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Anthropocentric Religious Communication of National Amil Zakat Agency for the Empowerment of Marginal Communities in Padang Indonesia

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Anthropocentric religious communication of empowerment has raised the quality of life, knowledge, work skill, and mindset of marginal communities in Padang by means of enlightening, supplying, and using capital resources in independent communities. The purpose of this article is to reveal the place of anthropocentric dakwah of National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) in the empowerment of marginal communities as independent communities in welfare improvement. This study used a descriptive phenomenological approach through observation and in-depth interviews with the executive board of BAZNAS of Padang City, da'is, and marginal communities as the aid recipients and further the university component was explored. Group discussion was focused on field data findings, then analysis and comparison with relevant articles and literature. Observation was carried out to study the socio-cultural aspects of marginal communities related to empowerment dakwah and communities independence. This study found that realizing independent marginal communities of Padang City was not achieved by granting revolving fund resources as capital to run their business or by giving them work skill training, but also by changing their mindset and their understandings through



cooperation with da'is in the form of religious talk/recitation *wirid* and with the university as field consultant. That BAZNAS which has performed in cooperation with da'is and the university in empowering marginal communities of Padang City Indonesia is a new finding in this study.

Key words: *anthropocentric religious communication, BAZNAS empowering, marginal communities.*

Introduction

One *dakwah* phenomena frequently overlooked by da'is is action or *bi al-hal* in the form of communities empowering (Huda, 2016 and Bukhari, 2015), but some have expanded the function of da'is not only as preachers but also as the ones ruling in social transformation by responding and resolving the social problems (Kamal, 2015). Likewise, *dakwah bi al-kitabah* in the form of writing a *dakwah* bulletin issued every Friday (distributed when khatib conveys his religious talk at Friday Prayer) and *dakwah* rubrics on newspaper are less attractive for the public (Bukhari, 2017). This is different compared with *dakwah* through social media (digital) such as YouTube, WA, Instagram, and facebook which has recently become a trend and is favoured by urban society (Khoiruzzaman, 2016, and Budiantoro, 2017) even defeating conventional *dakwah* for the people of Padang City (Bukhari, 2018; Gunawardana, Tantrigoda & Kumara 2018). These media however also have negative effect in the process of spreading religion apart from providing convenience (Minan, 2016).

Dakwah bi al-hal in the form of community empowerment has not been the main focus for da'is at the people of Padang City when, in fact, community empowerment in all aspects is an important thing in life. Efforts for overcoming poverty and ignorance, as well as solving *umat's* problem certainly need cooperation for realisation. The problem of *dakwah* in lower-class communities (poor) is food welfare and education. This fundamental problem significantly influences intelligence levels and brings about weak psychological leverage (Aripudin, 2013). Such communities generally come from the impoverished and the poor who have no power, especially knowledge and faith. The poverty of lower-class communities is dangerous for continued maintenance of their lives, whether with respect to their souls, religion, descents, or minds. Therefore anthropocentric *dakwah* of BAZNAS has sought to empower poor communities of Padang City Indonesia in the form of *dakwah bi al-hal* by performing in cooperation with da'is and the university party as a consultant.



Dakwah activities having orientation on diversity of umat's problem are able to empower communities as a form of dakwah *bi al-hal* (Bukhari, 2012; Zheng, Gupta & Ul-Huq 2018). It is the obligation of the da'is to empower communities trapped in conditions of poverty and various socio-cultural problems. The dynamic and complex community life has a positive and negative impact, so a dynamic da'wah is needed as an advocacy in protecting and guiding the communities. Anthropocentric dakwah touches life reality of the people of Padang City in asociological and anthropological manner as a means to achieve advancement and independence. Anthropocentric dakwah is an approach in dakwah by means of understanding and recognizing the socio-cultural aspects of dakwah objects then using a method of conveying dakwah message through dakwah media which is in accordance with one's life's growth and socio-cultural life. Anthropocentric dakwah in potential empowerment of poor marginal communities has a purpose to make them aware of choosing a better life. Thus, da'is as dakwah mission bearers must carefully take into account and apply the methods and strategies of da'wah accurately. In other words, dakwah is not only conducted by using a theocentric approach but also using an anthropocentric approach. This is in line with the purpose of empowering communities in capability, to change community behaviours, and to organize communities in becoming welfare-focused and independent communities. There is a relevant relationship between anthropocentric dakwah and empowerment of marginal Padang City communities. Marginal communities in Padang City are marginalized by the economic and social aspects of life. This marginalisation hinders them from gaining employment opportunities and business capital and renders them prone to lower-class communities. Thus, the anthropocentric dakwah of empowerment through BAZNAS has awakened a need for improvement, provided work motivation and added insight to the marginal communities of Padang City in their efforts to become independent communities.

