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# Egalitarian Agrarian Politics and The Authoritarian Challenge: The Emergence and Destruction of Indonesia's Gafatar Movement

*Abdul Rahman*

## **Abstract**

*In January-February 2016, 8,058 former members of the Fajar Nusantara Movement (Gafatar) were forcibly removed from several locations in Kalimantan, Indonesia where they had established egalitarian agrarian settler communities. They were accused of being a heretical religious group and of preparing a seditious attack against the Indonesian State. Their claim of existence as a group of farmers trying to escape from food dependence by farming on their own land was lost from public attention. This situation has raised many questions, upon which this study is based.*

*This study finds that Gafatar is an emancipatory movement that is strongly connected with the ideology of Millah Abraham, which is based on values of the universality of humanity, egalitarianism and social justice. Their attempt to build an egalitarian, self-sufficient, communal agrarian life was a culmination of the manifestation of these values, before they were forcefully dispersed. Because of the strong religious reaction towards this movement, the rejection and forceful dispersal of Gafatar can rather be seen as a kind of moral panic by the dominant religious and political establishment, rather than a dislike of their rural life practices as such. What becomes more convincing, however, is that broader authoritarian forces were directed at this movement, as shown by the alignment of the state apparatus (particularly military and police), mass media representation, and mainstream/orthodox Islam. Populist rhetoric was the main discursive weapon justifying the forced dissolution of the new settlements and dispersal of the members.*

*This paper starts by summarizing key concepts and teachings of Millah Abraham as the core ideology of the Gafatar movement. It then explains the manifestations of these teachings in the leaders' vision of egalitarian rural settlements through self-sufficient communal life, the steps taken to realise this vision in newly-established communities in Kalimantan, and the series of authoritarian practices leading to their collapse.*

**Keywords:** Gafatar, Egalitarian Politics, Authoritarian Populism

## Introduction

“One of them is a doctor, another is an engineer -- they left their jobs and say they want to be farmers – they must be lying!”

This was what one of the crowd shouted, as the panicked group of farmers tried to hold their ground. Although there were a number of security personnel present, the angry crowd could not be contained. The ex-Gafatar community's settlements were burned. Parents, children, women and men were forcibly evicted, from their land, homes, and farm fields. They had only lived and farmed for a few moments in those newly built camps, after migrating from various regions in Indonesia.

The incident took place on 19 January 2016, at the agricultural settlement of the former Fajar Nusantara Movement (Gafatar) members in Mempawah, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. In the following weeks, approximately 8,000 ex-Gafatar members were forcibly transferred from various places in Kalimantan. Most of them were brought to the camp, living as refugees, before being returned to their respective areas.

Two accusations were made toward this group; first, that they want to commit treason against the Republic of Indonesia, and second, that they have been practicing deviant religious teachings. Their teachings are considered to have tarnished religion, by confusing the teachings of Islam, Christianity and Judaism and thereby causing unrest among various groups, mainly popular Islamic groups through the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI). The state characterised them as an exclusive organization, recruiting members secretly, even by kidnapping. They allegedly assembled weapons, built defense forces and intended to establish their own State. All of those accusations were framed one-sidedly by the national media.

On the other hand their defence that they were a group of farmers who tried to overcome food dependency by farming on their own land was lost from public attention. This situation has raised questions about what and who exactly is Gafatar, and what is the meaning of the rejection and expulsion they experienced.

This study began more than a year after the expulsion took place, which gave implications for the research process. Methodologically, it was not possible to observe directly the actual practices of the farm-based community that they claimed to be constructing. The study is therefore based on collection of data from various literatures and retrospective interviews.

Constraints also came in terms of accessing the ex-members of the movement who had been forcibly returned to their scattered places of origin. Although it might have been possible to get information through the government apparatus, this could backfire when interviewing them. A snowballing procedure was therefore used instead.

The Joint Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Home Affairs issued after the Mempawah event – which prohibited any further discussion, promotion and advocacy of Gafatar's teachings, along with the threat of sanctions -- created a “panoptic” feeling of being watched which resulted in respondents' understandable cautious about being interviewed.

This research found that Gafatar was an emancipatory politics movement strongly connected with the ideological complex known as *Millah Abraham* (MA), which claims to be a system of values and beliefs expressing the universality of humanity, egalitarianism and social justice. I will summarize these values in the first section. Because of the strong religious dimension in this movement, their rejection and dissolution tended to take the form of moral panic from a dominant establishment of religious discourse, rather than dislike of rural life practices. What is convincing, however, is that authoritarian practices have been directed to this movement, as can be shown by the reactions of the state apparatus (especially military and police), media representation, and mainstream (orthodox) Islam, which will be explained in the second part of the paper. The egalitarian practices based on communality and self-sufficient agriculture, which they attempted to develop, were the culmination of the manifestation of MA values, before being subsequently forcibly dissolved. These findings will be explained in the final two sections of this paper.

## Millah Abraham and Its Vision for a Better Society

This set of values derived from this theological belief is important, since these are the main arguments behind the motive of the Gafatar movement. These values are called Millah Abraham (MA), the doctrine or the way of God, as practiced by Abraham<sup>1</sup>.

MA believes that God is one, and all humans are equal in the eyes of God. The implication of how God sees humanity is that people should not live in unjust conditions. Inequality is a condition not desired by God,<sup>2</sup> and this desire of God becomes the mission of humanity on earth. These ideologies that organize the system of human life should refer to the universal set of divine laws<sup>3</sup>. Even the different religious institutions (or those considered to be religions today, including nations) should not violate the universal rule of God<sup>4</sup>. MA unites the divided humans. The Way of Abraham is the model chosen to restore this egalitarian spirit, as it is historically believed that Ibrahim is the father of the different religious institutions, which today are trapped in endless conflicts<sup>5</sup>.

On the other hand, diversity is also believed to be God's ordinance. However, according to them, diversity should not be a reason for disunity. Arrogance and intolerance are not justified in the MA's view. Diversity is possible, including diversity of religions, as long as their core belief still rests on universal equality<sup>6</sup>.

