

Leadership and Governance in the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): Principles of Justice, Consultation, and Accountability

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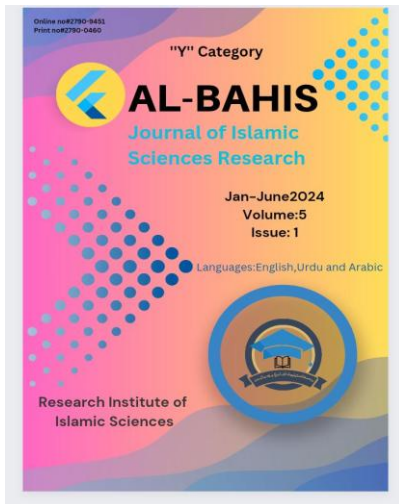
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Abstract:

The stability, justice and prosperity of any society are inseparable with the leadership and governance. The rule of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the Islamic history is a fully developed example of ethical governance, which relies on the values of justice, consultation (Shura) and accountability. This paper will focus on the leadership and governance systems of the Prophet (PBUH) which were evident in the Seerah and how these principles can be applied to the early Islamic state in Madinah. The study utilizes the qualitative analysis of primary Islamic texts such as the Quran, The Hadith texts and classical Seerah documents to discuss the pillars of Prophetic governance. This paper has emphasized how the Prophet (PBUH) made justice the fundamental principle of leadership, made sure that he consulted his followers in making decisions, and held himself accountable and transparent. It also looks at the administrative practices and institutional arrangements that occurred in the Prophetic period such as the Constitution of Madinah and the appointment of the governors and the judges. The results indicate that Prophetic model of governance is a balanced model that incorporates ethical leadership, social justice and responsibility to the people. The paper concludes that the leadership ideals exhibited by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are still very relevant in the contemporary debate on ethical leadership and responsible leadership in the modern societies.

Keywords:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Seerah; Islamic Leadership, Governance in Islam, Justice in Islam, Shura (Consultation), Accountability Prophetic Governance, Islamic Political Thought.

1-Introduction:

Governance and leadership are very important in ensuring the stability and justice as well as development of societies. Leadership has always been known throughout history as a necessary element in achieving the order in society, fostering justice, and securing the well-being of the communities. Leaders with integrity, wisdom and the commitment to the great good are very much required in political and social systems. Today, in the field of governance, scholars tend to stress upon the significance of ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability as the primary capabilities of the sustainable and just society. These values are not merely at the center of modern political thinking but also highly embedded within Islamic teachings and the historical experience of the early Muslim community.¹

¹ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 56-58.

The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a wonderful example of a leadership and administration that involves both the moral and the administrative. Being the founder and leader of the first Islamic state in Madinah the Prophet (PBUH) had founded a system of governance which was founded on justice, consultation and responsibility. His style of leadership was not that of authoritarian control but a balanced style that focused on equality, involvement and responsibility. The Prophet (PBUH) made sure that justice was administered equally to the members of the society, irrespective of their social status and he also encouraged his companions to consult him when making decisions concerning governance and the society.²

The system of governance that the Prophet (PBUH) developed was also very dedicated towards social welfare, community integration and the safeguarding of the rights of the Muslims and the non Muslim communities at large. The Prophet provided the grounds in which a stable and organized political structure was laid through measures like the Constitution of Madinah, the appointment of competent administrators, and the establishment of diplomatic ties with the neighboring communities among others. These teachings bring into focus the practical aspects of Prophetic leadership and how moral values could be applied into effective leadership.³

The main aim of this paper is to discuss the leadership and governance styles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as seen in the Seerah. The study attempts to investigate the influence of the principle of justice, consultation (Shura) and accountability on the administration and politics of the early Islamic state. It also seeks to answer such research questions: How did the Prophet apply justice in the community? How important was the consultation in his decision making process? And what can the Prophetic pattern of leadership tell us about modern leadership and ethical administration discourses?

The paper is divided into a number of sections. After this introduction, the paper talks about the notion of leadership and governance in Islam. It then discusses justice principles on the Prophetic model, and then on consultation (Shura) in decision making. The accountability and administrative practices in the Prophetic state are also discussed and lessons on the current leadership and governance given by the conclusion of this paper.

