

## THE CULTURAL VALUES OF *SIRI'* IN BUGIS COMMUNITY REPRESENTED IN TARUNG SARUNG FILM (2020)

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**Abstract:** Film *Tarung Sarung* (2020) presents the narration of young people's adventure in the setting of the local culture of the Bugis community, which emphasizes the value of *Siri'* culture. Local culture in contemporary films is still rarely discussed in depth. Thus, this study discusses the cultural values of *Siri'*, represented in *Tarung Sarung*. The research aims to get an understanding of the cultural values of *Siri'* in the Bugis community represented in film *Tarung Sarung*. The method used in this research is qualitative-descriptive with a film studies approach. This study uses Stuart Hall's representation theory to determine the representation of *Siri'* cultural values. *Siri'* cultural values in this film are represented as inspiration to move the characters in solving problems. There are two points obtained in this study. The first is that *Siri'* culture is very prominent, especially in the relationship between men and women. The second, *Siri'* culture is represented as an important ideology to uphold self-respect among the Bugis community.

**Keywords:** *bugis culture, indonesian film, siri' values, tarung sarung*

## INTRODUCTION

Cultural value importantly marks the identity of a particular society. In Bugis ethnic, the value of *Siri'* is deemed as something important not only for their identity but also for the dignity. The cultural value of *Siri'* is reproduced and represented in the film *Tarung Sarung* (2020), produced by Starvision Plus and directed by Archie Hekagery. It is an Indonesian action-drama film narrating the story of the main character, Deni Ruso, a conglomerate's son who goes to Makassar to run his family's business. The traditional

cultural value of *Siri'* is compelling to be discussed in this article since it shows that the old value still takes a role in contemporary life. Furthermore, it is interesting to find out how *Siri'* is represented in a movie with the setting of the modern life of young people. Because of the local wisdom content, the film got an Award as the Action Film with Local Wisdom Content in Festival Film Bandung (FFB 2021).

As stated by the title, the film presents the *Tarung Sarung* tradition. *Tarung Sarung* is a fight between two men using sarong as the border or arena for their fight. In the past, the practice of *Tarung Sarung* often occurred in society when two men did not make a deal on a particular conflict. They did *Tarung Sarung* to maintain their dignity. But nowadays, the tradition has changed, as this kind of fight is harmful. Mostly, it became a deadly fight, killing one of the fighters. The practice is now represented as a sport or recreated in arts, like paintings and other crafts (Iqbal, M., 2022).

With the setting in the Bugis community, the film also highlights the value of *Siri'*, which is important for the Bugis culture. Several studies have examined the significant roles of the *Siri'* values in the Bugis community (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021; Idrus, 2005; Rusli, 2019). *Siri'* is a concept or philosophy that teaches responsibility, integrity, and high moral values (Das et al., 2022). In addition, *Siri'* also introduces a sense of identity culture, which becomes a crucial issue in cultural studies as it bonds the community (Hidayat et al., 2022). The value connects society as an attitude emphasizing shame and self-respect. People need to know that violating social norms is shameful, and at the same time, they do not have self-respect.

The film shows that it is not only a medium of communication to provide entertainment for the audience but also a popular culture that displays and negotiates a tradition and values that exist in society (Rahayu et al., 2015). Therefore, it is engaging to discuss the importance of local value of *Siri'* and *Tarung Sarung* tradition in the context of the millennial era as represented in the film. The current study applies Stuart Hall's Representation theory to explore the local value of *Siri'* and the *Tarung Sarung* tradition. The representation uses signs to represent something absorbed, imagined, or felt physically (Danesi, 2010).

According to Stuart Hall, representation, a popular concept in Cultural Studies, refers to the process through which meaning is produced, interpreted, and shared within a culture. Analyzing representation means that we observe the use of signs, symbols,

language, and other forms of communication to convey ideas, experiences, and identities. Representation is not the same as the reflection of reality, but it is a complex and mediated construction that shapes our understanding of the world (Rahayu, 2020).

