

ARKADIUSZ PŁONKA

**Carnivalisation of the World
in the Christian Lebanese Diaspora's *tamizdats***

Abstract

The paper is devoted to the analysis of six anonymous texts written in French in the 1990-ties and published by The World Lebanese Organization. We focalize on deformation of Lebanese national symbols: language, territory and Lebanese people. The corpus, which is satirical reaction to the Taif Accords (1989) reinforcing Syrian supervision of Lebanon, represents anti-(pan)Arab and anti-Muslim ideas. From a sociolinguistic point of view, it is similar to propaganda materials published in Modern Standard Arabic and Lebanese dialects by Christian militias in Beirut between 1975–1990.

The propaganda materials of the Lebanese Christian Diaspora disseminated by modern media from the USA, Sweden, Australia and Canada, play the role of *tamizdats*, clandestinely circulating production supporting various forms of *Lebanonism*, *Phoenicianism* and *Maronitism*. In the paper we analyse six satirical texts published by The World Lebanese Organization (the WLO).¹ The texts, written in French during the 90's of the XXth century, must be perceived as a reaction to the political events unfavourable in the WLO's view for the Christians in Lebanon: Syrian supervision, the Taif Accords (1989) and the "Lebanese Christian Civil War" (January 31–October 13, 1990) [v. Phares 1995: 157–177]. The corpus includes (original spelling):

1. *Billet doux à Tonton Hafez* 'Love letter to dear Uncle Hafez' [BD]
2. *L'Accord de Taif* 'the Taif Accord' [AT]
3. *Comptes-Rendus du Levant* 'Reports from the Levant' [CRI]
4. *Comptes-Rendus du Levant II* 'Reports from the Levant II' [CRII]

¹ The WLO was founded in September 1991 by the militants of the *Lebanese Front*, the *Lebanese Forces*, the *Lebanese Army*, the *South Lebanon Army*, the *World Maronite Union*, the *Mashric* (sic) *Committee* (Middle East Christian minorities) and the *Worker Union* [<http://wlo-usa.org/Declarations/declaration.htm>].

5. *Comptes-Rendus du Levant III: Virée verolée au pays de la Sougourtha* 'Reports from the Levant III: syphilitic promenade in the country of Sougourtha' [CRIII]
6. *Fabula* 'Fabula' [F].

The corpus bears a strong resemblance to the xenophobic, anti-Palestinian *samizdats* [violent pamphlets, songs, poems in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Lebanese dialects], written by the members of *Numūr* ('Tigers') from Camille Chamon's *Ḥizb al-Waṭaniyyīn al-Ahrār* 'National Liberal Party' and by Etienne Ṣaqr's *Ḥerrās al-'arṣ* 'Guardians of the Cedars'.² The texts are anonymous, signed by figures of speech like periphrasis *Libanais qui te veut du mal* 'Lebanese wishing you [: H. Assad] badly' [BD]. The target population includes the French speaking Lebanese Christians. The full decoding of the textual ambiguities (*lire entre les interlignes. C'est le propre du déchiffrement* [CRII]) requires knowledge of French and Francophone literature (La Fontaine), history (Mirabeau) and pop culture (Audard, Brel, Chevalier). Some puns are based on Arabic and Modern Hebrew lexis. There is a dissonance between the educational level of the authors and their rudimentary argumentation.

In Lebanon, heterogeneous forms of *waṭaniyya* (here: 'local nationalism' in the Arab world, as the opposition to *qawmiyya* 'arabiyya various forms of [pan]Arab nationalism')³ refer to:

1. language
 - 1.a. "Lebanese language" and the new Latin alphabet [v. Płonka 2004];
 - 1.b. French;
 - 1.c. liturgical language different from Classical Arabic (Syriac);
2. territory (al-Matn);
3. prestigious ancestors (Mardaites/Ġarāġima and Phoenicians).

In our corpus all these national symbols are defiled. The logic is replaced by the nonsense of the carnival, moral and political decomposition with binary oppositions: high-low and sacrum-profanum [Bachtin 1975 (1965)]. In all the texts evil is active, good is passive like in Feġhali's *vulgar image* of *la malchance pitoyable des justes et la chance insolente des mauvais*:

əṣ-ṣamel ġereq wel-ba'r fāš
Le chameau s'enfonça et le crottin surnagea
 'The camel drowned and the dung rose [to the surface]'
 [Feġhali 1938: 665 (2786), (simpl. trans.).]

