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# THE CONTRIBUTION OF ARABIC LANGUAGE TO ANCIENT CIVILISATIONS

From a lecture delivered on the 25th January in Casablanca and the 24th February 1965 in Rabat. Morocco, at the request of the Cultural Committees and some other cultural associations, in both cities.

"Here I have some linguistic surprises in store for you. The first of them is to correct the title of this lecture of ours: "The Contribution of Arabic Language to Ancient Civilisations", as mentioned on the invitation cards. I confess that what I really meant, and would actually be our subject now was the contribution of Arabic to the sons of Adam even before the epoch of civilisations, and the gift of the Arab child - the Arab babe - to human languages. Moreover the favour of the Arab chick, yes the Arab hen's child, to civilised and advanced languages, in ancient and modern times.

Only I was afraid that if I disclosed anything of the sort to you in the invitation cards, you would be suspicious and run away from me and from my lecture.

Now that you have entered this hall, what prevents me from telling you the plain truth?

## A METHOD OF EXCAVATION

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Historians knew but very little about ancient civilisations. When regular excavations were carried out ruins of tombs and palaces were discovered and burried relics were dug up. Then the mysteries of the remote past began to unveil themselves little by little. Archeologists were able to discover now and then some antiquities wich - like torches - shed light on many hidden facts.

Once upon a time, some years ago, it happened that I also found myself engaged in digging and excavating the truths of the past. I excavated in place and time, from Nepal in the Himalayas to Iceland in the North Arctic, and from the dawn of hystory-rather from the dark night of history - to the present day. Yes I accomplished all this single-handed, without leaving my room or getting up from my desk. That is because my, method of excavation is to dig in linguistic dictionaries in search of human relations. From time to time I used to discover a find, more precious than a pearl, which beckonned to something unknown, which I had to look for, and unravel its secrets.

In my excavations I found many words common between Arabic and Latin, in the beginning. It seemed to me that it was Arabic which borrowed from Latin in general, and that the debt owed by Latin to Arabic consisted only a few words such as "Camelus " from Arabic « Jamal : ، جمل (= Camel) ; " Elephas " from Arabic « Alfil : الغيل (= Elephant) and similar words of the desert and Far East which were conveyed to the West through the intermediators of Arabic. In the case of a noble and important word like « Qalam : e pen) which I found ، قلم in Latin in the form of " $\dot{C}$  a I a m u s" I did not hesitate to claim that Arabic borrowed from Latin ; because, firstly, 'Arabic was relatively recent in comparision with Latin, and, secondly, because the Romans were the people of civilisation when the Arabs were beduine and primitive. I knew afterwards that the word was Greek in origin - Kalamos - and that all linguistic scholars thought that the Arab people of the desert were the party who borrowed this important cultural word. They still think so up to the present day.

I was astonished to find during my investigations that Arabic had intricate relations with other languages of ancient history, i, e. Greek, Latin and Persian. But I remembered that the language of the Akkadians - Babylonians - was Arabic, the Arabic of that time and place naturaly, that is more than 5,500 years ago, in Mesopotamea; and that the word "Babylon" itself was Arabic because in the Babylonian language it was "bab ilu" which is in modern Arabic « bab :  $\psi$ , (= door) and « ilah  $\psi$ , (= god). [Babylon : God's Door].

I found also that the theorum of the right-angled triangle which was attributed to Euclid was discovered in Mesopotamea written in Babylonian Arabic 17 centuries before the time of Euclid, i. e. 4,000 years ago.

I remembered also that the code of Hamurabi preceeded the civilisations of the Greeks, Romans and Persians as a whole.

Here the question reserved itself. I began to perceive that it was more probable that Greeks, Romans and Persians had borrowed from the light of the Babylonian, Assyrian, Himiarian, Canaanite and Aramaic languages which carried the torch of civilisation for many centuries. Thus Arabic is not a recent or primitive language. It is a language of science and culture from the time of the Akkadians. In other words, Arabic is the oldest of the living languages on the surface of the earth. No language other than the Arabic displays to day a brilliant cultural past - like the tail of a comet -at least 55 centuries long.

Although my investigations were neither sufficient nor regular because of frequent travels from one country to another and because of lack libraries and resources, my "excavations" supplied me with a good deal of Arabic words distributed between ancient nations in Asia and Europe.

