



Reflection of Islamic educational values in Anwar Hafid's political communication as governor of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the visual and textual signs in Anwar Hafid's political communication media that form connotative meanings about honesty, experience, social closeness, responsibility, and justice from the perspective of Roland Barthes' semiotics and Charles Sanders Peirce's classical pragmatism. This study employed a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, netnography, and content analysis involving internet and social media content. We also interviewed local politicians, local customary leaders, and citizens in several districts in Central Sulawesi. Data analysis techniques included data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The results of this study show that the values of Islamic education of Anwar Hafid were reflected in six interconnected hierarchical dimensions throughout Anwar Hafid's political communication. First, honesty was demonstrated through his open admission of program failure and shame over the poverty of Central Sulawesi, a rare moral courage in conventional political communication. Second, justice was manifested through the program's orientation to assist people experiencing poverty. Third, responsibility was manifested through a long-term commitment that does not stop halfway, but ensures that all development programs are completed.

Keywords: Visual and textual signs, Political communication, Islamic education values, Governor

Introduction

As social beings, humans are inseparable from the communication process in everyday life (Dennis, Fuller, & Valacich, 2008) [4]. From an Islamic perspective, communication functions not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a means of building noble values such as honesty, justice, and trustworthiness (Amiruddin, Nurdin, & Ali, 2021) [1]. These values hold a strategic position in shaping broader communication ethics, such as political communication. Political communication, from an Islamic perspective, serves as a normative foundation for conveying messages aimed at shaping public opinion, building legitimacy, and bridging interests between the government and society. In practice, political communication based on Islamic values will prioritize honesty in conveying political information to the public. This study takes Anwar Hafid's political communication media as a public figure.

At the denotative level, Anwar Hafid wears a black peci with a smiling expression, a white shirt, and community leaders around him. On the left side, there is a text "it all started here" and "recap of the trail of building the country, returning to serve". Meanwhile, on the right side, there are many black-and-white photo documentation depicting past activities, including military activities, leadership, and social interactions and from the denotative sign, ultimately forming a connotative meaning such as honesty, which is visualized by a wide smiling face as a symbol of an open and sincere attitude (Dole, 1991) [5]. Anwar Hafid often wears a black peci when giving speeches in

front of the public. The use of a black peci and a broad smile on the billboard can be interpreted semiotically as a representation of religious values. In the context of political communication, this symbol is chosen not merely as an ornament, but to shape the public's perception of the candidate as a religious, honest figure, and close to local Islamic cultural values. This is in line with Roland Barthes' approach in semiotics, which distinguishes between denotative meaning (a peci hat as a head covering) and connotative meaning (a symbol of morality, nationalism, or religion). At the denotative level, Anwar Hafid wears a black peci with a smiling expression wearing a white shirt and around him are community leaders on the left side with the text "it all started here" and "recap of the trail of building the country, returning to serve." Meanwhile, on the right side there is a lot of black and white photo documentation depicting past activities, including military activities, leadership, and social interactions. From these denotative signs, ultimately form connotative meanings such as honesty visualized by a broad smiling face as a symbol of openness and sincerity. Anwar Hafid often wears a black peci when giving speeches in front of the public. The use of a "peci The black and broad smile on the billboard can be interpreted semiotically as a representation of religious values. In the context of political communication, this symbol is chosen not simply as an ornament, but to shape the public's perception of the candidate as a religious, honest figure close to local Islamic cultural values. This aligns with Roland Barthes's approach to semiotics, which distinguishes between

denotative meaning (the peci hat as a head covering) and connotative meaning (symbols of morality, nationalism, or religion).