2-Islamic Leadership and Governance Concept:

Leadership and governance is considered a trust (amanah), as part of the Islamic thinking, and a moral responsibility that is vested to the people in benefit of the society. Islamic leadership is not just a status of power but rather a responsibility that demands justice, uprightness and responsibility to the society and to Allah. The Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stipulate that leaders should rule with fairness, compassion, and responsibility but at the same time ensuring that they protect rights and social harmony is achieved. The Islamic political thinking thus views

² Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1983), 198-201.

³ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 221-225.

leadership as a kind of custodianship where leaders are supposed to be serving the interests of the community instead of seeking to have power or status.⁴

One of the key ideas associated with Islam as far as leadership is concerned is *Khilafah*, or being a human steward and a human responsibility on earth. Quran refers to a human being as being the vicegerents of Allah and they are supposed to keep justice and order in society. This idea anchors that administration has to be administered under the divine instructions and ethical responsibility. Leaders are thus supposed to be morally upright, just and beneficial in the community. The Islamic definition of governance therefore incorporates both the spiritual and social and political responsibility.⁵

Quran also mentions that leadership should be directed by both justice and consultation. Justice is introduced as one of the main values that should allow ruling every sphere of public life. Quran teaches believers to be just even when it may not be in their interests or their near ones. This tenet ascertains that Islam leadership is founded on justice and objectivity. Meanwhile, the Quran promotes consultation (*Shura*) in the organizational matters, emphasizing the significance of participatory decision-making in the government. These are the ethical principles that the Islamic leadership is based on and they were put into practice by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the ruling of the early Muslim world.⁶

Besides justice and consultation, accountability is another critical element of leadership in the Islamic religion. The people they govern are not the only ones that hold the leaders accountable since they also have Allah to answer to their deeds and their decisions. The prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressed on this value by saying that everyone has the responsibility towards whom they are in charge of. The concept of leadership in Islam being intertwined with such concepts as responsibility, service, and moral integrity is further reinforced by this teaching.⁷

All in all, the Islamic vision of leadership and government is one that amalgamates morality and work responsibility. With the focus on justice, consultation, and accountability, Islam develops a holistic system of governance that aims at promoting fairness, social stability, and safeguarding human dignity in the society.

3. Justices in the Prophetic Governance:

Justice takes one of the key places in the model of governance that was put up by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). According to the Islamic doctrine, justice (*adl*) is not only a law but an overall moral principle, according to which social, political and economic associations in the society operate. Quran is also asking repeatedly that believers are required to practice justice and fairness, stating that justice should be equal and that justice should be administered fairly and uniformly. This principle was demonstrated practically during the administration of the Prophet (PBUH) in Madinah where justice was used as the basis of keeping a social harmony intact, protecting rights, and promoting equality in front of the law.⁸

⁴ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 60-63.

⁵ The Qur'an, 2:30.

⁶ The Qur'an, 4:58; 42:38.

⁷ Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Judgments, Hadith no. 7138.

⁸ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 229-232.

3.1 Justice as a Primary Ideal of Islamic Government:

Justice was another principle of the Islamic state instituted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His leadership approach stressed that none of the individuals irrespective of their social status, wealth, or affiliation with a given tribe was above the law. Quran teaches the believers to observe justice even when it costs them or even their immediate members of the family, thus emphasizing the need to be unbiased in rule. This principle influenced the leadership philosophy of the Prophet where justice was always a virtue in the personal and political governance.⁹

It is also noted that the Prophet (PBUH) insisted that justice is the key to the stability and legitimacy of governance. His fairness in the application of the law and justice in decision making positions made the different communities of Madinah have trust and unity. There was also the guaranteed protection of the rights and access to justice of Muslims, Jews, and other people, who lived in the city, under the rule of Prophet. This non prejudice attitude portrayed that justice in the Prophetic state was not confined to the religious scope but strived to grant social tranquility and mutual respect of other communities.¹⁰

3.2 Application of Justice in the Seerah:

The uncompromising nature of the Prophet in the face of justice can be seen by a number of examples that the Seerah gives. A famous case is the theft by one of the most famous noblewomen of the Quraysh tribe. There are people in the community who tried to mediate on her behalf since she was a highly established person and believed that the legal penalty would be lifted. The Prophet (PBUH) was however very against any kind of favoritism and he stated that he would give equal justice to everyone. He would make a well-known quote on how former nations were destroyed due to people letting the rich off when they committed wrongs but taking the poor. This is another indication of how much the Prophet believed in equality under the law.¹¹

Fairness in solving a dispute and conflicts was yet another critical attribute of justice in the Prophetic governance. The Prophet (PBUH) was a regular judge to the community members and he was able to listen to both parties before making decisions. He made his judgments based on evidence, fairness, and moral responsibility and made sure that the resolution of disputes was done in a way that did not violate justice and social harmony.