I would like here to draw your attention to a significant point; this is that I am not referring to what the Eastern and Western languages gained from Arabic during the flourishing centuries of Islam. These linguistic gains are known to scholars to have come from Arabic. What I actually seek is words borrowed from Arabic before Islam, or rather before history, and consequently they are not recognised by foreign dictionaries to be of an Arabic origin.

# GIVING « ATAA : ...

You may Well ask me what is my evidence that foreign languages have borrowed from Arabic and not the contrary.

Let us deal only with one of those common words, and let it be « Adaa : ادا » (= to pay) from the verb « Adda : أدى » In Persian it is « dad : داد » (= gave), in Latin " Addo, datio, dono", in Italian " dato...", in French « donner, donation » and some other forms. In English these two French forms are used.

Now, which one of these five languages is the giver of this word of "giving"?

According to the prevailing theory European languages descend from an Aryan origin and this is why they are termed "Indo-European ".

Thus according to this theory the word seems to be of an Aryan origin, and during its voyage from the East to Europe, perhaps through some Arab land, it was borrowed by the Arabs.

When we find a word common to a number of languages we can I think identify the mother language amongst them, by one of two methods : either by finding out in which language the word is older or by detecting in one of those languages the original primitive root from which the word sprang.

As to being older, the word had appeared as « Nadanu in Akkadian Arabic. But this is not a decisive proof because although the Akkadian language is the oldest amongst these languages in culture it may not be the oldest in existence. The word of "giving" moreover, is not such an advanced cultural one so that we may say that it was not known by backward nations and thus it should have been invented by the Akkadians and lent to the others. But even so, I still think that all these words of "giving " in these languages descend from an Arabic origin.

# The Hand "YAD "

I Found the seed that grew and "gave" its fruits to different nations in the East and the West. I found it in Arabic, and it is  $(yad : \_\_\_\_)$  (= hand.)

In Arabic as in other languages verbs and adjectives are derived from the names of the body's limbs. From « yad : عنه الله بي (= pay). From "yad" also they said " adda : ما أدى (= give by hand). By Course of time « adda : أندى ، developped into « anda : أندى ، (= give generously); and so forth.

Now, the imperative of « wada :  $e \in e$  in Arabic is "di: e : e (= give). This "di e : e is found in Persian as the imperative, precisely with the same pronunciation and meaning. From it the past tense « dad : e : e (= gave) was formed in Persian.

The verb « ayyad : (= assist) has infiltrated into English and French as " aid, aider " in the same Arabic sense.

The Romans also used the verb "adda : أدى " pronouncing it in their own way "addo " without changing the meaning. From the Akkadian verb "nadanu : تدانو " - or from some other similar Arabic form - they said " dono " (= to give a present.). And from Latin the new European languages borrowed some forms and added some more conjugations.

It is curious that " data " (= gifts, in Latin) has been translated into Arabic by modern interpreters as « mu'tayat ، (= given things). Both the Arabic and Latin words go back to the same Arabic root : "Yad : بيد ,

# " Qalam "

This word « qalam :  $\overline{}$   $\overline{$ 

The letter '' l' in '' galam '' is also interchanged with ' '' t'' in « qatam ، قطب with (s) in qasam ، قطب and with '' dh '' in « qadham : قضب . Like '' qalam,, itself all these three sister verbs mean : '' cut ''.

All these and many other words go back to < qatt :, (= cut), the Eve mother of hundreds of verbs that mean cutting and the like. In the two European languages, Greek and Latin, the word is an orphan, without family or kin.

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Secondly, "qalam : قلب means " reed " in the three languages - in addition to the meaning of pen in Arabic. To form a word that indicates " reed " from a past verb that indicates " cut ,, is not a unique instance in Arabic. The word " qasab : قصب which also means " reed " had been formed in the same way from the past verb " qasaba : قصب which meant " cut " as well. It seems that the people who fabricated " qalam " were the same who made " qasab " to indicate the same thing, " reed ,, by the same method : the Arabs. Perhaps the same clan of Arabs in both cases

#### Some Fruits of Excavations

This is but a small sample from many gains of our excavations in dictionaries. Here are some other examples from the three European languages : Greek, Latin and English.

