

Hadroh Art as a Medium for Religious Value Internalization and Congregational Spiritual Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary mosque education requires forms of religious formation that are intellectually meaningful, emotionally engaging, and socially participatory. This study examines how hadroh, an Islamic percussion and shalawat tradition, mediates the internalization of religious values and the strengthening of spiritual awareness among the congregation of Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Jabung, Mlarak, Ponorogo, Indonesia. The study aimed to analyze the internalization process, interpret hadroh's spiritual role, and identify its supporting and inhibiting conditions. A qualitative descriptive case study with a phenomenological orientation was conducted through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with eight purposively selected informants, and analysis of activity records and visual documentation. Data were analyzed through condensation, display, conclusion drawing, and verification, while trustworthiness was strengthened through source, technique, and time triangulation. The findings show that religious values were internalized through five connected mechanisms: explanation of shalawat meanings, repetitive embodied practice, trainer and administrator exemplarity, integration with prayer and religious instruction, and family-like communal interaction. These mechanisms nurtured faith, worship discipline, love for the Prophet Muhammad, noble character, remembrance of God, sincerity, and Islamic solidarity. Participants associated regular involvement with inner calm, greater devotional attentiveness, self-reflection, increased mosque participation, and stronger social bonds. Enabling factors included congregational solidarity, family and community support, committed leadership, routine practice, and a conducive mosque environment. Constraints included work and family obligations, age-related limitations, unequal musical ability, inconsistent trainer attendance, modern entertainment, and weak youth regeneration. Hadroh therefore functions as an aesthetic-relational medium through which religious meaning becomes affectively experienced, communally reinforced, and gradually embodied in everyday life.

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INTRODUCTION

Spiritual awareness is a central dimension of religious life because it connects formal worship with inner attentiveness, moral sensitivity, self-evaluation, and a felt relationship with God. In rapidly changing social environments, however, religious practice can become fragmented by occupational demands, digital entertainment, and limited opportunities for communal reflection. Individuals may continue to attend rituals while experiencing them as routine rather than as meaningful encounters. Mosque-based education therefore faces the challenge of creating practices that do more than communicate religious information: it must also enable participants to feel, rehearse, and socially embody the values being taught (Sudirman, 2025; Zailiah, 2023).

Within Indonesian Muslim communities, Islamic art has long served as one such formative practice. Hadroh combines frame drums or rebana, collective rhythm, vocal performance, dhikr, and poetic praise of the Prophet Muhammad. Its religious legitimacy is discussed differently across Muslim communities, yet local acceptance generally depends on purpose, content, etiquette, acoustic moderation, and consistency with the sanctity of the mosque (Firmansyah & Datmi, 2026). In contexts where it is practiced responsibly, hadroh is understood not merely as entertainment but as a medium of da'wah, communal worship, and cultural continuity.

The educational significance of hadroh lies in its capacity to connect cognition, emotion, bodily participation, and social interaction. Lyrics introduce religious messages; repeated recitation develops familiarity; rhythmic coordination requires discipline and cooperation; and shared performance creates an atmosphere in which participants can experience joy, reverence, calm, and belonging. Studies of Islamic arts and da'wah indicate that hadroh can make religious messages more accessible, strengthen interest in mosque activities, and support moral formation among young people (Rohman & Burhanuddin, 2023; Salamah et al., 2023; Saputri et al., 2023; Yasluh et al., 2024). Research in Islamic boarding schools likewise shows that hadroh can contribute to the internalization of religious character through habituation, collective participation, and the repeated articulation of devotional texts (Sauri et al., 2021).

Religious value internalization refers to the movement by which externally introduced values become personally understood, emotionally accepted, and behaviorally enacted. Muhaimin (2016) conceptualizes this movement through transformation, transaction, and transinternalization. Transformation involves communicating values; transaction involves reciprocal interaction and guided practice; and transinternalization occurs when values are increasingly integrated into personality and conduct. This framework is useful for examining hadroh because the activity simultaneously conveys religious content, organizes interaction, and provides repeated opportunities for devotional expression.