3.3 Social Justice and Welfare:

Other than legal justice, social justice and protection of the weak in the society were also the priorities of the governance imposed by the Prophet. The Prophet (PBUH) promoted the rights of the poor, orphans, widows, and other oppressed people. Policies like charity (zakat), just economic practices, and forbidding exploitation were some of the policies he implemented to minimize social inequalities and make sure that the needs of the less fortunate were taken care of.¹²

⁹ The Qur'an, 4:135

¹⁰ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2001), 147-150

¹¹ Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Hudud, Hadith no. 6788

¹² Safiur Rahman Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2002), 402-405

Social justice made this possible, and it can be said that this society began with compassion and support as some of its primary values. The Prophet always urged the members of the community to help the needy, and treat others with dignity and respect. Consequently, the Prophetic system of governance has proven that justice is not only grounded in law but also in more comprehensive measures of enhancing the social welfare and the general well being.

To conclude, justice was a pillar of the government created by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet established a system of governance that supported justice and safeguarded the rights of every individual in the society by facilitating impartial judgments through the lens of the law, equal treatment, and a great sense of social welfare.

4. The Leadership of the Prophet (PBUH) Consultation (Shura):

In the leadership and government of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), consultation (Shura) was one of the principles. Even though the Prophet was guided by God via revelation, he always consulted his companions in issues involving social, political and military experiences. This method showed that people should jointly engage in decision-making and created the example of the leadership approach that should consider the views of the community and its members. The Prophet (PBUH) enhanced unity among the Muslim community through the practice of consultation and promoted a feeling of collective responsibility in the governance of the community.¹³

4.1 The Concept of Shura in Islam:

Shura concept holds a significant role in the Islamic political philosophy. The Quran commends those who follow Islam and undertake their activities with an aspect of consultation as this aspect is one of the main features of a just and responsible community. Consultation enables leaders to value different views, prevent faulty judgments, and enhance rationality in making decisions. It also enhances trust between the people that the leaders serve and the leaders themselves.¹⁴

Under the Islamic form of rule, consultations do not weaken the power of the leadership; on the contrary, consultations improve the quality of decision-making by adding wisdom and experience of others. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed that leadership is neither grounded on authority only, but it is also based on cooperation and respect of the opinions of others. His practice of consultation became a precedent that was later to be an influential principle in the Islamic rule.¹⁵

4.2 Shura in the Seerah: in Practice:

The Seerah gives many instances on how the Prophet (PBUH) used consultation in critical issues. Among the earliest ones is the case of the Battle of Badr where the Prophet sought the advice of his companions on the approach to be taken to confront the Quraysh army. There was another pillar, Hubab ibn al-Mundhir, who proposed another strategic point of the Muslim camp on military reasons. The Prophet did not

¹³ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 64-66

¹⁴ The Qur'an, 42:38

¹⁵ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 235-238

reject this suggestion and this proves him to be receptive to advice and practical wisdom.¹⁶

The other striking instance was the battle of Uhud. The Prophet was first inclined to protect Madinah inside the city, as a lot of his companions advised to fight outside of the city. The Prophet took the view of the majority after consulting them. In spite of the fact that the struggle subsequently placed the Muslims in some serious trouble, the incident grandiose his devolution to consultation and partaking in decision making¹⁷

This consultation was also observed in the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq) when Salman al-Farisi suggested the idea of creating a defense trench around Madinah to defend the city against the coalition forces attacking it. The Prophet took up this new proposal, which was very effective and eventually helped in the defense of the Muslims community.¹⁸

4.3 The Influence of Companions in the Decision making Process:

The friends of the Prophet significant consultative process has been made. Consultation enabled them to voice their views, exchange their experiences, and participate in the administration of the community. This non-discriminatory policy assisted in building leadership qualities among the companions and a high level of group responsibility.

The Shura practice therefore portrays one of the most important facets among the Prophetic leadership model. Through consultation and participation, the Prophet (PBUH) showed that a good leader ought to be collaborative, modest and respectful of the wisdom of the people. This technique did not only enhance the unity of the early Muslim society, but also provided the groundwork to a permanent guide on the way to rule in the Islamic political thought.

