

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF SONGKET WEAVERS IN SUKARARA VILLAGE: Work Performance and Economic Capital

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Abstract:

This article addresses the intersection between gender, ethnicity, work performance, and economic capital. It focuses on Sasak Muslim women who weave songkets and their economic capital in Sukarara Village, Central Lombok. This article using an ethnographic approach focused on economic capital of songket weaver. The behavior, attitudes, and personalities that are inherent in weavers in their daily operations are examined holistically and particularly through qualitative research. This study found that Sasak Muslim women who weave songket fabric in Sukarara are in good performance due to their ability to use time wisely and complete tasks quickly and effectively. They are economically capable based on a lack of consumer debt, their capacity in business, their possession of investments, their ability to manage

business finances, and their mental readiness for monetary turbulence. In this framework, Sasak Muslim women's economic capital in songket weaving is separated into three roles: as the center of the family, as vehicles for personal fulfillment, and as wives.

[Artikel ini mengkaji tentang persinggungan antara gender, etnis, performa kerja, dan kapital ekonomi pada perempuan Muslim penenun songket suku Sasak di Desa Sukarara, Lombok Tengah. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografi, artikel ini fokus pada performa kerja dan kapasitas ekonomi penenun songket. Perilaku, sikap, dan kepribadian yang melekat pada perempuan penenun songket dalam kesehariannya dikaji secara holistik dan khususnya melalui penelitian lapangan. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa perempuan Muslim penenun songket dari suku Sasak tersebut memproduksi songket dengan sangat baik karena mampu menggunakan waktu dengan bijak dan menyelesaikan tugas dengan cepat dan efektif. Sehingga mereka sudah mandiri secara ekonomi dengan berdasar pada realitas tidak terlilit utang, mandiri dalam usaha, memiliki investasi, dan mental matang dalam menghadapi turbulensi moneter. Dalam kerangka ini, kemandirian ekonomi perempuan Muslim Sasak dalam menenun songket dipisahkan menjadi tiga peran: sebagai tulang punggung keluarga, pemenuhan kebutuhan pribadi, dan sebagai istri.]

Keywords: *Ethnography, Work Performance, Songket weaver, Muslim women*

Introduction

Islam teaches its followers to uphold the principles of Islamic ethics compliance. Every human is basically “homo faber” (working creatures). Islam also guarantees all the freedom for Muslims to choose a variety of useful work activities as their profession so that they will be able to sustain themselves.¹ Humans will also be able to meet all of their survival demands through employment activities. Therefore, mankind must strive

¹ Musa Asy'arie, *Islam Etos dan Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Umat* (Yogyakarta: LESFI, 1997), p. 40.

to succeed and find true happiness on earth and in the hereafter as a form of embodiment of working ethos.² A person's ethos can be defined as a simple trait or attitude that makes them distinctive both as an individual and as a member of a group. The word "ethos" invokes the word "ethics" which is related to the meaning of "morals." It is the fundamental trait of an individual or group of individuals toward a nation.³ Ethos is essential to explain how society perceives the value of one's professional ethics.⁴

Islam as a religion that compromises a strong work ethic is an essential teaching of the religion. Islam's emphasis on hard effort stems from the Muslim's conviction that achieving his life's objectives and pleasing Allah should go hand in hand. In this sense, it may be claimed that Islam is a religion that draws on legal principles, one of which discusses the value of labor.⁵ Religion, according to Nur Syam, has something to do with what people do because they think it is right. On another side, faith serves as a guide for interpreting his behavior.⁶

Work ethic is related to a belief system that is acquired through appreciation and observation of the community. They have a work ethic that is either better or worse than other societies with other belief systems because of this belief system. For instance, Max Weber's findings on the Calvinist Protestant, who eventually embraced them as the Protestant Ethic.⁷ Ethos will relate to evaluative aspects and even have a tendency

² Thohir Luth, *Antara Perut & Etos Kerja dalam Perspektif Islam* (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2001), p. 25.

³ *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 1980, p. 407.

