

# REPRESENTATION OF JAVANESE CULTURAL IN THE MODERN ERA IN THE FILM LOSMEN BU BROTO

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## ABSTRACT

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In modern dynamics, culture undergoes a significant transformation due to the influence of globalization and technology. Javanese culture as one of Indonesia's cultural heritage experiences challenges in maintaining identity in the midst of globalization. Film as a medium that has a wide and deep reach, has the potential to reflect culture and shape people's perceptions. The purpose of this study is for how Javanese culture is represented in contemporary artworks such as the film "Losmen Bu Broto" to be important to study. The film "Losmen Bu Broto" is an Indonesian film released in 2021. This film tells the story of a Javanese family who owns an inn called Losmen Bu Broto. The daily life of the Broto family in running its business there are problems that occur that make disputes. In this film is shown cultural symbols that are in harmony with modern life. This research method is a quasi-qualitative research method with John Fiske's semiotic research method. Semiotics is a method that studies a sign analyzed by Fiske's model, which uses 3 levels, namely reality, representation, and ideology. Researchers use a type of quasi-qualitative research to explain intensively and in detail the symptoms and social phenomena chosen by researchers, namely how Javanese culture adapts in the modern era through signs in films.

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## 1. Introduction

In the middle of globalization, the spread of Western culture is often seen as a force that diminishes the characteristics of local cultures, as Western values infiltrate and sometimes overshadow traditional cultural values (Siregar & Nadiroh, 2017). The influence of mass media, which dominates communication and lifestyle, plays a crucial role in representing and shaping the image of local cultures within a society that is becoming increasingly interconnected and diverse. As technological advancements continue and external cultural influences dominate, the Javanese community faces significant challenges in preserving its unique cultural identity. To address this, innovation is being utilized to integrate traditional cultural elements into modern contexts.

Film, as a dominant form of mass communication through moving images, is a key vehicle for representing culture, values, and identity worldwide (Chaniago, 2019). Through its combination of language, visuals, sound, and narrative, film has the potential to deeply engage audiences, enabling them to feel, understand, and respond to various cultural aspects in the context of an ever-evolving modern world. Given its wide reach, film has the power to

influence diverse social segments (Irawanto, 2017), making it a crucial medium for cultural representation.

Successful Indonesian films at the box office present an intriguing opportunity to analyze story structure and plot development, particularly in terms of their ability to captivate and resonate with audiences. This is evident in the growing interest reflected in rising ticket sales and extended theatrical runs (Kristianto & Goenawan, 2021). One such film that is particularly worthy of examination in terms of its representation of Javanese culture in the modern era is *Losmen Bu Broto*. With a total audience count of 116,123 in 2021, the film became one of Indonesia's highest-grossing films that year (Times Indonesia, 2021). This film has also received appreciation from the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, who acknowledged that it successfully presents Javanese cultural elements in a rich and authentic manner. This is reflected through the depiction of etiquette, traditional attire, music, and cuisine, all of which are portrayed with great authenticity (Wahana News, 2021)

The success of *Losmen Bu Broto* in this context presents an opportunity to analyze how Javanese culture is represented and received by contemporary society. The film showcases various aspects of Javanese culture, such as language, customs, values, and traditions, all while navigating the complexities of globalization and changing societal norms. *Losmen Bu Broto* stands out as an exemplary study because it not only features symbols of Javanese culture but also portrays a narrative that reflects the realities of modern Javanese society. The characters, their backgrounds, dialogues, and actions all carry culturally significant messages that resonate with today's audience.

This research will analyze how the film captures, reflects, or offers solutions to issues related to the Javanese cultural identity in the modern era. Specifically, the study will focus on characters who embody dilemmas faced by contemporary Javanese society and examine how the film explores the tensions between traditional and modern values.

By applying John Fiske's semiotic analysis, the research will explore signs, symbols, and cultural representations present in the film, including those embedded in the settings, character interactions, and visual elements. The analysis will rely on scene excerpts, screenshots, and narrative contexts that highlight the portrayal of Javanese culture.

