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Identity as identification in a situation of threat to cultural security

Tożsamość jako identyfikacja w sytuacji zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa kulturowego

Summary

Contemporary reflections on identity mostly focus on its changeability and volatility. We are also witnessing threats to cultural security and the so-called cultural trauma today, which do not inhibit the process of cultural homogenization and the resulting crossing of cultures, however. The intensifying processes of migration also raise a number of concerns. Perhaps this situation, generating new areas of conflict, has contributed to a revitalization of the notion of identification with a group, society, nation, as it provides a sense of security by emphasizing shared interests and common good.

Keywords: identity, identification, cultural security, cultural trauma.

Streszczenie

Współczesne rozważania na temat tożsamości koncentrują się w przeważającej mierze na jej zmienności i płynności. Obecnie obserwowane są także zjawiska zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa kulturowego i tak zwanej traumy kulturowej, które jednak nie powstrzymują procesu homogenizacji kultury i będącego jego następstwem krzyżowania się kultur. Nasilające się procesy migracji również stają się powodem wielu obaw. Być może ten stan wytwarzający swoiste nowe pola konfliktów jest przyczyną rewitalizacji pojęcia identyfikacji z grupą, społeczeństwem, narodem, gdyż daje on poczucie bezpieczeństwa poprzez eksponowanie wspólnoty interesów i dobra wspólnego.

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość, identyfikacja, bezpieczeństwo kulturowe, trauma kulturowa.

The Notion of Identity

Contemporary Europe provides a stage for both coexistence and confrontation of different cultures. Cultural identity allows individuals to be part of a greater community, thus providing them with a sense of security. Due to the inflow of immigrants from various cultures, concerns arise about obliteration of the cultural identity of particular groups, or even entire societies, which have been developing in Europe over many centuries. Taking this perspective into account is very important from the point of view of social cohesion. Unreasonable fear of strangers leads to such phenomena as discrimination and xenophobia. Specific patterns of identification and belonging are developed, from patriotism to nationalism, from tolerance to racism, etc. Cultural security is therefore important for the state for the sake of maintaining social identity and preventing changes which individuals consider to be negative for their secure existence. In the course of debates on cultural security, particularly in the context of the inflow of immigrants from different cultures into Europe, an important question arises: How is identity, understood as a type of identification, perceived in a situation of threat to cultural security? The category of identity is related to such notions as personality, individuality, uniqueness, sameness, but also distinctiveness when we refer to national identity, religious identity, professional identity, or sexual identity. We may thus say that identity is a type of psychical structure of a particular person, made up of a dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual experiences (Marcia, 1980, p. 159). This structure of identity provides the basis for defining the place of a subject in a society, group, community, while on the other hand pointing to the subject's individuality, uniqueness and exceptionality.

Aristotle claimed that when we say that something is the same, we believe that "...sameness is a unity of the being either of more than one thing or of one thing when it is treated as more than one, i.e. when we say a thing is the same as itself; for we treat it as two" (Aristotle, Book V).

We may thus consider identity as sameness, or a type of external relationship occurring between a given object and itself, but contrary to the notion of sameness, in the metaphysical sense identity is the inherent and invariable unity of existence, or sameness with oneself.

John Locke, in turn, uses the categories of time and space as a kind of identifiers. For we most often look at a thing given to us in a particular time and space: "... we compare it with itself existing at another time, and thereon form the ideas of identity and diversity. ... and in this consists identity, when the idea as it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were that moment where-in we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present." (Locke, Chapter XXVII).

The term identity when referred to a person may be replaced with the word consciousness, which defines the so-called state of being conscious and the

sum, or whole, of content we experience in this state. John Locke describes consciousness as the perception of what is going on in our own mind. This statement has generated another more precise definition of consciousness as not only the direct knowledge of phenomena occurring in our own mind, that is our sensations, thoughts, emotions or images, but also a knowledge of these phenomena which is in a way objective.