Political communication conveyed using visual and textual signs does not stand alone as a literal (denotative) meaning, but rather constructs a connotative narrative about honesty, experience, and social closeness. Therefore, Krippendorff's (2004) content analysis can assist the author in structuring data and categorizing content. Meanwhile, Barthes's semiotics (Berger, 2014) [3] deepens symbolic meaning in discovering the ideological concept of a sign used as data in content analysis. Thus, both can strengthen each other in political communication research based on Islamic educational values. Anwar Hafid's actions are in line with Islamic educational values, but in practice, he is often confronted with political pragmatism. To understand political pragmatism, the researcher uses the classical pragmatism theory of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) (Kilstrup, 2015; Uslucan, 2004) [10, 22], which assumes that the effectiveness of a political message is determined not only by the factual truth of a message, but also by its practical impact in shaping public perception, building legitimacy, and mobilizing support. This statement is supported by several studies using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic and pragmatist approaches, which show that the interpretation of signs and symbols in political communication significantly influences the formation of political perceptions and images, whether through mass media, advertising, or political memes. This suggests that the effectiveness of political communication is closely related to how the message is perceived and interpreted by the public, not simply its literal truth.

In this context, how often Anwar Hafid uses the denotative sign "wallahul musta'an" connotatively gives rise to a practical meaning for Anwar Hafid that he is a member of a particular social organization. Although the use of these signs can be interpreted as a representation of honesty values in accordance with Islamic teachings, there are fundamental issues that need to be studied in depth, especially the connotative meaning of whether it can be uniformly accepted by society, or whether the connotative meaning that arises actually contains an ambiguity of meaning that can be manipulated in the context of practical politics. According to Edison and several research results, in the practice of political communication, messages are not always interpreted neutrally. For example, visual signs such as facial expressions, political communication texts, and religious symbols are often used not only to convey honesty, but also to build a strategic and pragmatic image. This statement indirectly opens up a space for research that focuses on how visual signs and texts in Anwar Hafid's political communication media form connotative meanings about honesty, experience, and social closeness (Tarr, Launay, & Dunbar, 2016) [21] that are in accordance with Islamic educational values in the perspective of Roland Barthes's semiotics and Charles Sanders Peirce's classical pragmatism.

Literature review

Islamic education values

One of the main pioneers in developing a comprehensive framework for constructing Islamic educational values is Imam Al-Ghazali (Ashimi, 2022) [2]. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the framework for constructing Islamic educational values is based on an integral understanding of spiritual, moral, and intellectual aspects, aimed at forming a complete human being from an Islamic perspective. Based on this conceptual framework, several indicators of Islamic educational values formulated by Imam Al-Ghazali can be identified more systematically, such as purification of the soul (Tazkiyatun Nafs) as the basis for controlling desires and cultivating sincerity, developing noble morals, such as honesty, humility, and responsibility, and understanding and practicing beneficial knowledge, not only for worldly purposes but also for drawing closer to God.

The three indicators above are not only conceptual, but have been empirically tested in various studies, including the results of research conducted by Sitti Hanifah, which states that Imam Al-Ghazali's understanding in formulating guidelines for educating children with strong moral values, including spiritual and social aspects, so that children become "individuals who contribute positively to society (Rustina *et al.*, 2026) [18]. In addition, research by Sayid Ahmad and Hendra explains that mastery of knowledge, according to Al Ghazali's perspective, is closely related to the quality of adab and morals. This shows the integration between intellectual (knowledge), moral (adab), and spiritual (respect for knowledge) aspects. Research conducted by Hasmi and Eli found that the concept of moral education through Imam Al Ghazali's tazkiyatun nafs is the foundation for building a strong and ethical social character in students (El-Faizal & Mulyana, 2023) [6].

The three research findings above consistently refer to *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* as a normative and conceptual foundation, while also proving that Al-Ghazali's framework for constructing Islamic educational values remains relevant for development in the context of contemporary education. Education, in this view, aims to guide towards self-perfection through guidance between reason, heart, and concrete actions in society. Therefore, from this goal, Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of adab in the educational process. In line with Imam Al-Ghazali's thinking, subsequent thinkers, namely Al-Zarnuji and Ibn Jama'ah, also developed a holistic approach to Islamic education. These two figures bridged the legacy of Imam Al-Ghazali's thought in the field of Islamic education, especially regarding the formation of a complete human being through the integration of spiritual, moral, and intellectual aspects. Then, they passed it on in a more systematic form to the next generation. This statement is supported by the results of research conducted by Awaluddin *et al.* which states that Al Zarnuji was greatly influenced by the thoughts of Imam Al Ghazali, especially in the aspects of manners, intention to learn, and integration of knowledge and morals, so that it can be understood that Al Zarnuji inherited the spirit of Imam Al Ghazali in bringing educational values closer to the goal of purifying the soul and morals.