The prophet, around whom the cult is formed, is the bridge between God and humanity, who obeys and submits to the system of the law of God, reversing the various divisions and injustices which have arisen as a result of "wrong" human interpretation. In the crisis facing today's system of life, Ahmad Mushaddeq is the actor who is believed to play this role.

The life practices of God's way of living is done by following the God's 10 commandments, which also found in the religions of the book:

*"Referring to the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an, it can be concluded that The Ten Commandments are the nodes of Abraham's law." (Pledoi, 2017 p. 68).*

MA believes that if this submission to justice and equality is realised through these ten commandments, the barriers of injustice between people will disappear.

Thus, although it departs from theological roots, MA's vision of a better, more equitable society closely parallels the emancipatory politics discourse as outlined by Scoones et al (2017).

*Emancipatory politics, requires an understanding of the current regressive trends – the things to be 'resisted' – and a vision of a better society and ways to move towards it.*

The better society - using the theme of Ranciere (2012) - offers a picture of "something else", about the coming of a new day, a "better" new world; this better society is manifested in the emancipatory politics of political activities that aim to end exploitation and enhance participatory democracy (Feuchtwang & Shah, 2015).

Gafatar is not the only institution that bases itself on the MA values. The MA has become a limited discourse since 2002, and then grew into a da'wah institution called Al Qiyadah Al Islamiyah<sup>7</sup>. This first institution was dissolved simultaneously with Ahmad Mushadeq's detention in 2007, on charges of misguided teachings and his claim of being a Prophet. The second institution is the Millah Abraham Group (Komar), which emerged after the release of Mushadeq in 2008, and lasted until 2010. The third institution was born after Gafatar's dissolution in August 2015. This institution is called The

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<sup>1</sup> Full explanation of these beliefs can be found in Hawari (2009), Document of Defense of the Defamation of Ahmad Mushadeq (2007), Articles in the Defense White Book (2016); Defensive Pledoi (2017).

<sup>2</sup> Pledoi, 2017, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38; 46; 48.

<sup>4</sup> Tumanurung speech, Jakarta, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Pledoi, 2017, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Tumanurung speech in National Working Group II, 2014 and Hawari (2009).

<sup>7</sup> See Al Makin (2016), *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy. Accounts of Lia Eden and Other Prophets in Indonesia*.

Grace of God over Nusantara (NKTSAN - Negeri Karunia Tuhan Semesta Alam Nusantara), which specifically claimed to be the vehicle of food security<sup>8</sup>. All of these institutions are recognised as being inspired by the teachings of MA.

*"...whether it is Al Qiadah Al Islamiyah, Komar, or Gafatar, what we hold fast is the teaching of Abraham's value, that's all." (Andi, September, 2017).*

The historical trajectory of the movements above reflects how MA's values are embodied in a part of the six phases of struggle, which refers to what the previous prophets went through<sup>9</sup>. Those phases begin with the selectively closed *da'wah* movement, person by person, from house to house, until it forms a community and pioneer cadres. The second is the phase of open *da'wah*, where those who were formerly opposed become followers. Third is the phase of *hijra* (exodus), done in a peaceful way to maintain the continuity of the movement's mission. Fourth is the *jihad* phase defined as the defending the movement from attack by its opponents. The fifth is the *futuh* phase which means conquest. Although the accusation of treason was not proven in court, one of the prosecutors' accusations in the trial was referred to the existence of this phase of conquest<sup>10</sup>. Sixth is the phase of victory and realisation of the movement's vision.

To explain the character of the phases mentioned above we may refer to the concept of "social movement from below" (Barker, et al 2013). However, as with every struggle, it has to deal with social dynamics that are not static, or rigid (absolute/definite), but are otherwise very dynamic and dependent on / influenced by internal and external factors (Tilly in Tarrow, 2011).

In the phases of exodus to Kalimantan, which we will consider below, the values of MA were clearly embodied in social practice, namely by development of an agriculture-based livelihood system, cooperation, self-sufficiency and food sovereignty.

### **Gafatar: MA's Social Manifestation and Food Sovereignty**

Fajar Nusantara Movement (Gafatar) was established by the founding board after the first congress in August 2011. It was publicly proclaimed in January 2012 in Jakarta, in the presence of 1,128 people, from the central structural board and the 14 Regional Representative Councils from different regions of Indonesia. Mahful Muis Tumanurung was elected as the chairman for the period 2011-2015. Gafatar based its practices on the Indonesian national philosophy Pancasila<sup>11</sup> and had a vision to build a society based on a new way of life: peaceful, civilized, just and dignified under the auspices of God. The lifestyle is manifested through the unification of noble values of the Indonesian nation, the improvement of the quality of science and intellectuals, as well as the understanding and practice of universal human values, strengthening solidarity, togetherness and unity, especially among the elements of the nation and the world at large<sup>12</sup>.

Although it criticises western and eastern ideologies, the MA actually gives a positive place to the values of Pancasila<sup>13</sup>. Reinterpretation of Pancasila values is embodied in 38 points, which become the guidance for all Gafatar members, to be their teaching materials in seminars, also to guideline their own life practices<sup>14</sup>.

In a speech to thousands of members in 2013, Tumanurung said neocolonialism and neo-imperialism have made Indonesia lose sovereignty over its own country. The state has not been able to prosper and

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<sup>8</sup> Regarding this last institution, will be explained later.

<sup>9</sup> Pledoi, 2016, p.103.

<sup>10</sup> The document of indictment No.Reg PDM/JKT.TM/10/2016.

<sup>11</sup> *Pancasila*, the "five principles" of Indonesian national philosophy: 1. Belief in one God, 2. A just and civilized humanity, 3. A unified Indonesia, 4. Democracy, led by wise counsel, in representative deliberations, and 5. Social justice for all Indonesians.

<sup>12</sup> Pledoi (2017); Collection of Articles in Defense White Book (2016); Members' Handbook and Gafatar Statutes and bylaws (2014).