Let us begin with Greek :

SEMA : sign. Its Arabic origin is '' simah : سعه ' simaa : « سومه sumah ، سومه

MUTHOS : Its Arabic origin is '' muthlah : مثله and mathlulah : مثله In both languages the word means ''ancient chronicles '' or '' legends ''. I think we can use in Arabic « almathulat :

in European languages. I would like to tell you now in advance that this "logy" in "mythology" descends from an Arabic origin as well. I will return to this in more detail later.

HISTORIA : legend. This goes back to the Arabic "usturah : ماسطوره، or its synonym "istirah : ماسطوره، (= legend). Its literal linguistic sense in Arabic was : writing, or something written. The word was formed from "satr : سطر، (= line).

It appears in English as : history, and in French as : histoire.

ASTER, ASTRON : star. The first form (aster) seems to be a corruption of ISHTAR, the Babylonian goddess of love (= Venus). The second form (astron) seems to be from ASHTAROTH, as it was pronouced by the Phoenicians and perhaps some other ancient Arabs.

In Latin it is pronouced ASTARUM. From ASTRON (G.), ASTROLOGIA was formed in Greek and Latin, meaning ASTRO-NOMY and ASTROLOGY. Should we form the name of this science of the stars in Arabic from Ishtar's name, in the same European fashion we could say : ISHTAROLOGY.

TECHNE : art. In modern European languages the term "Technology " is formed from it. Its Arabic origin is " tiqn : التقن (= talent, nature, elaboration ".

After these five Greek words we present the following five Latin words :

، صلب : sulb « صند : SOLIDUS : Solid. Its Arabic is '' sald

salud : مصلود ، of the same meaning.

، قبض : CAPESSO : catch. Its Arabic is : " qadabha :

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TABUM : Plague. Its Arabic is : "Tauûn : طاعون : GENIUS : geni. In Arabic it is : "jinni : جنی MATERIA : matter. The Arabic origin is "mâddah : ماده of the same sense. Here are other five words from English : THAT, from " thak : ذاك ، CUT, from " thak : مناك ، EARTH, from " ardh : مناك ، TALL, from " tul : ملوك , (= length). WINE, from " wayn : وين , (= black grapes).

# The Common Origin

Some orientalists have noticed the resemblance, not only between Arabic and some European languages, but also between the Semitic languages including Arabic, and Aryan languages including Sanskrit. Some of them compared the original words in both groups and found out that those words had common biliteral roots. When no such common roots could be traced for certain words, they proposed some for them supposing that such roots must have been existent but were after wards lost.

By biliteral roots we mean that many linguistic scholars believe that words were primarily composed of two consonants, in imitation of a natural voice, and some other letters were added in different languages afterwards by course of evolution.

Scholars have had different opinions when attempting to explain this linguistic phenomenon, i.e. the resemblance between the origins of words in Aryan and Semitic languages. Some deduced that in some very ancient period both the Semites and the Aryans spoke one language that vanished after having been divided into two branches. Some others suggested that the human race of which both the Aryans and the Semites had descended spoke one primitive and ancient language.

When these two groups separated from one another each one followed its own method in developing its language, and thus some traces of the old extinct mother language are still surviving through these biliteral roots. But most linguistic scholars deny the whole concept rejecting the idea that these two groups of mankind belong to one original major race. They consider that this theory is unscientific because it is based on supposition and because of the absence of any conclusive evidence.

Now what attitude shall we take towards this fresh problem ? Shall we accept this theory to say that this resemblance between Arabic and Aryan languages dates back to the first linguistic background of which we know nothing, and by so doing refute our own claim to the favorable situation of Arabic of which we have just seen some significant examples; or shall we join with the theory's opponents overlooking this clear phenomenon which cannot be overlooked although it is ignored together with its linguistic consequences by some scholars ?

Actually both our own theory concerning the favorable position of the Arabic language and their theory regarding a common ancient origin for both groups of languages are right. These two theories can be explained this way, I think.

Words common to the two groups of languages can be classified into two categories. First, primitive words such as the names of animals, parts of the body and so forth. Second, advanced cultural words.