Literature Review

Dakwah policies are harmonized with the strengthening of community culture so that the power and potential they have can be enlisted in the quest to become independent communities (Bukhari, 2010), and has been identified as practiced by the Walisongo in spreading dakwah in Indonesia (Suyanto, 2012). When dakwah is carried out it did not clash Islamic teachings with local culture. In other words, dakwah was observed and approached by using an anthropological approach as agent of change in social life. Each community surely has power and potential, yet they are awareness and understand of these attributes is necessary. Therefore empowerment also means an awareness process toward potential and power so that these attributes are capable of use for empowerment (Machendrawaty, 2001). Anthropocentric dakwah observes dakwah with an anthropological approach to analyze the life's growth and social life of the communities as dakwah objects such that da'is use



involves the method and material of dakwah as suitable for the communities in accordance with their respective characteristics.

Anthropocentric dakwah touches life reality of the people of Padang City in sociological and anthropological manner in achieving their advancement and independence. This is in line with the purpose of empowering communities to develop communities ability, to change communities behaviour, and to organize communities in becoming welfare and independent communities (Muhyidin, 2002 and Siti, 2015), in, generally what were powerless marginal communities (Suyanto, 2009).

Research Method

This study used a descriptive phenomenological approach which provided a systematic and factual overview regarding the form of anthropocentric dakwah of National Amil Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) in empowering marginal communities of Padang City. Data collected in the form of words and field data were obtained from interviews and observations describing phenomena found in the field. The sources of information were the executive board of BAZNAS of Padang City, the da'is, and marginal communities of Padang City who received aids, and also the university party as field consultant.

Data collection technique used were interview and observation. Interviews were performed with three persons acting as the executive board of BAZNAS of Padang City, four da'is, seven community members receiving aid from BAZNAS, and three university personsel. Three BAZNAS executive board were representative for obtaining data: they were the Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer. Through the interview, data was obtained concerning the form of BAZNAS cooperation with da'is in empowering marginal communities of Padang City. Four da'is were used as interviewees since they were included in the BAZNAS program and directly involved in empowering activities and also they were representative from da'is component. Through the interview, data was obtained regarding dakwah method used as well as dakwah messages conveyed to marginal communities of Padang City as guided partners of BAZNAS. A consequent interview was conducted with seven members of marginal communities receiving aid. The seven informants were representative of marginal communities of Padang City. Through the interview, data was obtained concerning form and variation as well as the process of empowering the marginal communities of Padang City who received BAZNAS aid so they would become independent communities. Three informants as field consultants from Syariah Faculty of Imam Bonjol State Islamic University (formerly State Islamic College) Padang were also representative for



obtaining data. The interviews revealed what was carried out in the consultation process and how the guidance given to the marginal communities of Padang City was delivered.

Data collection with observation was performed in marginal communities of Padang City as the aid recipients from BAZNAS. Direct observation was conducted by recording events when the empowering process was executed. Data collection was further performed by attending dakwah activities in masjids as the place where da'is efforts in striving for community empowerment, guided by BAZNAS are staged so the information about community participation and method as well as the dakwah message conveyed by the da'is in order to build towards independence was obtained.

This data was then described in the form of relevant statements in the context of identified field conditions. Data analysis was carried out by reducing data i.e. choosing and sorting data according to object of study. Data display was then conducted by presenting data in the form of general statements and overview. Field findings were then analyzed by means of discussing them with colleagues and testing them based on theories and comparing them with the research results in Indonesia so that this study could be formulated in the form of new findings.