In addition, previous studies show that there is continuity of thought between Al Ghazali and Ibn Jama'ah in emphasizing the importance of adab for teachers and students as the basis for the blessings of knowledge. Ibn Jama'ah even restructured Al Ghazali's educational ethics in a systematic format. Based on the description and support of the research results, several indicators of Islamic educational values can be compiled that reflect the continuity of the thoughts of Islamic education experts. The indicators from Al-Ghazali above find an intellectual genealogy in the concept of contemporary Islamic education, one of which is the idea of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, who formulated an educational framework that emphasizes the unity of knowledge, morals, and actions as the foundation for the formation of ideal humans from an Islamic perspective. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the main goal of Islamic education is to "produce good humans", not only intellectually intelligent humans but humans who have adab, which means the unity of knowledge, deeds, and morals. This concept is known as *ta'dib*, which, according to al-Attas, is the most appropriate term to describe the essence of Islamic education because it includes elements of knowledge (*'ilm*), teaching (*ta'lim*), and good guidance (*tarbiyah*). This statement is supported by research conducted by Agus Hendratno, who explained that al-Attas's view of Islamic education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but rather the formation of adab, which includes the unity of knowledge, deeds, and morals. On another occasion, Sri Syafa'ati added the opinion of Sayyed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas that Islamic education aims to instill virtue in humans, both as individuals and as members of society, through the formation of spiritual and moral aspects. From the explanation above, it can be understood that Islamic education is holistic and transformative, leading to the formation of a complete and integrated person in both individual and social life.

Political communication

Within Lasswell's framework, social closeness influences all aspects of political communication (Sapienza, Iyer, & Veenstra, 2015) ^[19]. According to Farr, Hacker, & Kazee (2006) ^[8], a communicator ("who") who possesses social closeness will be more easily trusted and accepted by the public. The message conveyed ("what") will be more relevant to the public's needs because it is based on a deep understanding of social conditions. The communication channel ("channel") will be chosen according to the public's preferences and accessibility. The audience ("to whom") will feel valued and their aspirations heard. The communication effect ("effect") will be more positive because it is built on a foundation of trust and authentic relationships. Building on a deep understanding of the three ethical values of Islamic teachings in political communication, the next question is how these principles can be harmonized with modern political communication theory. In political communication theory, Lasswell has provided a fundamental framework for political analysis by proposing the famous communication paradigm: "Who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?"

In the first dimension of the political communication framework, Lasswell introduced the "who" aspect, referred to as the communicator. In the context of modern political communication, this refers to a communicator who has a good track record, is consistent between words and actions, and has a real commitment to the public interest. Meanwhile, the "what" dimension in Lasswell's political communication framework requires political messages to have constructive and meaningful substance. Therefore, the messages conveyed do not only contain empty promises or black campaigns, but must provide real solutions to the problems faced by the community. Therefore, messages delivered by communicators must be supported by accurate data, objective analysis, and realistic solutions to avoid the spread of hoaxes, misleading information, or populist rhetoric without clear substance.

After understanding the two dimensions above, the next dimension is the "In Which Channel" dimension, or the choice of communication channel. According to Lasswell, a communicator, when choosing media and platforms, should avoid channels that tend to spread slander or unverified information. In the current digital era, social media has become one of the most effective channels for political communication. However, the use of social media must also be done wisely, such as avoiding the use of fake accounts or other manipulative practices that can damage the integrity of political communication. Next is the "to whom" dimension, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive and non-discriminatory communication. This means that political messages must be accessible and understood by all levels of society, not just elite groups or certain supporters. The final dimension in Lasswell's political communication is the "with what effect" dimension, which emphasizes the transformative impact on society. Therefore, the goal of political communication is not only to win elections or gain popularity, but to create positive change in people's lives (Gurevitch, Coleman, & Blumler, 2009) ^[9]. Therefore, the expected effect of political communication is the creation of a more just, prosperous, and civilized society. Then, it inspires the public to participate in the democratic process actively, increases political awareness, and encourages the creation of good governance.

