



Islamic Political Identity in West Sumatra within Comparative Muslim Majority Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Islam has played an important role in shaping political identity in West Sumatra through the interaction between Islamic values and the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). However, previous studies have generally examined this issue separately from historical, legal, electoral, or governance perspectives. This study aims to analyse the formation of Islamic political identity in West Sumatra, examine its influence on political representation and local governance, and compare these dynamics with selected Muslim-majority regions. This study employed a qualitative approach using document analysis of academic publications, legislation, and official documents collected from January 2025 to June 2026. The findings indicate that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra is reproduced through the interaction between customary institutions, religious authority, and local political practices rather than through the dominance of Islamic political parties. The study also proposes the concept of value-based Islamic political identity as its main theoretical contribution to understanding the relationship between Islam, local culture, and democratic politics.

Keyword: ABS-SBK, Democratic Politics, Islamic Political Identity, Political Identity, West Sumatra

ABSTRAK

Islam memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk identitas politik di Sumatera Barat melalui interaksi antara nilai-nilai Islam dan falsafah *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). Namun, penelitian sebelumnya umumnya mengkaji isu ini secara terpisah dari perspektif sejarah, hukum, elektoral, atau tata kelola pemerintahan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pembentukan identitas politik Islam di Sumatera Barat, mengkaji pengaruhnya terhadap representasi politik dan tata kelola pemerintahan daerah, serta membandingkan dinamika tersebut dengan beberapa wilayah mayoritas Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis dokumen terhadap publikasi ilmiah, peraturan perundang-undangan, dan dokumen resmi yang dikumpulkan selama periode Januari 2025 hingga Juni 2026. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa identitas politik Islam di Sumatera Barat direproduksi melalui interaksi antara lembaga adat, otoritas keagamaan, dan praktik politik lokal, bukan melalui dominasi partai politik Islam. Penelitian ini juga menawarkan konsep identitas politik Islam berbasis nilai (value-based Islamic political identity) sebagai kontribusi teoretis utama untuk menjelaskan hubungan antara Islam, budaya lokal, dan politik demokratis.

Kata kunci: ABS-SBK, Identitas Politik, Identitas Politik Islam, Politik Demokratis, Sumatera Barat.



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1. Introduction

Islam has long constituted one of the principal foundations shaping political life in West Sumatra. The relationship between Islam and Minangkabau society extends beyond religious practice, influencing cultural norms, political legitimacy, electoral behavior, and local governance. The philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) positions Islamic teachings as the normative basis

of social order, making religion an inseparable element in the construction of political identity within the province (Amin, 2022).

The interaction between Islam and Minangkabau adat has created a distinctive model of political identity compared with many other regions in Indonesia. Islamic values are embedded not only in social institutions but also in public expectations toward political leaders, policy formulation, and regional development. This interaction has become stronger following the enactment of Law Number 17 of 2022 concerning West Sumatra, which formally recognizes ABS-SBK as one of the philosophical foundations of regional governance (Alfarid et al., 2022).

Recent developments indicate that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra has experienced important transformations. Contemporary studies reveal a gradual shift from Islamic modernism toward stronger expressions of religious conservatism, influencing public discourse, electoral competition, and the relationship between political elites and religious authorities (Zulfadli et al., 2024).

The strengthening of Islamic identity has also generated broader debates concerning the relationship between religion, democracy, and local governance. The implementation of sharia-inspired local regulations, public expectations regarding Muslim political leadership, and the institutionalization of Islamic values continue to shape political contestation in West Sumatra while simultaneously raising questions regarding democratic inclusion and freedom of religion (Rohidin et al., 2023).