This study aims to offer a deeper understanding of how Javanese culture is represented in the modern era, particularly through the role of mass media in communicating cultural messages to a broader audience. A more nuanced understanding of cultural representation in films like *Losmen Bu Broto* will contribute to the preservation and appreciation of Javanese culture, potentially enhancing efforts to safeguard and develop this local cultural heritage for future generations.

## 2. Method

This research employs a descriptive-qualitative approach, which aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the cultural representation in the film *Losmen Bu Broto*. While the qualitative descriptive design shares similarities with quantitative descriptive research, it is important to clarify that the term "quasi-qualitative" is not commonly used in academic research. The term in this context is meant to indicate a research approach that combines aspects of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This hybrid approach differs from purely qualitative research, as it incorporates some elements traditionally associated with quantitative design such as a systematic approach to data and theory placement (Bungin,

2017). However, it maintains flexibility, allowing the research to evolve based on the findings that emerge from the field (Hardani et al., 2020)

The use of a quasi-qualitative methodology is justified in this study as it allows the researcher to adopt both qualitative and quantitative elements as needed to analyze complex cultural phenomena depicted in *Losmen Bu Broto*. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring the cultural nuances of the film, as it does not limit the researcher to purely qualitative or quantitative methodologies but instead enables a more holistic examination. By using this flexible approach, the researcher can adapt to new insights that arise, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of how Javanese culture is represented in the film.

In qualitative research, the primary source of data typically includes verbal expressions and actions, alongside supplementary data from documents, photographs, and statistics (Moelong, 2017). Primary data for this research are obtained directly from the film itself, where scenes relevant to Javanese cultural phenomena are analyzed. Secondary data, drawn from literature sources and relevant theories, will be collected and analyzed to complement and support the primary data.

Data collection is a critical component of research (Sugiyono, 2020). Various methods are available, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, documentation, and triangulation (Sugiyono, 2020). In this study, documentation is the chosen data collection technique, where the research object is the film itself. Documentation allows for the gathering of data from the film and other archival sources, including theories and opinions related to the research topic.

Semiotics, the study of signs and their meanings (Prasetya, 2019) provides a relevant framework for analyzing the representation of Javanese culture in *Losmen Bu Broto*. In film, signs can include elements such as language, imagery, costumes, and set designs, all of which carry significant cultural messages.

John Fiske's semiotic model is particularly useful for this study. His approach divides semiotic analysis into three levels: Reality, Representation, and Ideology. These levels are crucial for analyzing audiovisual media such as films (Vera, 2014). Through Fiske's framework, this research will examine the representation of Javanese culture in *Losmen Bu Broto*, uncovering layers of meaning related to cultural reality, how it is represented in the film, and the ideologies and values that may be embedded within these signs.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

In the context of analyzing the film "Losmen Bu Broto," a series of significant findings have been identified. These findings provide insights into the characters in the film, the conflicts they face, and how Javanese culture is reflected and adapted in daily life. To map the signs in this film, the researcher recorded the scenes in the film as follows:



**Figure 1. Sri declaring that she keeps her pregnancy**

**Table 1. Analysis result**

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
<p>Conversation between Sri and her friend named Kirana discussing Sri's decision regarding her pregnancy. Sri has serious expression. Kirana's expression appears confused</p>	<p>The camera technique used is a medium close-up shot between the two individuals with soft focus. The conversation between the two characters occurs in a casual meeting, depicting an everyday situation. Sri expresses her willingness to take responsibility for the baby she is carrying. Then Kirana questions whether this decision is right for Sri.</p>	<p>Sri and Kirana discuss Sri's pregnancy. At that moment, Kirana questions the future of Sri's pregnancy. Sri decides to take responsibility for it, along with its consequences. The cultural value of "wani tombok," meaning Sri has the courage and responsibility for her actions, is evident in her decision.</p>