The integration of Islamic ethical values with Lasswell's political communication framework provides a new paradigm for understanding and implementing dignified political communication. This paradigm considers not only the technical and strategic aspects of political communication but also its profound moral and spiritual dimensions. Values such as honesty, experience, and social closeness provide a strong ethical foundation for every aspect of political communication, from who the communicator is, the message conveyed, the communication channel chosen, the intended audience, and the desired effect. Implementing this paradigm requires a comprehensive and systematic agenda setting to ensure that Islamic ethical values in political communication are consistently and sustainably realized. The concept of agenda setting, first developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 (Maurer, 2026) ^[13], is relevant in this context

because it can shape public perceptions of what is considered important and worthy of attention in political communication. Agenda setting, in the context of implementing political communication based on Islamic ethical values, is not only concerned with determining priority issues but also encompasses the establishment of communication norms expected of political actors. The agenda-setting process involves various stakeholders and is carried out through a holistic and sustainable approach.

Scholars suggest that agenda setting at the institutional level requires the establishment of a regulatory and policy framework that encourages ethical political communication practices (Leppänen & Liefverink, 2022) [12]. This includes the development of a political communication code of ethics based on the values of honesty, experience, and social closeness. One way to implement agenda setting is through institutions such as the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), the Press Council, and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) developing political communication standards that address not only technical and procedural aspects but also ethical and moral dimensions. Higher education institutions, particularly communication and political science study programs, play a strategic role in this agenda setting. The developed curriculum must integrate Islamic ethical values with modern political communication theories. This understanding suggests that students, as prospective political communication practitioners, need to be equipped with a deep understanding of how to implement the values of honesty.

Furthermore, agenda setting at the mass media level requires a transformation in how the media treats and presents political communication to the public. The research also explains that the mass media, as gatekeepers of political information, have the responsibility to convey political messages while simultaneously evaluating and filtering potentially negative political communication. In other words, agenda setting prioritizes content that reflects honest values, provides sufficient space for political communicators with adequate experience and competence, and encourages political communication that prioritizes social closeness with the community. Therefore, Gani's research findings suggest that the mass media need to develop program formats, including programs that provide space for in-depth dialogue on public issues, forums that allow direct interaction between politicians and the public, and coverage that focuses on the track record and competence of political candidates rather than merely popularity or controversy. After understanding the explanation above, the next step is to understand agenda setting at the civil society level.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016) [14, 17]. Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, netnography (Ermawati, Nurdin, Ahmed, & Huda, 2023) [7], and content analysis involving internet and social media content. We also interviewed local politicians, local customary leaders, and citizens in several districts in Central

Sulawesi. However, the main focus of this study was the idea of Governor of Central Sulawesi Anwar Hafid. The results of this study can later serve as a reference and guideline for studying other successes of political figures in other areas. Data were collected through direct observation, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis. The interviews involved the school principal, five teachers, and ten students. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were consulted with participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2014) [15, 16]. The data analysis used a deductive approach, which can be interpreted as a research procedure that produces deductive data from interviews and field notes. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis from Strauss and Corbin (1998) [20]. The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is the set of themes identified.

Results and Discussion

Reflection of Islamic educational values in Anwar Hafid's political communication