⁴ John M. Echols & Hassan Shadily, *Kamus Inggris Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), p. 219.

⁵ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan: Membangun Tradisi dan Visi Baru Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), p. 215.

⁶ Nur Syam & Suko Susilo, *Jejak Politik Lokal Kaum Tarekat* (Surabaya: Jengjala Pustaka Utama, 2020), p. 10.

⁷ Weber's thesis has raised pros and cons among sociologists. Some sociologists admit the validity of this thesis, but not a few who doubt it, even reject it. Kurt Samuelson, the Swedish economic historian is the one who rejected Weber's entire thesis, saying that there can never be support for parallels between Protestantism and behavioral economics. Kurt Samuelson, *Religion and Economic Action: A Critic of Max*

to be judgmental in social life when it has a foothold or foundation in human life.⁸ According to Weber, ethos is a conviction that directs the behavior of an individual, a group of individuals, or a certain institution (guiding belief of a person, group or institution). Work ethic can therefore be defined as a teaching about work ethics that, up until it is expressly demonstrated in work behavior, is perceived as a good and right thing by an individual or group of individuals.⁹

This article examines the productivity and economic performance of Sasak Muslim women weaving *songket* in Sukarara, Central Lombok.¹⁰ This study employs a qualitative ethnographic methodology known as cultural studies, which examines fundamental knowledge and incorporates ethnographic theory, research methods, and cultural description. In order to, it can be understand the importance of local knowledge for *songket* weavers in a holistic framework, it is important to learn about their daily activities. Additionally, this article also seeks to the ability of women *songket* weavers to maintain their economic independence in a natural environment is adapted to the motif or background of their weaving. It is serves as a source of money and a means of preserving the culture or tradition that has been passed down from the ancestors.

***Songket* Weaver Performance**

Women can maintain their standard of living by working in the traditional *songket* weaving industry in Sukarara. Women's labor performance is measured by how much they can produce on one piece of cloth, which, when done regularly, can last for a full week. The foundation for this production activity can be divided into two categories:

Weber (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1964), p. 1-26.

⁸ Taufik Abdullah, *Agama, Etos Kerja dan Pengembangan Ekonomi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), p. 3.

⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁰ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung : PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018), p. 4.

first, the objective aspect—also known as the scientific aspect—which is connected to the technical and economic side and includes the facilities used, the processed natural resources, and the labor devoted to production activities. Second, subjective factors, such as psychological motivations, objectives to be accomplished through production activities, and appraisal of production activities in light of various justice ideas that have been embraced.¹¹

Regarding the women who weave *songket* fabric in Sukarara, Central Lombok, it is important to note that they have been able to significantly contribute to supplying their families' financial needs. Even yet, there might be a wide range of contributions made because the socioeconomic status of the home affects this circumstance. In this situation, specific metrics must also be used to evaluate their work performance.¹²

Work performance is the ratio of the amount of output to the number of inputs.¹³ If a person's output is greater than their input, they are considered to be more productive. A person's performance will be considered low, on the other hand, if their input exceeds their output. Great performance skills will also be demonstrated by high work performance. Work performance is defined as an outlook on life and a mental attitude that always seeks to improve the quality of life.

The women Muslim in Sukarara as traditional *songket* fabric weavers always have a better perspective on the future. Their enthusiasm shows in work consistently, arriving on time, and genuinely enjoying job. They even believe that artistic and cultural souls are manifested in their work. As a result, Sukarara residents, particularly women weavers, always cherish their employment as *songket* weavers.

¹¹ Nur Chamid, *Jejak Langkah Sejarah Pemikiran Ekonomi Islam* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010), p. 327.

¹² Irving H. Siegel, "Work Ethic and Productivity," J. Barbash, R.J. Lampman, S. A. Levitan, & G. Tyler, (eds.), *The Work Ethic—A Critical Analysis* (Madison, WI: Industrial Relations Research Association, 1983), pp. p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-42.

Efficiency Term (Bedue Penunah)

In terms of economics, efficiency is the maximizing and use of all resources during the process of creating goods and services. Its consists of some aspects: the precision of the way in carrying out something without wasting time, energy, and money. It can be considered as an efficiency metric for women weaving *songket* fabric in Sukarara.

