Meaning and philosophy of Bale beleq traditional house East Lombok

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Abstract: The Bale beleq traditional house of Jerowaru Village and Wakan Village is a historical heritage. This house is different from ordinary traditional houses because Bale beleq is occupied by people who are respected. In addition, there are also historical relics such as keris, swords, and many more. This research aims to examine information about the meaning and philosophy of the Bale beleq traditional house. This research was conducted in Jerowaru Village and Wakan Village. Eight respondents were interviewed. The research method used was the qualitative method. Data collection was done by using observation, interview, and documentation methods. The data analysis techniques are data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The results of the study found the history of the emergence of the Bale beleq traditional house, the meaning and philosophy of Bale beleq, and the values within Bale beleq. Currently, Bale beleq is used as a center for socio-cultural religious activities. One way to maintain and preserve traditional houses is to make the house a cultural heritage so that it does not erode with the time, and to make Bale beleq an educational and cultural tour site.

Keywords: Bale beleq; meaning; philosophy; traditional house

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A. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a variety of cultures and diversity. In such large
diversity, various cultures are created in each region and accompanied by their
respective characteristics (Sutiari et al., 2018; Wahidin, 2019). Indonesia is a country
that has a long history and thus there are many historical relics located in several
regions. Traditional architecture is a reflection of the social and community life of an
area (ASa et al., 2019). This illustrates that Indonesia’s ancestors were architects who
were very adept at designing and building. Traditional houses are not only beautiful,
but their uniqueness also appears in terms of forms and contain certain meanings
and philosophies according to their respective goals (Irianti et al., 2022).

Traditional houses are houses with certain characters or are typical buildings in
local areas in Indonesia that symbolize the culture and characteristics of the local
community. Indonesia is known as a country that has cultural diversity and wealth,
a variety of languages, and tribes from Sabang to Merauke. Hence, Indonesia has a
large collection of traditional houses (Abdulghani & Sati, 2020). Various megalithic
cultures inherited from ancestors that are preserved from generation to generation
are still adhered to today, for example, regional dances, traditional clothing, carved
statues, megalith stones, regional specialties, traditional houses, and so on. These are
the legacy of local wisdom that is rich in history and meaning (Ziraluo et al., 2022).
Local wisdom, in the field of architecture, has a very important role in supporting the
sustainability of the archipelago’s cultural preservation (Wibowo, 2021).

Related studies on traditional houses, namely on the benefits of traditional
houses, how to preserve traditional houses, the shape of traditional house buildings,
and so on, have been carried out by many previous researchers. For example, in East
Nusa Tenggara, one of the provinces in Indonesia, especially in Kupang Regency,
there is a diversity of tribes that have different and unique cultures and customs that
even contain deep meanings and values. One example is the Sabu tribe, one of the
cultural elements is a traditional house or called "ammu ae nga rukoko" which
discussed cultural values and local wisdom (Udju & Saingo, 2022).

One of previous studies regarding traditional houses, precisely in Bandung,
West Java, discussed the philosophy and Islamic values contained in the building
style of the traditional houses of the people in Kampung Naga. Traditional houses in
Kampung Naga contain philosophy or the term Sundanese people call siloka
(Nurjaman et al., 2021) A previous research on traditional houses in Kupang, East
Nusa Tenggara, the purpose of the study was to describe the meaning of the Sabu
Community Customary House Building Philosophy (ammu ae nga rukoko do Hawu)
in Sabu, Ledeana Village, West Sabu District, Sabu Raijua Regency. The Sabu
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traditional house contains cultural values and local wisdom that are particularly important for the Sabu community. It is also a place to carry out all customary activities and a place to store the artifacts of the ancestors of the Sabu people containing its meaning thus that the architecture of the traditional house (ammu ae nga rukoko) continues to be maintained and maintained. (Sharon & Paranoan, 2020) One of the regions in Indonesia that has a distinctive cultural identity is East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province. This area on the island of Lombok has a variety of distinct cultural heritages such as music, dance, crafts, and architecture. The architecture of the buildings on the island of Lombok is a traditional house. For the people of Lombok, the house is not only a shelter but also has other functions for the people of Lombok (Sasak). Traditional houses have aesthetic value, philosophy, and simple life in the past that relies on natural resources as a livelihood, as well as material for house construction (Julita & Hidayatun, 2020).

