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Unboxing Indigenous Community Ritual *"Sedekah Turun Ton"* as Mitigation Communication to Mitigate Disaster in North Lombok

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the forms, meanings, and communicative functions embedded in the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual and its contribution to strengthening community awareness, preparedness, and resilience in facing disasters in North Lombok. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted in Bayan Village, North Lombok Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through a literature review, direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling and included traditional leaders, community leaders, and community members with knowledge of and involvement in the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model through data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual functions as a local disaster mitigation communication practice by conveying messages about the importance of conserving, protecting, and respecting the environment, including forests, water resources, the sea, and agricultural land. These messages are represented through traditional attire, ritual symbols, and customary speech and are subsequently reflected in community norms and everyday practices. However, the transmission of mitigation messages faces challenges, including limited youth participation, geographical distance to ritual sites, and language barriers. The study implies the need for adaptive and digital-based strategies to strengthen intergenerational transmission and sustain indigenous disaster mitigation knowledge among younger generations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries that have the potential for disasters with various risks [1]. This is often not realized by the community and is not managed properly. In

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addition, disasters often occur suddenly or unexpectedly. This kind of disaster causes various impacts. The first impact of a disaster is an emergency [2]. After this emergency, it is usually followed by a disaster preparedness process to mitigate the disaster. In this process, the role of communication is very important. Communication may function as a social radar that provides messages to other parties regarding a disaster somewhere [3]. Communication in relation to disaster mitigation is necessary because of the need to reduce uncertainty in the community so that people can act effectively [4].

North Lombok Regency is a region vulnerable to various types of disasters, including earthquakes, floods, landslides, and other hydrometeorological hazards, making the strengthening of disaster mitigation communication essential for enhancing community preparedness [5]. Within indigenous communities, disaster mitigation communication does not necessarily occur through formal mechanisms, such as government-led awareness and education programs, but may also be embedded in cultural practices and rituals that have been transmitted across generations [6]. So far, disaster mitigation implemented by the District Disaster Management Board (BPBD), especially the North Lombok BPBD for the Traditional Bayan Village community, is generally construction mitigation (focusing on repairing physical buildings) instead of developing local intervention practices that are more acceptable to the community and can reduce disaster risk [7]. In fact, the Indigenous Bayan people have long maintained their local knowledge in disaster risk reduction efforts. This local knowledge or value is known as the *"sidekah Turun ton"* ritual ceremony [8]. This ceremony aims to ask God for safety through prayer, so that they are always given safety from all kinds of disasters. This traditional ceremony lasts for four days. Ritual ceremonies like this then bring their own wisdom to the community. This local wisdom, which is an ancestral heritage, is one way to build an understanding of disaster mitigation [9].

Currently, various ways related to disaster mitigation efforts are carried out, but many of these efforts did not achieve the objectives. Cultural approaches and local wisdom can be one way of implementing mitigation communication. Local wisdom *"Sidekah Turun Ton"* by the Bayan community in North Lombok is one of them [10]. Local wisdom is a manifestation of the behavior of a particular community or society so that it can coexist with nature/environment without destroying it. Referring to this, it is also explained that local wisdom is rooted, basic in nature, and has become a form of behavior of a community member to manage and protect the environment wisely [11].

Previous studies have demonstrated the important role of local wisdom in disaster mitigation. Yolanda and Fahmi [12], for example, found that the Nagari Pasia Laweh community implemented structural mitigation based on local wisdom through settlement patterns, as well as the design and construction of houses and bridges. Meanwhile, non-structural mitigation practices included local knowledge such as *hujan di rimbo*, *bunyi gamuruah*, *bangkahan sampik*, *mancari rumah dunsanak*, and *maagiah kaba* through *tambo* and other local communication media, which contributed to strengthening community preparedness. Similarly, Ayub et al. [13] found that local wisdom among Lombok communities in earthquake mitigation encompassed religious beliefs, myths, and ecological awareness, physical and metaphysical signs, deliberation, mutual cooperation,

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the use of bamboo slit drums (*kentongan*), and traditional Lombok house designs. These forms of local wisdom contributed positively to disaster mitigation by strengthening both structural and non-structural measures, including building design, disaster information dissemination, community awareness programs, the integration of disaster mitigation into classroom learning, and coordination between schools and surrounding communities.