Result and Discussion

This study figured out that anthropocentric dakwah of BAZNAS empowerment was one of anthropocentric dakwah methods conducted by having cooperation with da'is and university in empowerment of marginal communities of Padang City. Besides having a program for providing capital resources and chances to obtain and use the capital, as well as enriching the insight and knowledge and providing work skill training for the marginal communities of Padang City, BAZNAS also had cooperation with da'is and the university in empowering the marginal communities, as grouped below.

The Cooperation of BAZNAS of Padang City with Da'i and University in Empowering Marginal Communities

The activities of BAZNAS of Padang City in anthropocentric dakwah of empowerment were through cooperation with da'is and the university (Imam Bonjol State Islamic University Padang). The form of BAZNAS cooperation with da'is initiated with a special meeting regarding the program and each work aspect. The executive board of BAZNAS delivered the empowerment program and provided funds for marginal communities, while da'is activities provided counseling and motivation for them, increasing their insight as well as their faith.



Cooperation for enhancing the knowledge and understandings of marginal communities was in the form of conveying the religious taushiyah to the members of guided-partner group of BAZNAS of Padang City. There were some rules applied for zakat recipients, one of them was they had to attend monthly wirid activities. There were two kinds of wirid activities carried out, the first was wirid activity addressed to poor marginal communities receiving business funds and the second was wirid activity addressed to groups which became guided-partners of BAZNAS of Padang City. Routine wirid related to poor marginal communities receiving business funds was conducted once a month every Wednesday on the first week. This wirid was held by various masjids such as Masjid an-Nur Sungai Sapih. In this wirid activity, speakers/lecturers brought in advice related to motivation to work seriously and resist being easily discouraged in running a business. The da'is packaged their dakwah messages such that the awareness and faith of marginal communities of Padang City to try to optimise operations could develop. On the other hand, monthly wirids attended by guided-partner groups of BAZNAS of Padang City already had good activity plans as was evidenced from monthly activity schedules of guided-partner groups of BAZNAS of Padang City. There were three wirid materials provided namely knowledge concerning Islamic religion, social realms, and business management/economy.

Plans of activities were made in detail that the input, process, and output of those wirid activities could be measured. The presence of routine wirid activity for poor marginal communities of Padang City receiving business funds was very helpful for them to determine solutions of problems they had when running their business. Monthly wirid activities held by BAZNAS of Padang City in cooperation with da'is were capable of raising optimism and spirit of 'trying' in the communities. Continuously wirid activities were highly effective in guidance and development efforts for poor marginal communities of Padang City. In addition to the monthly wirid activities detailed above, in order to establish silaturahmi and increase the knowledge of poor communities, BAZNAS of Padang City also performed a ramadhan safari for guided-partner groups of BAZNAS of Padang City.

Cooperation with Imam Bonjol State Islamic University (formerly State Islamic College) Padang was in the form of a consultation program for marginal communities and zakat collection program. It was started with meeting with the university elements then talking as well as explaining about BAZNAS programs and also mentoring/consultant activities provided by the university. BAZNAS of Padang City along with university officers opened rooms for consultation/discussion/dialogue for poor marginal communities receiving business funds facing difficulties running their business so they could share each other and find the solutions together. In this activity, discussion/dialogue rooms were opened for poor marginal communities facing constraints or problems in managing their business so that they could



discuss the solutions of all problems. Hence the members of guided-partner groups would no longer feel alone in resolving the problems they had.

In addition, for the manifestation of zakat collection program, a Zakat Collection Unit (UPZ) was established. In the field of empowerment, BAZNAS also involved scholarship-grantee students in guided-students program. In the guidance program, each guided-student sought to fulfil the specified requirements and also had to be actively involved in socialization programs of BAZNAS of Padang City. One of them was the effort in poverty eradication/empowerment of poor communities in Padang City. The guided-students were expected to actively participate in providing solutions to poor communities within their own geographical location. Thus the communities keenly felt the existence of BAZNAS of Padang City and students. Students involved in empowerment of marginal communities of Padang City came from disadvantaged communities receiving scholarships from zakat funds. In the student guidance process, students were empowered as voluntary staff members and also as consultant for communities regarding the issue of zakat. Students went directly into the field in order to survey other marginal communities to receive zakat aids. The guided-students were involved in the effort of zakat funds collection from the muzakki living around their domicile. They then presented motivation and enlightenment for muzakki to pay zakat through BAZNAS.

