local residents, whether for building mosques or harvesting crops. For example, in some areas like Sidi Lazrag, located in the southern part of the capital of the Wilaya of Relizane, families prepare couscous with broth, lamb meat, and honey for a dinner meal that gathers everyone who contributed to the harvest and study, inviting guests as a blessing for the start of the harvest season. After finishing the dinner, a gathering called "Sooq Al-Ribh" (Market of Profit) is held, which is an opportunity for loved ones to meet, resolve disputes between adversaries, and honor the elders after praying for them according to wishes (Abu Israa, 2016).

2.6 Bukhari

It is named after the author of the second most important book after the Holy Quran, which is "Sahih al-Bukhari." This celebration takes place after the completion of reading and explaining the book Sahih al-Bukhari, as well as reading the texts and Al-Burda. It concludes with holding mass wedding ceremonies and is celebrated as a joyful event marking the beginning of spring. It is held in the city of Al-Meni'a at the Awlad Zaid Mosque (*Frouhat*, 2022).

2.7 Al-Usbu' in Adrar (The Week)

Celebrations of the Week of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday are held in Timimoun (Gourara) in the north and at the Kenta Zawiya (Touat) in the south. The "Week" represents a religious and heritage event held annually on the 18th of Rabi' al-Awwal each year—that is, one week after the birth of the Prophet Mohamad. It expresses the deep Sufi heritage of the region, passed down through generations.

During this time, recitations of the odd-numbered poems, texts of prophetic praise (madih), the Burda, and the Baghdadi poems take place in various mosques. Religious seminars and lectures about the characteristics of the chosen Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are organized by the zawaya (Sufi lodges) and Quranic schools in various areas, especially the Haj Khalil School in Timimoun, the Bakria Zawiya in Timtimt, and the Sheikh Sidi Haj Hassan Zawiya in Anzegmir, as well as the Kenta Zawiya. In these celebrations, visitors and arrivals carrying flags representing the zawaya of the region are welcomed. These are colorful cotton banners adorned with vibrant hues and Quranic verses, whose historical origins remain academically unknown. It is said that they symbolize the zawaya and Sufi orders, and are topped with a copper dome in the shape of a crescent, varying according to the regions and the traditional attire of the flag bearer.

People gather in their traditional dress and white turbans, while women wear traditional clothing known as "Lizar." They come together to the rhythm of gunpowder shots and religious chants.

The gathering then concludes with a collective prayer and the sharing of special hospitality couscous. This form of popular celebration includes folkloric activities such as gunpowder displays and spiritual gatherings (hadra). It has become a well-known social and cultural phenomenon in Adrar, and the "Sboua" (Week) in Timimoun has been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (Harma, 2015).

3.Search Results

The data extraction process (data extraction table attached in Appendix No. 2) yielded the following results:

- Sample individuals attended three types of events in the following order: Zarda at 89.99%, represented by the following variables: 20% males inside Blida province and 6.66% outside it, 40% females inside the province and 32.33% outside it; followed by folklore at 6.66%, comprising 3.33% males inside the province and 3.33% females outside the province; and finally Twiza at 3.33%, represented by females outside the province.

- At the events held, the preparation and serving of food occurred at a rate of 83.32%, distributed as follows: 20% males outside the province, 6.66% males inside the province, 30% females outside the province, and 26.66% females inside the province. This was followed by the practice of certain rituals at 59.98%, distributed as 16.66% males outside the province, 3.33% inside, 26.66% females inside the province, and 13.33% outside the province. Prayer and seeking blessings came next at 39.99%, distributed as 10% males outside the province, 3.33% inside, and equal percentages of 13.33% for females both inside and outside the province. Fashion shows and religious seminars each occurred at equal rates of 33.33%. For fashion shows: 13.33% males and females outside the province and 3.33% males and females inside the province. For religious seminars: 10% males outside the province, 3.33% inside, and 20% females inside the province. Folklore activities followed at 19.99%, represented by 13.33% males outside the province and 3.33% females and males inside the province. Finally, tourism accounted for 7%, represented by females inside the province.

- The study also revealed that the purpose of visiting these events was primarily for entertainment and enjoyment at a rate of 93.32%, distributed across variables as follows: 16.66% males outside the province, 6.66% inside it, 40% females inside the province, and 30% outside the province. For another undisclosed purpose, the rate was 17%, represented by 6.66% males and 10% females outside the province. Finally, for a religious purpose, the rate was 6.66%, equally divided as 3.33% females and 3.33% males inside Blida province.