Kamasuta et al. [14] found that the communities of Pemaru and Bebekeq implemented disaster mitigation through terracing, traditional bamboo slit drums (*kentongan* or *kukul*), *gawe gawah* activities, evacuation routes, emergency response mechanisms, and post-disaster mutual cooperation. However, technological development has contributed to the gradual decline of certain forms of local wisdom in Bebekeq, particularly the use of *kentongan* as a disaster information medium, whereas the Pemaru community continues to preserve and rely on local wisdom as a preparedness mechanism for reducing the risks of landslides and flash floods. Similarly, Taufik and Pujayanti [15] demonstrated that local wisdom among Lombok communities plays an important role in earthquake mitigation through early warning systems, traditional settlement and building designs, customary rituals, evacuation practices, mutual cooperation, and post-disaster recovery. The sustainability of such local wisdom, however, requires strengthened intergenerational transmission in the context of modernization and globalization.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the important role of local wisdom in disaster mitigation, they have not specifically examined the function of indigenous rituals as communication media for disaster mitigation. This research gap is evident in the limited attention given to *Sedekah Turun Ton*, a ritual practiced by the Bayan indigenous community in North Lombok, as a communicative practice that conveys symbols, safety messages, ecological knowledge, and disaster preparedness values. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in *unpacking Sedekah Turun Ton* as an indigenous disaster mitigation communication mechanism, particularly by examining how mitigation messages are communicated, interpreted, and transmitted across generations. This study aims to analyze the forms, meanings, and communicative functions embedded in the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual and its contribution to strengthening community awareness, preparedness, and resilience in facing disasters in North Lombok.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to explore and describe in depth the forms, meanings, and disaster mitigation communication practices embedded in the traditional *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual of the Bayan community [16]. The study was conducted in Bayan Village, Bayan District, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, a region where the traditional practices and local wisdom of the Sasak Bayan community continue to be preserved. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in the ritual. The informants included Bayan traditional leaders or customary authorities, community leaders, and community members who understand the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual and demonstrate an interest in disaster mitigation and environmental issues. Their selection was intended to obtain in-depth information regarding the messages, symbols, values, and

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communication practices embedded in the ritual. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, as presented in Figure 2.