As an illustration, the *songket* weaving process requires inputs like yarn and yeast as a color ingredient. The weaver will create yeast (a color-mixing component) from natural elements if the customer's desired color isn't present in the yarn's base color. For instance, to mimic the color of the soil, weavers frequently use dried tamarind seeds that are then boiled with the threads to achieve the required color. However, there will also be a distinction between woven fabrics that use the original color of the yarn and those that use the color of the fermented yarn on the output side.

According to Suroso Imam Jazuli, efficiency is part of the principles of Islamic economics, namely the principle of efficiency and benefits by preserving nature.¹⁴ This is in line with the condition of the weavers, in their activities, they squeeze using threads made from nature.

Effectiveness (Bedue Perindengan) & Work Quality (Gunen Begawean)

Effectiveness is the speedy and exact accomplishment of objectives. It places more emphasis on output and less on input. Sasak women in Sukarara can weave a piece of cloth that is 25 cm long in one day thanks to their efficiency in the workplace. This accomplishment represents the pinnacle of what current looms, often referred to as *gedogan*, are capable of, making it possible to weave a 1.5 m wide piece of cloth in as little as six days. Whereas quality of work, specifically the level of output that employees generate in compliance with the institution's operating norms quality in this context refers to non-physical items like services as well as tangible commodities. In Sukarara, the Sasak women's craftsmanship does not appear to be in question. The best woven fabrics on the island

¹⁴ Suroso Imam Jazuli, *Prinsip-Prinsip Ekonomi Islam* (Universitas Airlangga, 2004).

of Lombok are evidence of this. There are many weaving communities, particularly in Central Lombok, including Sade Village, Ende Village, and many other villages, although their weaving can be stated to be of lower quality than that of Sukarara Village. For instance, to distinguish quality, the woven fabrics in Sade Village are stiffer and rougher than those in Sukarara Village. When it comes to the context of the quality of work, the Qur'an instills awareness that by working, we are aware of the purpose of our servitude to Allah, which raises our self-esteem, raises our standard of living, and benefits other person.¹⁵

Work Quantity

The quantity of work or the number of employees is the total amount of work that can be completed by a single employee in a given amount of time. One metric of work performance is the volume of work. The quantity or number of works created will determine how prolific a person is. As a result, quality work must be done in addition to amount of work. Women in Sukarara are able to produce roughly 25 cm per day when weaving traditional *songket* fabrics using only traditional looms or *gedogan*, making them deserving of the title of having good work quality. Therefore, it only takes a minimum of 6 days to make one sheet of cloth.

On Time (Pas Wayen)

Being on time means being able to complete an employee's work goals in the allotted amount of time. The degree of work performance that an employee can complete in accordance with the allotted time can also be understood as punctuality. Actually, discipline and punctuality are related. In this instance, women who work as weavers exercise discipline in their labor. They begin working at 7:00 WITA and then pause for prayer and lunch. They resume weaving at 14.00 WIB and do so until 18.00 WIB. To achieve high work quality, everyone must own the aforementioned performance metrics. Therefore, it is necessary for all people to work

¹⁵ Abdul Aziz & Mariyah Ulfah, *Kapita Selekta Ekonomi Islam Kontemporer* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2010), p. 53.

harder and more productively. Islam instructs its followers to utilize time wisely in order to accomplish good deeds for themselves, other person (*bablum ninannas*), and Allah SWT (*bablum minallah*).¹⁶ In order to promote greater efficiency, economic conduct has assimilated religious principles. This is appropriate with the findings of Irwan Abdullah's seeks on the Jatinom, Klaten, Central Java community's business phenomenon. He argues that the impact of internalizing religious principles on informants' performance demonstrates that they engage in spiritual productivity.¹⁷ The informants' religious principles include making things that are legal, reliable, and trustworthy as well as benefiting from financial success and giving alms. Internalized religious beliefs have the power to boost informants' performance by motivating them to put out their best effort at all times in order to provide more results.¹⁸

An Economic Capital

According to early argues this article, the Sasak Muslim women who weave *songket* fabric are hardworking, trustworthy, disciplined, patient, respectful of others' time, skilled, and others. They are who weave *songket* show work ethic in all of their personality traits. Good work performance was raised from this strong work ethic. It seems to reason that someone

¹⁶ <http://bertousman.com/2011/24/produktivitas-dan-kualitas-dalamperspektif-islam/>, accessed on 10 December 2020.