5. The Prophetic Model of Accountability and Ethical Leadership:

Islamic leadership and governance is based on the element of accountability, which was evident in the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Prophetic model did not consider leadership as a privilege or a way of giving authority to others; leadership was regarded as trust (amanah) which came with honesty, responsibility and ethical behavior. The Prophet (PBUH) always stressed that leaders were not only to people they serve but also to Allah they should be accountable to what they do and to whom they make decisions. This knowledge resulted in a powerful ethical code of leadership within the early Muslim society and saw to it that power was wielded with humility and accountability.¹⁹

One of the major aspects of accountability in the Prophetic leadership model was the focus on individual responsibility. According to Prophet (PBUH), every person who is in a position of authority is supposed to take care of the wellbeing of those he or she is in charge of. This ideology made a separation between leadership and service as well as emphasizing that leaders have to stand in the interests of the people rather than selfishness. This is the concept of responsibility and accountability in leadership as

¹⁶ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2001), 249-252

¹⁷ Safiur Rahman Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2002), 268-270.

¹⁸ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1983), 226-228

¹⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 237-240

captured in the well-known Prophetic teaching that, every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is accountable to his sheep.²⁰ The concept of leadership as being closely related to duty and moral uprightness was strengthened in this teaching.

The Prophet (PBUH) was also a transparent and fair leader. He led a simple and humble life where he did not have the privileges and luxuries that may come with political power. Although he was the leader of the Muslim community, he was in close contact with average people in the society and was available to them. Individuals could also come to him with their issues, queries, and conflicts and he could deal with these issues patiently and impartially. Such transparency enhanced confidence between the leader and the population and supported the principles of ethics in governance.²¹

The promotion of healthy advice and criticism was another area of accountability according to the Prophetic model. People who were close to the Prophet could comment and even disagree with some of his decisions in the strategies or governance. Prophet did not reject such input and considered it to be an essential aspect of joint decision-making. This transparency showed that one needs to be humble and ready to listen to others when exercising leadership.

Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) had the spirit of servant leadership whereby the leader serves the people as opposed to establishing dominance over them. His deeds were full of compassion, justice and commitment to the welfare of other people. Through his prioritization of service, ethical behaviour and accountability, the Prophet did institute a form of leadership that led to the following results; loyalty, cohesiveness and social peace in the Muslim community.²²

To conclude, Prophetic model of leadership focuses on accountability, responsibility, and ethical behavior as key elements of governance. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through his own example showed that true leadership lies on the basis of service, humility, and a strong feeling of responsibility to the society as well as to God.

6. Prophetic State Administrative and Governance Practices:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in addition to creating an ethical leadership which included justice, consultation and accountability, also created systems of administration which were practical and worked in the interest of the early Islamic state. The formation of the Muslim community in Madinah was the starting point of the organized political and administration system that merged spiritual guidance with the organized government. The Prophet established a powerful system of governance that ensured order, security of rights, and enabled the running of the expanding Muslim community by planning, instituting organizational structures and delegating duties and responsibilities.²³

The Prophet (PBUH) was one of the greatest administrators, and one of his greatest successes was the constitution of Madinah (Sahifat al-Madinah). This is a document that is mainly considered to be among the first written constitutional agreements in

²⁰ Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Friday Prayer, Hadith no. 893.

²¹ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1983), 331-334

²² Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 182-185

²³ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 221-224

history. It had defined the legal and social structure of relations among Muslims, Jews, and other nations, which inhabit Madinah. The constitution established the mutual rights and duties, provided the freedom of religion and formed a united political community, and reserved the diversity among the members. With the help of the created order to work together and to be just, the Prophet created the basis of peaceful coexistence and stability in the city.²⁴

The other significant aspect of the Prophetic system of administration was decentralization of power by appointing governors and judges, and also, the appointment of administrators in various regions. When the Muslim community grew bigger than the city of Madinah, the Prophet chose some diligent and responsible people to govern the local areas and to maintain the correct application of Islamic ideologies. These officials had the duty of enforcing justice, charity (zakat), dispute resolution and orientation of local communities on religious and social matters. With this system, the Prophet kept the government under control and accountable to the citizens.²⁵

Prophet (PBUH) also showed great talent in international relations and diplomatic rule. To enhance peace and security, he befriended and entered into treaties with other tribes and communities around him. These treaties were founded on the ideas of mutual respect and cooperation as they represent the willingness of the Prophet to stability and justice even outside the Muslim community boundaries. This is also demonstrated by his diplomatic relations with the rulers of the regions, which were very organized and strategic (Prophetic administration).²⁶

Moreover, the Prophet also had an open governance structure that was accountable to the masses. The community members could go directly to him with their issues, conflicts, and inquiries. This ease of access made governance be in close touch with the needs and well-being of the society. The leadership style of the Prophet promoted service to people and authority hierarchy but not authority, which strengthened the ethical principles of Islamic model of governance.