The most notable features at the events were, firstly, food and customs at 40%, comprising 6.66% males outside the province, 20% females outside the province, and 13.33% inside it. This was followed by performances at

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33.31%, distributed among males: 6.66% inside the province and 3.33% outside it, and among females: 16.66% inside the province and 6.66% outside it. Next was the large attendance of people at 13.32%, including 3.33% males inside the province, 6.66% outside it, and 3.33% females outside the province.

Then came lighting candles, prayer, seeking blessings, and organization, each at 10%. For candle lighting: 3.33% females inside the province and 6.66% outside it. For prayer and seeking blessings: 10% females inside the province. For organization: 6.66% males outside the province and 3.33% inside it. Next was the beauty of the venue at 9.99%, including 3.33% males inside the province and 6.66% females outside the province. This was followed by hospitality at 7%, represented by females outside the province. Finally, at 3% each were religious seminars and clothing variety, represented by females inside and outside the province, and social interaction, joy, and happiness at 3%, represented by males outside the province.

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- The forms of communication at the events held were primarily through personal contact, accounting for 56.65%, comprising 13.33% males outside the province, 6.66% inside the province, 20% females inside the province, and 16.66% females outside the province. This was followed by gatherings and dhikr circles at 33.32%, evenly distributed as 6.66% for males inside and outside the province, and 10% for females inside and outside the province. Next came singing and devotional chants (madih) at 6.66%, with 3.33% males inside the province and 3.33% females outside the province, followed by dancing at 3%, represented by females outside the province. Additionally, there was a 10% no-response rate from females inside the province.

- Regarding the category most frequently attending these events, the highest percentage was among the elderly at 73.33%, comprising 3.33% males within the province, 20% males and 20% females outside the province, and 30% females within the province. Youth followed at 43.32%, comprising 3.33% males within the province, 16.66% outside, 10% females within the province, and 13.33% outside.

- In terms of gender, the percentage of women showed the highest attendance at 47%, represented by 20% females within the province and 13.33% females and 13.33% males outside the province. Men accounted for 36.65%, represented by 6.66% males within the province, 16.66% outside, 3.33% females within the province, and 10% outside.

- Regarding whether these rituals still attract people, 83% responded "yes," distributed as 10% males within the province, 16.66% outside, 26.66% females within the province, and 30% outside. Additionally, 17% responded "no," distributed as 3.33% males outside the province and 13.33% females within the province.

- Concerning the reasons for people's lack of interest in these rituals, 13% provided reasons, representing 3.33% males outside the province and 9.33% females within the province, while 3% did not respond, from the female category within the province.

4. Discussion of Research Results

- The research demonstrated that people still attend Zarda and Wa'ada gatherings or visits held at shrines, as evidenced by the attendance of sample individuals at Zarda gatherings at a rate of 89.99% compared to other events. The majority of this attendance, according to respondents, comes from the elderly category at 73.33%, which indicates that these customs are practiced by older people due to their connection to ancestral traditions. This can also be explained by the fact that older people tend to be more attached to customs and traditions. Women's attendance follows at 47%, serving as evidence that these visits are largely supported by women in preparing food, costumes, lighting candles, and seeking blessings from the shrine for the bride's protection, marriage requests, and other purposes.

- These events are characterized by the offering of food and the practice of certain rituals such as prayer, seeking blessings, lighting candles, and holding performances including costume displays and folklore. These elements provide sufficient reasons to attract audiences for entertainment and enjoyment at a rate of 93.32%, which indicates their appeal and implicitly calls for the preservation of such customs, ensuring their continuity and maintaining a form of social solidarity and mutual support, as evidenced by the communal feasts and performances presented.

- Forms of communication at such events rely primarily on personal communication methods at a rate of 56.65%, because attendance at these events is not governed by any formal organization. People communicate with each other through informal communication channels. As for the event organizers, they communicate with attendees through gatherings, dhikr circles, singing, devotional chants (madih), dancing, and generally through performances or displays that attract people's attention, which explicitly demonstrates that these rituals still captivate people.

5. Conclusion

From this, we can conclude that these phenomena reflect a remarkable communicative dynamic manifested in the gathering of people who flock to these events and engage with them, alongside the actors involved (those responsible for organizing them), as they entertain themselves with the scenes and performances in coordinated movements rooted in the act of social solidarity. This highlights the social dimension of these rituals and displays through the concept of gathering and expressing the needs and identity of these groups of people.