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



**Figure 2. Jarot seeks approval from Broto's family**

**Table 2. Analysis result**

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
The Broto family and Mas Jarot, who are in the living room, discuss the responsibility towards Sri. Bu Broto's expression appears serious and angry. Pak Broto and Sri listen to Jarot attentively. Jarot's expression is serious. Pur's expression shows her attention to Bu Broto	The camera technique used is a medium close-up shot for one person with soft focus, and a medium shot for the five people. The Broto family and Mas Jarot face a crucial decision regarding marriage to Ms. Sri, who is pregnant. Mas Jarot expresses his sincerity to marry Sri and seeks their blessing. However, Bu Broto refuses.	Mas Jarot demonstrates his seriousness to take responsibility for Sri, even though Bu Broto, as the authority figure in the family, disagrees. Jarot's actions are related to the characteristic of "wani tombok" in Javanese culture, which emphasizes courage and responsibility.

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



**Figure 3. Sri is reprimanded by Bu Broto.**

**Table 3. Analysis result**

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
The conversation between Bu Broto and Sri aims to reprimand Sri's actions. The background is in Bu Broto's office. Bu Broto's expression shows anger towards Sri.	The camera technique used is a medium shot between two people. The conversation between Bu Broto and Sri reflects the relationship related to power and authority within the Broto family and Losmen Broto business. Bu Broto dislikes Sri contradicting in front of guests.	Bu Broto, as a figure representing authority and power within the family and business environment, sternly reprimands Sri. This occurs because Sri has contradicted what Bu Broto said. This reflects the Javanese cultural value of "Aja Dumeh," which emphasizes respect for authority and obedience.

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



Figure 4. Sri is reprimanded by Pur

Table 4. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
<p>The conversation between Mbak Pur and Sri revolves around food portions. The conversation takes place in the kitchen. Sri's expression appears relaxed as she responds to Mbak Pur's admonition. Meanwhile, Mbak Pur's expression appears serious and tense.</p>	<p>The camera technique used is a medium shot between two people. The conversation between Mbak Pur and Sri reflects the relationship related to power and authority within the Broto family and Losmen Broto business. Pur advises Sri against making impulsive decisions.</p>	<p>Pur and Sri discuss about the additional food portions for guests. Mbak Pur advises Sri not to act arbitrarily and explains that handling food is not as easy as it seems. Meanwhile, Sri responds casually. The cultural value of "Aja dumeh," which means that Pur advises Sri not to act capriciously, is evident in the conversation.</p>

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



Figure 5. Jarot asks for some time from Sri.

Table 5. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology

Debate between Sri and Jarot regarding the continuation of Sri's pregnancy takes place in Jarot's residence, specifically in the warehouse. Jarot appears confused, while Sri's expression shows anger and seriousness.

The camera technique used is a medium close-up shot of one person with soft focus. Mbak Sri appears firm in asking for accountability from Mas Jarot. However, Jarot asks for time to think it over carefully.

The debate between these two characters revolves around the baby carried by Mbak Sri. Here, Mbak Sri demands accountability from Mas Jarot. However, Mas Jarot asks for time for introspection. This reflects the cultural value of "Mawas diri," meaning Mas Jarot requests time before making a significant decision.

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)

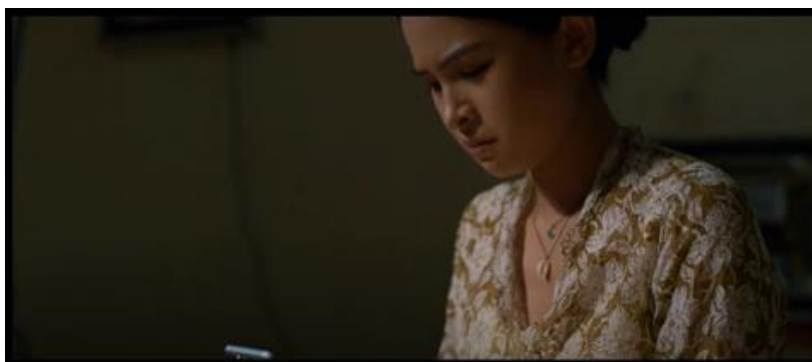


Figure 6. Sri sees that the room is empty & while she listen voicemail.