¹⁷ Irwan Abdullah, *The Muslim Businessmen of Jatinom: Religious Reform and Economic Modernization in a Central Javanese Town* (Amsterdam: Universiteit Van Amsterdam, 1994).

¹⁸ The internalization of religious principles by the informants is referred to by the researcher as "spiritual" rather than "religiosity" as a method. Internalized religious principles are employed as norms and guidance in every attitude and action when a Muslim manages a business (productivity). Additionally, the term spirituality is utilized to define the meaning of the informants' held religious values. The term spirituality was chosen because, in contrast to the term religiosity, it has a more positive, open, and inclusive connotation. While spirituality is a personal and practical experience that describes a person's efforts to find meaning and purpose in life, religiosity is a formal and institutional commitment to beliefs and practices that is founded on a specific (religious) tradition. Yulmaida Amir & Diah Rini Lesmawati, "Religiusitas dan Spiritualitas: Konsep yang Sama atau Berbeda," *Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Psikologis: Kajian Empiris dan Non Empiris*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 67-73.

with a poor or weak work ethic cannot be productive. One piece of cloth that may be created within a week serves as an example of how productive these women are at work.

Work performance denotes a style of life that constantly strives to be better in order to increase the quality of life, as was said in the preceding description. Economic capital is one of the real examples of this standard of living. From the discussion above, it may be seen that a strong work ethic would result in good performance, and the two characters' ultimate goal is financial capital. Sasak Muslim women in Sukarara mention it as the essential of *songket* weaving. They have a strong work ethic, which breeds performance, and in the end, both of these factors contribute to their financial capital.

Debt Free and Confidence in Business

One of the characteristics of Sasak Muslim women in Sukarara is that they are self-sufficient women. They weave if have their own capital and choose not to take on debt because they are worried about the consequences of heavy debt burdens. These women are very protective of themselves from debt. Inak Rohatun—one of Sasak women weavers—argues that using their own capital is more secure for financial than debt.¹⁹

Another characteristic of Sasak Muslim women in Sukarara is confidence in their business. When their business is functioning slowly, a person with faith in business is not easily swayed in conducting their firm. The Covid-19 pandemic which is still ravaging several countries is proof that Sasak Muslim women in Sukarara were confident in their businesses. They remain unaffected by the circumstances, even as they continue to look for ways to survive under all circumstances.

¹⁹ Interview with Inak Rohatun, 10 January 2021.

Investment

The fact that they have investments is another sign of the Sasak Muslim women weavers in Sukarara's economic capital. They are accustomed to investing because occupation as weavers. They use it as capital if they don't have much money to spend on woven textiles. The investing spirit in this situation, which is the ultimate outcome of a business process and how the business will operate, is undoubtedly neither enormous nor tiny, but rather rests in the future vision. Even the capital they put up for investment is not always in the form of cash; it can also take the form of energy, thoughts, etc.

Able to Manage Cash Flow and Prepared for Financial Distress

Sasak Muslim women weavers in Sukarara are painstaking in managing the financial results of their businesses. Their cash flow from the business can be managed properly, which is not entirely used as consumptive capital but partly used for investment in the businesses. They are able to calculate how much money should be used to meet their consumption needs and how much should be returned to the capital. This is an indicator that in the economic context, Muslim Sasak women weavers in Sukarara are independent.