The architectural pattern of the construction of this traditional house is made based on the beliefs of its inhabitants and is full of cultural values. For example, the number of stairs consisting of 3 or 5 steps which means that these 5 indicate the number of prayer times and the number of pillars of Islam. Taking the topic of Sasak traditional buildings, namely the Bale beleq traditional house, is motivated by cultural values that are still maintained yet still less known by the wider community so that they can be explored further (Juliani et al., 2020). The previous research that became a reference for research on traditional houses included: traditional houses in Bawomataluo Village have distinct meaning and uniqueness from other traditional houses so that tourists are interested (Ziraluo et al., 2022). The philosophy of Kampung Naga traditional houses with natural materials reflects the good relationship between the indigenous people of Kampung Naga and nature (Nurjaman et al., 2021). The use of traditional house recognition applications in Indonesia combining sound, text and 3D objects of traditional houses can generate interest so that information can be conveyed better (Sutiari et al., 2018). Several journals mentioned the structure of traditional houses or traditional house architecture (Zulfikar, 2020) about the value of local wisdom of traditional houses (Juliani et al., 2020), traditional houses as tourist objects (Sudriamunawar et al., 2020), traditional houses are full of historical value (Saragih et al., 2021). There are also those who discussed traditional Rasoulian houses (Asadi et al., 2016), design characteristics and adaptive roles of traditional courtyard houses (Baboli et al., 2015), discussing the analysis of aspels, discussing the analysis of mathematical aspects in the bajawa traditional house of East Nusa Tenggara Tenggara (Safitri & Priscilla, 2022), a study of the form of placement of carvings in the Bengkulu bumbungan lima traditional house (Anandy et al., 2016), preservation of Toba Batak traditional houses...
Based on the results of these studies on traditional houses, many discuss the uniqueness of traditional houses, the introduction of traditional houses, the analysis of mathematical aspects in traditional houses, kajin etymology in traditional houses, and et cetera. From several article titles that the researchers described, the authors raised the theme of the Meaning and Philosophy of the Bale beleq Traditional House Case Study (Jerowaru Village and Wakan Village) East Lombok. In line with this information, research examining the Bale beleq traditional house regarding its meaning and philosophy has never been done. This research needs to be done because it can provide benefits and information about the history of traditional houses and meanings contained in each building form, building materials, and et cetera. The results of this research can be used as material or a source for school assignments, lectures, and et cetera. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to conduct a case study on the meaning and philosophy of the Bale beleq traditional house.

B. Method

Qualitative methods were used in this study. According to Moleong, qualitative research methods as a part of research procedures are descriptive to present social phenomena and their perspectives in the world and provide an overview of issues related to the concepts, perceptions, circumstances, and human behavior under study as a whole (Udju & Saingo, 2022). In addition, qualitative research produce new findings that have not previously existed. Research activities are motivated by the nature of human nature namely curiosity especially if their desire for curiosity is
based on scientific knowledge (Sugiyono, 2018). On this basis, they are moved to seek answers to their ignorance. The authors used Miles and Huberman’s research procedures, including data collection and conclusion drawing.

This research was conducted in two villages, namely Jerowaru Village and Wakan Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency NTB. It was conducted for 3 months.

Qualitative data analysis activities were carried out interactively and continuously until completion so that the data was saturated. This analysis consisted of 3 main things: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification, as shown in Figure 1. The following are the interrelated activities before, during, and after data collection in a parallel form to build general insights called analysis.

**Figure 1**
*Data Analysis Technique According to Miles and Huberman*

In the process of collecting data, data analysis can also be carried out at the same time. Data is everything that is seen, heard, and observed. The data obtained were not the final data that were directly analyzed to draw a conclusion. The researchers used data source observation sheets. Observation was the initial stage of research where researchers visited the location of Bale beleq (a large traditional house) and at the same time made observations which include inventoring the parts of the traditional house shape, the history of traditional houses, the meaning contained in every corner of the building and et cetera. After the observation data was obtained, the researchers then re-recorded the results of the observations in a notebook that was arranged systematically starting from the bottom of the traditional house to its
roof. The next stage was an interview to obtain information about the results of observations. Furthermore, the interview part was a further stage of observation before the researchers visited Jerowaru Village and Wakan Village one more time to find residents who were willing to become sources and provide adequate information to researchers.