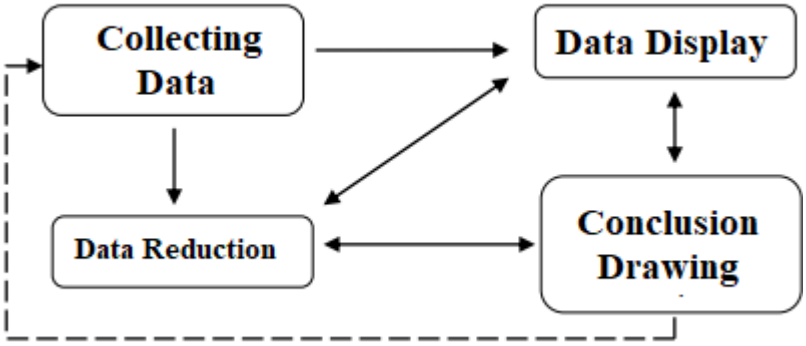


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman's Analysis

Miles and Huberman explain that data analysis consists of four interconnected activities: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [17]. (1) Data collection: The researchers first conducted a literature review of previous studies on local wisdom, disaster mitigation, disaster communication, and traditional rituals in Lombok. Direct observations were then conducted in Bayan Village, North Lombok Regency, where the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual continues to be preserved. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants selected through purposive sampling, including traditional leaders, community leaders, and community members who understand and participate in the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual and possess knowledge of disaster mitigation and environmental conservation. Data collection focused on identifying the forms, meanings, symbols, messages, and communication practices embedded in the ritual as part of disaster mitigation efforts. (2) Data reduction: The collected data were summarized, selected, classified, and focused on information relevant to the *Sedekah Turun Ton* ritual, particularly its cultural values, symbols, communication messages, and disaster mitigation practices. (3) Data display: The reduced data were presented descriptively and thematically based on interviews, observations, and documentation to illustrate the function of *Sedekah Turun Ton* as an indigenous disaster mitigation communication practice. (4) Conclusion drawing: Conclusions were formulated based on the patterns, meanings, and relationships identified in the data concerning the role of *Sedekah Turun Ton* in communicating disaster mitigation knowledge, strengthening environmental awareness and collective preparedness, and preserving indigenous wisdom within the Bayan community.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Bayan subdistrict is located in the northern part of Lombok Island, which is directly adjacent to the districts of East Lombok, West Lombok, and the Java Sea. The distance of the Bayan subdistrict to the district capital is about ± 80km. The location of the Bayan subdistrict is quite strategic because it is the main access to the natural tourist area of Mount Rinjani. Geographically, it consists of lowlands, highlands, mountains, and

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beaches. The area of Bayan subdistrict is about 521.22 km². Karang Bajo village is the location of the *"Sidekah Turun Ton"* ceremony. This Village is the centre of the traditional wetu telu Village in Bayan. Many traditional ritual activities are often carried out in this village, one of which is the *"Sidekah Turun Ton"* ritual. In addition to the rituals mentioned, there are also 3 types of rituals based on the duration of time, including:

1. Short-term (Islamic prayer) is conducted every year
2. Medium-term (Sidekah Turun Tons or Sidekah Turun Balit) is generally held every 3 years
3. Long-term (gawe alit) was last carried out in 1954 and has not been implemented since then.

This area is also known as the *Bayan Beleq* Area, where almost all religious, social, and cultural activities are carried out. There are also the main rites of *Watu Telu,* such as the ancient *Wetu Telu* mosque, ancestral graves, and the traditional village of Bayan.

3.1. Traditional Activities of Sidekah Turun Ton

The indigenous people of Bayan still maintain and continue to strive to preserve the traditions of their ancestral heritage in every aspect of their lives. Adat for the Bayan people is a rule of life that should not be abandoned even though modernization and globalization cannot be stopped. There are at least three basic elements *(Wetu Telu)* that the Bayan people must understand and practice in carrying out their lives, namely creating harmony among people, between people and nature, and between people and God. To foster harmony with these three elements, the Bayan community often performs several rituals with different goals and at different times. One of the traditional rituals that are often carried out to maintain the harmonization of human life with nature is the *Sidekah Turun Ton.* This traditional ritual is held by the Bayan community who live in Karang Bajo. The ritual ceremony is held every three years. The objective of the ritual is to develop harmony amongst people, people and nature, and people with God. People also hope for the safety of the people and expect protection from natural disasters. In addition, people of Bayan village hope for prosperity.

The *Sidekah Turun Ton* ritual undergoes a series of six rituals. It starts with gundem (traditional meeting of the adat leaders) to agree on the day of the ritual. After the adat leaders agree on the day of the ritual, the *penjeleng* is held. Penjeleng is the ritual to make holy oil to be used to clean all artefacts of the ritual ceremony. This ritual is led by the *penjeleng* (someone who is, by heritage, in charge of leading the ritual of making holy oil). After the penjeleng ritual, there will be a series of four rituals called menjojo. The first *menjojo* is held in the adat forest at about 8 pm. The procession starts from Karang Bajo, where people walk barefoot, using traditional Sasak sarongs, a white headband *(sapuk),* and bare chests. This is to symbolise that people are bound to nature. They walk about five hours to reach the forest. In the forest, they hold the *menjojo* ritual led by *Perumbak Daye* (people who were appointed through heritage to lead the ceremony. The ritual is aimed at bringing prosperity to the people and protection from natural disasters such as flooding and drought. They believe that God created the forest that protects them from such disasters. On the basis of this ceremony, the Bayan people develop unwritten rules that state that