This is in line with the concept that anthropocentric dakwah is closely related to empowerment, and it could be said that dakwah is a community empowerment process. Dakwah process is understood as changing the human condition from a bad to a better state to achieve salvation and happiness in the world and the hereafter. Empowerment involves changing a community so that there is an improved direction in order to increase standard of living, prosperity, and welfare of the community, both materially and spiritually. Since anthropocentric dakwah is always oriented to the problem phenomena of life's growth and human's life, there is a harmony between anthropocentric dakwah and empowerment i.e. both contribute to the creation of independent community and have the ability to solve their problems.

This explanation is directly proportional with the opinion of (Azwar, 2014), that the form of anthropocentric dakwah of empowerment for marginal communities are, *first*, that the absolute requirement in the dakwah process is that dakwah develops communities from the traditional static thinking discourse to adopting a rational dynamic. Generally, all activities of community empowerment could be categorized as dakwah efforts aimed at creating the improvement of community life quality. *Secondly*, dakwah develops communities and changes their behaviour for the better. *Thirdly*, dakwah develops community independence,



in the sense of having potential to resolve the problems they are facing, and the ability to fulfil their needs by not relying on outside help in their lives, with respect to both government and non-government organizations. *Fourthly*, dakwah develops communities by appreciating their rights to determine the best course of action for them. Dakwah seeks to explore and understand the umat's problems and together with them, collaborate on efforts to solve these problems.

In harmony with this, a comparison is made with the findings of Salam (2016) with respect to the speech of the Indonesian President Indonesia, who states that "President Soeharto expressed major concern about the nature of dakwah. In the midst of his strong rejection of political Islam, his concern regarding dakwah needs to be discussed. For Soeharto, religion serves as a true life guide which functions as a spiritual, ethical and moral basis of statehood in Indonesia. Soeharto believed that a good dakwah would create better Muslim communities in Indonesia. Accordingly, he expressed a warning that Muslim leaders should not perform dakwah by provoking conflict, not only between Islam and the country, but also between Muslim communities with other existing religious communities, and he often reminded that dakwah in Indonesia should not contradict with the ideology of the state." In addressing the dakwah phenomena in alleviating poverty and powerlessness, Muslims need to revitalize the dakwah that has been exemplified by Rasulullah SAW in the findings of (Fatmawati, 2014) that in essence, the prophet's dakwah is iman actualization which is manifested in a system of activities, carried out regularly in the social field, to influence the way of feeling, thinking, behaving, and acting by the people of Madinah, through specified methods. The prophet's dakwah tried to change the environment of Madinah by laying the foundation of the existence of Islamic society, and instilling the values of justice, equality, unity, peace, kindness, and beauty, as the driving force of society's development, liberating individuals from the tyrannical system (slavery) and towards the system of independence".

The explanation above becomes relevant compared to what was disclosed by Rosyada (2011) :that the significance of Islamic dakwah in the future should: *first*, encourage productive communities so they would have better lives, employment instead of being joblessness, *second*, encourage intelligent communities so their members have more enlightened lives, *third*, encourage competitive communities so innovation and creativity flourish, *fourth*, encourage communities with strong faith and taqwa. To establish dakwah strategy in order to achieve these goals effectively, da'i must have soft skills that include not only good teaching about the hereafter, but also teach participants to think smart. The soft skills of da'i in question are earnestness in dakwah, sincerity, self-confidence, calmness, and simplicity. The da'is do not only need reinforcement in terms of content but also methodology/manhaj of dakwah.



In connection with this, dakwah embodies Islamic teachings in daily life, and is relevant to the findings of Al Mutawalli (2016) about Islam communities in Lombok, showing that harmony and religious existence as well as internal and inter-religious tolerance will be established, moderate and balanced and fair if the dialectics and dynamics between syariah texts are contextualized with realities and local traditions/communities' culture. It is revealed that revitalizing syariah texts is necessary in dakwah implementation to realize Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in the current era of globalization. Dialectics and dynamics between syariah texts concerned with the realities and local traditions of Lombok have introduced Islamic concepts characterizing moderation in *tawazun* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *shura* (prioritization dialogue), and *i'tidal* (justice). Islam in Lombok described the harmonious inter-religious coexistence of multiple communities including various ethnicities, religions, and cultures; and described Islam as rahmat for the universe.