Table 6. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
<p>Sri looks at the empty room and receives a voicemail from Mas Jarot, stating that he needs time for introspection. Sri's expression appears sad as she listens to Jarot's message.</p>	<p>The camera technique used is a medium close-up shot of one person with soft focus. Mas Jarot asks for time from Sri to find himself before taking responsibility for Sri. However, this situation could be linked to Sri's uncertainty about Jarot's intentions and willingness to take responsibility as a father. Sri may think that Jarot will leave and not fulfill his responsibilities as a prospective father.</p>	<p>The conflict experienced by Jarot is also related to self-assessment and awareness of his limitations, prompting him to consider everything, which reflects "mawas diri," or the attitude of deliberation before making significant decisions.</p>

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



Figure 7. Bu Broto advises Sri.

Table 7. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
<p>The conversation between Bu Broto and Sri revolves around Sri's job. It takes place in Bu Broto's office. Sri's face shows a frown as she speaks to Bu Broto with an angry expression, while Bu Broto looks tense and then disappointed upon hearing Sri's response.</p>	<p>The camera technique used is a medium close-up shot of one person with soft focus. Bu Broto advises Mbak Sri to focus on managing Losmen Bu Broto. However, Sri firmly expresses that she wants to focus on her career as a singer.</p>	<p>Bu Broto and Sri discuss Sri's decision regarding her career. Bu Broto wants Sri to focus on the inn, while Sri immediately decides to continue her profession as a singer. Sri is someone who is firm in making decisions for her aspirations. The cultural value of "Jer Basuki Mawa Beya," which means that Sri has the courage to leave the inn to pursue a career as a singer, is evident.</p>

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



Figure 8. Sri is performing a concert.

Table 8. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology

Sri is performing a concert with her friend Kirana. Many spectators are attending this concert. Sri imagines that the Broto family is present at her concert. The background is in an open space adorned with lanterns. There is a background of sad music playing. Sri's expression appears sad.

The camera technique used is a medium close-up shot of one person with soft focus. Sri successfully performs the concert according to her wishes and dreams. Sri's imagination of the Broto family attending her concert is a representation of her desire or hope to receive support and recognition from her family in her significant achievement.

Sri successfully realizes her dream of becoming a singer and holds a concert with her friend Kirana. This reflects values such as hard work, perseverance, and success in achieving personal goals, in line with the principle of "Jer Basuki Mawa Beya" in Javanese culture.

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



Figure 9. Sri reveals her pregnancy to the Broto family.

Table 9. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
<p>Conversation among the Bu Broto family during dinner. Sri reveals her pregnancy to the family. The film background is in the dining room of Losmen Bu Broto. Sri's expression appears sad and guilty. Pur has a sad expression, with her body language holding Sri's shoulder, indicating her sadness for Sri. Bu Broto has an angry expression, with body language clenching her fists. Pak Broto has a sad facial expression.</p>	<p>Medium close-up shot between two people with soft focus. Mbak Sri, with the support of Mbak Pur, admits to her parents that she is pregnant. However, the response is not supportive from both Bu Broto and Pak Broto. Bu Broto instructs Sri to leave their losmen.</p>	<p>Sri has brought shame upon her family with the disgrace of being pregnant out of wedlock. Bu Broto demonstrates protection over her family, aligning with the Javanese cultural ideology of "mendhem jero mikhul dhuwur" which emphasizes the importance of protecting the honor and dignity of the family.</p>

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)



Figure 10. Sri asks for Bu Broto's blessing.

Table 10. Analysis result

Level Reality	Level Representation	Level Ideology
<p>The conversation between Bu Broto and Mbak Sri, who is pleading for blessings for her marriage to Jarot. The background of the film is in the garden at Losmen Bu Broto. Sri's expression appears sad and guilty, with body language kneeling before her mother. Bu Broto has a sorrowful expression, with body language touching Sri's face.</p>	<p>Medium close-up shot between two people with soft focus. Sri seeks full support from Bu Broto for her marriage to Broto. Initially, Bu Broto is hesitant to provide full support, but eventually, she melts and immediately offers the support Sri desires.</p>	<p>Sri humbly begs Bu Broto for forgiveness and blessing for her marriage to Jarot. Bu Broto accepts Sri's apology and extends her blessings and forgiveness. This reflects the cultural value of "Mendhem Jero Mikul Dhuwur," which emphasizes forgiveness and letting go of grudges towards parents</p>