The film can always be observed through the representation theory, as the film is a medium in which the filmmakers use audio-visual devices and languages to represent a particular idea. For instance, the analysis of representation in a film can be examined in the study by Rahayu (2021), which elaborates on how the discourse of Islamophobia is represented in the movie in more subtle ways. Yet, it is crucial to mark the conflicts. The study of representation may also discuss the analysis of speech, body language, and actions of the leading actor or movie star (Rahardjo, 2016). The other cinematic representation might also discuss contemporary issues such as radicalism and the essential roles of the family in curbing radicalism (Rahayu, 2020).

The cinematic representation of cultural values was engaging and discussed further in this article. Therefore, the present paper aims to examine the cultural values of *Siri'* represented in the *Tarung Sarung* film. The research question of the study is, "How is the cultural values of *Siri'* represented in the movie *Tarung Sarung*?"

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Bugis ethnic is one of the prominent ethnicities in Indonesia that has rich tradition and culture, through which the ethnic's values survive and develop up to now. One of the highly respected Bugis traditions explored in this paper is *Siri'*. The term *Siri'* or shame is a trait that is inherent and respected in Bugis community (Rusli, 2019). The concept of *Siri'* has two values, shame and self-respect, which defines the social reality of the Bugis society. Shame is not only understood as actions contrary to customary law or norms but also means as an effort to refrain from behavior contrary to the cultural system of the Bugis. *Siri'* also means dignity or self-respect, a psychological defense against disgraceful acts or actions contrary to local customary rules. Therefore, people who do not have *Siri'* are deemed similar to animals (Rusli, 2019).

Film and local cultures are two entities that closely relate to each other. For instance, there have been many films representing Bugis traditions, such as *Uang Panai* (2016), *Ambo Nai Supir Andalan* (2022), *Athirah* (2016), and *Silariang* (2017), all of which communicate Bugis culture and tradition to the audience. Presenting local

culture in popular cultures is challenging to maintain and develop the culture (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). As one of the most enjoyable popular products, the film supports creating traditional and local cultures in the millennial era. In doing so, watching movies has become one of the most crucial consumptions of modern society (Rahayu & Mediyansyah, 2020), for the activities of watching films have shaped the audience's perception of social realities.

The importance of observing the movies is supported by the fact that films have multiple functions, such as reflecting the anxieties and desires of the audience (Rahayu, 2020) and having the potential to strengthen, challenge, or crystallize religious perspectives, ideological assumptions, and norms (Rahayu, 2021). For instance, the film that represents how a radical group operates and recruits its members can challenge the way we perceive radical groups' ideologies and many other assumptions about radical groups. In addition, films also function as a means of entertainment, criticism, propaganda, politics, advertising, and education (Nasir et al., 2019), as we can see in the film *Jenderal Soedirman* (2015) which presents and constructs identity politics of the General and promoting the military power in civil-military relation (Budiman & Sofianto, 2018).

## **METHOD**

This study is descriptive qualitative research, applying the perspectives of film studies. The descriptive qualitative approach aims at exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups attached to a social or human issue (Creswell, 2014). [bf1] As it uses film as the material object of study, it applies the cultural studies approach by focusing on film studies. The research question presented here is “How is the cultural values of *Siri*’ represented in the film *Tarung Sarung*?”. To answer the research question, this current study applies Stuart Hall’s representation theory. As a film study, it also pays attention to various aspects of the film, such as the story plot, mise-en-scene, and the development of the conflict (Rahayu, 2020).

The data source is *the Tarung Sarung* film (2020), directed by Archie Hekagery. The data collected are in images, sounds, words, sentences, and dialogues in the film, which are then coded and classified (Rahayu, 2021). The data are presented in the screenshots of 12 scenes representing *Siri*’ culture. Based on the classification of the data,

the analysis is classified under two themes: *Siri'* culture in the relationship of men and women and *Siri'* culture as an ideology to uphold self-respect.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

In this part, the data are presented and classified to expose sentences or scenes related to the representation of *Siri'* cultural values in the film. The data are collected from the *Tarung Sarung* film and presented in line with the theme of the cultural values of *Siri'*. The data are classified and presented into two themes, mainly the *Siri'* culture in male-female relationships and the *Siri'* culture as an ideology of upholding self-respect.