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Andi, October, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Members' Handbook and Gafatar Statutes and bylaws (2014).

lift its people from destruction. This is due to greed for material possessions, acquired in unlawful ways, conspiracy in decision making process, vulnerability of the nation to horizontal conflicts and disunity, the tradition of unjust behavior, and the common immoral acts of hypocritical state elites. These conditions will only get worse, he argued, when there is no fundamental change<sup>15</sup>.

Gafatar's views above place show that their movement is not only a struggle for identity and recognition of a belief system. On the contrary, Gafatar is not too distant from the Marxist analysis of class struggle (Barker et al, 2013). In fact, it would be strange, according to Barker, if New Social Movements did not come into contact with the role of capitalism, or at least to question it.

*“...it would seem odd, at the very least, not to inquire if the world capitalist system is not somehow responsible for generating them”.*

In the first year of its activities, Gafatar took its message to the public through various social and cultural events, in cooperation with various institutions, both private and state. In January 2014, at its National Working Meeting II in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Gafatar designed the Food Security and Self-Sufficiency program. This was a significant development, as it was, -- besides the authoritarian persecution levelled against them – the main motivation for their mass migration to Kalimantan.

In MA's doctrine, food is important. In a movement that tries to build a better system of life, the issue of food availability and self-sufficiency is inevitable, and even become one of its basic elements before moving on to other aspects of community life. Followers of the MA believe that this is also what Moses did in the Sinai desert, what Jesus did with his miracle of the loaves and fishes, and what Muhammad did in Medina<sup>16</sup>.

According to Tumanurung, Indonesia is on the brink of a tremendous food crisis. Indonesia's food security is still based on imports, supported by Law No. 25 of 2007 on investment. Indonesia also experienced difficulties in the availability of seeds and agricultural land. Each year, existing agricultural land is shrinking by 100 thousand ha/year, while only 40 thousand ha new agricultural land is opened up. Local seed production meets only half of the national needs, the rest is supplied by corporate companies, 90% of them controlled by multinationals. Law No.13 of 2010 on horticulture, he claims, legitimates the import of seeds. Meanwhile, Gafatar is also concerned about the decline in the number of people working in agriculture. On the other hand, the government's priority and increased budget given to the food sovereignty program and rural infrastructure are not achieving the needed results. In 2015 the total agricultural budget increased by 71%, and the Ministry of Agriculture's budget by 112% over the previous year, but in the same year imports of rice, corn and soybeans increased by 2.1%, 3.7%, and 4.8%<sup>17</sup>.

Gafatar's Food Security and Resilience Program is supported by 3 household-based food movements. First, is the “100% Local Food Movement” which invites members, sympathizers and the wider community to return to local food consumption, lessen the aversion to consuming local food, and stop valuing imported products. Second, is the “Rice Once a Day Movement”, which aims to stimulate food diversification considering the diversity of local food types, while helping to reduce the chronic demand for rice imports. Third, is the “Self-Sufficient Food House Movement”, which encourages members and citizens to utilize their home yards and gardens to produce food.

In addition, Food Security and Resilience Program also links families in Cooperative under the coordination of the respective Regional Boards. This farming and livestock program planned to use an integrated (agriculture-livestock-fishery) and organic farming concep<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Tumanurung speech in Gafatar National Working Meeting III, Jakarta 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FdIUPUT7hc>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Anto, October 2017. Anto is a member of Gafatar who has known the MA since 2007. Has held Gafatar management at the District level and during his time in Kalimantan, and is in charge of administrative and agricultural affairs.

<sup>17</sup> Tumanurung speech in Gafatar National Working Meeting III, Jakarta 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FdIUPUT7hc>

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Anto, October 2017.

As a new program launched in 2014, more rejections were faced by the organization as a whole, rather than the result of the implementation of the resilience program.

### Struggle and Rejection of Recognition

Rejection of Gafatar mass organizations has started since its establishment. On 2 November 2011 Gafatar applied for a Certificate of Registration (SKT) to the Directorate General of the Office of National Unity and Politics, Ministry of Home Affairs, to register the existence of their organization. This did not get a positive response. On 9 July 2012, Gafatar re-submitted the SKT application, attaching all the requirements, including SKTs which had been obtained from the local government by 30 per cent of Gafatar's Regional Executive Boards. The SKP was never issued by the Directorate General of the Office of National Unity and Politics until Gafatar got disbanded. This was justified by the Minister of Home Affairs<sup>19</sup>.

*"They have applied 3 times, and even then, [the SKT] has not been issued yet. Then on 5 April and 30 November, 2012 the Director General of the Office of National Unity and Politics sent an SRT (circular letter) to the provincial and district Offices of National Unity and Politics instructing them not to issue Certificates of Registration to Gafatar, and to be alert and monitor the activities of this organization" (Tjahjo Kumolo, Minister of Home Affairs).*

On 30 November 2012, the Directorate General of the Office of National Unity and Politics, Ministry of Home Affairs, issued Circular Letter No: 220/3957 D.III on Explanation of the Status of Gafatar, followed by at least 15 letters at the local government level. The letters contained the explanation of the Gafatar existence, and instruction to be vigilant, to reject, to delay requests for audience, revoke any SKT, pronounce Gafatar as a perverse cult, and to prohibit gatherings of its members.<sup>20</sup> Actions of rejection emerged in the form of expulsion, forced closing of the secretariat office, the dissolution of activities, beatings and torture, theft of laptops and data, imprisonment, dissemination of fake information occurred in various regions, including Southeast Sulawesi, Denpasar Bali, North Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara. Even in Aceh, six Gafatar administrators were taken to court and sentenced to jail for alleged blasphemy in May 2015<sup>21</sup>. The action was led by the Communication Forum of Religious People, the Council of Indonesian Ulama, and the state apparatus (Satpol PP).

The peak of these refusals prompted Gafatar to hold an Extraordinary Congress (KLB) in August 2015. The congress resulted in the formal dissolution of Gafatar, while continuing the Program of Food Security and Resilience<sup>22</sup>.