Source: (Authored by the writer, 2024)

#### a. Wani Tombok

The concept of "wani tombok" reflects the brave and resilient attitude that is characteristic of Javanese society. "Wani tombok" means being willing to bear losses for the sake of dignity. The "wani tombok" attitude for Javanese people is the courage to take risks or bear losses (Wahyuni, 2021). In Javanese culture, the "wani tombok" attitude is often valued and considered as an action that demonstrates maturity and responsibility. Although Javanese society generally respects conservative social norms, the "wani tombok" attitude is also recognized as an expression of courage to live life according to individual moral principles. This is illustrated in figures 1 and 2.

In both scenes, the "wani tombok" characteristics displayed by Sri and Jarot can be linked to modern issues. Changes in social norms, social stigma, and pressure from the environment can be examples of modern issues. They demonstrate that courage, steadfastness, and determination to take responsibility remain relevant in facing the challenges of this era, thereby reinforcing Javanese cultural values in a modern context.

Mbak Sri's behavior reflects strong moral and ethical values in Javanese culture, where the courage to admit mistakes and take responsibility is highly respected. This shows how the "wani tombok" characteristic is not only relevant in a traditional context but also relevant in responding to modern issues such as changes in values and social norms.

Meanwhile, Mas Jarot also demonstrates the "wani tombok" nature by seeking the blessing of the Bu Broto family despite being faced with a difficult situation and receiving a less positive response. His firmness, respect, and earnestness in seeking blessings demonstrate his determination to take responsibility. Therefore, the "wani tombok" characteristic is not only a cultural heritage but also a source of inspiration and strength in addressing modern issues.

#### b. Aja Dumeh

"Aja dumeh" encapsulates a simple yet profound message. Within the Indonesian cultural context, this expression advises against exaggerated or presumptuous behavior. Essentially, "aja dumeh" signifies an attitude where individuals act without boundaries and tend to assert dominance, often portraying themselves as the most authoritative figure. Such behavior typically arises from certain opportunities or situations that grant individuals a sense of freedom to act without constraints (Wahyuni, 2021). In essence, the essence of "aja dumeh" embodies values such as adherence to societal norms, humility, and the avoidance of conflicts, all of which are integral aspects of Javanese culture. These traits signify local wisdom in fostering social harmony and honoring established norms.

Figures 3 and 4 depict the admonishments issued by Bu Broto and Pur to Sri, illustrating the enduring dynamics of power and authority in various settings, including familial and business contexts. Sri's struggle in responding to the authoritative reprimands from Bu Broto and Pur highlights the common challenge individuals face in discerning when to express their opinions and when to defer to authority.

#### c. Mawas Diri

"Mawas Diri" is the cautious practice of mindful speech and behavior. It involves managing emotions and actions with careful control, aiming to avoid future negative consequences and ensure no harm to others (Alamsyah, Rahmadi, & Wahyudi, 2022). In the context of Javanese culture, "Mawas Diri" refers to a heightened sense of self-awareness, caution, and careful consideration in decision-making to set a good example for others (Sumardjoko & Subowo, 2022). Examples of self-awareness include the ability to reflect before acting, considering the consequences of each action, and prioritizing wisdom in decision-making. These traits are depicted in figures 5 and 6.

These scenes reflect that Javanese individuals not only make decisions without careful consideration but also exercise self-awareness regarding the consequences of their actions. Thus, Javanese cultural values focusing on "self-awareness" are reflected in the dynamics of the conversation between Mbak Sri and Mas Jarot. Furthermore, these scenes demonstrate that "self-awareness" remains a relevant principle in addressing modern life issues, such as pursuing serious relationships, marriage, and parental roles. By better understanding oneself and respecting the process of personal growth, individuals can make wiser decisions and build a strong foundation for a happy and meaningful life.