In other aspects, Sasak Muslim women weavers in Sukarara were also able to survive the onslaught of Covid-19. They are able to show a strong mentality even though there is extraordinary economic turbulence. At a time when many other professions have experienced a drastic decline in their economic income and even went failed, Sasak Muslim women weavers in Sukarara are relatively unaffected and their income is stable. They continue to weave *songket* with a strong work ethic. This phenomenon shows their financial independence.

According to the preceding explanation of the indicators of economic capital, it can be concluded that economic capital is the ability of an individual or community to meet their requirements without relying on anybody or anything. The person becomes liberated from

the numerous dependencies of the current economic crises when they achieve economic capital.²⁰ Economic capital is also defined as the state of having the capacity to reason, to choose wisely, to act morally, and to use those capacities to use his abilities to find answers to a variety of difficulties in his life. Cognitive, psychomotoric, and emotional skills as well as the skills of various physical and material resources are among the capacities under discussion. Capacity, which can be attained through the learning process, is always a defining characteristic of the empowerment of an individual or society.²¹

A Typological of Sasak Muslim Women Weaver

In this context, there are various different types of Sasak Muslim women who work as *songket* weavers. They have each character in their work motivation. Sasak Muslim women weavers are not just a profession but also a characterization of a group of women who have high dedication. Following are some of the typologies of Sasak Muslim women who weave *songket*.

Head of Family

The widowed group (*behalu*), which includes *songket* weavers, consists of widows who have either had a divorce from their husbands or whose husbands have passed away. Typically, the women who belong to the widow society are either weavers or collectors.

This typical widows' group helps one another while also providing the numerous raw materials needed for the weaving process. As distributors or collection stations for weaving raw materials, they pass over their woven products to the collectors in the meantime, with a sales system reduced from the cost of the raw materials they get from the

²⁰ Nur Fitriani, "Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Perempuan terhadap Kemandirian Ekonomi Perempuan di UKM Pelangi Nusantara Singosari Malang," *thesis*, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2019, p. 35.

²¹ Sumodiningrat, *Pembangunan Daerah dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* (Jakarta: PT. Bina Rena Pariwara, 2000), p. 24.

collectors. The good work performance and work ethic of this widow weaver are both quite strong.

The above argues describing the work ethic that has been ingrained in them as a result of their sense of camaraderie in the struggle, resulting in a strong emotional bond. The tenacity of the *bebalu* weaving groups is caused by conditions that force them to become the head of the family. To satisfy their needs, they use all ingenuity and imagination. High morality ultimately affects the production of output and efficiency at work.

Self-Actualization

Women in this group typically decide to join an art gallery or shop in Sukarara Village in order to sell traditional *songket* woven fabrics. They have working hours just as any other firm employee would. In addition, they are required to meet an unique daily goal of at least 25 cm in order to get Rp. 50,000 in compensation. The women weaver model that works in the home industry has a tendency to have a measured work ethic in line with the business owner's direction, so that the output created has a clear standard according to the objective of the business owner.

In another regard, people decide to work in the home-based sector for a variety of reasons, including emotional closeness with business owners, which allows them to feel at ease without feeling coerced.

Husband Support

In order to form a marriage that is *sakinah, mawaddah, and warahmah*, the husband and wife should look out for one another and encourage one another. Generally speaking, a husband serves as the family's leader and has the responsibility of working to provide for the family's basic requirements of clothing, food, and housing. Additionally, the husband performs the role of a spouse, i.e., a devoted friend in happy and sad occasions by making time to talk and hang out with his wife.

In addition to playing a crucial supporting role to their spouses, wives also play an essential role in raising their kids. Wives act as partners

who are entertaining and enjoyable for their life, just like husbands do. Wives might be invited to talk, share thoughts, find solutions, and work through any issue together. The woman is the husband's motivator in different endeavors, including work and domestic duties.²²

According to Sunardi, in his activities, the husband actively supports his wife's line of work as a *songket* weaver. She appreciates how useful her job as a weaver is because she can work and take care of her husband's, children and household duties at the same time because the weaving is done at home.²³

In addition, Sasak women not only work as *songket* weavers but also as farmers. Weavers who don't have access to agricultural land become farmer laborers. They typically open up plantations or fields belonging to other people to grow vegetables like long beans, peanuts, and other crops. Additionally, weavers also livestock for who have cows, goats, chickens, and ducks. Additionally, some weavers operate as market vendors. They sell around the community and in some cases while they are still weaving on the terrace of their homes.²⁴

In this context, Islam convincing that the level of work performance between men and women is the same. Even the Qur'an permits women to engage in a variety of economic pursuits, according to the words of Allah in QS. An-Nissa: 32.