Spiritual awareness in this study is understood as a person's growing attentiveness to God, worship, moral responsibility, and the religious meaning of everyday life. It is reflected in consistency of worship, inner calm, love of dhikr and shalawat, willingness to evaluate oneself, and more constructive relationships with others. This understanding resonates with the multidimensional view of religiosity developed in contemporary Islamic education research, where belief, religious practice, religious experience, knowledge, and behavioral consequences are treated as interrelated rather than separate domains (Juanda et al., 2024). Hadroh is therefore potentially significant because it can address all five domains within one communal activity.

Existing studies have largely examined hadroh as a medium of da'wah, youth moral development, Islamic communication, or cultural preservation. Fitriani and Sulistyani (2022) show that hadrah can strengthen Islamic outreach in mosque settings, while Qibtiyah (2023) highlights the internalization of ukhuwah through religious activities. Karimullah (2024) emphasizes the emotional response generated by music in Islamic da'wah. Nevertheless, fewer studies explain in detail how hadroh functions as an internalization process among an adult and intergenerational mosque congregation, how participants interpret its spiritual effects, and what institutional conditions sustain or weaken those effects.

This study addresses that gap through a case study of the congregation of Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Jabung, Mlarak, Ponorogo. The mosque was established in 1967 and has developed as a center of worship, Islamic education, social service, and community interaction. Its programs include congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, fiqh study, maulid and al-Barzanji recitations, social assistance, and weekly hadroh practice. The congregation includes children, youth, adults, and older people, although regular hadroh participation during the study was dominated by adult men and women.

The study asks three questions: How are religious values internalized through hadroh? How does hadroh contribute to congregational spiritual awareness? What factors support or inhibit the process? The article contributes an analytical interpretation of hadroh as an aesthetic-relational medium. The term refers to a process in which religious meaning is communicated through lyrics and instruction, affectively intensified through sound and rhythm, embodied through repetition, and socially reinforced through communal practice. This formulation is not intended as a causal model; rather, it synthesizes the mechanisms consistently described across the case evidence.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive case study with a phenomenological orientation. The case-study dimension bounded the inquiry within one mosque community and one recurring religious-art practice, while the phenomenological orientation directed attention to participants' lived meanings, feelings, and interpretations. The study was conducted at Al-Muttaqin Mosque, Jabung, Mlarak, Ponorogo, during the 2025/2026 period.

Participants were selected purposively because of their direct involvement in the organization, instruction, participation, or observation of hadroh. Eight informants were interviewed: the chairperson of the mosque board, a religious leader who led the study circle, the hadroh trainer, one male congregant, two female congregants, and two local residents who observed the activity but were not core members. This role diversity enabled comparison between institutional intentions, trainer practices, participant experiences, and community perceptions. Personal names are not used in the article's analytical narrative; evidence is attributed by role to reduce unnecessary identification.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observation focused on the sequence of weekly practice, the relationship between musical and religious components, participant interaction, discipline, prayer-related routines, and the emotional atmosphere of collective shalawat. Interviews, conducted between late May and June 2026, explored the history and objectives of the activity, values emphasized, instructional methods, perceived spiritual and social changes, supporting conditions, obstacles, and expectations for continuity. Documents included the mosque profile, organizational records, activity notes, photographs, interview transcripts, and observation records.

Data analysis followed the interactive stages of data reduction or condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification (Hardani et al., 2020). The materials were first

organized around the three research questions. Initial codes included lyric meaning, shalawat repetition, worship habituation, exemplarity, motivation, emotional response, mosque participation, social solidarity, family support, age, attendance, skill variation, entertainment competition, and regeneration. Codes were then compared across informant roles and data sources. In the final interpretive stage, the findings were synthesized into five mechanisms of value internalization and five dimensions of spiritual awareness.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation across administrators, trainer, congregants, and residents; technique triangulation across interviews, observation, and documents; and time triangulation through data collection on different dates and occasions. Interpretations were checked against convergent and divergent evidence rather than based on one testimony. The research received institutional permission, and participants were interviewed in relation to their roles in the mosque community.