Man strives towards a sense of continuity and inner identity by integrating past and present experiences. He achieves it by observing himself and analysing his own behaviour and its consequences, but also by observing the behaviour of other people and comparing himself to others. An important factor constituting identity is insight into one's own personality, which may be referred to as self-interpretation. External appearance, character, patterns of behaviour will affect the development of a sense of distinctiveness. The sense of sameness, on the other hand, will be revealed in the statement: "I am myself", irrespective of one's social role or the situation in which one was, is, or will be. This is strictly related to the system of values and a sense of coherence. Therefore, the content of identity will include individual beliefs, interests, needs, motivations, but also one's way of thinking determined by axiological criteria. The structure of identity perceived this way is founded, on the one hand, on enhancing one's distinctiveness, becoming independent from others, building a sense of causation, satisfying one's own needs; while on the other hand the social bond is strengthened as well, founded on social contacts and various types of interactions which contribute to the development of cultural identity, becoming a historically conditioned, cultural pattern of behaviour in both individuals and groups.

When analysing the problem of identity, however, we often encounter adjectives which describe it as changeable, or even volatile. They are used when certain social groups are distinguished by sex, physical features, age, nationality, or sexual orientation, and when the rights of these groups are emphasized. This rather emancipatory view of identity makes it difficult to define it using the categories we have discussed above. The probable reason is that the prevailing model of description places emphasis on the crisis of identity, which almost becomes a *sine qua non* condition of man living in the contemporary, globalized world. We hear it repeated like a mantra that the main factors which have contributed to the crisis of identity is the crossing of cultures, generated by the unlimited and fast flow of information made possible by the development of mass media. This ever intensifying process contributes to a relativisation of values and the emergence of an axiological chaos, supported by consumerism as the effect of a free, globalized market oriented mostly towards innovation and profit. The identity of a subject thus keeps changing and adapting, to varying degrees, to the changeable conditions resulting from cultural, ethnic, racial, and national diversity, but also, or perhaps mostly, due to the need for changes determined by professional, consumer, or institutional problems. Identity as

a concept defining an exceedingly important principle of man's functioning in the world reveals through its ambiguity problems with providing definitions by juxtaposing meanings which collide with and cancel each other out, while at the same time signalling problems with defining the scope of the term – for it is not clear how one should refer to the so-called individual and collective identity (Boksański, 2005) without falling into definitional aporias.

An attempt at smoothing out this defining chaos could consist in emphasizing several fixed points of reference, serving as a notional scaffolding for the concept of identity. To this end, we need to emphasize the process of identification and classification, pointing to the fact that a subject has a certain feature through which he can perform self-identification and self-classification as well (Brubaker, 2016, pp. 66–85). This process, in turn, generates the need for the subject's self-understanding and self-interpretation as well as his placement in time and space, or location. It is therefore necessary to ask questions about who I am, what my values are, and what my place is in the social context in which I am to survive and to act.

Thus, we discover social connotations, noticed already by Aristotle in his famous term *zoon politicon*, most fully expressed in the word community, commonwealth, group, which point to the awareness of the existence of a feature distinguishing human subjects from among others. It also becomes necessary, however, to include such categories as relationship, belonging, trust, solidarity. Such connotations accompanying the word identity point to the fact that identity is perceived as a type of identification. Perhaps the notion of identity should thus be replaced with the notion of identification (Hall, 1996), further specified by such words as: self-identification, self-classification, self-determination, self-definition. Often the replacement of one ambiguous term with another, more explicit and clearer one, may not only eliminate disputes over definitions, but also open new interpretative possibilities for the phenomenon concerned.

The notion of identification as more operational appears naturally together with the notion of social bond or a sense of common interest, or common good. Identification is also inherently related to culture and the internalization of values it contains. For these values testify to the dignity of the subject who identifies with a particular culture, and assure him of his belonging to the community (Kłoskowska, 2005).

The identity of a subject, or rather the subject's identification, depends on the social role assigned to or imposed on her (Drabarek, 2011, p. 76). This is naturally most visible, for example, in playing the role of a mother or a father, which are related to our somatic and characterological dispositions.