These words: Historia, Muthos, Techne, and Astrologia. have the same meaning in both Greek and Latin. We have already seen how they go back to an Arabic origin We can also add here "alphabetha", from Arabic "Alifbaa : الفياء , which is well known to have been borrowed by the Greeks from the Arab Phoenicians.

These are but developed terms that cannot be considered primitive words in so far as linguistic value and significance progress are concerned. So, these common cultural words cannot be antique traces of an extinct ancient language. I find no other solution to the problem than to aknowledge the contribution of Arabic to these two European civilised ancient languages.

#### The Mother language

Now, what about this other resemblance between the roots of the primitive words in Arabic and Aryan languages including Sanskrit, the ancient Indian language? What is the significante of this curious linguistic phenomenon, and how are we to interpret it?

! Wondered : had Arabic ever met the Indian Sanskrit? In what place?

Are the Arabs Indian in origin? Are the Indians Arab in origin? Has either of the two parties migrated to the other's land in the remote unknown past?

Yes, there must have been a migration, some time, from some place to another. Three words : migration, time and place.

Now the problem is already solved. The place of the play, or the tragedy, is Arabia. The time is some period about 11,000 years ago. The conclution was a migration, a terrible one.

I found the key in a well known historical fact which we so often meet with and talk about without considering its great linguistic consequences

It is known that the Arab peninsular was in the remote past a thick jungle, like those of India and Africa, with many rivers, big and small, and great wealth of trees, fruit and animals, and consequently it was thickly populated. When the ice age was over and the continent of Europe unveiled its face to be seen by the sun, this great blessing for mankind was a great catastroph for Arabia, because it resulted a serious change in wind directions which carried the rain clouds away from Arabia which thus became the well known desert The other logical result was the migration of the inhabitants to all directions. Some of them must have travelled northward to Syria and Iraq. Some others eastwards to Iran and beyond. Same others westward to Egypt and beyond. Perhaps some others crossed the Mediterranean and Asia Minor. It seems that some had reached India, in one, or more, of the migrations which must have been many and successive at various times. In fact, migration from Arabia has never since ceased. Whenever drought comes exodus follows. And this is how Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc... as far as Morocco, became Arab countries.

The original home of Sanskrit is not yet decided by scholars. According to this interpretation it may have been some where in East Persia, and hence it moved to India. Persia was, anyhow, the first halt.

These ancient Arabs who migrated settled in various places, and with them there settled their language which seems to have been, most probably, in its biliteral stage.

This is the only solution I can see, in the thick darkness of that far past, to interpret this phenomenon of resemblance between the roots of Arabic and Sanskrit languages.

# THE VOCAL ROOTS

In spite of this, I hesitated to accept this grave conclution. I argued with myself that the suggested exodus of the Arabs to east Persia and their planting their language there are but possibilities, which, if they cannot be refuted, cannot be proved either. But two significant pieces of evidence presented themselves to me. I could not overlook these.

The first is the fact that only in Arabic we can trace those common words - between Arabic and Aryan laguages - to the very origin, as we have seen in setting back the words of "giving" to the Arabic "yad :  $\underline{}$  (= hand). Still more significant is the fact that in Arabic we find the first vocal seed accent from which the word sprang since the day of its birth. For instance, the verb "farr :  $\underline{}$  (= fled) which is an imitation of the sound made by a sparrow's wings when fleeing. Most Arabs in the Middle East still say: "He made firrrrr... and ran away like a sparrow" From this word the English say : fly, flight, flee. We cannot identify the vocal origin in these modified English words without been lead to them by the Arabic origin "farr ", which precisely depicts the natural sound, and thence any of these English words cannot be the origin of the Arabic one : "farr ".

## THE ARAB CONSONANTS

The second piece of evidence is the Arabic consonants that do not exist in foreign languages. Many a time have we heard some foreigners cristicise the Arabic language for its consonants : 'a  $\xi \cdot h : \xi \cdot$ 

One of these consonants is "h  $\sim$  . It is a natural gutteral consonant which comes out automatically when a baby says: "ah: -i, just to clear its throat without any intention of addressing anybody or expressing anything. From this voice the Arabs produced the verb. "ahha: -i, (= to cough). By course of time another form was derived from it: "qahha: -i, with another one : kahha: -i, which are still used in some Arab Middle East countries. It seems that from this "qahha: -i ancient Arabs formed the verb "qahafa  $\cdot$  -i, and "qahaba : \* -i, is the origin of all, because it is the one that represents the natural sound of coughing.

