

Exploration of Non-Verbal Karo Folklore as Social-Cultural Development

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Abstract: *This study aims to find an effort to explore various non-verbal Karo folklore. The research method used is qualitative research with a holistic approach. The data is presented through descriptive folklore with observation, in-depth interview techniques. The research location is Karo Regency. Based on the research findings, there are efforts to explore Karo folklore, including: (1) the efforts of the local Tourism Office in building the Karo Arts Building with the aim that the Karo generation preserve traditional Karo arts and musical instruments; (2) there have been personal efforts from certain parties in developing non-verbal Karo folklores, namely: (a) the role of teachers in optimizing extracurricular Karo music and traditional instruments; (b) art activists reactivate various trainings in art studios so that the young generation of Karo loves to learn culture; (c) participating in efforts to promote cultural objects through participating in cultural endowment fund competitions; (d) holding traditional music festivals; and (f) registering various forms of Karo culture in the Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Aceh-North Sumatra Cultural Value Preservation Centre. The function of folklore for the Karo ethnic group is not only understood as a culture, but also becomes a self, communal identity, even national identity.*

Keywords: Exploration, non-verbal folklore, Karo

1. Introduction

North Sumatra, one of Indonesia's provinces, is known as a multicultural province. This province's diversity of ethnicities, religions, and races motivates this. However, in certain areas still inhabited by the majority of the indigenous population, cultural uniqueness is still clearly felt. This homogeneity becomes self-identity for several community groups. This becomes an identifier if it is in a specific area. The community also understands that the site is the ownership of a majority ethnic group, such as North Tapanuli Regency, Toba Samosir, Humbang Hasundutan, and Samosir, whose majority are Toba Batak ethnicities, Pakpak Bharat Regency, whose original population is Pakpak Batak ethnicity, Karo Regency with the majority of the population based on ethnicity is the Karonese. The Angkola-Mandailing ethnicity inhabits the areas of Mandailing Natal Regency, South Tapanuli Regency, Padang Lawas Regency, and Sidempuan Regency.

This study examines one of the ethnic cultures in North Sumatra Province that still adheres to the cultural values that become their identity and outlook on life, namely the Karo Ethnic inhabiting the Karo Regency area. One cultural study on this ethnic group is related to Karo folklore. As revealed in the Oxford Dictionary[1], folklore consists of the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a group of folks, which are developed orally from one generation to the next.

In some Karo cultures, the relationship between folklore studies is very close. Therefore, exploring folklore can lead to deeper exploration by the Karo people; for example, by understanding the origin of a place (traditional houses, lakes, mountains), they can use oral folklore such as various folklore such as legends and myths of a community group. Furthermore, understanding folklore in tourism[2], [3] can undoubtedly explore the cultural tourism of ethnic groups,

including the Karo Ethnic deeper if the community can take advantage of folklore as part of cultural tourism in the district. Karo.

The urgency of this research is to explore various forms of Karo Ethnic folklore in Karo Regency to explore Karo's cultural heritage. The importance of inventorying Karo folklore to explore its function for the Karo Ethnic in depth. The importance of analysing various forms of Karo folklore to explore the Karo cultural heritage.

2. Literature Survey

According to Bascom, there are several functions of folklore for its supporters, namely: (a) as a projection system, (b) as a tool for cultural validation, (c) as an educational tool, and (d) as a means of forcing the enforcement of norms[4]. Dundes added another function, namely: (a) to strengthen the feeling of collective solidarity, (b) as a means of justifying a society, (c) giving direction to the community so that they can criticize others, (d) as a tool to protest against justice, (e) as a fun and entertaining tool. In addition, folklore also makes a confusing world coherent for individuals and communities. This goal is not just for the present moment but a more significant part of how folklore functions and why it evolved. Folklorists are aware of these stories, figures of speech and associations play in shaping people's understanding of the world around them[5]. This function means that folklore can contain various functions, such as cultural, legal, political, and aesthetic.