This could be compared with the findings of (Dulkiah, 2016) concerning empowerment of poor communities in other places. Empowerment models of poor communities in West Java were built with norms or rules obeyed and followed by community members and elements of the empowerment. The norms were among others; (a) Institutions set rules: farmers getting aids from empowerment program ought to (1) have the same goals with the institution's program i.e. masjid's prosperity, (ii) attend socialization through recitation, (iii) have their own lands; (b) Chief of the group set rules: (i) every member of community that would get aid from the program must attend the recitation (jamaah of masjid); (ii) every member of community had to follow the instruction of planting technique until harvesting, (iii) the community ought to sell the result of their oil palm plants through the chief of the group, (iv) the community ought to set aside a small portion of the proceeds for the prosperity of the masjid (Rp 25.- for every one kg of fresh fruit bunches of their oil palm plants); (c) the community played a role in monitoring the rules they agreed upon together.

The Provision and Use of Capital Resources and Work Skills for Marginal Communities

This study showed that marginal communities of Padang City were lacking in capital to improve their economic lives, whereas capital/financial resources were extremely necessary. The obstacle that had always been faced by marginal communities in Padang City when it came to developing their business was capital and other financial problems. In response, BAZNAS of Padang City through the Padang Sejahtera Program posed that the poor marginal communities in particular could have a more prosperous and better life in the future. For this reason, BAZNAS of Padang City made the Padang Sejahtera Program one of the programs to provide business capital aid and guidance as well as development for small and



medium enterprises. There were two forms of implementation related to an effort to provide capital resources to the poor, *first*, granting Business Funds (DBU) and *second*, granting aid for the guidance and development of group business. BAZNAS of Padang City created a productive business program named Business Funds (DBU), i.e. aids funds for the guidance and development of business for the poor family.

It was expected that from the existence of this program, the poor families would enjoy the beauty of zakat by receiving working capital to build their business without collateral and interest. This program aimed at alleviating poverty and establishing prosperous umat through guidance and development of productive business and particularly aimed at, among others,; - helping the poor families to develop their business, - saving the business of the poor families from the pressure of moneylenders or the like that clearly contradict the provisions of the Islamic religion, -providing convenience for poor families to get business capital without collateral and interest, -striving to change them from mustahik to muzakki, which had been included in the Padang Sejahtera Program brochure. (Ahmed, Umrani, Qureshi & Sarmad, 2018; Ali & Haseeb, 2019; Haseeb, Abidin, Hye, & Hartani, 2018; Haseeb., 2019; Suryanto, Haseeb, & Hartani, 2018). The capital without collateral and interest obtained from BAZNAS of Padang City greatly helped marginal communities. By providing capital resources to the poor, BAZNAS had helped by provision of sound stimulation for poor marginal communities so they would be more empowered to determine their own future.

This productive business aid program was developed in the form of revolving funds professionally managed, started from recruitment patterns to feasibility analyzes entrusted to Syariah Faculty Team of Imam Bonjol State Islamic College Padang (now Imam Bonjol State Islamic University) as well as routine and periodic guidance provided by BAZNAS of Padang City, both those related to mental spiritual development and business development. The procedure/mechanism to obtain DBU was: *First*, the applicant submitted an application to BAZNAS of Padang City by attaching the photocopy of the National Identification Card and Family Card, business certificate from Government of Urban Village or Nagari, floor plan of business and house location. *Second*, the complete application was submitted to the administrative and general department of BAZNAS of Padang City. *Third*, the applicant obtained evidence/sign of disposition of his application letter from BAZNAS of Padang City. *Fourth*, the application was forwarded by administrative and general department to Padang Sejahtera Program department of Padang City. *Fifth*, Padang Sejahtera Program department prepared a survey team to go directly to the field/the location of the applicant. *Sixth*, the survey team went to the field to administer a survey/feasibility study of prospective recipients. *Seventh*, the team analyzed survey results then decided on the prospective recipients. *Eighth*, the prospective recipient data of DBU was then presented to the Executive



Director for analysis when it was forwarded to the General Chairman of BAZNAS of Padang City. *Ninth*, the socialization was carried out with DBU recipients. *Tenth*, the prospective recipients signed an akad/agreement of DBU. *Eleventh*, the prospective recipients opened accounts at the Bank Tabungan Negara (BTN). *Twelfth*, BAZNAS of Padang City distributed DBU to BTN then BTN distributed DBU to each prospective DBU recipient.