In this case, researchers chose 8 people as informants, consisting of 1 traditional leader (TAD), 2 community leaders (TM1 and TM2), 1 youth leader (TP), 2 religious leaders (TA1 and TA2), 2 village heads (KD1 and KD2), who met the criteria that researchers had previously determined, namely 1) local community leaders, 2) over 40 years old, 3) understand about local culture, 4) the average informant has a title, 5) educated, 6) never migrated. After obtaining these eight sources, researchers interviewed them one by one about the history of the emergence of the Bale beleq traditional house in the past, the shape of the traditional house building, the meaning and philosophy contained in every corner of the building, the materials used in making Bale beleq, why it is called Bale beleq, the function of the Bale beleq traditional house, the existence of the Bale beleq traditional house. Furthermore, researchers conducted documentation where the stages carried out by recording, taking photos, and videos in order to make evidence in the preparation of articles.

Reduction of data stage took place continuously in line with the implementation of the research. It was intended to further sharpen, classify, direct, and discard unnecessary data and organize it. At this stage the authors reduced the data based on the results obtained from informants in the field. If there were several answers from informants that were repeated, the authors took the most general and representative ones.

Data presentation is an organized set of information that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions and action. Based on the data, researchers can more easily understand what is happening and what to do. The form of data presented can be in the form of charts, brief descriptions, graphs, charts, or tables. At this stage, the authors presented the data based on the results of interviews and observations in the field and form a brief description of the respondents’ answers.

Based on the data that had been reduced and presented, researchers drew conclusions that were supported by strong evidence at the data collection stage. The conclusion is the answer to the problem formulation and questions that had been expressed by the researcher from the beginning. Conclusions must be able to answer the problem formulation. Conclusions can be obtained from the researcher's interpretation of the findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. Credible conclusions are supported by strong evidence and can be continued to the
stage of implementing the research results. At this stage, conclusions were drawn based on the most credible answers from respondents based on the research objectives to be achieved, namely those related to the history, meaning, and philosophy contained in the Bale beleq traditional house.

C. Results and Discussion

The History of the Bale beleq Traditional House in Jerowaru Village

Based on the results of interviews with sources (TP) regarding the history of the Bale beleq traditional house in Jerowaru Village, several versions have been explained by the sources, namely the first, Bale beleq was said to have existed before the existence of Jerowaru village, because from the phrase "jerow" and "aru". Jerow means "honorable or noble people", while aru means "the fastest or the earliest". Hence, the authors were ensured that Bale beleq existed before the village of Jerowaru existed. Jerowaru meaning is that honorable people existed first, so Bale beleq indicated that Jerowaru existence. Furthermore, Bale beleq was presumably related to the history of the kingdoms that once existed in the southern region, namely the Seremongkot kingdom and the Dapur kingdom. Furthermore, people named Mas Nyake I and Mas Nyake II landed on the coast of the Jor Sea or the South Sea.

The history of the emergence of the Bale beleq traditional house can also be explained from the explanation of the resource person (TA2) regarding the Bale beleq. Based on the Jerowaru Village government data source, Bale beleq was built around the 1300s. However, the year of the construction of Bale beleq could not be confirmed. It is because at that time the community already existed but was still small, therefore the government data could not be confirmed. Therefore, the existence of Bale beleq could be confirmed to have existed hundreds of years ago or around the end of the 11th century into the 12th century. In addition, the community in Jerowaru already existed because Bale beleq was the first house in the area. The first source from Central Lombok is in the form of takepan (lontar), from which it is mentioned that Bale beleq was built by several people including Mas Nyake I and Mas Nyake II. It was also mentioned as the first house that stood in the middle of the wilderness by Mas Nyake I and Mas Nyake II.