² A. Płonka 2004, *L'idée de langue libanaise d'après Sa'īd 'Aql*, Paris, Geuthner, chap. VI: 120–147 and our two papers: "Le nationalisme linguistique au Liban autour de Sa'īd 'Aql et l'idée de langue libanaise dans la revue „Lebnaan” en nouvel alphabet", "Arabica", 2006, Vol. 53(4), pp. 423–471. "Sayabān ou l'anomie au Liban: Quelques remarques sur le lexique expressif en arabe", "Cahiers de Linguistiques de L'INALCO" (in press).

³ A. Płonka, *Język znakiem ontologicznej tożsamości w świecie arabskim: rozmowa z Salahem Stétié*, „Bliski Wschód", 2006, Vol. 3.

Inventory

I. Language

- 1.1. *sabir jargonesque* 'jargonised sabir' [CRI], spoken by citizens of Sougourtha, v. § 2.2.5 and § 3.8, Syrian impact: *Vous n'êtes pas syrieux?* 'You are not syrious?' [CRI] < *Vous n'êtes pas sérieux?* 'You are not serious?'; *Ah sy ris, sir!* 'Oh, yea, smile, sir!' [CRI]; *JE SUIS SYRICHE!* 'I [: E. Lahoud] AM SIRICH' [CRIII] < 'so rich'; cf. allusion to the activity of pro-Iranian forces in Baalbek, Arb. dial. *ballašu yehku l leğga l lebnaniyyi b lahzi 'iraniyyi* (translit. of the new Latin alphabet) '[in Baalbek some people] began to speak the Lebanese language with Iranian accent' [Płonka 2004: 74]; cf. *pays de chlônaks* § 2.2.4.
- 1.2. *francacophones: indigènes de ce bled (même les ~)* 'indigenous of this godforsaken place (even francacophones)' [CRI], *francacophones* < 'francophones' + 'cacophony'.

II. Territory

- 2.1. oppositions:
 - 2.1.1. *high-low*: ideologically significant *Lebanese mountains* (v. for example Charles Corm's *La Montagne inspirée*) versus *mire landscape*: *qui dit marécages dit insectes, microbes, bactéries, virus!!! La voilà la plaie qui menace Sougourtha* 'Who says mires, says insects, microbes, bacteria, virus!!! This is a wound which threatens Sougourtha' [CRIII].
 - 2.1.2. purification aspect: *sea-stagnant water*: vulg. alliteration *marécage merdeux* 'shitty mire', in: *ta syrie* [minuscule] *est un ~* 'your [: H. Assad's] syria is a shitty mire' [BD], inhabited by *maquereaux, maquereles et morues*, alliteration, intentional ambiguity (sexual aspect): *maquereaux* 1. 'mackerels', 2. slang 'pimps', *morues* 1. 'cods', 2. slang (old) 'tarts' [CRIII]; cf. disparaging Palestinians in Lebanese [Płonka 2004, chap. VI].
 - 2.1.3. *water-its lack*: *l'eau des gouttières* 'water from the gutters', in: *danser la danse de la pluie pour (...) récupérer ~* 'to dance the rain dance for (...) collecting water from the gutters' [about Lebanese people] [AT]; cf. *la pluie (d'obus aussi)* 'rain (also of missiles)' [AT]; cf. oppositions, significant for *Lebanonism*: (mountain) river-desert [Płonka 2004: 273].
- 2.2. Appellation of Lebanon
 - 2.2.1. pseudomilitary terminology: *Zone DPI (Decharge Putride Internationale)* 'Zone PID (Putrefying International Discharge)' [CRIII], cf. in Lebanese hapax legomenon: *nomen loci* + Pers./Tur. *hāna* 'house', metathesis *SWĤ* < *WSĤ*: *maswahhāna* 'laystall' [: Palestinian camp] [Płonka 2004: 141].
 - 2.2.2. Fr. *bled* 'godforsaken place' [CRI], cf. MSA *balad* 'country, place', v. § 1.2.
 - 2.2.3. Demography
 - 2.2.3.1. *boîte à sardines* 'can for sardines' [CRIII], cf. [Sougourtha] *surpeuplée de créatures (...) bizarroïdes (...) étrangiformes*, v. § 3.2.