The design has several limitations. It represents a single mosque, relies substantially on participant accounts, and did not use standardized measures of spirituality before and after participation. Attendance intensity also differed among participants. Accordingly, the findings should be read as a contextually credible interpretation of perceived and observed patterns, not as a statistically generalizable or causal estimate of hadroh's effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hadroh as an Integrated Religious-Art Practice

The hadroh activity at Al-Muttaqin Mosque was conducted routinely once a week, generally on Saturday evening. Practice began with collective prayer and shalawat, continued with vocal preparation and rebana training, and ended with evaluation and a short religious reminder. On some occasions, maulid recitation or an informal religious lesson was added. The sequence is important because it shows that musical competence was never treated as the sole objective. Technique, devotion, etiquette, and religious understanding were deliberately interwoven.

Training materials included basic percussion patterns, vocal performance, memorization of shalawat, interpretation of selected lyrics, etiquette in a religious gathering, moral instruction, and narratives that strengthened love for the Prophet Muhammad. When prayer time arrived, participants prioritized congregational prayer before continuing practice. They were also reminded to maintain mosque etiquette and respectful interaction. Thus, hadroh practice was placed inside a wider moral and ritual environment rather than operating as a detached artistic rehearsal.

The group was dominated by adult men and women, with some older participants. This composition shaped both its strength and its vulnerability. Adults brought strong commitment, local legitimacy, and a desire to enliven the mosque. At the same time, work, household responsibilities, health, and age affected attendance and musical learning. The case therefore demonstrates a form of nonformal adult religious education in which participation is voluntary, socially embedded, and negotiated around everyday obligations.

Five Mechanisms of Religious Value Internalization

The evidence indicates that religious values were internalized through five connected mechanisms: semantic mediation, embodied repetition, exemplarity, ritual integration, and communal reinforcement. These mechanisms did not occur in a fixed linear order. They interacted repeatedly during weekly practice and during other mosque activities.

First, semantic mediation occurred when the trainer or religious leader explained the meaning of shalawat lyrics, connected praise of the Prophet with imitation of his character, and linked devotional language with worship and moral conduct. Participants were not expected merely to memorize melodies. They were encouraged to understand why shalawat

matters, what values it communicates, and how love for the Prophet should influence daily behavior. This mechanism corresponds to value transformation because religious content is articulated and made intelligible.

Second, embodied repetition occurred through collective recitation, rhythmic coordination, vocal practice, and regular attendance. Repetition enabled texts and gestures to become familiar, while musical synchronization required attention, patience, and mutual adjustment. Religious meaning was therefore rehearsed through the voice and body, not only contemplated intellectually. The educational value of repetition is supported by studies showing that hadroh strengthens religious character when devotional content is practiced consistently in a supportive environment (Sauri et al., 2021).

Third, exemplarity was provided by the trainer, mosque administrators, and religious leaders. Participants emphasized that they learned more easily when instructors modeled discipline, prayer, respectful speech, humility, and commitment. The trainer's role therefore extended beyond correcting rhythm or melody. His consistency communicated what it meant to treat hadroh as worship and da'wah rather than as performance alone. Exemplarity transformed religious instruction into visible practice.

Fourth, ritual integration connected hadroh with congregational prayer, maulid recitation, religious talks, dhikr, and mosque etiquette. This prevented the activity from becoming an isolated cultural event. Instead, it served as an entry point into a wider ecology of worship and learning. Participants who initially attended because of music or social invitation were gradually exposed to prayer, study, mosque service, and other religious programs. Similar findings in mosque da'wah research indicate that artistic activities can lower the social threshold for participation and create a more welcoming route into religious engagement (Fitriani & Sulistyani, 2022; Rohman & Burhanuddin, 2023).

Fifth, communal reinforcement developed through family-like interaction, mutual invitation, informal conversation, shared equipment, food contributions, and collective appearances at community events. Repeated encounters strengthened familiarity and trust. Participants described how people who previously met rarely became more closely connected, and how residents from neighboring areas also joined. Through this social dimension, values such as cooperation, generosity, patience, and ukhuwah were enacted rather than merely discussed (Hadari, 2023; Qibtiyah, 2023).