Another version of the source (TA1) is that when a religious figure came from the south in ancient times, the first thing he looked for when he landed on the southern part of Lombok was a water source. He dug a well that is now known as Lingkok Tutuk (tutuk well) after meeting with an abundant source of water that could not be dammed, then filtered. It is said that materials of that time were beyond
human logic, then the overflow of water was able to be filtered. After that, a stone was taken from the bottom of the well that was dug. He ordered his retinue or bodyguard to throw the stone. Then, a residence or house would be built at the location of the stone. He threw another tool to dig the well. He said where the digging tool fell, then they would build a place of worship/mosque. After throwing the digging tools, then the bodyguard of the religious figure referred to as the guardian followed the direction of the stone which was thrown. After walking around the wilderness for a long time on foot, they met the stone that was thrown earlier, which was the precise location of the *bale beleq*. Therefore, the position of the stone is still preserved and has become one of the monuments of the ancestors. The stone is on the floor of the *Bale beleq* house, then the digging tool was found not far from the location of the *Bale beleq* building, which is then from this house every day leaving for the location of the mosque.

From the explanation of the informant (TA1), he explained that it could be the same person mentioned earlier, namely Mas Nyake I and Mas Nyake II. He was told by an elder religious figure in the Jerowaru Village area and this story was passed down from generation to generation by the elders and figures in Jerowaru. He said that the hamlet of Jor or the nickname Badui is more historical than other hamlets because that is where one of the scholars from Jordan who spread Islam on the southern island of Lombok landed. This religious figure was probably the first pioneer to dig the lingkok tutuk (well of tutuk) because when someone wanted to settle in an area, the first thing to look for was a water source. He was a figure who was believed to have built the tutuk well with his followers or close disciples. It is also possible that these people were referred to as Mas Nyake, which means "suddenly" or "mid-life". Because the Sasak people have given a name or nickname to someone who was honored until now, the title was given with the nickname "Mas", which was interpreted as a person who was glorified or very noble.

From the versions that have been explained by the sources, it can be seen that *Bale beleq* is the first house built in the Jerowaru area which became a residential house where past civilization figures or religious figures lived. *Bale beleq* was named because of the size of the building, which at that time was said large by the people of the past. *Bale beleq* is recorded as a cultural icon in the Jerowaru area and is still preserved today.

**History of Bale beleq Name**

The explanation of the informant (PA1) regarding the name of *Bale beleq* is that it has no bale or house. Previously, there was only one house because there was still no knowledge about building architecture in the past. They could only make a small
berugak seat made of wood. As a result, Bale beleq was called the biggest house of that era. Bale beleq was logically a role model in making houses. Others said the house was named Bale beleq because it was the residence of a saint of God who might at that time occupied quite a long time. Bale can be interpreted as "house" or residence, while beleq in the Sasak language is defined as something big. Researchers conclude that "Bale beleq" or a large house can be understood as a place of residence for a person or group that has a large area. Bale beleq is traditionally used as a traditional place; a place to solve social, religious problems, and others.

**Meaning and Philosophy of Bale beleq Traditional House**

An explanation of the meaning and philosophy of the Bale beleq traditional house based on the results of interviews with sources (TAD), namely, Bale means house, while Beleq means Big. However, the meaning of big is not only by the size of the house but also the residence of a scholar or religious figure who is the source of Sasak civilization, especially those in the Jerowaru area, because Jerowaru Village is known as a fairly old village. Based on the results of interviews from sources (KD2) regarding the meaning and philosophy of the traditional Bale beleq house, it is almost the same as in Jerowaru Village because people of Wakan Village believe that those who used to live in the Bale beleq in Jerowaru were the same people who occupied the Bale beleq in Wakan Village.

The meaning contained in each selection of building materials used from the explanation of the sources (KD1 and KD2) explains the building materials used in the construction of Bale beleq in Jerowaru Village and Wakan Village are almost similar. The only difference is the size of the traditional house. Each material used has its own meaning starting from the foundation of the house, the floor of the house, the walls of the house, the roof of the house, the pillars of the house, and the door. Each Bale beleq does not have windows from any angle. In the following researchers explain the meaning of the selection of Bale beleq building materials.