Now we encounter the verb " qahafa . . . in English in the form of " cough ". The English etymological dictionary says it is descended from Middle English, and that is all. We cannot argue, anyhow, that Arabic has borrowed " qahafa " from the English " cough ", developped it into " qahha', and then taken it back to its natural source " ahh ".

# THE ARAB BABE

Here is another sample of the gains of linguistic excavations. It takes us back to one of the oldest and most beautiful sources of language. In this sample we are going to see how a seed springs, grows and bears leaves and fruits before our eyes. It is time now to fulfill our promise by presenting to you the Arab babe accomplishing a brilliant achievment for human languages.

After a good sleep and time at his mothers breast a feeling of happiness pervades our infant, which makes him begin to sing : "gha, gha, gh, gha.... غاغاغا عالي . Sometimes, still more contented, it declares its satisfaction with the world by singing enthusiastically in a louder tone : "lagh, lagh, lagh, lagh... لي لغ لغ لغ لغ . Of course this is not a speciality of the Arab infant ; it is inborn, and practiced naturally and instinctively by infants all over the world.

Let us now study this human phenomenon to find out what value or values lay behind it. First of all it is "speech " in relation to its sayer - the infant - because it is an "expression" of his feeling of his fresh existence and delight in life. It is, second. "nonsence" in relation to us, because it does not express some specific meaning like our dictionary words. In addition, thirdly, it is "singing". And fourthly it is an invitation from this little Adamite to adults, specially mothers, provoking in them the feeling of human sympathy and kidness.

Strangley enough, all these senses were perceived correctly and profoundly by the Arabs of those ancient ages of jungle.

Appreciating the "inutility" value in this infant's "lagh. lagh... " they formed the verb "lagha, laghwan : لغا لغوا meaning that the little one said : "lagh, lagh, lagh... ", and afterwards the word was used for adults too meaning : " to say nonsense ".

What really indicates profound sense and sound conception, still more, is the fact that Arabs, also, perceiving mentally and psychologically from those ancient times what speaking value lay in the baby's "lagh, lagh, lagh ", regarded this sound as a form of talking and expression by this little dumb, ignorant and chattering being. So they used the same verb in the meaning of speaking as well. And from the same verb they derived the word "lughah is , (= language).

When an infant says: "lagh, lagh, lagh, lagh... "his mother in many cases answers him smiling: "lagh, lagh, lagh... " too Thus in appreciation of this third, emotional value, the Arabs formed the word "nagha: نغوي (= caressed, and talked nicely to, a baby), which was derived, I believe, from the same verb too, by changing the "I" into "n", - either by adults or by babes themselves, who sometimes say "nagh, nagh, nagh" or "dagh, dagh, dagh ".

Cencerning the fourth value of singing the Arabs primarily formed the word '' inghaa : النفاء and afterwards developed it into '' ghina'a غناء (= singing) - the verb being ''ghanna: مغناء ,

Let us now travel to Europe in order to seek the Arab Childhood's gifts in languages Here is "laghu لغبو in its talking sense appearing in Greek as "logos " (= word). And here is "Lughah : الغبي (= language) emerging in Latin as "Lingua" (= Language, tongue), which is still the same in Italian. In french it is "langue" in the same two meanings. From it also the French derived "langage" and the English "language'.

Borrowing the word "ghanna : فنى (= sing) the Romans said "cano" the infinitive being "canere " and " cantare ". which is still the same in Italian. In French it is developed into "chanter", which appears as "chant' in English.

Returning to the Greek "logos' we find it developed into "loghica" in Greek and thence in Latin, which is 'logic" in English and "logique" in French. The Arabic "Lughah" (= language) too appears again as "loghia" in Greek and Latin, meaning discourse, and pronounced "logy" in English to be attached as a suffix to some words indicating the sense of knowledge or science as in : biology, psychology, geology, technology, etc... From amongst these words "technology" is completely Arabic : the first part is Arabic "tinq" as we have said previously, and the second part is Aarbic "Lughah" as we have just seen now.