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people are forbidden to cut and log the trees; burn the tree leaves and brush; people are not allowed to throw waste into the river or spring water; people are forbidden to herd their cattle in the forest. By means of these rules, the forest is protected. If the forest is sustained, spring water and fresh air will be sustained, and floods will not occur. This is one of the teachings in the ritual *Sidekah Turun Ton*.

The second mejojo is to the sea. This ritual ceremony is also started by people of Karang Bajo walking to the sea. At the beach, the people of Karang Bajo held the ritual and prayed to the God held by Kyai Lebe. They prayed in the hope that the sea would provide people with prosperity. The fish are abundant, and other sea creatures also provide food to people. Similar clothing to the first mejojo was suggested to all participants. The third *menjojo* was held in the east part of the village near the forest. The ritual ceremony is held in the rice field. The ceremony is led by *perumbaq lauq*. Here they pray to God to get blessings for their prosperity. They hope that the rice field they cultivate will produce abundant rice and sustainable production. The last menjojo is held in the western part of the village. This ritual is led by Kyai Lebe. The people of Karang Bajo ask for God's blessing so that the village governance runs well. So the people of Karang Bajo live in harmony among themselves.

These findings are in line with the results of the study conducted by Quddus et al. [18], who found that the people of Karang Bajo mostly believe in *wetu telu*, which is the teaching that people should act and behave in such a way as to respect other people, nature, and God. If they respect other people, they will live in harmony among them, and if they respect and protect nature, nature will also protect the people. If people believe in and pray to God, god will protect them.

Mitigation Communication on the *"Sidekah Turun Ton"* Ritual.

Civilizing local traditional culture through traditional ritual processes means making customary culture a functional part of cultural development. Local traditional cultural products are symbols. This symbol has a broad and deep meaning and is understood by the community that created it. The meaning of this symbol is actually a communication process carried out by traditional leaders to their community or followers. Usually, the symbols created and used in traditional ritual processions have been explained and communicated by traditional leaders to their followers so that people know and understand what the symbol means. By understanding the meaning of symbols within the community, it is hoped that the community will respect existing traditional symbols and internalize them, as well as implement them in everyday life.

The Bayan traditional community that believes in wetu telu has a tradition that they have to follow and implement wetu telu teachings in their lives. The most important teachings for the wetu telu community are to live in harmony among people, to live in harmony with nature, and to live in harmony with God as the human creator. This belief looks similar to what the Balinese community calls *"tri hita karana"* [19]. The ancestors of the traditional wetu telu community tried to pass on this belief to their descendants through the traditional rituals.

In line with the second belief, to live in harmony with nature, the *wetu telu* ancestors created the ritual ceremony called *Sidekah Turun Ton*. Within this ceremony, the

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teaching of values, respect, protection, and conserving nature is included. This ceremony uses symbols and nonverbal and verbal communication to communicate and pass on their teachings regarding how to conserve nature to avoid natural disasters to their ancestors or the younger generation. Symbols appear in a wide variety of contexts and are used for a variety of purposes. The symbol is a term in logic, mathematics, semantics, semiotics, and epistemology. Symbols also have a long history in the world of theology (symbol is a synonym for belief). Symbols cannot be treated in isolation, apart from their associative relationship with other symbols. However, unlike sound, symbols already have a unified form and meaning.