As expressed by Brunvard classified folklore into three major groups based on its type, namely 1) verbal folklore (verbal folklore), 2) partially verbal folklore (partly verbal folklore), and 3) non-verbal folklore). Among the three types of folklore, there are various sub-folklores[4]. However, the researcher limits the study to maximize the

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findings obtained. Therefore, the studies of folklore that have been explored in the Karo Regency area are (1) oral folklore which is focused on traditional expressions and folklore of the Karo Ethnic such as myths, legends, and fairy tales, (2) partially oral folklore focused on folk beliefs, folk games, and Karo Ethnic folk parties, and (3) non-verbal folklore focused on folk architecture, handicrafts, traditional clothing and body jewellery, folk food and drinks, and traditional Karo Ethnic medicines. Therefore, as revealed by Sommersthat folklore can focus on two sources of culture, namely tangible and intangible, this research will also be explored further in this regard.

Karo folklore is explored to strengthen and preserve the cultural heritage of the Karo Ethnic as a cultural treasure in Indonesia. The data collected will become the basis of Karo Ethnic folklore in Karo Regency and, of course can be used as an educational medium that has meaningful educational value as revealed by Sibarani[6]–[8]. In addition, this research can also act as a step in preserving the existing local culture. This is felt necessary at this time because many of the younger generations of the Indonesian nation has forgotten the culture, which is the heritage of their ancestors, and the pride of the nation's identity.

Various researchers have studied several studies on folklore. Among the studies that have discussed the study of folklore are First, research by Romadi and Kurniawan state that the importance of folklore to be put forward in local history learning materials is a means for the formation of national identity through historical awareness and cultural awareness, as well as the approach of a teacher or instructor to introduce students to the local wisdom around them. Learning like this will make students understand the history of themselves or their environment[9].

Purnami's study states that based on the content analysis carried out on folklore in the Jember district, various kinds of cultural values are found, namely personality, religious, and social values. The study of Ginting and Lubis revealed the results of research from one of the Karo folklores, namely mahangke, formed because, in ancient times, the form of Karo's house was "*Siwaluh Jabu's House*" where this house there were eight heads of households who lived in it together. So to avoid something unwanted (such as a mistake that sex occurs between them) then, this rebu custom is made, which is helpful to be able to respect people who should be respected[10]. The study by Ginting et al shows that people outside the village have never heard the story of 'Tambak' in the Karo Ethnic. Hence, it is appropriate as teaching material for learning literature in high school[11]. Hasibuan study revealed four values of character education in the folklore of Sampuraga and *Nasondang Ngilong-Ilong*, namely the values of religious character education, compassion, hard work, and honesty[12].

Discussions related to folklore lead to extensive studies, as Ishtiaq et al reviews them by looking at wild plants used by rural communities in the Samahini Valley, Pakistan, as folklore study[13]. Furthermore, the use of traditional Irish medicine, which was based on data on the ethnography of Irish national folklore, was also studied, and from folklore to pharmacy in the use of plants was also studied^{[14], [15]}. Not

only that, but the art of self-painting through tattoos is also a focus of folklore studies^[16]. Finally, the study of folklore and modernity, which is also studied by Indian folklorist, Narasimmiyengar, can also be considered as a representation of involvement with modernity which leads to the view of folklore as traditional, rural and requires a touch of civilization^[17].

3. Methodology

The research method used in this research is qualitative with a holistic approach. Danandjajaexplains that folklore research mainly utilizes qualitative research with a holistic approach^[4]. This relates to folklore which contains cultural elements that its supporters use. The elements of oral culture must be balanced in the study. That is, the researcher needs to focus on more than folk issues, but also the lore elements. These two elements interweave and form a unique cultural community^[18].

Qualitative methods aim to study the behaviour of people studied naturally^[19]. The paradigm chosen to strengthen this research method is to use an interpretive paradigm^[20]. Building a close relationship with the research subject is of essential things for researchers^[21]. Because in this type of research, researchers must be able to uncover various secret beliefs that are difficult to uncover. If the relationship built between the researcher and the person being studied seems rigid and there is an element of suspicion, the research will fail. The research has been distributed to several sub-districts that represent the folklore that exists and become a guide for the life of the Karo Ethnic in Karo Regency.