#### d. Jer Basuki Mawa Beya

The Javanese proverb "Jer Basuki Mawa Beya," which translates literally to "All achievements require sacrifice," carries the meaning in Bahasa Indonesia that every success requires proportional sacrifice (Santosa, 2010). Sacrifice in this context does not only refer to

material possessions or money but encompasses all aspects of life such as thoughts, energy, and time. In the context of design, this proverb is chosen because it remains relevant to current life realities. It serves as a valuable lesson for children and society, teaching that achieving goals is not easy and always involves certain (Sigit, Mardiono, & Adiel, 2014). In this sense, these characteristics are found in figures 7 & 8.

In both scenes, the focus is on the modern challenges of preserving traditional cultural values amidst changing times. Despite Sri having achieved her dreams and goals, the conflict between family values and personal aspirations persists, indicating the complexity of navigating between family traditions and individual ambitions in the modern era. In this context, the characteristic of "Jer Basuki Mawa Beya" serves as a reminder that patience and perseverance remain essential in facing uncertainty and obstacles, as well as the importance of staying steadfast in cherished values without disregarding the demands of the times.

e. Mendhem Jero Mikul Dhuwur

The concept of "Mendhem Jero Mikul Dhuwur" embodies the idea that "mikul dhuwur" involves behaviors that uphold the dignity of others to be recognized positively by society. On the other hand, "mendhem jero" involves deeply burying and concealing all forms of disgrace, shame, and shortcomings, yet it is considered better if all of these are kept from being disclosed. Literally, "mendhem jero mikul dhuwur" means preserving honor from within, maintaining privacy, and the family's image (Nugroho, 2021). The concept of "mikul dhuwur mendhem jero" is an expression or reflection of social ethics in the Javanese way of life. It portrays respect or obedience to others. Such ethics can be observed in a child's behavior towards their parents, grandchildren towards their grandparents, students towards their teachers, and so forth.

In the context of modern society, values such as "mendhem jero mikul duwur," which include maintaining honor and silencing things that could harm the family's or one's own reputation, can still be relevant. However, the applicability and interpretation of these values can vary depending on various factors such as culture, family values, and personal beliefs. In scenes involving Sri, we can see how she strives to mend her relationship with her family after a conflict has occurred. This reflects a desire to respect and uphold the honor of the family, similar to the concept of "mendhem jero mikul duwur." However, in the modern context, it is also important to consider that these values may evolve and change over time. Generally, traditional values can still hold significance in modern society, but their application may be influenced by various dynamics and changes occurring within culture and society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is that the film "Losmen Bu Broto" demonstrates the complexity of Javanese cultural dynamics in facing modern changes. Through the analysis of cultural signs, such as the concepts of "wani tombok", "aja dumeh", "mawas diri", "Jer Basuki Mawa Beya", and "mendhem jero mikul dhuwur", the film depicts how Javanese cultural values remain relevant in addressing modern challenges.

This study also highlights the importance of awareness of traditional values in the context of rapid social change. Although Javanese society faces pressures from cultural changes and global norms, values such as courage, adherence to norms, self-awareness, sacrifice, and maintaining honor remain strong foundations in preserving cultural identity.

Furthermore, this analysis associates John Fiske's semiotic theory of television codes, which are often found and result in depictions of Javanese culture at the level of reality. At this level, it helps researchers to see how dialogues and behaviors presented in the film. Therefore, this research provides a deeper understanding of how Javanese cultural values are reflected and adapted in everyday life, and how they influence understanding and interpretation of social reality.

For filmmakers, this study provides valuable insights into how cultural elements can be adapted in modern cinema without compromising the essence of traditional values. The implications for cultural policymakers are also significant, as films like *Losmen Bu Broto* serve as effective mediums for both introducing and preserving local cultural heritage amid globalization. Moving forward, adjustments in character development and storyline construction could be explored further to ensure that similar films remain relevant to a broader audience in the future. In addition, scholars can utilize this research as a reference in studies on cultural representation and narrative analysis in Indonesian cinema.

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