Secondly, and importantly, it demonstrates people's ability to generate ideas and express them through symbols and gestures within these gatherings and beyond, imbuing them with social and religious dimensions regardless of debates about their innovation or permissibility in religious law. The fact remains that they are embedded within the social fabric, through which the foundations of relationships among individuals are established through solidarity and cooperation, as well as between them and the Creator in seeking sustenance, mercy, blessings, and through supplication.

The reality is that the symbolism of a thing can only be understood through its uses and what exists in people's collective imagination, because these symbols and gestures are created by groups that belong to the same categories as the broader community. Perhaps the aforementioned expressions embody a particular system and lifestyle specific to those groups or categories of people (place, clothing, performances, language), and they operate according to certain organizational principles, arrangements, and regulations. The act, practice, or ritual does not occur except within these frameworks; otherwise, it loses its communicative meaning. Therefore, we observe from the aforementioned performances that each ritual follows a specific dramatic scenario and varies from one social structure to another or from one cultural system to another.

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However, it is noticeable that some of these customs have faded while others have disappeared entirely, which will negatively affect the collective imagination. This leads us to question the continuity and sustainability of these practices in today's world. Circumstances are changing rapidly, and preserving these customs is not an easy matter. Some customs that once existed independently have vanished and disappeared with the spread of urbanization and increased awareness through modern technological means. Undoubtedly, these traditions are experiencing an existential crisis. Out of concern for their disappearance and extinction, international organizations strive to preserve some of these practices as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage.

In conclusion, it can be said that all rituals, even those we did not have the space to mention—such as circumcision rites, weddings, praise singers in popular markets (), dances, folk songs and music, theater, drama, folk tales, painting, sculptures, monuments, inscriptions, symbols, etc.—are also forms that create spectacle and convey an implicit message about the cultural system in which they are produced.

The "twiza" and "wa'ada" foster cooperation and solidarity among the local population, while "Bougnaja" symbolizes charity and the seeking of blessings. The "hadra," "wa'ada," and "zarda," which are held to seek blessings from the righteous saints and their intercession, often for healing the sick, take place at the shrines and tombs of the saints to reunite the community and seek their blessings.

All these rituals involve distinctive performances for the event being held, with each performance characterizing a particular form of these rituals and thus possessing its own symbolism. This is clearly evident in the duality of time and place, which creates a special significance for the type of ritual being performed. It is also clear that the strongest symbolic significance resides with those carrying out this undertaking (organizers, participants, performers, etc.), in addition to fulfilling the community's needs through the ritual performed, such as mutual assistance in "twiza," seeking blessings in "wa'ada," and healing in "hadra."

Methodology:

This study adopts an exploratory mixed-methods research design appropriate for examining cultural phenomena that have received limited academic attention within communication studies.

1. Research Design

- Exploratory: to uncover underlying communicative dynamics within ritual events.

- Descriptive: to document the structure, symbolism, and communicative patterns of the Wa'ada.

2. Data Collection Methods

a. Questionnaire Survey:

A structured questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample of media and communication students who attended the event.

b. Direct Observation:

The researcher conducted non-participant observation, recording notes on rituals, performances, symbolic acts, and crowd dynamics.

c. Qualitative Reflections:

Students provided narrative reflections to enrich the findings with personal insights.

3. Data Analysis

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- Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

- Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify symbolic and cultural meanings.

Ethical Considerations:

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. No personal data were collected. Observational notes focused on public behavior only. Confidentiality and anonymity were fully respected.

Acknowledgement:

Funding:

Conflict of Interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Questionnaire form

The Role of Entertainment Communication in Rituals and Shows

"The Wa'ada of Sidi El Kebir, Blida "

Exploring Student Opinions at the University of Blida2

Hello!

Dear student

We are conducting a study on "The Communication of Spectatorship in Rituals and Performances - Zarda (Sidi Ahmed El Kebir) in Blida." The purpose is to diagnose the phenomenon and the form of communication established. Since you represent an important part concerning this study, we kindly ask you to grant us some of your valuable time to fill out this questionnaire after carefully reading all its statements and answering the box that you believe reflects your point of view. Please note that the data collected will be treated confidentially and used solely for scientific research purposes. Thank you very much.