The data collection techniques can be done relying on several ways, namely observation and in-depth interviews, literature studies and documentation. Data analysis in qualitative methods is generally inductive, starting from discovering facts or reality/symptoms, even problems which, of course, are obtained from a particular observation. Analysis means processing data, organizing data, and breaking it down into smaller units. Then, look for patterns and themes that are similar. Data analysis and interpretation always go hand in hand^[19].

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Karo Traditional House Architecture

One form of non-verbal folklore is folk architecture. In the Karo ethnic folk architecture, one of which is a traditional house also called *Siwaluh Jabu*. If interpreted in Indonesian, it means eight houses in one big house. The meaning of the "*Siwaluh Jabu*" traditional house is eight households that occupy or live in the traditional house. Each household will have cubicles divided into each other with the same area.

The "*Siwaluh Jabu*" traditional house has several rules, both in terms of construction and use in terms of the shape of the house. However, the essential thing is that the traditional house, "*Siwaluh Jabu*", is a house in the form of a house on stilts. According to the people who live in the house that when the house on stilts is occupied, it will provide benefits such as:

- 1) Provide for the owner or the people who occupy the traditional house comfort and safety from wild animals because, in ancient times, wild animals such as tigers, snakes and other animals still roamed the environment around the community. Therefore, a high-concept stilt house was created to be free from the threat of wild animals.
- 2) The second use is obtained from the traditional house in the form of "Palas". *Palas* are house pillars or foundations made of wood or concrete that support parts of houses or traditional houses. In its use, there is a space at the bottom of the traditional house that can be used as a livestock room. Usually, the bottom is filled with livestock cultivated by the community, such as buffalo, goats, cows and chickens. Usually also, at the bottom, there is a door that leads to the livestock, which helps check or feed the livestock.

Architecture or unique parts that can be seen in the "*Siwaluh Jabu*" traditional house, such as the stairs that use bamboo but do not use ropes or nails, but use "Sendep-Sendep" or a locking system on bamboo or wood parts.

Siwaluh Jabu's house in Karo Regency can still be found in Lingga Village and Dokan Village. Regarding the location or position of the house, the *Siwaluh Jabu* building leads to the north and south. In ethnoscience, the Karo ethnic group does not allow traditional house buildings to point to the east and south because those directions are the rising and setting positions of the sun. The Karonese think that if the door of the house is directed to the west position, it will have bad luck because it is considered to invite darkness because in that position, the end of the day (the setting of the sun). Therefore, the best position is facing north and south. Meanwhile, when a house faces the rising sun or the east, the Karo people consider it forbidden and not good. The reason is that when irradiated by sunlight that is so bright and warm or hot, it ends well if the family who occupies the house can accept the light. However, if the family cannot accept the light, it will bring disaster and misfortune.

After the cultural shifts in the Karo people, the traditional Karo houses were also used less traditionally. It can be seen that every village inhabited by the Karo ethnic does not have a traditional place. The change in function from the original conventional home to an ordinary house inevitably erodes the prevailing customary rules. Not only that, the reason for the shift in traditional dwellings part is that knowledge of using traditional materials is rarely known to the current Karo generation. In addition, the limited space for movement of the eight families in the conventional house causes inconvenience due to the lack of private space, resulting in "*simehangken*" or a reluctance to do something personal. Therefore, the Karo people began to shift Karo traditional houses into houses that became private property rights or individual homes. After separate ownership, there are changes in building materials, such as semi-permanent.

However, the Karo ethnic still pays attention to the house's layout. The Karo people believe that the location and direction of the house will determine the sustenance and ease of life of the family living in the house. Things to note are the layout that should not be in front of the intersection

of three roads; the location used as a home is not dead land. Dead land means land that has never been fertile (productive), and when someone wants to or does agriculture on the land, they often get sick and even die. Deadland is land that is said to be facing the wrong direction, such as meeting Mount Sinabung or other rules that are not by the beliefs of the Karo people. Therefore, the laying of the house should not be on dead land or former graves because it is not suitable for everyday life.

4.2 Traditional Karo Musical Instruments

The music of *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* is the art of Karo music. They become the basis of resilience to realize cultural preservation for the Karo ethnic, create social harmony, and develop the art of music so that it does not become extinct. This is because, at this time, according to several informants, they say that most Karo people use keyboards, but there are some trends in society that are more towards traditional music. This means the community is still trying to preserve the art of traditional Karo music.