J. Butler (Butler, 1993, p. 105) believes that our corporeal identifications often become imaginary images nowadays, related to the effort involved in adjusting to social roles. The issue of loyalty to one's own identification is often difficult to uphold, and the matter is further complicated by the fact that these

identifications are continuously replayed and modified, thus becoming contradictory. Facts, actions and their interpretations performed by the subject are either confirmed and accepted, or negated in view of the values one embraces which either accept or negate his behaviour related to corporeality. That is why the subject's gathering of data for the purposes of identification and self-identification with himself and his group through his body may be enhanced, but may also be subject to the process of destabilization and erosion. We then talk of a loss of identity and a lack of identification, as every man is shaped to a greater or lesser extent, by interactive cooperation with others. Every one of us develops those behaviours and customs which are most visible, and those emotions and motivations on which our role, imposed on us by the society, depends (Drabarek, 2011, p. 76).

If we are rewarded for these dispositions, emotions and motivations, they become our primary features. It would be wonderful if there was always and in every situation consistency between our social role, the features of our temperament and the properties of our body. If such consistency does not exist, however, a pathological cognitive dissonance appears which may result in an inherently conflicted identity. In such a situation, the subject may become "a failure of his own self-hood, torn apart and divided", losing his internal cohesion. The structure of the subject's identity is based on a certain ideal structure generated by culture founded on a particular system of values. The features of our identity are often created based on some imaginary ideal, and when such ideal cannot be achieved at least partially, the creation of an identity focuses on a constant strive towards this ideal (Drabarek, 2011, p. 77). For example, the will to achieve the ideal of rationality could in such case be reduced to constantly attempting to arouse in oneself certain intellectual habits which promote the avoidance of confusion. Or, striving towards the ideal of empathy, one could try to achieve it by intensely exercising one's imagination.

The subject's identity and the social role he plays entails a number of commitments as well as privileges. People play various social roles depending on their place in the social structure. Therefore, such places as home, work, neighbourhood, national state, global system, contain features identifying and integrating for a particular system. Processes related to the subject's identity are largely based on routine (Goffman, 2005, Giddens, 1986) rooted in the tradition of a particular society.

Philosophical concepts of identity often lead to normative conclusions. This does not help, however, to determine the causes and role of identity conflicts both in the individual and the social dimension. In this context, Charles Taylor says: "...our identity is defined by our fundamental evaluations ... which are essential because they are the indispensable horizon or foundation out of which we reflect and evaluate as persons" (Taylor, 1985, pp. 34–35). He believes that the modern identity (Taylor, 2001) of a subject is determined by a utilitarian approach to reality. The consequence is a lack of heroism, lack of a philosophical

reflection and distance, and a lack of faith in values. These lacks are apparently cancelled out by the instrumentalization of culture.

This expansive, instrumentalized model of life, in addition to depriving man of his inner wealth, depth and meaning, also causes a breakdown of traditional communities, such as the family, depreciating and dooming the former, less egotistic ways of man's functioning in the world, to oblivion. The rapacity and aggressiveness of such a model of life results in destroying matrices or, to use Giddens's expression, routine behaviours which once entailed the unquestioned and useful paradigm of man's functioning in an "ontologically secure" world (Drabarek, 2011, p. 87).

Taylor comes to the radical conclusion that the identity of a man who displays an egotistic and cynical approach to life, denying himself the chance to perform a selfless, altruistic act at least once in his life, undergoes an internal disintegration. He therefore points to the need for so-called "strong evaluations" which become a *sine qua non* condition for the development of the subject's identity. Consequently, the shaping of modern identity should not be based, as it is now, on dependence on and attention to somatic needs, while overlooking or purposefully disregarding spiritual needs. Such state of affairs results in a relativisation of the notion of good, as well as elimination of good as a goal and its replacement with means, or utility goods.

Cultural Identity in the Process of Globalization

The processes of globalization we are witnessing in today's world are based on economic and political integration as well as the development of an ever growing number of corporations and supranational structures, whose effect is a homogenization and universalization of many institutions as well as cultural processes in national minorities and weaker cultures. This situation generates a kind of resistance to the process of globalization which violates the identity of individuals, social groups, nations and states, sometimes also taking away their identity. In his book entitled "Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity" (Taylor, 1992), Charles Taylor analyses the problem of the instrumental treatment of culture in the modern world. It is first of all oriented towards a utilitarian treatment of reality. The consequence of a culture understood this way is the loss of the meaning of life, which loses its depth and essence. An instrumental treatment of culture leads to a dissemination of imaginary views of human life devoid of the existential dimension related to free self-determination, responsibility for one's own deeds, dignity and respect for others as subjects. All of this is replaced by instrumental approaches, focused mostly on consumption (Drabarek, 2012, p. 177). The yielding to so-called commercialism in the world and its cultures generates a process of standardization, consisting in