In contrast to a sign, a symbol is a word or something that can be analogized as a word related to (1) user interpretation, (2) usage rules according to the type of discourse, (3) creation of meaning in accordance with the user's intention. The symbols that exist in and are related to the three items are referred to as symbolic forms. In the language of communication, symbols are often termed symbols. A symbol is something that is used to designate something else, based on the agreement of a group of people. Symbols include words (verbal messages), nonverbal behavior, and objects whose meanings are mutually agreed upon.

All cultural meanings are created using symbols. Meaning can only be stored in symbols. Cultural knowledge is more than a collection of symbols, including folk terms and other types of symbols. All symbols, including spoken words, are objects of a place, such as a house of worship or a traditional house. Alternatively, a traditional activity, such as Sidekah Turun Tons, is part of a symbol system. A symbol is an object or event that points to something. Symbols include anything we can feel or experience. The symbols can be seen in the following picture:



Figure 2. Traditional Clothing in the Sidekah Turun Ton ritual.
Source: Primary data processed, 2022

The picture indicates that people use a white-coloured hat-like headband *(sapuq putiq)*, symbolising that the participants have clean and pure thinking in carrying out the ritual. People with bare chests and feet symbolise that they are merged with or bound to

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nature. They walk in a line, with the older people in front and followed by the younger generation, symbolising that they have to respect each other in their lives. In such an inseparable relationship between humans and culture, humans are called cultural creatures. Culture itself consists of ideas, symbols, and values as a result of human action. In a culture, there are various kinds of attitudes and awareness as well as different forms of knowledge. So there are also different cultural systems to represent all of that. In the tradition of *Sidekah* descending tons, there are two orders of signs, and they are based on Barthes' semiotic analysis. The first order is the connotation, where cultural meanings are attached to terminology. The meaning of denotation is the literal meaning of a word or object. More clearly, each form of nonverbal symbol and its meanings in the Sidekah Turun Ton tradition are presented in the following table.

Table 1. The Meaning of Symbolic Messages in the Sidekah Turun Ton Tradition.

Categories of Nonverbal Symbols	Nonverbal Symbol Form	Meaning
Artifact	Londong abang	It is a typical sarong that must be worn by indigenous parrots and is generally red in color. Means the strong spirit to conduct the rituals and conserve nature
	Sapuq putih	In the form of a white headband, which must be owned by every indigenous Bayan community, this headband has a meaning of purity or clarity of mind.
	Dodot	It is a belt cloth, which is used by the indigenous Bayan community as a symbol to distinguish identity. The use of this belt cloth can be divided into two, namely nyaka (using a regular tied cloth) and mantra (using cloth by slinging it)
Proxemic	gundem	Implementation of traditional meetings held by traditional stakeholders such as Pembekel (leader and person in charge), Pande, walingumi (ritual organizer), guru basa (spokesperson) with the aim of determining the time of ritual implementation and preparing all ritual needs
	menjeleng	manufacture of special oil or oil of a thousand hajat which will be used to clean or purify heirlooms in the ritual of desSidekahTurun Ton
	menjolo	The procession of the carnival (parade), which is part of traditional rituals, this parade is attended by many people and aims to open accompanying traditional elders to the forest to carry out the peak of the ritual.

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2022.

Based on the table above, it is explained that Communication can never be separated from the presence of visual and verbal elements. Visual is marked by pictures;

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verbal is indicated by spoken or written words. There is a close relationship between verbal and visual. Even though in communication there is only one visual or verbal, communication will continue. Moreover, this is what is seen in the traditional ritual culture of Bayan. In the traditional rituals carried out by the Karang Bayan indigenous people, it is clearly visualized that everyone unites and communicates to carry out traditional ritual activities.

Furthermore, verbal communication is also seen in various activities carried out by the elders and traditional stakeholders. Ways of thinking, ideas, and even hopes that are associated with them are symbols of communication. In addition, norms and perspectives in society are also symbols. In carrying out the Sidekah Turun Ton ritual, the participants must wear traditional Bayan clothes which have special meanings such as londong abang *(red cloth/sarong)* which is a special cloth that every Bayan community must have, white Sapuq (white headband) which means purity or clarity of mind, *Dodot (ikat cloth)* as a symbol to distinguish identity and can be seen from the way it is used where ordinary people or *(Nyaka)* wear a dodot with a regular tie in contrast to elements of a special society *(Mantri)* wearing a dodot in a sling. In the ritual, it is not allowed to use footwear as a symbol that humans must be at one with nature [20].