**Bale beleq Traditional House Foundation**

The explanation of the foundation of the Bale beleq traditional house from the source (TA1) is that the building material for the foundation of the Bale beleq house used raw soil, which was coagulated by human hands in ancient times mixed with bran (coarse rice skin). With this material, it is interpreted that humans will return to the ground. From previous research on the meaning of traditional house foundations, there are different meanings of human metaphorical form, namely the central head for thinking, the human body, and the feet as the support of the body and head (Sharon & Paranoan, 2020).
House Floor

Based on the interview with the informant (TA1), the material used for the floor uses soil mixed with bran (coarse rice skin), which means that humans are made of soil and will return to the ground. From previous research, there are different meanings contained in the floor of the house, namely ‘ahembató’ refers to the floor of the house as a place to sleep or a place to sit. If there are guests who spend the night at the house, then there the guests will sleep in ahembató. It is also not allowed for people to carry slippers carelessly on the batô (Ziraluo et al., 2022).

House wall or Fence

From the explanation of the informant (TA1), the walls of Bale beleq are made of woven bamboo, known as pager in Sasak language. Bale beleq does not have windows, which means that the privacy of a person in a household is maintained. As a result, it does not have a negative impact on the household itself and the surrounding people. In addition, in spiritual science (Qalbu), it refers to something that has entered the secret will always be placed in the secret itself (private). From previous research, there is a different meaning contained in the walls of the house, namely the value of simplicity that can be applied in life (Juliani et al., 2020).

House Door

The informant (TA1) explained the selection of building materials for the door using Gonde wood for the main door and woven bamboo for the room door. The size of both doors is almost similar, for a length of about one meter and a width of about half a meter, which means that everyone who visits someone’s house must bow his head and body when entering the house. It also refers to politeness or ethics. When visiting others’ houses, the guests must be good and polite. The guests should sit in the position of praying, namely sitting in between two prostrations. The door of the house faces the Qibla, which indirectly means the owner of the house teaches that we must not forget God wherever we are. Previous research on the meaning of the door of the house has the same value, which reflects mutual respect between guests and hosts (Juliani et al., 2020).

House Pole

According to the results of interviews with sources (TA1), the teken (pole) of the Bale beleq house has 1 pole, which is then broken into 4 corners or angles. The pole illustrates the tawhid, which is then broken down into 4 strengths (faith, Islam, tawhid, and ma’rifa). It is embodied in the pole of Bale beleq house. As a result, people get safety and happiness in the world and the hereafter, which refers to the selection
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of the *Bale beleq* house pole and an example for us in building houses/residences in general. From several previous studies regarding the meaning of traditional house poles, they have different meanings, namely as a shelter to avoid natural disasters (Amalia, 2014).

**House Roof**

Based on the results of the interview (TA1) to the informant, the building material used for the roof of the *Bale beleq* house is ere (thatch), in which the position of the roof tip rises downward. It means guests who enter someone else’s house when visiting must lower their body first, which signifies respect and manners to the owner of the house. The way of entering others’ houses is full of God’s ethics. It can be concluded that not just anyone who occupies the *Bale beleq* house, then he is a person who is quite close to his God (wali Allah or Custodian of God). Previous research on the meaning of the roof of a traditional house has a different meaning, namely the manifestation of human relations with the Creator of the universe, and as a place where the spirits of ancestors reside. Therefore, in the petuo (broker beam), the roof functions as a place to hang buffalo head horns from the results of sacrifices at traditional events (ASa et al., 2019; Elert et al., 2021).

**Characteristics of *Bale beleq* Traditional House**

Based on the results of interviews with informants (KD1 and KD2), the characteristics of the *Bale beleq* traditional house in Jerowaru Village, as shown in Figure 2, use original materials, namely the foundation of the house uses raw soil with a mixture of coarse bran (rice skin), the floor of the house also uses soil with a mixture of coarse bran, the roof of the house uses thatch, the walls use woven bamboo, the door uses wood, which consists of one pole then split into four corners. The shape of the house is square and has no windows. The direction of the house facing the Qibla shows its characteristics. It has three rooms, including the main room, which is divided into two rooms, namely a large enough room, a bedroom, and the other part is a terrace. The house has a large yard. The characteristics of the *Bale beleq* traditional house in Wakan Village are almost similar. The only difference is the size of the building and the number of rooms. The *Bale beleq* in Wakan Village, as shown in Figure 3, only has one room and a terrace. In terms of architecture, both houses are the same in the form of a square that has four corners.