# THE ARAB CHICK

Now it is the turn of the Arab chick. Like other chicks of the world it is lovely and many a time have we enjoyed its charming song : "si, si, si, si, si, می صی صی صی

From this syllable '' si '' the Arabs said '' saa al farkh : م صاء الفرخ (= the chick sounded). The word '' saa developed into '' sata : مات '' saha : مال sata '' sahala '' sahala '' مال

Pursuing the achievments of our dear chick in Europe we would find that the verb " sawwata : مات (fr. sata : مات turned to be " sonitum " and thence " sono \* in Latin, in the same Arabic meaning (i.e. to sound). In many cases I found that inserting the letter (n) inside the words borrowed from Arabic was a habit of pronunciation of some Europeans.

In fact inserting (n) or some other letters is an Arab habit too; perhaps it is the origin. Instances : '' jaddala : جدل = jandala, jahdala : جدل جندل , = anda, ahda : أندى ، = anda, ahda : أندى ، أهـدى

From our chik's sound we find "sonde, sondage, sonner" and knowing its distant Arabic origin, we Arabs also use it reluctanly as an alien word because we have no pure Arabic one to remplace it.

From our chik's sound we find " sonde, sondage, sonner " and others in French. In English " Sawt : صوت (= voice) is pronouced " sound ". Here again the (n) is inserted. There is, anyhow, another word without " n " in English : " shout ". We find also " sahil : صهيل (= horse neighing) as " squeal ".

# CORRECTING A NAME

It is quite clear now that Arabic language is Arabic language. Do not tell me that this is the case with English, French and other languages of the world. Most languages, if not all, are not themselves, i.e. they do not represent their names. Rather they represent a mixture of languages, alien and local, and thus no living civiliced language is original, except Arabic.

The Arabic language was created from the beginning by the Arabs temselves, in their peninsular which began to export Arabs and Arabic language about 110 centuries ago. This language cannot be imported from some other place, because here we see how it is made from its primitive raw natural matter, before our eyes - by their own mouths, adults and youngesters, from their voices in different moods of laughing, singing, sneezing, coughing and so forth. And also by the beaks of their chicks, the hiss of their snakes the chirp of their sparrows and the roar of their thunder. They alone have in their language the consonants that depict all these sounds which are to be inevitably changed or ommited by foreigners who borrow any Arabic words with such sounds in them.

Since scholars decided that Europeans had originally immigrated from Asia, or from India in particular, because of the resemblance they noticed between the Sanskrit and the European languages so that they called them Indo - European languages; now they can only permit us to use the same measurement and make the same deduction to say that the resemblance between Arabic and Sanskrit may also be interpreted by the Arab's migration after the drying up of their fertile peninsular to India or somewhere else - where they settled with their language.

Consequently we are justified, <u>I</u> suppose, in naming Sanskrit the "Arab - Indian" language. Concerning the Indo - European languages I think it is time to correct their name according to historical facts by calling them, from now on, the "Arab - Indo -European" languages.

### ABDUL-HAK FADIL

A State of the second se

رسالة من منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية الى المكتب الدائم للتعريب بعث الاستاذ احمد الشقيري رئيس منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية برسالة الى المكتب الدائم للتعريب في موضوع أسبوع فلسطين الذي نظمه المكتب هذأ نصها : د يسر منظمة التحرين الفلسطينية أن تعبر عن شكرها وامتنانها للمجهود الوطني القومي الذي قام به المكتب الدائم للتعريب بتنظيم واعداد المهرجانات الشنعبيسة بمناسبة الذكرى الثامنة عشرة لاغتصاب فلسطين العربية كذلك للشخصيات العربية واساتلة الجامعات ورجال السلك الديبلوماسي العربي الذيس شاركسوا المكتب بعواطفهم وجهودهم الفكرية في نجاح هذه المهرجانات . هذا وبروح الاعتزاز ، نحيى الروح العربية الاصيلة التق تتحلى بسها جماهير الشعب المغربي ألبطل والتي تلمسها بوضوح قولا وعملا في وقوف هذه الجماهير الي جانب الشعب الفلسطيني في كفاحه وجهاده على طريق التحرير والعودة .

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