Table 1. Mechanisms of religious value internalization through hadroh

<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Representative practices</i>	<i>Religious values</i>	<i>Internalization function</i>
<i>Semantic mediation</i>	Explaining lyrics, short tausiyah, maulid narratives, moral discussion	Faith, love of the Prophet, religious knowledge, moral orientation	Makes values intelligible and connects devotional texts with daily life
<i>Embodied repetition</i>	Weekly shalawat, vocal rehearsal, rebana rhythm, repeated prayer routines	Dhikr, worship discipline, patience, consistency	Turns religious language into a familiar bodily and emotional practice
<i>Exemplarity</i>	Trainer and administrators model prayer, discipline, humility, and respectful interaction	Akhlak, responsibility, sincerity, respect	Provides visible standards that participants can imitate
<i>Ritual integration</i>	Prayer before/within practice, congregational	Obedience, reverence, mosque	Links art to a broader ecology of worship and

	worship, study circles, attachment, spiritual learning mosque etiquette attentiveness	
<i>Communal reinforcement</i>	Mutual invitation, shared equipment, food support, collective appearances, conversation	Ukhuwah, cooperation, generosity, social care Stabilizes values through belonging, recognition, and repeated social interaction

Viewed through Muhaimin's framework, semantic mediation represents transformation, while embodied practice, dialogue, and exemplarity represent transaction. Transinternalization becomes visible when participants begin to attend the mosque voluntarily, recite shalawat outside formal sessions, show greater worship discipline, and express religious values in social relationships. The study does not claim that every participant reached the same depth. Attendance, age, motivation, and previous religious experience shaped the pace of change. Internalization was therefore gradual and uneven rather than automatic.

This finding is significant because it clarifies why hadroh may be more influential than a purely verbal activity for some participants. The activity combines message, sound, bodily engagement, emotion, and social recognition. Salamah et al. (2023) describe hadrah as a persuasive communication medium, while Karimullah (2024) emphasizes the emotional response generated by music in da'wah. The present case extends these arguments by showing how emotional and communicative qualities become part of an internalization process when they are repeated, interpreted, and embedded in mosque relationships.

Spiritual Awareness as Devotional, Affective, and Social Change

Participants associated regular hadroh involvement with several forms of spiritual awareness. The most frequently mentioned was increased love for the Prophet Muhammad. Shalawat lyrics, stories of prophetic character, and collective recitation encouraged participants to remember the Prophet, seek his intercession, and imitate his conduct. Love of the Prophet was not framed as emotion alone; administrators and trainers connected it with obedience to God, moral improvement, and willingness to follow religious guidance.

A second form was inner calm and devotional attentiveness. Congregants described feeling peaceful, moved, and more focused when reciting or listening to shalawat, particularly during emotionally intense moments such as mahal al-qiyam. Some participants associated these moments with tears, introspection, and recollection of their life journey. Such accounts should not be interpreted as clinical evidence of psychological change, but they do show that hadroh created an affective setting in which religious reflection became more accessible. Sudirman (2025) similarly argues that internalized religious values can contribute to mental and spiritual balance when they are meaningfully experienced rather than mechanically performed.

A third form was increased participation in mosque life. Informants reported that some people who had rarely attended religious gatherings became more willing to join shalawat, study circles, congregational worship, mosque cleaning, yasinan, tahlilan, and Muslimat activities. Local residents described hadroh as an attractive entry point: people might first come because of the sound or a friend's invitation, then remain for wider religious and social activities. This pattern supports previous research showing that hadroh can make da'wah more approachable and stimulate participation without relying solely on formal preaching (Rohman & Burhanuddin, 2023; Saputri et al., 2023).

A fourth form was self-reflection and moral motivation. Participants linked shalawat with the desire to improve worship, speech, relationships, and daily conduct. The activity

provided a recurring pause in which people could evaluate themselves. Because the messages were delivered poetically and collectively, they were experienced as invitation rather than accusation. This persuasive quality is central to Islamic arts education: aesthetic form can reduce defensiveness while still communicating moral seriousness (Salamah et al., 2023; Yasluh et al., 2024).

A fifth form was social-spiritual solidarity. Congregants became more familiar, communicated more openly, helped one another during community events, and experienced the mosque as a living shared space. Residents observed that relationships across neighborhood boundaries became more fluid. This social dimension is not external to spirituality. In Islamic ethical life, awareness of God is expressed through care, cooperation, reconciliation, and respect for others. Hadroh strengthened this connection by making ukhuwah part of the repeated religious experience.