#### *Siri' culture in male - female relationships*

*Tarung Sarung* movie, whose setting is in Makassar, presents the Bugis people who practice *Siri'* in their daily life. The understanding of 'shame' also means and relates to upholding dignity. *Siri'* cultural value can be seen in the following data, showing how people are cautious in keeping the distance (physical and symbolical) between male and female relationships.



**Figure 1. Sanrego will propose to Tenri**

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (0:16:12)

In the Bugis culture, marriage tradition is a complex process full of symbolic signs. It starts with the marriage proposal process. In this film, Sanrego proposes to marry Tenri by attending Tenri's house, where the family gathers in the living room. The main conversation occurs between Sanrego and Tenri's father in the Bugis language. The father stipulates that Sanrego had to prepare *panai* (the money the man gives to the woman's family) as much as 50 million Rupiah. The dowry is a considerable amount of money compared to people's salary, which is around 3 or 5 million Rupiah per month.

Tenri, who is proposed to marry, shows an indifferent attitude, showing no interest in the conversation between his father and Sanrego. She sits with her back to Sanrego, listening to the music through her headphones. Her attitude in this event shows her symbolic refusal

of Sanrego's proposal. However, Tenri and her family know Sanrego is a thug in the village, so they must respond well to his proposal.



**Figure 2. Sanrego's warning to Deni**  
Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (0:23:49)

In addition to her refusal to Sanrego's proposal, Tenri is more interested in Deni, a newcomer in the town. She shows warm welcome to Deni, that makes Sanrego jealous. On occasion, Deni wants to learn and practice a fight called *Tarung Sarung* with Tenri, because they have been close and familiar with each other. Knowing that situation, Sanrego immediately interrupts. He does not let this happen, as seen in Figure 2. Sanrego says angrily to Deni that it is inappropriate for a man to do *Tarung Sarung* with a woman. In this case, Sanrego uses the reason for *Siri'* values to respect women and *alebbireng*, meaning that Bugis women are considered a glory (Idrus, 2005). Fighting against a girl means inappropriate and disrespectful to Bugis women.



**Figure 3. Deni and Tenri's conversation on the beach**  
Souce: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:12:52)

Tenri builds a good relationship with Deni, a young man newly coming to the town. They often make conversation about daily things, in a relaxed situation as in a scene in Figure 3. The scene shows the beauty of the beach while Tenri and Deni sitting on a simple wooden swing, at a distance. The scene was shot in the medium distance, showing the position of Deni and Tenri, safe enough to be in a public space. They discuss Tenri's hijab. Giving an example of the candy as the analogy, Tenri says that the girl is purer in their attitude when they are "covered" just like a wrapped candy. The scene also shows Tenri's attitude, which highly upholds the value of the female *Siri'* or women's honor. In the scene it is clear that Tenri wears fully-covered clothes in her daily life as a form of upholding the *Siri'* values.

***The culture of Siri' as an ideology of upholding the self-respect***

*Siri'* also means the value of self-respect, this can be interpreted as people or family will uphold the people's respect by using the idea of *Siri'*. Applying *Siri'* also implies that people can do anything to defend their pride and dignity. One of the most extreme ways of defending self-respect presented in the film is performing *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* (it is a kind of dead-or-alive fighting between two men).



**Figure 4. Sigajang Laleng Lipa fight**  
Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (0:41:22)

It is told in this film that Mr Khalid does *Sigajang Laleng Lipa*, a deadly fight between Pak Khalid and his brother (Figure 4). The scene was shot from above, showing the position of the fighters in the sarong with each of them handling a digger (*badik*). Mr. Khalid recalls the event that happened long years ago, a fight of *Tarung Sarung* result in the death of his brother. Since then, Mr. Khalid is popular as the champion of the fight, a winner of the deadly fight. As a winning fighter, Mr. Khalid is believed to be the best in *Sarung Tarung* fighting, therefore Deni wants to learn the fighting from him.