a unification and homogenization of human needs and behaviours, which leads to a “boring universality and massification” (Kellner, 2016). The processes of globalization which are based on consumption are supported by modern technologies which enable an unlimited flow of information and interpenetration of cultures. It is thanks to new technologies that services, capital, information, ideologies are transferred in an unprecedented way and across national borders. The process of globalization which generates the so-called global culture emphasizes tolerance, strives towards eliminating nationalism and ethnocentrism, rejects fundamentalism (Drabarek, 2015, pp. 140–141). Culture perceived this way is usually readily accepted by the young generation, while the older generation often object – even in countries which lead the economic development and create the globalization process. Generally, a greater” ... dose of acceptance comes from intellectual elites and the business community, as well as the middle class. It is in these circles that creating a global mentality is the easiest. The decisive factor seems to be the influence of religion which – like in the case of Islam – strives to regulate all areas of life and does not tolerate any spiritual competition” (Czaja, 2013, p. 112). It would be naïve to claim, however, that political, economic or cultural systems uncritically accept all of the assumptions of globalization. Even liberal France and England have restrictive policies designed to protect their own cultures. No wonder then, that countries which do not fit well in terms of philosophy and mentality to the system of Western values, i.e. countries of a high level of religious devotion, such as Islamic states, display a wide range of reactions to the processes of globalization, from selective acceptance to complete negation and rejection. Such selective acceptance can be observed, for example, in orthodox Saudi Arabia which builds huge American-style commercial centres. This leads to a hybridisation and co-adaptation of various cultures, a cultural eclecticism which, while not destroying the old culture, deforms and distorts it, which may have a negative influence on the sense of cultural identity, and thus national and ethnic distinctiveness (Drabarek, 2012, p. 142).

Samuel Huntington emphasizes that „in the post-Cold War world flags count and so do other symbols of cultural identity including crosses, crescents, and even head coverings, because culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people. People are discovering new but often old identities and marching under new but often old flags which lead to wars with new but often old enemies (Huntington, 1997, p. 20).

Huntington’s words reveal an anxiety which pervades nations and societies today in relation to the increasing risk of losing their cultural identity. The cultural identity of each nation has developed over many ages, creating a cultural capital based on material and spiritual resources, on the system of religious and moral values, on national symbols. All of these values, passed on from generation to generation, have often been threatened by wars, colonialism or the imposition of a dominating culture by stronger and more prosperous countries.

Cultural Security

Today's Europe is being increasingly tormented by the problem of so-called cultural security, because the confrontation of various cultures resulting from mass relocations of people is an undeniable fact. Political and economic crises, wars and poverty awaken anxiety, mistrust, fear for one's own life and the life of one's family. This often gives rise to a desire to move away to a safer and more prosperous place, where it will be easier to find a job, support the family and live in peace. Thus, we witness the problem of migration and immigration of people from poor and backward countries to more prosperous ones. The phenomenon of migration, unlike in the case of immigration controlled both politically and administratively, is perceived as peaceful, but sometimes takes the form of a violent wave of economic refugees.

When analysing the problem of security, it is necessary to identify its objective and subjective aspects. Objective safety is a state which enables all beings to exist by offering them a chance to multiply, survive and develop. Such approach to security is often referred to as ideal, abstract, or even utopian. Subjective perception of security on the other hand, to a certain extent eliminates such excessive generalization and holism, as it presumes a specific and particular definition of that which is being analysed, namely existence, continuity and survival, with regard, for example, to a particular case in the conditions of a particular state. The constitution of a state, the organization of life so that the citizens can feel safe becomes the challenge of every age and every government. In this context, we encounter the notion of sovereign state, *raison d'état* and legislation, which build the state's subjectivity as a sovereign.