Hamka pointed out that both men and women are required to labor and run businesses in order to receive their fair share based on the standards for the particular business they own. Even so, women must continue to act as the wives and housewives that they are meant to be and cannot take the place of men as husbands or home leader.²⁵

²² Dyah Purbasari Kusumaning Putri & Sri Lestari, "Pembagian Peran dalam Rumah Tangga pada Pasangan Suami Istri Jawa," *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2015, pp. 72-85.

²³ Interview with Sunardi in Sukarara Village, 5 February, 2021.

²⁴ Interview with Mar, Nurmin & Muliani, in Sukarara Village, 5 February, 2021.

²⁵ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar, Jilid V* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1984), p. 35-39.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that in essence, women weaving *songket*, in Sukarara, have a fairly high work ethic and this cannot be separated from the spiritual values in Islam. In the Qur'an, it is clear that the heavens and what is on earth (both on land and in the sea) are (absolutely) the property of Allah and are intended to be used and preserved and empowered for the benefit of mankind.²⁶ Islam teaches its people to always work and work will be worth worship if the intention is for Allah.

In line with Max Weber's thesis which holds that there is a connection between religion and economy,²⁷ Sasak Muslim women weavers in Sukarara not only internalize religious values but also show economic capital as a result of their strong work ethics and work performance. Socially marginalized women are actually capable of performing their public roles well and even assisting in the financial independence of their families. The Sasak Muslim women who weave *songket* in Sukarara are an example of this.

The fact that the existence of women cannot be underestimated has also existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. One of them is represented by Siti Khadijah as the Prophet's wife as well as a rich merchant in Mecca at that time. In addition, there is also a women figure named Samra' binti Nahika Al Asadiyah who was appointed as market supervisor (*al hasabah*) by the prophet. While Rafidhah Aslamiyyah is identified as the manager of the first Islamic hospital.²⁸

Even if women's role in the economy has increased since the time of the prophet, Weber's thesis still falls short on the subject of women's capacity because it does not expressly address women's work ethics. Thus, the fact that Muslim women also have a strong work ethic, which might be impacted by their religious experience, can be used as a starting point

²⁶ Al-Quran, 2: 29.

²⁷ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic...*

²⁸ M. Siraj Sait & Hilary Lim, Islam, *Land & Property: Research Series* (Kenya: UN-HABITAT, 2005), p. 12.

for understanding Weber's argumentation. Women who are capable will have more authority in the household and in society.²⁹ Women that fit the bill for determination are capable of problem-solving and are not reliant on others.³⁰

Conclusion

Work performance of the Sasak Muslim women weavers in Sukarara has been able to make a significant contribution in supporting the economic needs of their families. Efficiency, effectiveness, quality of work, quantity of work, and timeliness are characteristics of excellent work performance. It must be admitted that the the work performance of Sasak Muslim women is an excellent skill.

Due to their excellent production, Muslim Sasak women in Sukarara have achieved economic capital. Free of consumer debt, business confidence, investments, the ability to handle cash flow, and mental readiness for financial upheavals are some signs of someone's economic capital. Three types of Sasak Muslim women who weave *songket* can be classified according to their economic independence: those who serve as the core of the family, those who seek self-actualization, and those who serve as wives.

²⁹ Eny Zuhni Khayati , "Pendidikan dan Independensi Perempuan," *Musawa: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Islam*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 19-35.

³⁰ Sri Emy Yuli Suprihatin, "Menggagas Pendidikan Entrepreneur dan Perempuan Mandiri *Musawa: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Islam*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 81-96.

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