The political dynamics of West Sumatra also demonstrate that Islamic identity is not merely expressed through Islamic political parties. Electoral competition shows that candidates from nationalist parties frequently employ Islamic symbols, religious narratives, and relationships with ulama to obtain political legitimacy. Consequently, Islamic identity functions more as a source of moral legitimacy than as an indicator of partisan preference (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

Previous studies have examined Islamic politics in West Sumatra from different perspectives. Research by Wanto (2012) explains the paradox between the limited electoral success of Islamic parties and the continued dominance of Islamic values in local politics. Asrinaldi (2022) emphasizes the changing authority of traditional leaders within Minangkabau political structures. Zulfadli et al. (2024) analyse the rise of Islamic conservatism in West Sumatra. Taufik (2024) focuses on the interaction between ABS-SBK and religious freedom in regional governance. Pradipta and Hidayat (2025) discuss electoral dynamics and regional political development in West Sumatra. Rahmadani and Pradipta (2026) analyse the relationship between identity politics and cultural institutions in contemporary Indonesian elections.

Although these studies contribute significantly to understanding Islamic politics in West Sumatra, several limitations remain. Most previous research discusses Islamic identity from historical, legal, electoral, or governance perspectives separately. Comparative studies positioning West Sumatra alongside other Muslim-majority regions remain limited. Existing literature also pays relatively little attention to explaining how Islamic political identity is reproduced through cultural institutions, religious authority, and local political practices simultaneously. This gap limits a broader understanding of whether the political experience of West Sumatra represents a unique local phenomenon or reflects wider patterns found across Muslim-majority societies.

This study addresses that gap by analysing Islamic political identity in West Sumatra through a comparative perspective involving several Muslim-majority regions, including Malaysia, Turkey, and Pakistan. Rather than focusing exclusively on electoral competition or Islamic political parties, this research examines how Islamic political identity is constructed through interactions among Minangkabau adat, Islamic educational traditions, ulama networks, local governance, and political representation. This perspective offers a more comprehensive explanation of the relationship between religion and politics at the sub-national level.

The novelty of this study lies in proposing West Sumatra as a model of value-based Islamic political identity, in which Islamic influence is reproduced primarily through cultural institutions, moral legitimacy, and local traditions instead of domination by Islamic political parties or state religious institutions. This perspective broadens existing discussions on political identity by demonstrating that democratic political systems may accommodate strong Islamic values through culturally embedded mechanisms.

Based on this background, the objectives of this research are (1) to analyse the formation of Islamic political identity in West Sumatra, (2) to examine how Islamic identity influences political representation and local governance, and (3) to compare these dynamics with selected Muslim-majority regions in order to identify the distinctive characteristics and theoretical contribution of the West Sumatran experience.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a qualitative document analysis design to examine the construction of Islamic political identity in West Sumatra through relevant scholarly documents. The data consisted of secondary sources, including national and international journal articles, academic books, legislation, and official government documents discussing Islamic politics, political identity, Minangkabau culture, and the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK).

Data collection was conducted from January 2025 to June 2026 through systematic searches in Scopus, Google Scholar, Crossref, Dimensions, and Garuda. The reviewed documents included publications from journals such as *Cogent Social Sciences*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights*, *Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*, *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, and *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, as well as legal documents, including Law Number 17 of 2022 concerning West Sumatra Province. The documents were selected based on their relevance to the research topic, publication quality, and contribution to the research objectives.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis through three stages: (1) identifying and selecting relevant documents, (2) coding and categorizing the findings according to the research themes, and (3) interpreting and synthesizing the findings using the perspective of political identity theory to address the research objectives and formulate the study's theoretical contribution.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from academic publications, legal documents, and official government sources. This process enabled a comprehensive and well-substantiated interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

3. Results and Discussion

Historical and Cultural Foundations of Islamic Political Identity in West Sumatra

The analysis indicates that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra was formed through a long historical interaction between Islamic teachings and Minangkabau customary institutions rather than through the institutional dominance of Islamic political parties. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that religion gradually became embedded within social norms, customary authority, and collective political values, allowing Islam to function as the principal source of political legitimacy in local society (Amin, 2022).