Analyses of security supplemented with a subjective description delineate the field of reflection which Giddens refers to as ontological security (A. Giddens, 1986, p. 50). Man constituted as self cannot be understood other than through his everyday activities forming part of social practice, and by reflecting upon these activities. At the same time, the structure of the subject's identity is based on a certain ideal imaginary structure generated by culture built on a particular system of values. Thus, the basic features of our identity are often created based on some imaginary ideal. The extent to which man who undergoes the process of subjectivization embraces this ideal as part of his identity depends on the reasons for which he has become involved with this ideal, as well as on its attractiveness and the possibility of integrating ways of its implementation with the features of the subject's character. The category of ontological security is further defined by Giddens by reference to the concept of trust and routine. He believes that routine, or proficiency, experience gained through long practice, or the propensity to follow well established patterns is supposed to warrant, by trusting the behaviours it generates, a sense of security to individuals and the society alike (Giddens, 1986, p. 60).

The need for routine in individual and social life is discovered when we analyse the so-called borderline, or critical, situations, which are „... built into the

regularity of social life by the very nature of the intersection between the life process or 'cycle' of the individual, the *durée* of activity on the one hand and the *longue durée* of institutions on the other. ... [Critical situations], forming as they do an intrinsic part of the continuity of social life, even though they are discontinuities for individuals, ... tend themselves to have a definitely routinized character" (Giddens, 1986, p. 61).

An insecure, critical situation is defined by Giddens as a radical disjuncture, often unpredictable from a certain pattern of behaving, acting, or making decisions. It may take away the sense of security from both individuals and large groups of people. Thus, the basic problem of security is survival, and this is related to man's incessant anxiety about a state of existence that is achievable in particular conditions. The essence of security is therefore man's striving for freedom from threat as well as – as Barry Buzan says – the striving of states and societies for maintaining an independent identity in the face of changes which are considered negative for their secure form of existence (Buzan, 1991, p. 67). Which is why anxiety becomes a permanent state of man and the institutions he creates, as this is related to the need for maintaining a desired form of continuance. If threats exceed an acceptable threshold, man resorts to violence. If an individual man could provide for his safe existence on his own, perhaps no state would ever be created. No existing theory of natural state or human nature confirms such an optimistic version of single-handed security, however. There can be no security without cooperation with other people. An entirely independent, self-contained functioning is not possible for man; people need one another to develop competences necessary to sustain their lives.

A classification of security thus reveals that it includes satisfaction of man's needs defined in the categories of existence, survival, confidence, stability, completeness, identity, independence, protection of the level and quality of life. Security is therefore a resultant of the basic needs of human beings as well as social groups, states and international systems. Insecurity causes anxiety and a sense of threat (Zięba, 1989, p. 50).

In this context, the notion of cultural security appears as well. It could be described as the state's ability to protect cultural identity, cultural goods and national heritage in the circumstances of intermingling cultures and openness to the world. This cultural openness which results, among others, from the process of globalization, enables cultural development through internalization of values which are not inconsistent with one's own identity (Czaja, 2013, p. 82). Which is why cultural security should be analysed taking into account a number of factors. The first one is protection of the value of symbolic culture, which is an extremely important element of national identity. It is made up of the language, religion, customs, historical tradition, literature, philosophy, ideology. The next important factor is the protection of material cultural goods and cultural heritage. These will include "... listed buildings, national monuments, objects recognized as part of world heritage, churches, castles and

palaces designed by outstanding architects, entire city quarters of old historical buildings, works of art and handicrafts, as well as other objects of particular value (Czaja, 2013, p. 82).

Other important factors of general cultural security include the so-called national sense of cultural security, referred to as national identity often linked to patriotism; an individual sense of cultural security, manifest for example in the freedom to create and freedom of contacts; and a sense of cultural security in ethnic groups which are able to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness within a multinational state. This is related, for example, to school education which develops in students a sense of national community by introducing the young generation to national traditions. Yet another factor of cultural security is the so-called openness of contemporary culture. This factor is very important in view of the historical development of culture. It is very important in this context to maintain balance between internal cultural development based on native, traditional values and safeguarding against undesirable influences of foreign cultures, often having an expansive and destructive character. We should not overlook the need for internalization of foreign cultural elements, however, which often contribute to the development of native culture.