The musical arts of *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih*, which changed terms with *Lima Sendalanan*, combine three in-line and five agreements. This means that this musical art is a musical art that combines three which are obligatory in one way or in playing it. Therefore, there must be three components and five agreements, meaning that the addition of these two additional musical instruments could be in the form of a deal between music players in the art of Karo music.

The musical arts of *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* consist of the musical instruments, *Sarune*, *Gendang Singanaki*, *Gendang Singindung*, *Penganak*, and *Gung*. These musical instruments are still a category in the art of music that is not too related to the rules in numbers. According to the informant, these musical instruments could be added or replaced with other musical instruments such as *Keteng-keteng*, *Mangkok Bentar*, and *Kulcapi*.

According to the informant, Simpei Sinulingga, the music of *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* at present is much less dominant. However, there are other reasons that the old musical instruments or musical arts no longer exist in society. The Karo generation's love for playing traditional musical instruments has started again. Previously, the devices and tones that appeared on each musical instrument were modified to modern technology so that it was enough to use a keyboard. *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* were already available. However, the use of musical instruments is different from traditional music. Moreover, the values contained in it are also not the same. These tendencies begin to emerge when people already have an economic orientation, flexibility of thinking, and the depletion of cultural values.

In some events, such as the death ceremony or the traditional death ceremony, it is combined with the art of music arranged with *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih*. However, in some special events, informants mentioned that there were saruni or dancers. This is related to the taste or expression contained in the music, which will be more

profound if using existing tools.

In the Karo people, the art of *Telu Sendalanan* music is an expression of the community in everyday life. Therefore, the loss of Karo Telu music in Sendalanan is not without reason. Several factors cause the failure of Karo music at this time. The art of *Telu Sendalanan* music has been well-conceived by the previous community. Still, some changes occurred in the art of music, one of which is caused by the development of an increasingly modern era.

Karo music has faded due to the impact of globalization and modernization. Modern musical instruments have entered Indonesia, including the Karo people, who, in this case, are more flexible in using the keyboard. In using these modern tools, people are facilitated in terms of transportation, which is only one tool that is brought along, a keyboard (kibod), in playing various Karo musical instruments by entering the instrument file. Its use and maintenance is considered challenging, and costs must be incurred to finance the players. Of course, this condition has an impact on Karo music players who still use the original tools of Karo traditional music.

On the other hand, religious factors caused the decline of Karo music or musical instruments into modern music. However, he did not mention what religion was the factor that caused the music to fade. In the eyes of religion, some things are considered taboo or even prohibited because they violate or collide with religious teachings.

When the religion entered the Karo community, so that's where faith will begin to erode culture one by one due to conflicting teachings in traditional and religious ceremonies. For example, about death. In the custom of the end of the Karo people, it is referred to as the term *ndungi adat*. However, because it was too busy and too much time was spent, there were several cuts in the time of the event, one of which needed to be using Karo music in the funeral ceremony.

The disappearance or fading of Karo music in culture was because, in ancient times, the geography of the Karo land still had many natural resources that allowed the Karo people to choose the right and rare materials to create musical instruments. However, these resources have been eroded by poaching and settlement development so that the Karo people cannot distribute or pass them on to the next generation because the materials available in natural resources or nature are no longer available. Therefore, he is worried that this traditional art of music will become extinct with the times because it is rare to find Karo people who can play and pass down the ability to use conventional musical instruments to the next generation.

The decline or disappearance of the Karo people's musical arts was due to the concept or mindset of the community itself regarding cultivation or maintaining their own culture. The Karo people, especially the artists, the first thing asked was money. This is a fatal basis for the Karo people because their culture is raised, so material orientation should not be a priority. However, the musical arts of Karo *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* still exist even though their use is

starting to decrease. However, in the past three years, the use of old music has increased because people's love for traditional Karo music has begun to rise. Efforts to develop the art of Karo music are being promoted by several art studios growing in the community. This is, of course, an effort that needs to be encouraged by the tourism department and the local government.