This finding suggests that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra should be understood as a socially reproduced identity rather than an electoral identity. Political Identity Theory explains that political identities emerge through continuous interactions among shared historical experiences, cultural values, and collective institutions. In the West Sumatran context, Islamic values acquired political significance because they were institutionalised within Minangkabau social life through the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK), creating a normative framework that continues to influence political behaviour across generations.

Historical evidence further demonstrates that Islamic educational institutions became an important mechanism in strengthening this identity. Reformist institutions such as Sumatera Thawalib and Muhammadiyah introduced Islamic modernist thought while simultaneously promoting civic responsibility, educational reform, and moral leadership. The literature indicates that these institutions contributed not only to religious education but also to the development of political consciousness among Minangkabau Muslims (Zulfadli et al., 2024).

Religious authority also occupies an essential position within this historical process. Ulama have continuously functioned as moral leaders whose authority extends beyond religious affairs into political and social life. Their influence reinforces public expectations that political leaders should demonstrate religious integrity and moral responsibility. This pattern illustrates that Islamic legitimacy is reproduced through respected religious networks instead of formal political institutions alone (Asrinaldi, 2022).

Table 1. Historical Components Shaping Islamic Political Identity in West Sumatra

Historical Component	Empirical Finding	Analytical Interpretation
Islamisation Process	Islam became integrated with Minangkabau customary life	Religion evolved into a source of political legitimacy rather than solely religious belief
Islamic Education	Sumatera Thawalib and Muhammadiyah strengthened civic and Islamic values	Educational institutions reproduced Islamic political identity across generations
Ulama Authority	Religious leaders influenced social and political legitimacy	Political authority became closely associated with religious morality
ABS-SBK Philosophy	Islamic values became embedded within customary institutions	Cultural institutions continuously reproduce Islamic political identity

Table 1 demonstrates that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra cannot be attributed to a single historical factor. Instead, the interaction among Islamisation, educational reform, religious authority, and customary institutions produced an interconnected system through which Islamic values became embedded within political culture. This finding differs from explanations that primarily associate Islamic political identity with electoral competition or Islamic party organisations because the historical evidence shows that cultural institutions preceded formal political institutions in shaping political legitimacy.

The analysis also indicates that the enactment of Law Number 17 of 2022 strengthened the institutional recognition of ABS-SBK within regional governance. Nevertheless, the legislation should be understood as formal recognition of values that had already become deeply rooted within Minangkabau society. Islamic political identity therefore emerged through cultural acceptance before receiving legal institutionalisation within regional government (Alfarid et al., 2022).

Recent developments reveal that Islamic political identity continues to evolve alongside changing religious orientations in West Sumatra. Contemporary studies identify the increasing visibility of Islamic conservatism within public discourse and social life. The present analysis finds that this transformation does not replace the historical foundation of Islamic political identity. Instead, contemporary conservatism develops upon an existing cultural structure consisting of Islamic education, customary institutions, and religious authority that has historically shaped political legitimacy in the province (Zulfadli, 2024).