Summary

How does subjective identity, understood as a kind of identification, behave in the situation of a cultural threat? This question can be answered by taking into account various degrees of an individual's identification with the society and its institutions. Persons with a coherent, consistent identity are characterized by a high degree of integration of both personal and non-personal motives in an effort to achieve pro-social goals. They are able to effectively control their emotions, which results in a more frequent experience of positive ones. This state, in turn, generates not only a positive approach to oneself, but also a high level of self-control and social competences, which is revealed, for example, in effective work and satisfaction with one's social role. Persons characterised by the so-called stable identity, often described as rooted in culture or conventional, prove to be well adjusted socially, have a high degree of self-acceptance, are satisfied with their life style, while at the same time not being very open to radical changes and thus not very creative in professional work. They exercise strong self-control, which results in the suppression of affective behaviours, demonstrating high emotional stability. These are often persons with conservative views. These two types of identities display a high degree of social identification and pro-social activity.

Two other types of identity may also be listed, however, which display little or no identification with prevailing legal and social norms. One of them is the

so-called liquid or dispersed identity, characterized first of all by unpredictability of behaviour and avoidance of close relationships with others. The consequence of such an attitude is most often an underdeveloped system of protections of one's own self, reluctance to act, and the resulting loss of the sense of life. Permanent frustration and a low level of social competences characteristic of this type of identity is often manifested in dissatisfaction with being here and now. The most controversial type of identity is that which could be called resentful, deferred, confrontational, vengeful. A person with such identity values their own independence above all, which is revealed in a strong sense of pride. They may be described as rebellious and nonconformist. Due to a retrospective attitude to their own past, they are unforgiving and want to take revenge on their actual and supposed adversaries.

Naturally, this classification of identity treated as a kind of identification is somewhat oversimplified and does not take into account a number of important nuances which result, among others, from changing social conditions, new threats to ontological security, development of new technologies which generate the crossing of cultures and very fast flow of information. All of this has an enormous influence on the shape of modern man's identity.

We should not disregard one more category, encountered more and more often mainly in sociological reflections, referred to as cultural trauma. It represents a threat to the development of identity (Sztompka, 2000, p. 31). The term has been coined in result of analyses of the social costs of transformation, consisting in rapid, sudden and radical changes resulting in damage to the cultural tissue which provides the basis for the functioning of a society, community, or social group (Sztompka, 2000, p. 19). Cultural trauma is thus a type of exemplified threats to cultural security. There are four causes of cultural trauma. Firstly, it can be caused by interpreting an event or social phenomenon as inconsistent with the fundamental assumptions of a given culture and its most important values which shape the sense of collective pride (Sztompka, 2000, pp. 31–32). Secondly, such trauma may appear when native culture clashes with a foreign culture. This may happen either due to contacts with a foreign culture in result of emigration or travel, or when such contact is caused by factors independent from the subject's individual decisions, due to conquest, colonization, domination, globalization (cf.: Sztompka, 2000, pp. 33–34). The third type of cultural trauma is a phenomenon which is the effect of a clash between new lifestyles with the old, 'displaced' culture. It most often appears as a result of political or economic changes, sometimes, particularly recently, accompanied by technological changes. Such metamorphosis causes anxiety mostly due to the lack of new rules sanctioning new ways of acting, often objected to due to generational conflict (Sztompka, 2000, pp. 34–35). The fourth type of trauma may appear inside a given culture in result of diversified pace at which individual cultural segments develop, causing the so-called cultural backwardness. It may also be a side effect of various cultural innovations which are incompatible

with the “old” culture. Probably the most spectacular case of cultural trauma is the so-called “cultural shock” caused by the revealing of various facts, most often infamous and not included in the official version of history, from the past of a society or social group (Sztompka, 2000, p. 36).

We may thus say that man’s identity is shaped in its social and cultural aspect. This process takes place at a particular time in history and in a particular place determined by geopolitical processes. Taking into account the past, present and future of himself, his family and his community, man creates his existential scenario depending on identity- and identification-generating processes, but must also take into account risk factors often resulting from decisions he takes himself as a sovereign subject as well as situations which are beyond his control. The awareness of one’s own powerlessness in confrontation with reality is a mobilizing factor for some, motivating them to do as much as possible, while acting as a blocking, frustrating or marginalizing factor for others. Our attitude to reality is mostly shaped, however, by the axiological horizon which delineates the potential perspective of the creative life of every self. To what extent this potential will be used is a very individual matter, however.

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