*"We agree to remain consistent, to focus on continuing our struggle to, build this nation through food sovereignty. This is our mutual agreement, though non-binding and non-coercive; because after Gafatar has been dissolved, all leadership, membership and citizen of the Fajar Nusantara Movement has officially been disbanded. And we invite each person to take a standpoint."*

This step appeared to be a rational choice in response to the repressive external dynamics facing their movement.

### Exodus and Self-sufficient Communal Life

In order to carry out the congressional mandate in the field of food security, a new institution was established, called The Land [*Negeri*] of God's Grace in the Nusantara Universe (NKTSAN)<sup>23</sup>. NKTSAN is an institutional structure responsible for coordinating ex-Gafatar members, who intend to

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<sup>19</sup> Liputan 6, January 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Gafatar internal documents and media reports on Gafatar's rejection in various regions, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Tirto.id, March 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Tumanurung, press conference at the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation office, Jakarta, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Negeri Karunia Tuhan Semesta Alam Nusantara (a string of six nouns: Land (or State), Grace, God, Universe (or Cosmos), Archipelago, is difficult to translate to English with confidence.

continue fighting for the Food Self-Sufficiency and Security and movement<sup>24</sup>.

Kalimantan was chosen as the destination of the program as it was considered strategic for its relatively more positive response to the existence of their organization since 2011. Gafatar groups from Gorontalo, Papua and West Nusa Tenggara groups had already migrated to Kalimantan to initiate communal food security programmes, due to the rejection they have received since 2014. Besides, Kalimantan was considered easy for land access, due to its availability and low price<sup>25</sup>.

Between August 2015 and January 2016, a total of 8,058 of the 55,000 Gafatar ex-members migrated gradually to Kalimantan. These groups (2275 households) spread themselves across 68 locations in the provinces of West, Central, East and North Kalimantan, with a total land area of 565.96 ha<sup>26</sup>, which had cost them altogether 6.3 billion Rupiah (= slightly less than US \$ 0.5 million).

#### *The Yogyakarta Group and the Exodus Wave*

In Yogyakarta, 230 ex-Gafatar members mobilized themselves, raised capital, made their plan, migrated, and built an agriculture-based settlement in Pasir Village, Mempawah, West Kalimantan<sup>27</sup>. These 230 people consist of:

- +/- 80 married couples, age between 25-50 years old
- +/- 50 boys and girls of pre-school and school age (the largest proportion is in elementary school age, the youngest is one month old, while the oldest is in junior high school.)
- 30 single men and women, age between 18-25 years old.

These members, it was claimed, came from diverse religious, ethnic, educational and economic backgrounds. Most have a history of higher education in various disciplines, ranging from agriculture to accounting, architecture, and tourism. Their employment backgrounds are also diverse, including bank employees, domestic workers, traders, livestock farmers, employees in the tourism business, and farmers. One informant, Andi, said that the majority of them came from modest economic backgrounds, not those with high social or economic status<sup>28</sup>.

After the results of the August 2015 congress (at which Gafatar was formally dissolved) were communicated to all members, all the ex-officials of the Yogyakarta and sub-district branches met and formed a working group to facilitate the transition process. This resulted in formation of two working units, in Yogyakarta and Kalimantan. The first identified and collected the data of the members who wanted to be involved, collected donations, designed and organized the migration process, arranged transportation tickets until each member left Yogyakarta, while coordinating with the team in Kalimantan.

The Kalimantan team, initially four persons, was given the responsibility to prepare the land for settlement and everything related to it. The team had experience in financial planning, construction, agriculture, and negotiations. Later, 10 more people with the same qualifications joined then to help with the preparatory work. This work was done during late August and September 2015.

With the help of ex-Gafatar members from Kalimantan, they located 20 ha of land (mostly forest), did the whole purchasing process, and took care of the necessary asset transfer. In addition, they conducted public relations work by coming to the village and sub-district government, and the local Police and Military Command (Koramil). They also invited community representatives in formal forums in the village, where they introduced themselves as farmer groups and explained their plans to

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<sup>24</sup> In the prosecutor's indictment in court, this coordinating body is referred to as the governmental structure prepared by Gafatar as part of the treason plot, one of which was denied in the defense.

<sup>25</sup> Tumanurung, press conference at the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation office Jakarta, 2016; Pledoi 2017; Interview with Giri, September 2017, Surya October 2017. Surya is a member of Gafatar and has known the MA since 2010. Bachelor of Engineering, and after the expulsion has been involved in legal advocacy team in Jakarta.

<sup>26</sup> Defense White Book, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Anto, Andi, Huda, 2017. Huda is a member of Gafatar and has known the MA since 2007. One of the first four people assigned to Kalimantan as an analyst for land and administration purchases.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Andi, 2017.

build agricultural settlements on the land they had purchased. It was at this time that they were offered a chance to take over some agricultural land that had been the site of a failed agricultural project of the local Agriculture Department. 5 ha of land, ready to cultivate, was thus added to the land already purchased. In September, this borrowed land began to be used.

The land purchased by the Pasir Sejahtera group was communally owned. There was no private ownership of the land within the group, except the plots for individual houses, which would also be shared between several families. This commitment had been mutually agreed long before they came to Mempawah.

At the same time, a general analysis of the land conditions was carried out, as a basis for land use planning based on the most urgent needs and on the state of the land itself. At that time, the top priority was the construction of settlements on already-cleared land, and the second priority was to open most of the forest land. They also identified places where they could access farming equipment, hired excavators, chain saws, and construction materials such as wood and woodworking tools. The team calculated the budget for the construction of residential units, public facilities, road construction, and essential basic needs to start agricultural activities, including the cost of land clearing and the amount of labour needed. During September 2015, the 14-person pioneer team had also completed the construction of a simple housing unit for use during their initial work.

During their stay at Mempawah, the Kalimantan team coordinated with members who were still in Yogyakarta. All information and developments taking place in Mempawah were informed and became references for further plan and action, especially in sending members from Yogyakarta who would support priority needs.

In Yogyakarta, member identification continued, following the information received from Kalimantan, to select competent members to be sent in accordance with the priority needs. While waiting for their turn to cross, members prepared their departure by selling personal items, vehicles, houses, land, as capital to start their new life in Kalimantan.