**Function and Existence of *Bale beleq* in Today’s Society**

From the explanation of informants regarding the function of *Bale beleq* today and its existence, *Bale beleq* has many functions. It is not only used as a place to live
but also as a place for socio-cultural religious activities and a cultural destination. The types of activities that can be done in Bale beleq are as follows:

**Figure 2**  
*Bale beleq in Jerowaru Village*

![Bale beleq in Jerowaru Village](image1)

**Figure**  
*Bale beleq in Wakan Village*

![Bale beleq in Wakan Village](image2)
Religious

The informant (TA2) explained the function of the Bale beleq traditional house as a religious place, such as dhikr in the Sasak language means roah. The Jerowaru community itself still conserves this religious event. The house is also a place to gather orphans to share donations/donations from contributions by the local community. Moreover, the religious function of the Bale beleq traditional house in Wakan Village is a place of worship, such as Friday prayer in certain months.

Social

From the explanation of the informants (TM1 and TM2) regarding the social conditions in the Bale beleq traditional house in Jerowaru Village, the discussion activities occurred in it regarding religious activities and cultural activities conducted by the local community and are still maintained to this day. Meanwhile, in Wakan Village, the Bale beleq traditional house is not used as a place for deliberation. It is only used as a cultural place and as a center of local wisdom.

Culture

Based on the results of interviews with sources (TAD) regarding the culture that is still maintained in Bale beleq Jerowaru, the first festival activity around Jerowaru Hamlet was Selamet Dese by carrying torches and reading solawat for the safety of villagers. There are also other cultural activities, namely the reading of lontar by tribal leaders or traditional leaders. On the other hand, the cultural function of the Bale beleq traditional house in Wakan Village is as a place to hold thanksgiving by slaughtering livestock in the 7th month of the Sasak community month calculation and accompanied by perisean (traditional performance).

Local Wisdom Center

The resource person (TAD) explained that Bale beleq as the center of local wisdom of the Sasak Husunya community in Jerowaru Village is still attached to customs and religious values. Several local pearls of wisdom are still maintained to this day, such as besentulaq or rejecting bad luck that occurred in the 9th month of the Sasak, the slaughter of goats or other livestock, which is believed to be a means to recover from illness. Bale beleq also annually holds a cleaning of historical items such as keris (traditional dagger), spears, swords, and so on. The location of Bale beleq is also the center of rituals to ask God for rain, both religiously and customarily. The house becomes a cultural site that is still preserved today. On the contrary, the local wisdom of Bale beleq in Wakan Village includes being a place of treatment for
people who are said to be brought in their dreams to seek treatment at Bale beleq in Wakan Village. Moreover, Bale beleq in Wakan Village is not a cultural destination.

**Historical Objects in Bale beleq**

From the explanation of the sources (TM1 and TM2), not only Bale beleq is a historical object, but also objects or items in the house. It is still well preserved until now. Nowadays, the local community is afraid that historical objects will be stolen by people. Therefore, they build sekepat Bale beleq to store these historical objects such as keris, gong, gandeq, kitab, spear, ceraken, kendi, bunut belingker, jungkat, kelewang, sword, loom, takepan, kettle, books, kitchen utensils, and women’s hair in ancient times.

**D. Conclusion**

Bale beleq traditional house is a historical building that has a long and unique story in it. In addition, the existence of the Bale beleq traditional house is currently a cultural destination that is still preserved by the local community. Bale beleq traditional house has meanings or positive values in everyday life such as religious values, cultural values, social values, and local wisdom values. Every selection of Bale beleq building materials has a good meaning to be an example in behavior and other good things. The functions of the house are to be a place for deliberation, dhikr, thanksgiving, a place to clean tools and materials of historical heritage, besentulak (rejecting bala or bad luck), reading palm trees, a place of treatment, and others. Thus, historical relics such as traditional houses will be preserved if the local community maintains and cares for these historical relics so that they are not eroded by the times. The results of this study are expected to be used as guidelines in developing society, both by youth, religious leaders, community leaders, or the government.

**References**


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