Several noteworthy performances and festivals feature performances of traditional Karo music. Through this effort, it is hoped that the interest of the young Karo generation will emerge. The government is also trying to hold concerts or cultural festivals, such as the one recently held in Lingga Village. The cultural festival in Lingga Village is supported by the village government and the Tourism Office in developing cultural arts, including the musical skills of *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih*. Not only can they reap the benefits, but they also foster a sense of love for their culture in the people who see or watch the cultural festival.

Simpei Sinulingga, the head of the studio in the village, admitted that when there are people or the younger generation who intend and learn the art of music or art from the Karo people, he is willing to teach with all his heart to awaken or preserve the Karo culture. If only to learn and only to know the use of the musical arts, the Three *Sendalanan* and Five *Siperarih* do not have too complicated requirements. The most important thing is to have a diligent and disciplined intention and high sincerity so that no matter the effort, it will never betray the results. With the developments carried out by several parties in the Karo community, this has become material basis that has a solid foundation to preserve Karo culture.

Sanro Arga sigiro, as a member or founder of the *Sadakata Art studio* and as a teacher of cultural arts at the Catholic Private High School 1 Kabanjahe, said that the efforts he had made in developing the musical skills of Karo *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* had been carried out. This development was carried out by him bringing all the tools related to Karo music into the extracurricular activities of the private high school. After he used the device, he recruited members with talents in the music field. Thus, in educational or school activities, an effort or development is carried out to preserve culture. He is also in the business of developing the art of Karo music, especially *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih*. He has made efforts by making musical instruments such as *Kulcapi*, *Surdam*, *Sarune*, *Gung*, *Kendang*, and *Keteng-keteng*. He admits that the manufacturer does require perseverance in its manufacture so that the results provided can be as much as possible. However, the effort to develop the art of Karo music doesn't stop there. The *Sadakata Art studio* makes albums or songs in which the instruments of *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih* are used. It has been included in the YouTube app and has over a million views. Thus, not only the indigenous Karo people are familiar with musical instruments or the art of traditional Karo music, but the general public also knows it.

Apart from that, the development efforts also train several students to make musical art instruments used in *Telu Sendalanan* and *Lima Siperarih*. Thus, it can be concluded

that when it is inherited, the technique or the way it is made does not disappear from the Karo people. Making these musical instruments is also beneficial for those who make them because they often receive orders from many people or people outside Karo. Therefore, this can be understood as the most efficient effort because the way to play it is inherited. But, then, the way to make the instrument is also inherited. He also admitted that when several students interviewed their studio for their thesis, he did not hesitate to help because it was used to promote Karo culture so that it could be preserved and developed as much as possible.

Therefore, the existence of *Telu Sendalanan* Music Art in the Karo community must be considered. However, globalization and modernization in society, as well as the use of keyboards, do not mean that the Karo people do not use traditional musical instruments. According to several informants, it is said that most Karo people use the keyboard instrument, but there are some tendencies in society that are more toward traditional music.

4.3 The Art Building as a Place for Art Preservation

The art building is in Taman Mejuah-Juah Berastagi, Berastagi District, Karo district. This building is usually used by teenagers and children still in elementary, junior high, and high school for practice and art performances. The art building has existed since the 2000s. The art building was built for performances and training traditional Karo arts, music or traditional musical instruments, and dance. The Tourism Office also intervened directly to take care of it and even became one of the administrators of the art building. The building will usually be opened on Monday when an art training or festival is being held. Sometimes representatives from the Tourism Office also inspect the art building and discuss the festival. There is a festival held in the art building every year. One of them is called the mejuah-juah party, a cultural party featuring Karo dances such as the five-series dance and the Pengalo-ngalo dance (welcome dance). A perkolong-kolong performance (a duet between men and women dancing) is also performed while singing). Not only dance, there are also performances of musical instruments such as kulcapi, keteng-keteng, five drums, and other Karo musical instruments. This mejuah-juah party will last 3-4 days, and there are various cultural events, such as dance, music, and cultural fashion shows, as well as competitions, held so that through the competition, the students will be more enthusiastic in participating in the mejuah-juah party. Before staging the Mejuah-juah party, the parties involved in the Mejuah-juah party will first practice in the art building.