The empowerment dakwah of BAZNAS of Padang City offered opportunity for the poor to develop their business. There were some opportunities gained by poor marginal communities to obtain business capital without collateral and interest, to obtain aid for their business development, to save their business from the pressure of moneylenders or the like, and to turn from mustahik into muzakki. For business development opportunities in agriculture, farming groups were given the opportunity to utilize tractors/rice plow machines. In fisheries, fishermen were provided opportunity to utilize machines and boat for fishing. In carpentry, carpenters gained opportunities to use carpentry tools and so on. BAZNAS of Padang City had given opportunities for marginal communities of Padang City to use and utilize tools for the acceleration of their respective fields of business.

In these findings, it is revealed that the distribution of business funds (DBU) to poor marginal communities of Padang City is greatly helpful in improving their business wellbeing. The aid in the form of capital and tools from the BAZNAS in Padang City have initiated inspiration to look for other business opportunities in accordance with the existing financial conditions and calm, reasoned practice is possible due to the aids of machinery, ships and business tools. Likewise it is summarised from the results of interviews with aid recipients “that aid in the form of a rice plow machine from BAZNAS of Padang City to farmers group “banda langik” (water source from rainfed water) has opened new business opportunities for him sometimes it is rented to other people in need”. In addition, with the new rice plow machine, farmers who have unprocessed lands could optimally process them, such as making vegetable gardens, fish ponds, duck farms, and other initiatives.

Aid from BAZNAS of Padang City to poor marginal communities has opened opportunities for them to work smart in accordance with their respective fields. This is highly important since opportunities and chances are very valuable factors so that one is empowered to determine their own future. Generally, it is found that BAZNAS of Padang City in distributing DBU aid, guidance, as well as development selected participants purely based on a survey conducted by a team of BAZNAS of Padang City. BAZNAS of Padang City provided the widest opportunity for poor marginal communities of Padang City to obtain and use aid in the form of DBU capital, guidance and development for their group business. It was totally dependant on the communities, whether they would try it or not. In addition it was



noted that BAZNAS had previously tried to improve the work skill of marginal communities of Padang City through various kinds of training.

BAZNAS aid for marginal communities was not only in the form of business capital, but also life skills training and development. BAZNAS of Padang City prioritized a Business Funds (DBU) program and guidance/development of group business for marginal communities. The forms of work skills sought were for example workshops skills at Technical Education Training Center (BLPT) Padang and mobile phones (HP) service skills. For farmers, they were trained on how to use the rice plow machine, making compost and cultivating catfish. This training as in cooperation with relevant government agencies such as the Agriculture and Fisheries Service, while for workshop skills and HP service skills cooperation was with the Work Training Center of Padang City. Therefore the keyword for community empowerment is power. A sense of power is capable of encouraging and motivating someone to act and try to change in a better direction. Such power is obtained through skills as outlined above.

Conclusion

The success of anthropocentric dakwah in the empowerment of BAZNAS of Padang City for marginal communities was carried out by cooperating with the da'is and the university and striving for marginal communities to actively become jamaah of masjid and participate in dakwah activities. BAZNAS had program and funds provision in collaboration with the da'is as instructors and enlightenment agents of knowledge and spiritual and further the university element acting as companion and consultant in finding solutions and providing business consultation in order to improve the welfare of Indonesian marginal communities. Hence poor marginal communities were more empowered and became increasingly independent in their daily lives.

Recommendation

This study focused on anthropocentric dakwah of BAZNAS of Padang City in cooperation aspect with da'is and university as well as capital provision and work skills training for marginal communities of Padang City Indonesia, and still did not reach broad groups of communities, such as homeless people, street children, beggars in roadside and markets. Therefore it is recommended that for those interesting in researching of anthropocentric dakwah of empowerment of marginal communities, they should conduct research with broader and more complete object as well as method and materials of dakwah in accordance with the characteristics of Indonesian marginal communities.



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