Table 2. Spiritual awareness associated with regular hadroh participation

<i>Religiosity dimension</i>	<i>Case evidence</i>	<i>Spiritual tendency</i>	<i>Interpretive caution</i>
<i>Belief</i>	Lyrics and explanations emphasize God, the Prophet, obedience, and prophetic example	Stronger devotional orientation and love of the Prophet	Belief change was inferred from participant accounts, not measured psychometrically
<i>Religious practice</i>	Shalawat, prayer, study circles, mosque service, yasinan, and tahlilan	More frequent participation and worship discipline	Attendance varied because of work, family, health, and age
<i>Religious experience</i>	Peace, emotion, tears, khushu, introspection, and a sense of closeness	Greater affective engagement with worship	Experiences were subjective and differed in intensity
<i>Religious knowledge</i>	Explanation of lyrics, short sermons, maulid narratives, etiquette, and moral teaching	Better understanding of devotional texts and expected conduct	The study did not administer a formal knowledge test
<i>Consequences</i>	Improved interaction, solidarity, mutual assistance, mosque attachment, and motivation to improve oneself	Religious meaning extends into social behavior	Behavioral changes were context-specific and reported rather than causally established

Table 2 organizes the findings through the five dimensions used in religiosity research (Juanda et al., 2024). Hadroh did not strengthen one dimension in isolation. Knowledge of lyrics supported belief; repeated practice generated experience; experience motivated participation; and participation reinforced social consequences. The dimensions operated as a mutually reinforcing configuration. This helps explain why participants described hadroh as both enjoyable and religiously serious.

The study's distinctive contribution is the identification of an aesthetic-relational pathway to spiritual awareness. 'Aesthetic' refers to the role of melody, rhythm, poetic language, and emotional atmosphere. 'Relational' refers to the roles of trainer, administrators, peers, family, and community. Aesthetic experience without religious interpretation could remain entertainment, while instruction without relational warmth could remain abstract. At Al-Muttaqin Mosque, the educational effect emerged from their combination.

Supporting and Inhibiting Conditions

The success of hadroh as a medium of value internalization depended on an enabling social and institutional environment. Congregational solidarity was the most visible support. Participants invited one another, shared responsibilities, supplied refreshments or equipment voluntarily, and maintained a sense of collective ownership. This reduced the perception that hadroh was an elite performance group and instead presented it as a communal religious practice.

Family and community support were also essential because practice was held at night. Permission, understanding, and flexibility within households affected attendance, particularly for women and older participants. Positive community responses strengthened legitimacy. Even residents who did not participate directly valued the more vibrant mosque atmosphere, increased social contact, and devotional soundscape.

Committed leadership and trainer exemplarity provided continuity. The mosque board integrated hadroh with other religious programs, while the trainer combined technical instruction with moral reminders and personal encouragement. Routine weekly practice created the temporal consistency necessary for habituation. A conducive mosque environment further linked artistic activity with prayer, study, and etiquette.

The strongest obstacles were practical rather than ideological. Work schedules, household responsibilities, illness, and age made attendance irregular. Participants differed in rhythmic, vocal, and memorization ability, so training required differentiated pacing. The absence of the trainer or religious mentor reduced the quality of sessions. Competing modern entertainment also affected attention, especially among younger people. Some residents recommended better equipment, wider variation in shalawat, and careful control of volume at night.

Youth regeneration emerged as the most important long-term concern. Many active participants were adults or older people. Without deliberate involvement of adolescents and young adults, the practice may remain socially respected but demographically fragile. Regeneration requires more than inviting youth to perform. It requires roles in organization, digital documentation, arrangement, percussion, vocal leadership, and community service so that younger members experience hadroh as a meaningful field of contribution rather than as an inherited obligation.