Within the framework of Islamic educational values established by Al-Ghazali, Al-Attas, and Al-Mawardi in the Literature Review, the interview results demonstrate hierarchical empirical evidence. The transcripts make explicit *shidq* (honesty) in its boldest form: an admission of shame over the poverty of the people of Central Sulawesi and the failure of the 10-year program while serving as Regent of Morowali Regency. The second transcript makes explicit *'adl* (justice) in the collective dimension through a program to assist the poor. Another transcript presents a synthesis of *ukhuwah*, *tawadhu*, and *tawakal* in a very concise statement of leadership philosophy. The fourth transcript makes explicit the value of *shura* (collaboration) and provides emic confirmation of the BERANI construct through the mention of the Nine Berani by another informant. The fifth, most distinctive transcript, makes explicit the value of *tazkiyah*/worship not merely as rhetoric, but as a verifiable bureaucratic policy. In line with research findings that explain the integration of Islamic educational values as a vital instrument in driving bureaucratic reform and improving the quality of public services, the literature highlights several approaches that have failed to eradicate the deeply rooted practices of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. As a solution, the literature proposes applying the principles of monotheism, trustworthiness, and spiritual accountability to shape the character of honest and professional state officials. Through this moral foundation, the bureaucracy is expected to transform into a public servant oriented toward the welfare of the people and social justice.

Barthes' semiotic analysis: Five layers of myth

Barthes's semiotic reading of the five transcripts yields a hierarchical and mutually reinforcing myth system. According to Barthes, myth is a communication system, a message, a mode of signification. Therefore, anything that contains a message has the potential to become a myth. In this context, the first transcript yields a paradoxical myth of integrity. When a

leader admits shame and failure, Barthes's myth mechanism is at work. Courageous honesty is naturalized into a character that is taken for granted, not a claim that needs to be verified. This statement is in line with research exploring Roland Barthes's mythological thinking and its application in literary studies. Myth functions as a second-level signification system capable of naturalizing ideological messages for certain political interests. Through the concepts of exnomination and depoliticization, literary texts are analyzed as a means to dismantle or even perpetuate the dominance of power in narratives. Overall, the text positions Barthes's theory as a critical tool for understanding the interaction between text, culture, and the political structure of society. As stated in the second transcript, which shows the construction of the leader's myth as a guarantor of systemic, not partial, social justice. The third transcript yields the most philosophically distinctive myth: the myth that legitimate leadership is servant leadership, not power. Redefining loyalty from loyalty to superiors to loyalty to the people is a second-order semiotic exercise within Barthes's framework. Transforming the conventions of office hierarchy into a new, seemingly natural myth, this myth resonates strongly with the teachings of Al-Mawardi and Al-Ghazali about leadership as a trust derived from divine obligation. The fourth transcript adds the myth of collaborative leadership as a contemporary shura. The governor, who calls himself "assistant to the regent," semiotically destroys the office hierarchy and replaces it with a hierarchy of values in which the most serving is the most leading. Meanwhile, the fifth transcript yields the most powerful and novel myth: the myth that good governance and Islamic governance are the same.

The strategy for internalizing Islamic educational values in political communication

Value anchoring: Localizing values in local context

The first identified strategy is Value Anchoring, an ability possessed by Anwar Hafied in connecting universal Islamic educational values with specific and concrete local contexts. NVivo Cluster 14, which places "Sulawesi-Region-Society" as a node connected to ethical values, confirms that Islamic values are not conveyed in an abstract, normative register. This statement is in line with research findings that Islamic ethics or values are not only in the form of formal commands or normative rules, but are always "materialized" in the context of everyday life. In the first and second transcripts, value anchoring works at the issue level: the value of justice is localized to Morowali Regency (poverty in the industrial area), and the value of trust is localized to the program to assist people experiencing poverty. According to one informant, the concept of value anchoring refers to the strategy of anchoring universal values to local issues to increase relevance and persuasion, similar to the anchoring effect in behavioral economics that adjusts perceptions based on initial benchmarks. From this explanation, it can be concluded that at the issue level, it involves framing the value of justice as a response to poverty, especially in the Morowali industrial area.

In the fourth transcript, the strategy rises to the governance level; the value of collaboration is attached to the reality of "the same people and the same territory" framing that removes the boundaries of the ego of office by referring to concrete and observable goals. According to Emily R Lai, collaboration is joint involvement in a coordinated effort to solve problems together, and collaborative interactions are characterized by shared goals, symmetrical structures with high-level negotiations, through interactivity and interdependence. Furthermore, according to Scott London, collaboration involves several parties starting from the individual level, work groups, and organizations, so that in carrying out collaboration, it is very important to understand the performance of public institutions that focus on the level of public sector organizations. From the explanation above, it can be understood that Anwar Hafied's statement in the fourth transcript is in line with the two public service administration literatures.