- 2.2.3.2. *ces 10452 Km carrés pour engendrer la mauvaise herbe* ‘these 10452 square Km [: surface of Lebanon] for begetting weed’ [AT], cf. *pousser comme une mauvaise herbe* ‘proliferate quickly’.
- 2.2.4. substantivization *chlônaks*, in: *pays de ~ ‘chlônaks’ country*, “‘How’re ya doin’ s’ country’ [CRI], shibboleth: Arb. dial. (Syria) *šlônak?* versus Lebanese *kīfak?* ‘How’re ya doin’?’, interr. adv. + suffixed pronoun of 2nd pers. sing. masc.
- 2.2.5. *Sougourtha* [CRIII], deformation of *Zġartā*, village in Northern Lebanon with strong impact of *Sulaymān Franžīyye* (1910–1992, President of Lebanon /1970–1976/), allusion to his conflict with the *Lebanese Front*; v. Gilsenan’s observations on *Zġartā* and rivalry between Lebanese villages after the election of Franžīyye as the President of Lebanon on the example of Berqayl [Gilsenan 1996: 245] and Arb. dial. *zġerti* ‘smallness’, cf. § 3.8.
- 2.2.6. *brouillon de culture* ‘rough copy of culture’ < Fr. *bouillon de culture* ‘bacterial culture for scientific use’, in: *le Liban est devenu brouillon de culture!* ‘Lebanon became a rough copy of culture!’ [AT]; “Bouillon de Culture”, title of the French literary talk show of Bernard Pivot, cf. Lebanese culture, v. § 3.5.1.
- 2.2.7. *Ce pays à plat qu’est le mien* ‘This servile country which’s mine’ [CRI], Jaques Breil’s text (*Le plat pays*) deformation, cf. impure, crawling creatures [Lurker 1989: 27]; v. opposition: *high-low* § 2.1.1 and *SiiiDOOO* § 3.3. In the propaganda materials of the *Guardians of the Cedars* we found: MSA neolog. (December 1975) *al-zaḥfaṭūniyyūn* < *al-zāḥifn* ‘*alā l-buṭūn*’ [persons] crawling on the bullies’ [: servile Lebanese politicians], cf. dial. plur. derog. (suffix -*žī*) *zaḥafatžīyyi* ‘crawling [people]’ [Płonka 2004: 134], MSA *zaḥafa* ‘*alā l-’aduww*’ ‘marcher contre / sur l’ennemi’ [Reig 1983, entrée 2278], *zāḥifa* ‘reptile’, *al-inbiṭaḥiyyīn* fig. ‘[of] “reptiles”’ [: servile Lebanese politicians].⁴
- 2.2.8. *pays du miel et de l’encens* ‘honey-and-incense country’ [CRI], intentional ambiguity: *miel* in French is an euphemism for *merde* ‘sheet’; *encens* means also ‘flatteries’, cf. Arb. dial. *baḥḥūr* ‘encens’ fig. ‘cadeau, présent corrupteur’, also Arb. dial. II *baḥḥar* ‘parfumer avec de l’encens’, fig. ‘corrompre par des présents’ [Barth.: 30], in: *Du pays lait-et-miel, je suis passé-par la frontière mais chut!-au pays du miel et de l’encens* ‘From the milk-and-honey country [: Israel] I have crossed-by the frontier but hist!-to the honey-and-incense country [: Lebanon]’ [loc. cit.].⁵

III. People

- 3.1. *la populace libanaise (...) au stade “cro-magnon”* ‘Lebanese populace (...) in the stage of Cro-Magnon’ [AT].

⁴ Arabic examples quoted in Płonka, *Sayabān ou l’anomie au Liban...*, op. cit.

⁵ Cf. anagram *Valentine-levantine*, in: *région levantine (qui, contrairement à Valentine, n’a pas de tout petits tétons mais bien de gros et grands têtus)* with paronomasia *tétons-têtus*: ‘Levantine region (which, unlike Valentine, has not quite small teats but well fat and big toughs)’ [CRIII], deformation of the song *Valentine* by Maurice Chevalier: *Valentine, elle avait des tout petits tétons*.