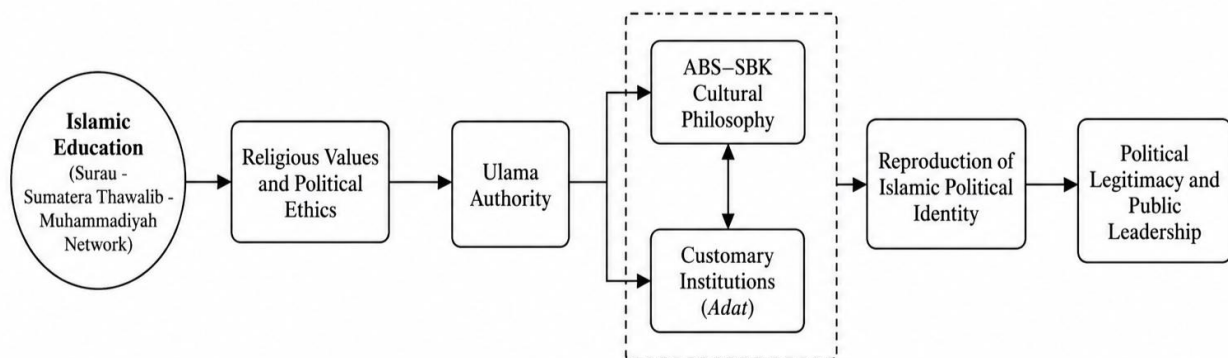


Figure 1. Historical Reproduction of Islamic Political Identity in West Sumatra

Figure 1 illustrates that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra develops through mutually reinforcing cultural institutions rather than through a single political actor. Islamic education disseminates religious values, ulama provide moral legitimacy, and customary institutions embed those values within everyday social practices. Their interaction continuously reproduces political legitimacy and shapes public expectations regarding political leadership.

This finding expands previous studies that generally examined Islamic education, customary institutions, or religious authority separately. The present study demonstrates that these three elements constitute an integrated mechanism for reproducing Islamic political identity. The contribution of this study therefore lies in proposing that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra operates as a cultural-moral system of political legitimacy, where political influence is maintained through historically embedded social institutions instead of relying on the electoral dominance of Islamic political parties. Pendekatan ini

memperkuat kebaruan penelitian yang menempatkan Sumatera Barat sebagai model value-based Islamic political identity dalam konteks masyarakat mayoritas Muslim. (Pradipta & Hidayat, 2025)

Islamic Political Identity in Political Representation and Local Governance

The analysis indicates that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra exerts a stronger influence on political representation and local governance than on the electoral performance of Islamic political parties. The reviewed literature consistently shows that political legitimacy is primarily constructed through candidates' ability to demonstrate Islamic morality, maintain relationships with ulama, and express commitment to the values of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). This finding suggests that Islamic identity functions as a normative standard for evaluating political leadership rather than as a determinant of party affiliation (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

This finding corresponds with Political Identity Theory, which argues that collective political identities influence how citizens evaluate authority, legitimacy, and political trust through shared values rather than organisational membership. Within the West Sumatran context, Islamic identity has become a moral framework through which voters assess political actors. Electoral competition therefore reflects a contest over religious legitimacy instead of competition between Islamic and non-Islamic parties.

The literature further indicates that candidates from nationalist parties frequently employ Islamic narratives throughout electoral campaigns. Public commitments to religious education, support for Islamic institutions, participation in religious gatherings, and close relationships with ulama are regularly presented as indicators of political credibility. These strategies demonstrate that Islamic symbolism has become an essential component of political communication regardless of party ideology (Putra, 2023).

The analysis also reveals that the institutionalisation of ABS-SBK has reinforced this political pattern. Since the enactment of Law Number 17 of 2022, regional governments have increasingly incorporated Islamic values into development priorities, educational programmes, and local public policies. Rather than functioning as symbolic political rhetoric alone, ABS-SBK has become an important normative reference influencing governance and policy formulation within West Sumatra (Alfarid et al., 2022).

Table 2. Manifestations of Islamic Political Identity in Political Representation and Local Governance

Dimension	Empirical Finding	Analytical Interpretation
Electoral Competition	Candidates utilise Islamic symbols regardless of party affiliation	Religious legitimacy outweighs partisan identity
Political Representation	Political elites cultivate relationships with ulama and Islamic organisations	Religious authority strengthens public trust
Local Governance	ABS-SBK guides regional policies and development priorities	Islamic values function as governance norms
Political Communication	Religious narratives dominate campaign discourse	Islamic identity becomes a shared political language

Table 2 demonstrates that Islamic political identity operates across multiple dimensions simultaneously. Rather than appearing only during elections, Islamic values continue to influence governance, elite behaviour, and political communication after electoral competition concludes. This pattern indicates that Islamic identity constitutes a long-term political resource embedded within institutional and cultural practices.