The Yogyakarta group, later named as the Pasir Sejahtera Farmer Group (Pasir taken from the name of the village where their land is located), managed to raise about 2 billion rupiah, which was collected voluntarily and in accordance to the ability of each family. There was no minimum or maximum limit for members in raising money. Nevertheless, the amount of donation was adjusted to the basic needs, such as transportation costs and land purchase costs and construction of residential units. Those who have more capital will subsidize those who have less.

The table below shows how some some key items of donation money were used:

Spending	Detail	Cost (Rupiah)
Survey pioneer cost	Transport, accommodation and meals	No data
Forest Land	18 Ha x 10 million	180 million
Land + House	2 Ha + 1 home unit	110 million
Development costs of residential units	20 unit x 20 million	400 million
Public facility	Fish cages, road hardening, water filtration unit, public kitchen, hall, logistics warehouse.	200 million
Electricity	For residential units, public facilities (they are preparing solar cells).	< 1 million/month on December – January

Agricultural capital	Land preparation equipment (rent excavators, chainsaws, hoes, crowbars, etc).	60 million
Transport	Ticket: land, sea, air.	100 million
House renting in the village	10 homes as a transit place x 15 million/year	150 million
Logistics	Estimated cost/person for meal not more than 10.000 rupiah/day	In January +/- 2,3 million/day
Education	Procurement of books	No data
Operational Vehicles	Pick-up cars and some two-wheeled vehicles	60 million

Source: Interview compilation with Huda, Andi and Anto

In September 2015, work units were formed with responsibilities in construction, agriculture (primarily land clearing and processing), and social relations. The first four pioneers (Arven, Satrio, Abdi, Huda) were in charge of the existing units. All activities in the following months were under their coordination, and assisted by 10 others.

Toward the end of September and during October 2015, 30 single people (all unmarried men) came from Yogyakarta and joined in carrying out the pending jobs. They cleared land, cut down trees, levelled the ground, dug up the roots, built houses, roads, and then built rice fields. By the end of October, they had successfully cleared most of the forested land, built 8 units of houses and also had begun to cultivate the land borrowed from the Department of Agriculture. As the buildings were completed they were connected to the electricity grid from Pasir village.

The larger wave of arrivals took place in November. This time the new arrivals brought all their family members. Some directly occupied the house units on the prepared land, and some occupied the rented houses in the village of Pasir or Mempawah town. Their presence also supplied extra labour for the unfinished work. A public kitchen was set up in a rented house in the Pasir village, where the women members prepared food for everyone. At this time, the first rice fields on the purchased land were ready for planting. They also began to construct a clean water filtration system, while the education team began to draw up teaching plan.

In December, more and more families were arriving. The public kitchen on the land was completed, so meals could be prepared on the site. Freezers were purchased to store food. A logistics warehouse was available, and clean water ran into the residential units. Members still living in rented houses started to move as every new house was completed. Also at this month, children's educational activities began to take on a stable form.

In January, some of the last family arrived at Mempawah, although they still had to live in rented house. The water tower completed, agricultural activities ran more regularly. Construction work continued, with 5 units of houses were still to be completed. Corridor roads were improved, compacting the roads that connected the site with village roads.

#### *The Division of Roles*

The role and tasks of individual members was primarily based on competence and needs. Each member who arrived at Mempawah was directly assigned a work post according to current priorities. According to Andi, skill and ability were not the only requirements, willingness also played a huge role. In addition, other social group functions were activated as community life became more stable, as summarized below:

Role within Group	People Involved	Composition Based on Gender	Explanation
Agriculture	40	Generally done by male, with only one female involved as an agricultural planner.	Land clearing, land cultivation, plant and care. Generally done by men, women are only involved in small amounts. But one of the first 10 people involved in agricultural design was a woman.
Construction	20-30	Played by Male	Building houses, roads/bridges between houses, fish cages, water tower, including maintenance.
General Workers Team	5-8	Male	Building and repairing road access from village roads to settlements, carrying materials from the village road to the settlement, or from the pier to the settlement. If using the river route, bringing food purchased from the outside to the warehouse/kitchen, spreading and delivering food to homes or to farm fields.
Education	6	Female	Play a role as a mentor. Developing study plan, study module, teaching materials, workshops with parents, monitoring.
	80	Female	Look after the children, supervise and teach them with a concept of homeschooling.
	40-50	Female and Male	Children: to play and study.
Public Kitchen	10	Dominated by Female	Prepare the needs of the community members 3 times a day. In average, it is played by women, while assisted by the general workers team for food distribution.
Entrepreneur	6	Male and Female	2 bakeries and 4 coffee shops: all were capitalized by group funds.
Health	1	Female	Providing health care and counselling, and also early response to community health complaints.
Public Relation	2	Male	Assist in completing the administration, correspondence with the local government that includes supporting necessary transactions to support the work of the units of agricultural, carpentry, and kitchen.
Watchman	5-8	Male	Take turns every night.

Source: Interview compilation with Anto, Andi, Tina and Huda.

According to Tina<sup>29</sup>, the role and activities of women were more in the field of children's education. For groups, children are entirely parental responsibilities, as is the main essence of family-based homeschooling (based on Howard Gardiner's theory of 'multiple intelligences'). Mothers were the

<sup>29</sup> Tina is a former Bantul area administrator, an agriculture technology graduate, developer of cassava modification technology in Yogyakarta during Gafatar. In Mempawah, Tina played as a Junior High School tutor for homeschooling education program, which had not been implemented due to expulsion. Tina took a role in the field of education because since high school has experienced tutor/private course mentoring, her specification is in mathematics.