**Figure 5. Sanrego and his gang came to Pak Khalid's residence**  
Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (0:56:15)

Mr. Khalid becomes Deni's mentor in fighting, and this ignites Sanrego's rage. He cannot accept this, then he goes to Mr. Khalid's home with his gang to challenge Deni to fight. Sanrego is not satisfied to be able to beat Deni, he wants a "dead-or-alive" fight. Mr. Khalid responds by saying that death is in the hands of Allah, not in the hands of thugs. Then, Mr. Khalid gives an offer of joining the *Tarung Sarung* Tournament, to which Sanrego agrees.



**Figure 6. Mr. Khalid and his young brother in *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* fight**

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:15:00)

The deadly fighting called *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* was exemplified by Mr Khalid fighting against his younger brother (Figure 6). Recalling the event, Mr. Khalid tells the event with a melancholic tone. He regrets the event, even though he wins. He says, "In this place, my younger brother was killed. We had a *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* fight. A fight inside a sarung using *badik* (daggers). Just because we fell in love with the same woman. These two hands... have taken the life of a brother!"

The tradition of "*Sigajang Laleng Lipa*" was a deadly fight, the last measure for maintaining self-respect (*Siri*) if a problem cannot be resolved peacefully (Tifada & Mahabarata, 2020). As stated by Mr. Khalid, he was willing to fight *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* against his brother because of competing over a woman, and he regrets up to now.



**Figure 7. Gogos is challenged to do *Tarung Sarung***

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:27:48)

The *Tarung Sarung* fight in fact might happen because of trivial things. The scene at the beginning of *Tarung Sarung*, as seen in Figure 7, shows Gogos and Tutu, the interns at Ruso Corp, driving on a deserted road at night. On the way, they are intercepted by Sanrego's gang. Gogos is challenged to fight against one of the men just because of a little incident of dropping coffee to the man. Feeling humiliated, the man challenges Gogos to do *Tarung Sarung*.





**Figure 8. Sanrego threatens Deni to death**

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:44:10)

The problem between Sanrego and Deni is a problem of jealousy. Sanrego sees him as a rival in getting Tenri. Mr Khalid's offer to do *Tarung Sarung* tournament is welcomed by Sanrego. The fight is a determinant for the champion and also the pride of the winner (Figure 8). In the fight, Sanrego wears a red sleeveless shirt with red hair, and Deni wears a white sleeveless shirt. The situation is very nerve-wracking. Before the tournament starts, Sanrego arrogantly humiliates Deni and threatens him with death. He says, "Sissy. I'll finish you, sissy! Tenri will be mine. You're finished." Sanrego wants to defend and uphold his pride, and if he wins the fight, he will get 50 million Rupiah as the prize he can use as the dowry for Tenri.



**Figure 9. Deni and Sanrego's Battle**

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:44:22)

With Mr. Khalid as a referee, the battle between the two men seems increasingly tensed and fierce (Figure 9). Deni is able to balance the fight. He hits and punches Sanrego hard during the match. The referee is also tensed seeing the increasingly fierce battle. Both of them fight for maintaining their pride. For Sanrego, the norms of *Siri*' is manifested in the spirit to win the fight whatever the cost, "dying for *Siri*' is better than surviving but losing *Siri*" (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021). On the other side, Deni has also his own goal, marry Tenri.



**Figure 10. Deni the winner of *Tarung Sarung***

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:46:37)

Finally, Deni wins the battle. The referee raises Deni's hand excitedly, declaring the winner, a new player who is able to beat the incumbent. Deni is proud and happy, and satisfied with defeating Sanrego. On the other side, Sanrego feels humiliated (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Sanrego doesn't accept his defeat**

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:47:08)

Feeling humiliated and angry, Sanrego does not want to accept his defeat. His red face, completed with his red clothes and hair all express his anger. The defeat is a big loss for him, a loss of pride and a loss of money. As a result, he points his finger at Deni, challenging him to fight *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* (Figure 12).



**Figure 12. Sanrego challenges Deni to do *Sigajang Laleng Lipa***

Source: *Tarung Sarung* movie (1:48:25)

Fighting *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* (The live-dead fight) is the last opportunity for Sanrego to regain his pride. He shouts in full of anger and loud voices, showing his power, and trying to threaten Deni and the audience.