Another important finding concerns the strategic role of political elites in reproducing Islamic political identity. The reviewed studies indicate that elite actors actively maintain relationships with pesantren, ulama, Islamic educational institutions, and religious organisations to strengthen their social legitimacy. These interactions illustrate that religious authority continues to influence political competition despite increasing democratisation and party pluralism (Pradipta & Hidayat, 2025).

Recent scholarship further demonstrates that political identity in West Sumatra is increasingly reproduced through interactions between cultural institutions and electoral politics. Islamic identity is no longer confined to ideological mobilisation but has become integrated into everyday political practices, including policy formulation, campaign communication, and political coalition-building. This finding expands previous discussions by explaining how cultural institutions continuously reproduce political legitimacy beyond electoral cycles (Rahmadani & Pradipta, 2026).

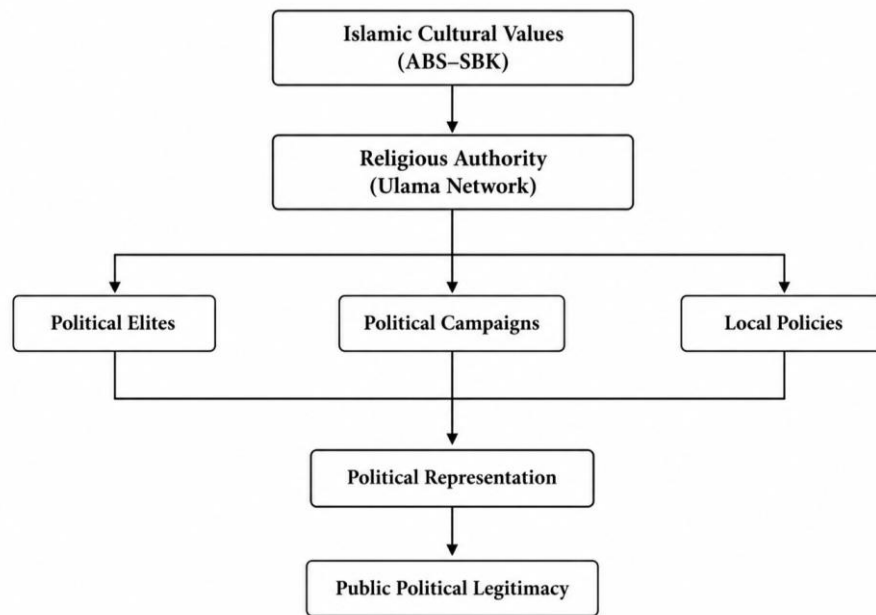


Figure 2. Reproduction of Islamic Political Identity in Political Representation

Figure 2 illustrates that Islamic political identity is reproduced through interactions among cultural values, religious authority, political elites, and governance institutions. Political actors obtain legitimacy not merely through electoral competition but through their capacity to align themselves with religious norms that are socially recognised by the community. Consequently, Islamic identity functions as an enduring mechanism of political representation rather than a temporary electoral strategy.

The findings presented in this subsection extend previous studies that primarily associated Islamic politics in West Sumatra with voting behaviour or the performance of Islamic political parties. The present study demonstrates that Islamic political identity also shapes governance practices, elite strategies, and public legitimacy through culturally embedded mechanisms. This broader perspective contributes to understanding Islamic politics as a process of continuous political representation, where religious values are reproduced through interactions between cultural institutions and democratic governance instead of through the organisational dominance of Islamic political parties (Pradipta & Maharani, 2026).

Comparative Analysis of Islamic Political Identity in Muslim-Majority Contexts and Theoretical Contribution

The comparative analysis demonstrates that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra represents a distinctive model among Muslim-majority societies. Unlike several Muslim-majority regions where Islamic political influence is institutionalised through Islamic political parties or state religious bureaucracies, the findings of this study indicate that political legitimacy in West Sumatra is primarily reproduced through cultural institutions, religious authority, and the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). Islamic values therefore function as a shared normative framework that shapes political behaviour without requiring the electoral dominance of Islamic parties (Taufik, 2024).