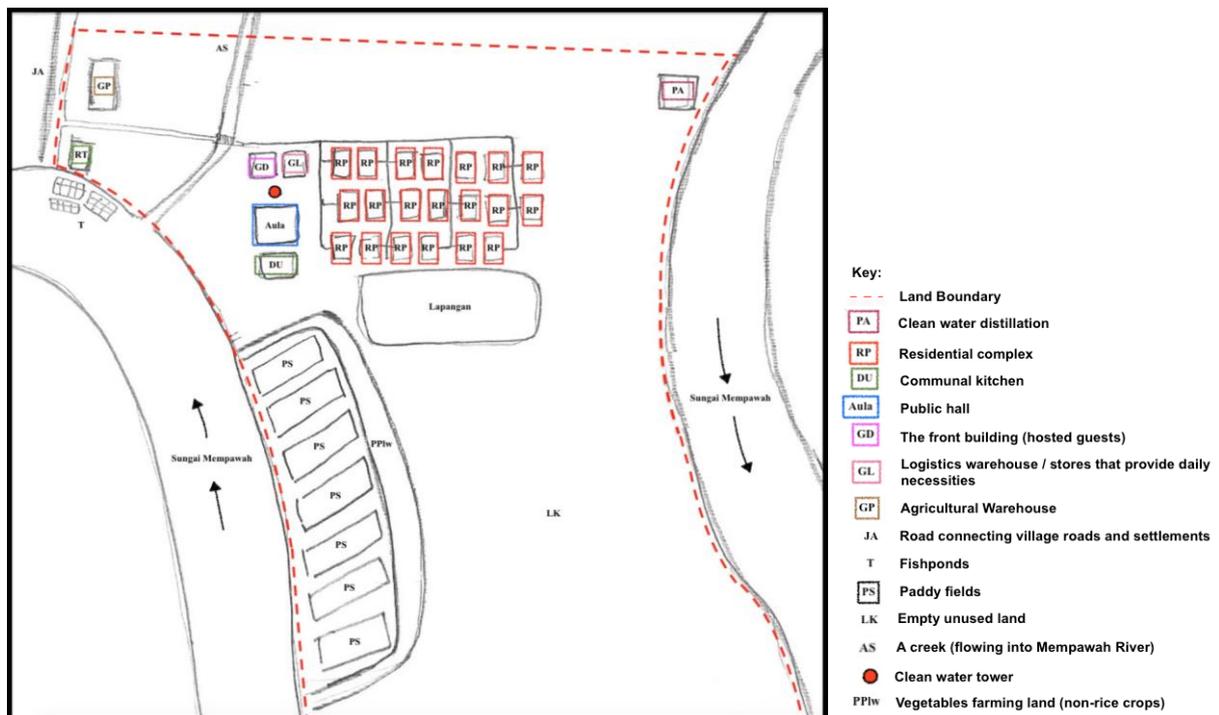
main pillar of children's education at the time because most men had other roles, e.g. land clearing, agriculture and construction. Other roles for women included entrepreneurship, bread-making and producing healthy foods. In addition, women were also actively involved in children and family health programs.

Women's activities were regular, but not formal in the form of training, knowledge sharing, health education, education and entrepreneurship, which were conducted by utilizing the potential existing among community members. As in the field of education, regular activity is coordinated by a retired principal in Yogyakarta. Women are continuously equipped with knowledge and skills that are sustainable for the community, Tina said. This system has been running since the members were still in Yogyakarta.

The description of the social role above shows how each member contributes to the formation of a new social organization oriented towards group togetherness, cooperation, sharing of roles, taking into account the priorities, competencies, and especially the interest of each member. According to those interviewed, individuals had autonomy in how they selected their roles. However, it is notable that in nearly all cases, men and women selected roles that tended to be within heavily gendered occupational groups, e.g. women chose teaching and men chose agriculture.

### Land Utilization

Below is a sketch of the half of Pasir Sejahtera group's land, showing its utilization until January 2016.



The sketch shows the part of the site that has already been drained, and the land that has already been utilized, or is ready to use. The southern portion of the sketch (not shown here) is still swamp land and requires more treatment before it can be utilized.

Their land is bounded by the red lines. East, West and South bordered directly with Mempawah river. There is a water filtration system using gravity mechanism which then becomes the source of clean water that distribute to homes (PA). The settlement consists of 20 housing units connected by bridges of wood (RP). The model of the house is built following the house of *bentang* (traditional house of Kalimantan), i.e. a long house, where 4 households live under one roof. One long building is partitioned into 6 sections, 4 sections for 4 families which is the only private room, 2 bathrooms and 1 kitchen and living room which is used together.

There are agricultural warehouses (GP), pond houses (RT), fishponds (T), and daily logistics supplies (GL). While the community hall is used for public meetings, learning places for children, or just a

place to rest in the day (hall). To the south of the residential area is a field, which is used for children to play and do other outdoor activities.

There is also a public kitchen that provides the needs of all members (DU). Every day the public kitchen unit will prepare food, provide them to the workers who cultivate the land, serve in the hall for all citizens or send to each member's housing unit. With a meal cost of not more than Rp.10.000/person/day, the kitchen is able to provide food three times a day, a mixture of rice and corn, vegetables and simple dishes.

#### *Agricultural Land*

The first cultivation of rice was done on the 5 ha of land borrowed from the Agriculture Office, and carried out in September - October 2015. While in November 2015, plantation was carried out on +/- 2 Ha of the community's own land. In addition to rice, they also plant chili, spinach, tomatoes, eggplant, cassava, corn, which were planted around and among the rice fields in both locations. The land on the eastern side is cleared, although not yet utilized. According to Anto, it is because the available labour is still deployed to cultivate the borrowed land first.

The coordinators for the agricultural unit are Pak Abdi and Bu Susi, both of whom are experienced practitioners since both were in Yogyakarta. Bu Susi had a hydroponic vegetable farm, and was active as a speaker in trainings at the Department of Agriculture and other agencies in Yogyakarta. Her farm was also frequently visited as a good learning center for public. She also had a business of buying and selling hydroponic equipment and other agricultural tools.

For the provision of seeds, the group brought them from Yogyakarta. Any member who will leave Yogyakarta is always ordered to bring certain types of seeds needed for the field. In addition to land, the Agricultural Department also helped the group by providing tractor loans, hoes and sickles, so they do not have to buy or rent themselves. They claim that the farm they are trying to develop will employ organic farming and not use artificial fertilizers. The fertilizer which they received from the Department of Agriculture with their borrowed land borrowing was not used, and instead was donated to local farmers.