- 3.2. [Sougourtha, v. § 2.2.5] *surpeuplée de créatures (...) bizarroïdes (...) étrangiformes* 'overpeopled by (...) *bizarroïdes* (...) *étrangiformes* creatures' [CRIII].
- 3.3. inert and latent *yes-men*, infected by *SiiiDOOO* [CRIII]; cf. Arb. dial. *sīdī* 'mon Seigneur' > Fr. *sidi* derog. 'indigenous from Northern Africa, living in France' [Robert 1992 (1967): 1812], quasi-homonymous with Fr. *SIDA* 'AIDS', cf. xenophobic examples in Lebanese [Płonka 2004: 51–53]; the topos of pest: *épidémie du 13 oct 90* 'epidemy of the 13th Oct 90' [: Syrian invasion in Lebanon] [AT].
- 3.4. *bâtisseurs* 'builders' [: Phoenicians] [AT] > neolog. *pâtisseurs* 'pastry builders' < *pâtissiers* 'pastry cooks', in: *de peuple de bâtisseurs il s'est mué en peuple de pâtisseurs! C'est ça la décadence, la vraie!* 'From the people of the builders they have undergone a transformation into the people of the "pastry builders"! This is a decadence, the true one!' [loc. cit.], v. metaphor of Phoenix, § 3.6.
- 3.5. Topos of idiot
 - 3.5.1. *patates* infml. 'potatoes', fig. 'half-witted persons', alliteration: *patates, pavots* (...), *politique* 'potatoes, poppies [: opium] (...), politics' [: Lebanese culture] [AT], cf. Eng. 'poppycock'-'nonsense', Fr. infml. onom. *patati, patata* 'prattle, tattle' [cf. Makhlouf 2000, *Cannabis et pavot au Liban. Choix du développement et cultures de substitution*, Paris, L'Harmattan].
 - 3.5.2. [Syria's] *partenaires* 'partners' and *aliénés* [AT], semantic condensation: *allié* 'ally'-*aliéné* (orthography: one /l/) 'person who must be treated in psychiatric hospital for his alienation' [Robert op. cit.: 48].
 - 3.5.3. *gens insensés* 'insane people' [CRIII].
 - 3.5.4. regionalism (South France) *fada* 'nutcase', opposition: *fadas-anti-fadas/énté fada* (homon. *intifada*), in: *dans ce pays il ne reste plus que des fadas car les anti-fadas se sont quelque peu affadis* 'In this country [: Lebanon] there is nothing but the "fadas" [: nutcases] because the "anti-fadas" [: Palestinians] became debilitated a bit' [CRI], in the dialog between *p* [: Palestinian] and *h* [: Hebrew]:⁶ *p: énté fada et nous continuerons jusqu'à la libération totale de nos territoires!* 'You are barmy and we will continue untill the total liberation of our territories!' [CRI], *énté fada* 'You are barmy', Arb. nominal clause, Arb. dial. *énté*: independent form of the personal pronoun (2nd pers. sing. masc.).⁷
- 3.6. Vulgarised metaphor of Phoenix, here: resurrection of the Lebanese nation wishing only by *gens insensés* 'insane people' > 'name of the best confectionery in Beirut', in: *nation nouvelle qui renaît de ses cendres, tel le Phœnix (qui par ailleurs était (...) la meilleure pâtisserie de Beyrouth)* 'New nation which is reborn from its ashes like Phoenix (which was besides (...) the best confectionery in Beirut)' [CRIII].

⁶ Cf. pseudoscientific formula: *un pH neutre dans la région* 'neutral pH [: Palestinian-Hebrew] in the region' [CRI].

⁷ In larger regional context: Fr. *naze* 'doolally', equivalent of Fr. *taré*, in: *Hélas qué naze!* literally 'Alas, that doolally!' [CRI], quasi-homon. with *Ashkenazi* [loc. cit.]; *t'es naze arrête!* literally 'You're doolally, stop [it]!' [CRI], *naze arrête* homon. with *Nazareth*.