This pattern differs considerably from the experiences of Malaysia, Turkey, and Pakistan. In Malaysia, Islamic political legitimacy is closely associated with state institutions and religious bureaucracies that formally regulate the relationship between Islam and public administration. In Turkey, the development of Islamic politics has largely been shaped by party competition and national political leadership. Pakistan presents another trajectory in which Islamic identity is institutionalised through constitutional arrangements and formal legal frameworks. The evidence reviewed in this study indicates that none of these institutional configurations fully explain the political dynamics of West Sumatra because Islamic legitimacy is maintained primarily through interactions between customary institutions, Islamic education, and religious authority rather than through state institutions or Islamic political organisations (Rohidin et al., 2023).

The findings also demonstrate that democratic political competition in West Sumatra does not weaken the influence of Islamic identity. Electoral competition instead encourages political actors from different ideological backgrounds to adopt Islamic values as an important source of public legitimacy. This pattern indicates that Islamic identity has become a collectively accepted political norm that transcends partisan boundaries. Political legitimacy is therefore evaluated not only through policy performance or party

affiliation but also through candidates' ability to demonstrate moral commitment to values recognised by the local community (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

From the perspective of Political Identity Theory, these findings reinforce the argument that political identities are socially constructed through historical experience, cultural institutions, and collective values rather than emerging solely from formal political organisations. The West Sumatran experience illustrates that cultural institutions possess the capacity to continuously reproduce political legitimacy across different political periods. Islamic political identity therefore remains influential despite changes in electoral competition, political parties, and government leadership because its legitimacy has become embedded within local social structures.

The findings of this study both confirm and extend previous scholarship on Islamic politics in West Sumatra. Earlier studies have explained the paradox between the limited electoral success of Islamic parties and the continuing influence of Islamic values in local politics (Wanto, 2012). Other studies have emphasised the transformation of religious authority, the strengthening of Islamic conservatism, or the institutionalisation of ABS-SBK in regional governance (Asrinaldi, 2022). Research has also highlighted the interaction between Islamic identity and electoral dynamics in contemporary West Sumatra (Zulfadli et al., 2024). While these studies provide important explanations from historical, legal, or electoral perspectives, they generally examine these dimensions separately. The present study demonstrates that these elements are interconnected and collectively reproduce Islamic political identity through a continuous interaction between cultural institutions, religious authority, local governance, and democratic political practice (Pradipta & Hidayat, 2025).

The principal contribution of this study lies in proposing the concept of value-based Islamic political identity to explain the political experience of West Sumatra. This concept refers to a model in which Islamic political legitimacy is reproduced primarily through culturally embedded values rather than through the organisational dominance of Islamic political parties or formal state religious institutions. This perspective broadens existing discussions on political identity by demonstrating that strong Islamic values may coexist with democratic political competition when they are institutionalised within local cultural traditions and social institutions. The findings also contribute to comparative studies of Muslim-majority societies by showing that the relationship between Islam and politics develops through multiple institutional pathways, with West Sumatra representing a culturally embedded model that differs from state-centred and party-centred patterns found in several other Muslim-majority contexts (Rahmadani & Pradipta, 2026).

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Islamic political identity in West Sumatra is constructed and continuously reproduced through the interaction between Minangkabau customary institutions, Islamic educational traditions, religious authority, and the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK), rather than through the electoral dominance of Islamic political parties. The findings further reveal that Islamic identity influences political representation and local governance by functioning as a source of moral and cultural legitimacy accepted across political actors. The comparative analysis also shows that the West Sumatran experience differs from several Muslim-majority contexts because Islamic political legitimacy is primarily sustained through culturally embedded institutions instead of state religious bureaucracies or party organisations. Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of value-based Islamic political identity as its principal theoretical contribution, offering an alternative perspective for understanding the relationship between Islam, local culture, and democratic politics in Muslim-majority societies. Future research is encouraged to complement this literature-based analysis with empirical field studies involving political elites, religious leaders, and local communities to further examine the development of Islamic political identity in different regional contexts.

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