The first menjojo is held in the forest, where the wetu telu community should walk about five hours from their residence to the forest barefoot. They use traditional clothing as explained above. The rituals are at night around eight pm. The ritual prayer is headed by perumbaq daye. During the worship, the perumbaq daye puts the offering under the big tree in the forest and says mantras in ancient Sasak words to ask for safety and protection of the people from natural disasters such as drought and flooding. After the rituals, there is a speech given by the perumbaq daye to convey the message to the community [21].

Obstacles in Communicating the Messages in *Sidekah Turun Ton* Ritual to the Young Generation.

Mitigation can be defined as any ongoing action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risks to property and human life. In this regard, mitigation can be regarded as one of the mechanisms so that the younger generation is able to avoid the impact of disasters that will occur. Actions can focus on disaster avoidance, in particular avoiding placing people and property in hazardous areas [22]. This includes efforts to control disaster hazards through various traditional rituals. Another problem in controlling disaster hazards is the problem of communication. The existence of different perspectives on problems and how to communicate them is a challenge for the younger generation. Therefore, Rizal et al. concluded that to achieve effective and sustainable communication, it is necessary to build adequate communication methods using certain methods to establish cooperation between the younger generation, scientists, and the local community [23]. The explanation that can be concluded is that information makes a difference about something. A person has a different attitude from others or makes a different decision because of the availability of information or the information obtained. In order for disaster information to be received effectively, there are several conditions that must be met. First, there is a need for public trust in the party that conveys the message. Second, the party that conveys the message is the party that is considered to have the authority or qualification as the sender of

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information, because each individual is free to choose which party he wants to hear. Third, there is no interest in obtaining anything from the information submitted. The public must feel confident that the information obtained is of no particular importance. Fourth, the information submitted should be accurate, can be confirmed, and can even be supported by data. Fifth, consistency in delivering messages, especially messages that are delivered repeatedly. These five criteria for effective message delivery have been fulfilled by the communication processes in *SidekahTurun Ton Ritual*.

Therefore, the message is received by most of the community members. Even though the message delivery processes have fulfilled the prerequisites for effective message delivery, some obstacles were found [24]. The lack of interest of the younger generation in activities related to culture is because the ritual is less attractive to young people. Young people usually use mobile phones; during this ritual, using mobile phones is not allowed. As a result, they are reluctant to participate in the ritual ceremony. One of the impacts is the absence of good communication media [25]. Effective communication media are those that can convey messages in the form of information in accordance with the sender's expectations. However, in Karang Bajo Bayan village, many of the younger generations do not have access to communication media. Both personal communication media (intermediaries) and mass communication media (mobile phones) are used. The existence of personal communication media (intermediaries) is generally only at the level of adults who are considered to be of sufficient age and ability. So the information disseminated stopped only at their parents. Meanwhile, information for the younger generation is only provided if their parents feel that they have the right to obtain the information.

4. CONCLUSION

The Sedekah Turun Ton ritual conveys the mitigation message about how people should behave in conserving, protecting, and valuing the environment, including forests, water, the sea, and rice fields. This message is conveyed in the form of artefacts such as clothing, ceremonial symbols, and speech. These symbols and speech are then translated into the rules and norms for the daily life of the people in Bayan. As a result, people of Bayan who traditionally wetu telu believe then behave accordingly. Some obstacles were found in delivering the mitigation message to the young generation. Among them are: (the young generation is less interested in participating in the Sidekah Turun Ton ritual, the long distance to reach the location of the ritual, and the language barrier.

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