By the time of the community's forced dissolution, there had not yet been any meaningful results from farming. Until January 2016, they had only harvested some vegetables such spinach and chilli, which were used in the public kitchen

#### *Working Hours*

Daily activities began at 6am. People gathered in the field or community hall to plan the day and to exercise, while waiting for breakfast to be prepared. The agricultural and construction workers, worked until 5pm. Some women and children who had finished with their respective duties joined them later in the farmlands, although not routinely. After dinner, the one or two hours before bedtime, were use to gather with family members, watch TV together, fish in the river, or other personal activities. At 9pm or 10pm, all activities in the settlement stopped, as all members rested and were ready to start again the next day.

This new life routine did not last long. Only about 5 months since starting their new lives as Pasir Sejahtera Group Farmers, on 19 January 2016 they were forced to leave their land, homes, and newly planted farmland. Their egalitarian communal life was confronted with the challenge of authoritarian practices.

### **The Last Blow Ex-Gafatar**

Four months after the extraordinary congress, Rica, a young female doctor and her son were reported missing in Yogyakarta since December 30, 2015. This moment marked a significant increase in public news and interest in Gafatar. The investigating officials found Rica in an ex-Gafatar settlement in Pangkalan Bun, Central Kalimantan on 11 January 2016. From the police investigation, Rica was known to have been a member of Gafatar since 2012.

Rica case was followed by many other reports about missing members of families associated with

Gafatar. During December 2015 and January 2016, Yogyakarta police received 36 reports of missing persons related to Gafatar. Missing persons reports were also made in Semarang, South Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), and Palembang. Various speculations emerged in the society; the disappearances were quickly linked to Gafatar, and Gafatar was equally quickly associated with Ahmad Mushaddeq, who in 2007 had been convicted of blasphemy.

From the analysis of 131 reports on Gafatar up to end of January 2016, only 7 news items were found from the entire period 2012-2015. 80% of the news stories contain a second-hand narrative of Gafatar, without even quoting or displaying direct statements from Gafatar members themselves. The media framing tends to place Gafatar as a forbidden, misguided, abducting, dangerous, radical group, which should be rejected.

The framing analysis of 5 national online media from January-March 2016 conducted by Winarni et al (2017) concluded that almost all media published only negative coverage related to Gafatar. The study found that social media played a significant role in shaping the public opinion of Gafatar as a deviant movement and a traitor against the state. It also identified some central issues that have been blown-up by the media. Firstly, the issue that Gafatar had much to do with rebellion and separatism from NKRI (The Unitary State of Republic of Indonesia). Secondly, Gafatar was perceived as a deviant organization and misguided from the fundamental teaching of Islam. Thirdly, the existence of Gafatar had disturbed local community due to the spreading of Millah Abraham doctrine. Fourthly, in the resettlement of ex-Gafatar members, media proclaimed that Gafatar had committed treason. According to Winarni, there was no accuracy in those informations, no strong analysis and no objective framing about the group.

On 13 January 2016, the Minister of Religious Affairs made a public statement to not follow the Gafatar.

*"Gafatar is an unregistered organization. Therefore, this organization is unfit for the society to follow." (Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, Minister of Religious Affairs<sup>30</sup>)*

One day after the statement of the Minister of Religious Affairs, on 14 January 2016, the Minister of the Interior issued instructions to close all Gafatar offices throughout Indonesia. According to him, Gafatar groups in the area need to be given guidance and evacuated to their area of origin. Apparatus (Satpol PP) also need to participate in maintaining security and peace within the region<sup>31</sup>.

The abundant reports of abduction, missing persons, and their relation to the framing made about Gafatar, successfully "heated up" public anger. This atmosphere was greatly felt by Gafatar members in the field. They were visited by intelligence and security officials, and threatened by thugs. The discovery of Rica, drew attention to the other Gafatar settlement centers in different parts of Kalimantan. Unfortunately, at the same time, on 14 January 2016, the terror of the Sarinah bomb occurred in Jakarta, which would have added to the growing sentiments and public unrest that had been awakened earlier.

The peak was what happened in Mempawah. On 19 January, 2016, hundreds of "Malays"<sup>32</sup>, some with yellow headbands, attacked two Gafatar farmer groups, in Kampung Pasir and Antibar village, Mempawah. They destroyed and burned houses, flattened, farmland, trampled on crops and seeds, and shouted to the community to get out of Kalimantan.

*We were woken up and taken to the jungle at 11 o'clock (by the officials) -- , "wake up, wake up! Mother, mother, wake the children and tell them not to make a noise. No need to bring clothes, no need to bring anything. Just bring the children, and hold them tight . . "What's up?" "The mob is going to attack!"*

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<sup>30</sup> Liputan 6, January 2016

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> "Malays" (Melayu) in Kalimantan refers to the non-indigenous people of Malay origin (who mostly migrated to Kalimantan some centuries ago), to distinguish them from the indigenous ("dayak") population. "Malays" are predominantly Moslems.

*We went into the forest, in fear and without flashlights, we walked for 1 km. We stumbled, there should be no sound, no lights, cellphones had to be turned off, to escape attention..*

*We walked, it was a peat soil road, slippery after the rain. We walked pretty far... there was a bridge, we passed over big wooden bumps... that was sharp!*

*There was even one child who fell, that's when my child cried. He hugged me, "Mama, can't go on... I'm tired." My child slipped and fell twice, I said, "Get up, child... We have to continue, do not be afraid" I said, "we are not wrong". "Why are they so cruel to us, Mama?" the child asked. I also do not understand (crying). I took the arm of a pregnant mother, she was 6 months pregnant and carrying a 2-year old child. I held the mother, "Mother no... Hold your child, ma'am. Don't let the child fall." I said to her.*

*There were babies, children, witnessing the burning. We all cried, evacuated as if we were prisoners, terrorists. We were held at gun-point by the military. (Ida, Jakarta, 2016<sup>33</sup>)*

Military and police evacuated Gafatar members by truck to the Tanjungpura Military Command headquarters in Pontianak<sup>34</sup>. This rejection action spread to other areas in West, Central and East Kalimantan.