In the fifth transcript, value anchoring culminates in the value of congregational prayer attached to the context of the Central Sulawesi governor's office, thus making Islam not an external teaching, but a value that grows from within the government institution itself. This explanation is in line with Syarif Makmur's opinion that Governor Anwar Hafied requires ASN in the governor's office to stop all activities 30 minutes before the Adhan for congregational prayer, as part of the "Sulteng Berjamaah" and "Sulteng Berkah" programs. The policy aims to build spiritual discipline that has an impact on loyalty, performance, and the eradication of corruption in the Central Sulawesi bureaucracy. In addition, the results of research conducted by Moh. Ubay Dillah *et al.* stated that this practice turns congregational prayer into an institutional ethos, where religious values such as piety become indicators of ASN integrity, in line with strengthening spiritual development amidst religious diversity. Then, within the framework of McCombs and Shaw's agenda setting, Value Anchoring sets Islamic value-based issues as a priority agenda for the digital public space. In Al-Attas' perspective, this is ta'dib, placing values in their proper context so that they can be absorbed and experienced organically, not just adopted formally.

Personal testimony

The Personal Testimony strategy in Anwar Hafied's corpus operates on three increasingly deeper layers. The first layer is the testimony of office: "10 years as a regent" (T1), bureaucratic experience that provides empirical legitimacy. The second layer is the testimony of philosophy: "My life principle is being an employee" (T3), experience that transforms into wisdom. The third layer is the testimony of structural empathy: "I am also a former regent, I know the suffering of regents" (T4), experience used not to claim superiority, but rather to build authentic institutional closeness. Most dramatic is the Personal Testimony in the fifth Transcript: the narrative that President Jokowi himself submitted to the call to prayer policy in Morowali. This testimony uses the highest state authority figure as a validator of Islamic values in governance. This legitimacy mechanism transcends office and

demonstrates that consistency of values does not compromise with the hierarchy of power. This mechanism transcends office because it is religious and pride-based, where state authorities such as the president function as validators who maintain the consistency of Islamic values without compromising power, as explained above. This is relevant to socio-legal studies in Indonesia, including post-disaster governance. Meanwhile, in the Islamic educational tradition, all layers of testimony above serve as good examples, where values are internalized through observable examples, not simply through heard doctrines.

Conclusion

The values of Islamic education are reflected in six interconnected hierarchical dimensions throughout Anwar Hafied's political communication. First, shidq (honesty) is demonstrated through his open admission of program failure and shame over the poverty of Central Sulawesi (T1), a rare moral courage in conventional political communication. Second, 'adl (justice) is manifested through the orientation of the program to assist people experiencing poverty. Third, amanah (responsibility) manifested through a long-term commitment that does not stop halfway, reflected in the concept of TUNTAS (completeness) and his ten years of service as Regent of Morowali. Fourth, ukhuwah/shura expressed through the philosophy of serving the people, redefining loyalty, and collaborative leadership that eliminates sectoral egos. Fifth, tazkiyah/worship experienced a distinctive epistemic leap: from a peripheral value in the digital text corpus to an institutional bureaucratic policy enforced by sanctions of dismissal. Sixth, the emic confirmation of the construct of 'BERANI', through the informants' explicit mention of the Nine Berani vision, directly validates the research subjects' own understanding of the novelty of this research. Barthes's semiotic analysis identifies five hierarchical and mutually reinforcing layers of myth: the myth of paradoxical integrity, the myth of the guarantee of systemic justice, the myth of leadership as service (T3), the myth of collaborative leadership as contemporary shura (T4), and the most strategic myth, that Islamic governance and modern professional governance are the same. Through Pierce's framework, the five transcripts demonstrate an interpretive escalation from the personal to the relational to the institutional levels, demonstrating that Islamic values in Anwar Hafied's communication are not merely rhetoric, but habits of action that shape institutional reality.

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