In short, the administrative activities that were instituted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reflected a balanced approach that integrated ethical leadership and effective administration. The prophet had established a stable and prosperous government body through distribution of administration duties, and establishment of diplomatic affairs, as demonstrated by the Constitution of Madinah, and it helped the early Islamic state to achieve stability.

7. Lessons for Contemporary Leadership and Governance:

The leadership and governance process exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provides a lot to the modern societies that want to learn how to leaders can be ethical and effective at the same time. The Prophetic model is a holistic model, which incorporates morality and practical administration, a time when most of the political and social systems are grappling with issues like corruption, injustice and accountability. The Prophet became very specific on justice, consultation, and

²⁴ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2001), 147-150

²⁵ Safiur Rahman Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2002), 412-415

²⁶ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1983), 302-306

accountability that have found such importance in the current leadership and administration practices.

The centrality of justice in governance is one of the greatest lessons that can be gained using the Prophetic model. Contemporary communities tend to struggle with the issues of inequality, discrimination, and abuse of power. This is evident in the case of the Prophet (PBUH) who treated everyone fairly and equally irrespective of their social positions, riches, or political clout. The system of governance that is founded on the principle of fairness and equality before the law may be used to strengthen the community and encourage social stability.

Consultation and participatory decision making is another important lesson that has been learned. The Prophet (PBUH) would consult his companion's frequently on significant issues and this is reflective of the fact that good leadership appreciates different viewpoints and group wisdom. Participatory decision-making structures, including expert and community consultations, and stakeholder engagement, can be used to make more balanced and informed policies in contemporary governance. This strategy promotes openness and improves leader-community relationship.

Accountability and ethical leadership are also important as we note the Prophetic model. Leaders should understand that power is a mandate that needs responsibility and honesty. In contemporary politics, transparency, institutional checks, and public accountability are only some of the mechanisms that can be used in keeping leaders accountable to their citizens. The example of the Prophet in terms of being a humble and a servant shows that leadership must be based on a sense of service to the society in terms of service and not authority.

Moreover, the Prophetic system of governance emphasizes on social welfare and civic service. The Prophet (PBUH) has always given priority to the needs of the poor, the weak and the downtrodden in the society. Modern leadership can be inspired by this method by advanced the policy that favors social justice, economic equity, and community health.

To sum up, the principles of governance that are exhibited in the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can provide a great deal of guidance to the contemporary leadership. Through the combination of justice, consultation, accountability and social responsibility, contemporary societies may come up with governance systems that encourage ethical leadership and sustainable social development.

8- Conclusion:

This paper has reviewed the leadership/governing model that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exhibited and displayed in the Seerah in terms of principles of justice, consultation (Shura), and accountability. The analysis demonstrates that the Prophet had an effective legal framework of governing people, which was both spiritually led and practically structured to make it fair, stable, and socially well. The principle of justice was used to administer justice in all domains of governance and to guarantee equality under the law and safeguard the rights of every member of the society. By ensuring that justice and equity are exercised regularly, the Prophet established a society where trust and social cohesion existed among communities and there was mutual respect of one another.

Another key point of the study is that the Prophetic leadership model places a lot of emphasis on consultation. The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged a participatory type of

government through frequent consultation of his followers in the decision making processes by respecting the collective wisdom and responsibility. This strategy enhanced cohesiveness among the Muslims and promoted the creation of competent individuals who have taken up key leadership positions.

Moreover, responsibility and moral behavior were the major elements of the leadership of the Prophet. The Prophet stressed that leadership is a responsibility which is bestowed upon a person to be responsible, humble and committed to the well being of the society. His own display of openness, accessibility and service gave a good ethical base to governance and solidified the notion that leaders ought to be held accountable to the society and to Allah.

All in all, Prophetic model of leadership and governance is a holistic model that incorporates morals and proper governance. The teachings of the Seerah are very applicable in current discourse of good leadership and governance. Through the principles of justice, consultation and accountability as exhibited by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the modern societies can come up with a leadership structure that would encourage justice, social balance and responsible leadership in the service of the people.



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