The whole process and form of rejection addressed to Gafatar shows how the society has accepted the practice of authoritarian populism (Scoones, 2017): the sequence of state actions by the state, through media framing legitimized by the arguments of populist discourse from mainstream Islam groups, with accusations of apostasy and treachery.

On 3 February, 2016, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) issued an official *fatwa* No. 6 of 2016 on the Gafatar Teachings, reinforcing their earlier claims, that Gafatar is heretical. Relatively similar views also come from other Islamic circles, such as Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Islamic scholars.

*"Gafatar is not in accordance with Islamic teachings" (Daily Board Member of the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama Tanfidziyah<sup>35</sup>)*

*"Gafatar is a threat to the state of Indonesia and its basis in the ideology of Pancasila" (Azyumardi Azra, Islamic State University Syarif Hidayatullah<sup>36</sup>)*

*"Gafatar is misguided and misleading, if we stay silent it can cause unrest and a growing ethnic-religious conflict [SARA]" (Indonesian Council of Ulama<sup>37</sup>)*

Citing the MUI *fatwa* one of the main references, on 29 March, 2016 the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of Home Affairs issued the Joint Decree (SKB) Decree No. Kep-043/A/JA/02/2016 and Number: 223-865 of 2016, proclaiming a prohibition on Gafatar practices.

On 25 May, two leaders of Gafatar (Tumanurung and Chaya) and their original inspirational figure, Ahmad Mushadeq, were interrogated, and finally detained as suspects. According to the East Jakarta District Court indictment dated 21 October, 2016, the three leaders of Gafatar have been charged with inciting hostility, misuse or defamation of one of Indonesia's religions, and have committed conspiracy, to commit treason with the intention of overthrowing the government. The three persons were threatened with criminal sanction of article 156a jo article 55 paragraph 1 jo article 64 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code, and article 110 paragraph 1 jo 107 paragraph 2 jo article 64 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup>Testimoni Kisah Warga Eks-Gafatar, Tempo, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oY6niJOLKOc&t=2s>

<sup>34</sup> Human Right Watch (HRW), 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Liputan6.com, January 2016

<sup>36</sup> Concord Strategic, June 2016

<sup>37</sup> Liputan6.com, January 2016

<sup>38</sup> For many Indonesian human rights observers, this article is a rubber-stamp article, and rather, controversial.

*“This is not simple, it’s a serious threat. They have a governor, they want to establish their own state.” (Badrodin Haiti, Chief of the Indonesian National Police)<sup>39</sup>*

The Head of Research and Development Sub-Division (State Security), Criminal Police Directorate, AKBP Satria Hady Permana said he had found strong evidence of attempted treason by the Gafatar group<sup>40</sup>.

*This group, who called themselves Gafatar, practices a teaching that comes from various religious sources, which certainly has created a confusion and a disturbing situation (Inspector General Pol Boy Rafli Umar, Head of Public Relations Division of the National Police Headquarters, 2016).*

In March 2017, East Jakarta District Court Judge pronounced sentence on the three Gafatar leaders by sentencing Ahmad Mushaddeq and Mahful Muis Tumanurung to 5 years in prison, and Andry Cahya for three years in prison on charges of practicing heresy. However, they were not convicted of treason.

The repatriation process has involved great material and immaterial damage to Gafatar members. The total losses they claimed from the 68 locations were more than 20.4 Billion Rupiah.<sup>41</sup> This figure is based on the sum of all costs of land purchase, housing construction, and investment in livestock and agriculture. This total does not include the loss of movable assets, and others. Approximately 1 billion rupiah loss suffered by the Pasir Sejahtera Farmers group from the sum of the same items.

At the evacuation shelter, there were 4 cases of miscarriages and dozens of cases affecting children, ranging from trauma, separated from parents, and various types of respiratory diseases. The victims are still undergoing guidance, in addition to trauma healing services. This guidance is given by the state carried out by the military containing material about nationalism and Indonesian-ness. The victims also undergo finger scan and mugshot (including children) and receive a criminal record (inafis) for formally being a member.

In addition, they are subjected to religious guidance from the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a result of MUI recommendations. They are "purified from misguidance" and "converted" back into formal religions.

*"One of the recommendations from the MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulama) fatwa on Gafatar is that, the government is obliged to conduct continuous rehabilitation and coaching to former followers, members and administrators of gafatar" (Ministry of Religion, 2016).*

Besides the negative stigma faced by family and community members, Joint Ministerial Decree 3 to this day has become a source of terror for the ex-members, who are no longer free to discuss their past beliefs.

## Conclusion

The imagination of a better society has been killed. Gafatar, as its manifest, reflects a form of emancipatory politics that is based on communal and egalitarian practices, which emerged in the establishment of an agrarian-based social organization in rural areas of Kalimantan. Resource distribution was done by acquiring legal ownership over land through formal purchases, as well as equal sharing of these resources for the sake of common good without any private ownership of the land. They were denied the opportunity to be recognized as a faith-based, and at the same time a farming-based community. The failure of their struggle for recognition and redistribution is due to a series of authoritarian practices that occurred in response to moral panic of both the dominant religious

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Not only in the case of Gafatar, this article has also tries to justify the legitimation of the practices of discrimination in many places. See Telle (2017), *Faith on Trial: Blasphemy and 'Lawfare' in Indonesia*; Howell (2015), *Muslim, the New Age and Marginal Religion in Indonesia: Changing Meanings of Religious Pluralism*; dan Crouch (2012), *Law and Religion in Indonesia: The Constitutional Court and the Blasphemy Law*.

<sup>39</sup> Concord Strategic, June 2016

<sup>40</sup> Jawapos, May, 2016

<sup>41</sup> Defense White Book, 2016.

populism, and national security apparatus.

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**The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI)** is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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