## **Discussion**

The data presented above show that the cultural values of *Siri'* influence the Bugis people in their daily life. The *Siri'* can be seen as the motives in many stages of the plot of the movie from the beginning, in which Sanrego visit Tenri's family to give marriage proposal. Along the next scenes, there are many actions that are motivated by the value of *Siri'*. There are two points discussing the representation of cultural values of *Siri'* in the film *Tarung Sarung*; those are the culture of *Siri'* in male-female relationships and the value of *Siri'* to uphold self-respect.

### ***The culture of Siri' in male - female relationships***

Bugis society highly values *Siri'* which implies communal or familial pride. The pride or dignity in a family mainly and especially lies in the daughter or a woman, which is importantly upheld by all of the family members. For example, in the marriage proposal, a man has to go to the girl's family to ask for their agreement and discuss about dowry and many other things. The more precious a daughter of a family, the higher the dowry. In the process of a marriage proposal, in which all the family members come together, the man who proposes has to face the father or the oldest man in the family. The interaction and transactional conversation happens among the men, while the woman proposed is not directly involved in the conversation. In this case, a woman (Tenri) is not allowed to have direct interaction with the man (Sanrego). A woman is protected, and represented by the men in the family, to keep the woman's dignity (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021).

The *Siri'* value is also symbolized through the *panai* money or dowry as a symbolical form of respect for a woman. The more precious a woman of a family, the higher the dowry. In one side, the dowry or *panai* money has become the symbol of *Siri'* or dignity for the family. *Panai* money also functions as *sompa* (dowry) and *dui menre* (show women's social status) in the Bugis ethnic (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021). In the case of Tenri in this film, the high *panai* not only shows respect for her in the family, but also a strategy to reject Sanrego's proposal politely. As discussed above, Sanrego is a well-known thug or champion in the village, so the family has to be cautious to deal with him. The family uses the high *panai* as the weapon to minimize Sanrego's access for the marriage proposal (see Figure 1).

In the Bugis culture, based on the cultural value of *Siri'*, male-female interaction especially in public space is restricted. When Tenri and Deni has a conversation, they are seated at a certain distance that is safe enough. The physical interaction between man and woman is restricted, so men and women, boys and girls are not allowed to have touch physically. In the film, Deni and Tenri makes a conversation in a breezy and relaxed situation in front of a beach, but they sit on a wooden swing at a distance. The culture of *Siri'* has a different impact compared to the girl and boy interaction nowadays, in which people do not make any restrictions on the interaction between men and women in public spaces (see Figure 3).

The norm is that a good girl is the one complies with Islamic values. In the movie, Tenri is represented as the girl who complies with the Islamic norms. She wears hijab, and obeys the cultural values of *Siri'*. Tenri discusses her hijab by giving example of a candy as the allegory of a girl. Tenri says that the girl is purer in their attitude when they are “covered.” Tenri’s statement is based on the Islamic concept of *aurat*. In fiqh (Islamic law), *aurat* means part of the body in a person that is required to conceal or protected from sight of non-mahram (Oktariyadi, 2018). The scene also shows Tenri's attitude, which highly upholds the value of *Siri'* to bolster the women’s honor or in Bugis’ traditional term, *malebbi*, which means graceful and reflects good character (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021)

Women in the Bugis cultural values are also deemed as glorified. In one case, Sanrego also uses the argument of *Siri'* values to respect women and *alebbireng*, which means Bugis women are considered a glory (Idrus, 2005). Based on the argument of *alebbireng*, Sanrego angrily warns the practice of *Tarung Sarung* between Tenri and Deni, as the action is inappropriate and disrespectful to Bugis women. At the same time, Sanrego uses the issue of *Siri'* to uphold his interest, to avoid Tenri and Dani’s closeness (See Figure 2). Under the values of *Siri'* and *alebbireng*, people are expected to be ashamed of doing the close physical interaction in public space, which is considered inappropriate, a shameful action.