Note: Please put an × mark in the appropriate box.

- gender: Male   Female
- place of residence: within the state   outside the state
- called visit to the shrine of Wali SidAhmed the great-Have you ever heard of the so: Yes   No
- d or come to this ZardaHave you visite: Yes   No
- how to prepare for this visit:
- preparing food   preparing costumespreparing   folklore scenes   religious seminars
- What is offered on this visit:
- conducting religious rituals   offerinfood   praying and blessing   practicing certain rituals   is another thing to mention..
- :What is the purpose of your visit to this event
- watching and having fun   religious purpose   is another thing to mention ....
- What things caught your attention?..................................
- How do people communicate during this visit?................
- What category is most visited for this promise:
- Young men   elders   women   men
- peal to people to visit itdoes this promise still ap:
- Yes   No   if your answer is no why............
- **Observations**...

7.2 Appendix 2 : Data dump table

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Top Table

Questions		Attending a form of ritual				The form of the ritual						What is prepared and presented														Purpose of the visit						Organization		Reviews		E...
		Yes		No		Zarda		Folklore		Twizah		Eater		Fashion		Folklore		...ayer and blessi		...actice of certain		...eligious purpos		Other		...hing and havin		...eligious purpos		Other						
		Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund
Males	Within th	3	10%	0	0%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	0	0%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	1	3,33	1	3,33%	0	0%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6,66%	
	Out of Sta	6	20%	0	0%	6	20%	0	0%	0	0%	6	20%	4	13,33%	4	13,33%	3	10%	5	16,66%	3	10%	0	0%	5	16,66%	0	0%	2	6,66%	0	0%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%
Females	Within th	12	40%	0	0%	12	40%	0	0%	0	0%	8	26,66%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	4	13,33%	8	26,66%	6	20%	2	6,66%	12	40%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	5	16,66%	2
	Out of Sta	9	30%	0	0%	7	23,33%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	9	30%	4	13,33%	0	0%	4	13,33%	4	13,33%	0	0%	0	0%	9	30%	0	0%	0	0%	3	10%	1	3,33%	2	6,66%	3
Total		30	100%	0	0%	27	89,99%	2	6,66%	1	3%	25	83,32%	10	33,32%	6	19,99%	12	39,99%	18	3,8965	10	33,33%	2	7%	28	93,32%	2	6,66%	5	17%	3	10%	10	33,31%	

Bottom Table

...ategory and gender				...es this ritual still appeal to peop				If the answer is "No" Why?							
Elders		Young men		No		Yes		...chcraft and sorc		...demise of the el		...away from the tr		...ithout an answe	
Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percent	Redund	Percentage
1	3,33%	1	3,33%	0	0%	3	10%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6	20%	5	16,66%	1	3,33%	5	16,66%	0	0%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%
9	30%	3	10%	4	13,33%	8	26,66%	2	6,66%	0	0%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%
6	20%	4	13,33%	0	0%	9	30%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
22	73,33%	13	43,32%	5	17%	25	83%	2	7%	1	3%	1	3%	1	3%

Things that draw attention | **Forms of communication** | **The most visited category and gender**

	Eater		Lighting candles		Clothing variety		...and seeking ble...		...ism and Explora...		beauty of the p...		audience atten...		...erence to custo...		Generosity		...eligious semina...		...tance, joy and...		...gular conversati...		...ings and works...		...inging and prais...		Dance		No answer		Men		Women		Elders	
	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%	Red.	%
	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6,66%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6,66%	0	0%	1	3,33%
	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3,33%	4	13,33	2	6,66%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	5	16,66%	4	13,33%	6	20%
	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	0	0%	3	10%	1	3,33%	2	6,66%	0	0%	2	6,66%	0	0%	1	3,33%	0	0%	6	20%	3	10%	0	0%	0	0%	3	10%	1	3,33%	6	20%	9	30%
	3	10%	2	6,66%	1	3,33%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3,33%	3	10%	2	6,66%	0	0%	0	0%	5	16,66%	3	10%	1	3,33%	1	3,33%	0	0%	3	10%	4	13,33%	6	20%
	6	20%	3	10%	1	3%	3	10%	2	6,66%	3	9,99%	4	13,32%	6	20%	2	7%	1	3%	1	3%	17	####	10	33,32%	2	6,66%	1	3%	3	10%	11	36,65%	14	47%	22	73,33%