4.4 The Existence of Traditional Karo Ethnic Music and Dance

Karo ethnic has a variety of cultures left by their ancestors as cultural heritage, one of which is art, dances, and also typical Karo musical instruments. This musical instrument is usually used for traditional ceremonies such as, maba anak kulau (bringing children to the water, usually to ward off evil spirits from children), juma three (this ceremony is to introduce their children to the basics of work), and *erbahan* title (making a child's name). Ergunting (cutting the hair of a

newborn child), adat perjabun (wedding custom), gendang cawir metua (death ceremony for people who die at an old age and all their children are married), erkata gendang mentas (ceremony for people who die at a young age)). Some of these ceremonies may have yet to be carried out because they are not in accordance with the community who adheres to religion, such as newbies, children of kulau, juma three, erbahan titles, and ergunting ceremonies. People only make events such as thanksgiving events, wedding ceremonies (perjabun custom). The simalungut rayat song will usually be used at this ceremony, and the death ceremony (death custom) will use the odak-odak and patam-patam pieces. There are still large parties in these two traditional ceremonies accompanied by traditional Karo music and dances.

Karo musical instruments are known as *gendanglima sendalanan*, (drum five in line), *telu sendalanan* (three in line) and *sada perarih* (in one accord) consisting of *sarune*, *gendang singindungi*, *gendang singanaki*, *kulcapi*, *penganak*, *gung balobat*, *surdam* and *keteng-keteng*. In the Karonese, the people who play musical instruments are called sierjasen. There is also a call for each musician, the *sarunai* player called *Penarunai*, the *singindungi* drum and *sinanaki* drum players are called *penggual*, *gung* players are called *simalugung*, *kulcapi* players are called *perkulcapi*, *Surdam* players are called *penurdam*, *keteng-keteng* players are called *simalu keteng-keteng*, *penganak* players are called *simalu panganak*, and *balobat* players are called *perbalobat*.

The dances in the Karo area are also varied, for example, the five-series dance, the *telu-serangai* dance, the piso surit dance, the sweet bread dance, and many other dances. These dances usually function as social dances between men and women, generally performed at *guro-guro aron* (annual Karo ceremony party).

The musical instruments and dances mentioned above, usually used for traditional ceremonies, both in joy and mourning ceremonies, are now being replaced by modern technology. One of the cultural cities in the land of Karo is the city of Berastagi. In preserving its culture, whether from traditional dances or traditional Karo ethnic musical instruments, the Karo Tourism Office has built one of the places used for performances and training of art, an art building located in Taman Mejuah-juah in Berastagi.

There are challenges faced in preserving the Karo arts, such as only a few teenagers and school children located in Berastagi are interested in participating in training and festivals. Since working from 2018 until now, people who join in celebrations at the art building, teenagers, and children from Berastagi District. Most of those who come to practice or participate in the festival at the art building are from outside Berastagi District or people who the Tourism Office has prepared. Several solutions can be used to solve these problems. The first is through socialization with schools about how important it is for students to participate in preserving culture, especially in the arts. The two tourism offices, as building managers, can give appreciation to students or children who participate in training or can also hold other festivals besides the mejuah juah party to serve as a forum for teenagers or students to show their skills in

music or dancing.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the temporary study, it was concluded that the Karo ethnic group contained various forms of non-verbal folklore in the form of folk architecture, traditional handcrafted musical instruments, folk food and drinks, and traditional medicines. The description of the results of this study focuses on the findings of folk architecture and Karo traditional musical instruments as well as efforts to explore them. There are efforts to explore Karo folklore, including building the Karo Arts Building to ensure the Karo generation will preserve traditional Karo arts and musical instruments. In addition, on a personal level, there have been efforts from certain parties to develop non-verbal folklore. There have been efforts by the government and Karo cultural observers to strengthen Karo cultural identity, such as participating in efforts to promote cultural objects through participating in a cultural endowment fund competition and registering various forms of Karo culture in Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Aceh-North Sumatra Cultural Value Preservation Center. The function of folklore for the Karo ethnic group is not only understood as culture, but also becomes self and communal identity.

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