***The culture of Siri' is an ideology of upholding self-respect and dignity***

*Siri'* is also intended as an ideology to uphold the self-respect. The pride or self-respect is the most important thing to fight for. The tradition of *Tarung Sarung* is also a vehicle to show people’s self-respect and pride. Those who win in the fight, will be

respected, and people will count them in any social matters. Fighting and winning *Tarung Sarung* is a big pride (Irham, 2021). However, on many occasions, people cannot stop to fight for their pride only with *Tarung Sarung*. When a man feels humiliated or defeated in *Tarung Sarung*, they continue to do *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* fight (Tifada & Mahabarata, 2020).

The fight of *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* is a tradition of live or dead fight. Traditionally, Bugis people do this old tradition to solve a problem if it cannot be solved through the *Tarung Sarung*. This is a dead-end solution (Tifada & Mahabarata, 2020). *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* means to stab each other using *badik* (a short digger) used in a closed fight, in one sarong (Irham, 2021). The fight of *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* is considered more honorable, even though one of them dead at the end of the fight. Dying to maintain self-respect is honorable.

In this movie, the idea of the deadly fight is considered as the old tradition that is not suitable for the modern era (Mukaromah, et. al. 2022). There is an example of the deadly fight from Mr. Khalid's recollect memory. He had the experience of *Sigajang laleng lipa*, a fight that resulted in the death of his brother. They fought because of competing for a woman. Mr. Khalid feels big pride because of winning the fight. However, he regrets it now (see Picture 6).

In this movie, the fight of *Tarung Sarung* has changed, from a tradition for a pride and a deadly fight, to become a sport competition. In the case of competition between Sanrego and Deni, they do it in a competition, with the referee, in a sport stadium. Deni wins the fight against Sanrego. The winning means a lot to Deni, as a good revenge on Sanrego, and, most important thing, to get Tenri. On the other hand, because of upholding pride or *Siri'*, Sanrego does not accept the defeat. Instead, he challenges Deni to do the deadly fight, *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* (See Picture 8-12).

In Bugis tradition, upholding the value of *Siri'* through the fight is an important thing, and considered honorable, confirming the study done by Fitriani and Siscawati (2021). It is deemed honorable, because the people fight and get the solution of their conflict. However, in this film, the ideas of *Siri'* are supported by Islamic concepts and perspectives. For example, Mr Khalid gives a new religious perspective based on his contemplation and reflection to prevent the guys from the deadly fight. He says that people's fate, life or death, depends on Allah, not on the hand of the thug or fighter. Mr

Khalid's perspective confirms the modern government and law-making that prohibit the tradition of *Sigajang Laleng Lipa*. Doing this deadly fight is against modern law, because it is an intentional cause of murder. It is against the criminal/penal law. In short, *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* is not allowed to be practiced in the modern time in Bugis society (Mukaromah et al., 2022)

## CONCLUSIONS

The value of *Siri'* in Bugis society is proven to be still widely manifested in the life of modern Bugis society. In this film, *Siri'* values have become an inspiration that moves the characters to overcome problems or conflicts. Besides that, the value of *Siri'* represented in this film are not always in line with normative values. *Siri'* culture is influential and maintained, especially in the interaction between men and women. For example, when Sanrego tries to propose to Tenri, Tenri's extended family uses the cause of *Siri'* culture to make a decision. As a result, Tenri family settles on a huge amount of *panai* money that Sanrego cannot possibly fulfill. *Siri'* has become a cause to protect the unwanted bride.

The second conclusion is, *Siri'* culture is an ideology to uphold self-respect. When Deni defeats Sanrego at the *Tarung Sarung* tournament, Sanrego feels his self-respect plummet. To re-establish it, he challenges Deni to do *Sigajang Laleng Lipa*. However, because of Mr. Khalid's reflection and the normative law, the deadly fight cannot happen. *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* is not accepted in modern life, legally unacceptable. It can be concluded that there is a good value of *Siri'* that people get from the tradition, however, the tradition of deadly fighting such as *Sigajang Laleng Lipa* is prohibited and unacceptable in modern life.

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