Table 3. Enabling conditions, constraints, and practical responses

<i>Enabling conditions</i>	<i>Constraints</i>	<i>Practical responses derived from the case</i>
<i>Congregational solidarity and voluntary support</i>	Irregular attendance because of work and family obligations	Use flexible scheduling, advance coordination, and shared responsibilities
<i>Committed mosque board and trainer exemplarity</i>	Trainer or mentor cannot always attend	Prepare assistant trainers and distribute technical and religious leadership
<i>Routine weekly practice and a conducive mosque setting</i>	Differences in age, health, musical ability, and learning pace	Use differentiated practice groups, gradual instruction, and peer mentoring
<i>Family and community approval</i>	Competition with modern entertainment and changing youth interests	Add appropriate repertoire variation, digital outreach, and meaningful youth roles
<i>Integration with prayer, study, and social service</i>	Risk of becoming spectacle or creating excessive night-time noise	Preserve devotional purpose, mosque etiquette, moderate volume, and reflective content
<i>Strong local tradition and</i>	Weak regeneration and	Develop systematic cadre

community legitimacy

limited equipment

 formation, fundraising,
 maintenance, and
 intergenerational training

Educational Implications for Mosque-Based Islamic Learning

The findings suggest that mosque education can benefit from treating Islamic arts as structured learning environments rather than as supplementary entertainment. A well-designed hadroh program should contain at least four pedagogical elements: clear interpretation of devotional texts, repeated embodied practice, exemplary leadership, and reflective connection with everyday conduct. Removing any one of these elements weakens the internalization process. Music without interpretation risks superficiality; explanation without practice risks abstraction; routine without example risks inconsistency; and performance without reflection risks spectacle.

The case also shows the importance of adult religious education. Mosque programs are often discussed as youth development initiatives, yet adults and older people also need accessible spaces for learning, belonging, and spiritual renewal. Hadroh created such a space because it allowed different levels of ability, did not require formal academic credentials, and combined worship with sociability. This inclusiveness helps explain its capacity to attract participants who might feel less engaged by lecture-only formats.

At the same time, aesthetic attraction must remain ethically governed. The mosque board should monitor lyrics, etiquette, gender and spatial arrangements where relevant, sound volume, performance expectations, and the balance between public visibility and devotional intention. The study's community respondents explicitly valued the activity while also recommending moderation of volume and protection of its identity as worship and da'wah. Such concerns align with research showing that local acceptance of hadroh depends on context-sensitive religious and social norms (Firmansyah & Datmi, 2026).

For program evaluation, success should not be judged only by musical quality or audience size. More meaningful indicators include consistency of attendance, understanding of shalawat meanings, participation in prayer and mosque service, willingness to help others, respectful communication, self-reported spiritual reflection, and involvement of younger members. These indicators capture the educational and spiritual purposes of hadroh more accurately than performance excellence alone.

Finally, the activity should be connected with broader mosque development. Youth cadre formation, family engagement, digital documentation, community service, and intergenerational mentoring can expand hadroh's educational reach. Future programs could combine rehearsal with brief thematic reflection, rotating leadership, social action, and evaluation sessions. Such integration would preserve cultural continuity while responding to contemporary patterns of attention and participation.

CONCLUSION

Religious values at Al-Muttaqin Mosque were internalized through a recurring combination of semantic explanation, collective shalawat and rhythmic practice, leader exemplarity, integration with prayer and religious instruction, and communal interaction. These mechanisms cultivated faith, love for the Prophet Muhammad, worship discipline, dhikr, sincerity, noble character, and Islamic solidarity. The process corresponded to transformation, transaction, and gradual transinternalization, although its depth differed among participants.

Hadroh strengthened spiritual awareness by creating an experience in which religious knowledge, devotion, emotion, and social participation converged. Participants associated

regular involvement with inner calm, greater khushu, self-reflection, increased willingness to attend the mosque, and stronger relationships with fellow congregants. The study therefore interprets hadroh as an aesthetic-relational medium: its formative capacity lies not in sound alone, but in the interaction between meaningful lyrics, embodied repetition, affective resonance, exemplary guidance, and communal reinforcement.

The process was supported by solidarity, family and community approval, committed leadership, routine practice, and a conducive mosque environment. It was constrained by work and family obligations, age, unequal ability, occasional trainer absence, modern entertainment, limited resources, and weak youth regeneration. Future research should compare multiple mosque communities, follow participants longitudinally, and combine qualitative evidence with carefully designed measures of religious participation and spiritual well-being. Such studies could test the transferability and durability of the aesthetic-relational pathway identified in this case.

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