- 3.7. Juxtaposition of Phoenicians in the derogative context: *Des politiciens véreux, ouais! Des souteneurs de régime, des affairistes sans scrupules, des indicateurs de baasse police! Phéniciens!* ‘Maggoty politicians [: Joumblatt, Murr, Hariri, Berri], yea! Pimps [supporting] the regime, crooks without scruples, delators of the *baasse* police! Phoenicians!’ [BD]; intentional ambiguity: *souteneur* 1. ‘someone who supports’, 2. ‘pimp’; *baasse* 1. homon. Fr. *basse* fem. ‘low’, 2. *Ba’t* [party].
- 3.8. Lebanese internal antagonisms: *Si tu te rends en Sougourtha, triple ta ration de Yoghourtha* ‘If you go to Sougourtha, treble your ration of Yoghourtha’ [CRIII], v. § 2.2.5, semantic condensation: *Yoghourtha* < *yoghurt* + *Jugurtha*, king of Numidia, fighting with Rome; cf. Lebanese internal antagonisms in:
1. *’eza betrūh ‘a Zgārtā, ḥaṭṭ ṣabbātak taḥt ra’sak*
‘If you go to Zgārtā, put your shoes under your head’ (‘You will have a problem’).
 2. *’eza betrūh ‘a Beyrūt, ḥod mḥaddatak ma’ak*
‘If you go to Beirut, take your pillow with you’ (‘the Beirutians are greedy’).

IV. War-game-carnival

- 4.1. *Carnaval à Baabda* ‘Carnival in Baabda’ [AT], location of the presidential palace close to Beirut.
- 4.1.1. *le 31 Janvier 1990 c’est le monde à l’enfer! Puisque tous persistent à voir une lumière dans cette obscure idée appelée Accord de Taïf* ‘January the 31st 1990, it’s a world in hell! Because everyone persists to see the light in this obscure idea called the Taif Accord’ [AT]; *à l’enfer* ‘in hell’ < Fr. [*monde*] *à l’envers* ‘carnival’, ‘[the world is going] topsy-turvy’, *le 31 Janvier 1990*, beginning of the “Lebanese Christian Civil War” [Phares op. cit.: 157–177]. Phares remarks: *Even circles sympathizing with the Lebanese (Christian) Cause, were perplexed by what many called an irrational, senseless or even suicidal war* [Phares op. cit.: 157].
- 4.1.2. *Liesse (hourra oui) généralisée! TARABATTATTA! J’en ai râââle...* ‘Generalised joy (Hurray, yes)! TARABATTATTA! For this [reason] I cry like agonised...’ [AT], *J’en ai râââle* quasi-homon. with *général* ‘general’ [: Aoun], *Liesse (hourra oui)* quasi-homon. with Elias Hrawi, Lebanese president; *TARABATTATTA*, cf. Fr. onom. *taratata* interj. of disdain.
- 4.1.3. Sacrum-profanum: *Sfeir* [: Maronite Patriarch] *danse la lambada à Bkerké* ‘Sfeir dances the lambada in Bkerké [: residence of the Patriarch]’ [AT], one of the Sfeir’s discourse: *sermon du jus de pomme* ‘sermon of apple juice’ [AT] < *serment du Jeu de Paume* (1789).
- 4.2. War in Iraq
- 4.2.1. *Une nouvelle partie de golfe se prépare peut-être dans la région du Tigre et de l’Euphrate* ‘Maybe a new game of golf is being prepared in the region of the Tigris and the Euphrates’ [CRI].

4.2.2. *Des bombes lancées avec haute précision faisaient de grands trous (...) pour placer les balles.* ‘The bombs thrown with a high precision have made big holes (...) to put the balls’ [CRI].⁸

4.3. Riddles

4.3.1. Riddles based on the word *Sion*:

H: (...): *Je te donne la première partie d'un mot et toi continues* ‘H [: Hebrew] (...): I give you [: Palestinian] the first part of the word and you continue’:

H: *expul... p* [: Palestinian]: *sion*

H: *expan... p*: *sion*

H: *repré... p*: *sion*

H: *applica... p*: *sion*

H: *des résolu... p*: *sion*

H: *qwertyazertyhagawagabrrrrblblll... p*: *sion* [CRI],

Cf. this kind of linguistic strategy [Lecerclé 1996].

4.3.2. Riddle with a multilingual word game

Devinette en vogue au Liban-sud:

Que dit-on quand un prisonnier Hezbollah éternue?

Rép: Tsahhal! Tsahhal!

‘Riddle in vogue in South Lebanon:

What does one say when the Hezbollah prisoner sneezes?

Answ: Tsahhal! Tsahhal!’ [CRI],

tsahhal:

1. *Tsahal* [: Israeli army]

2. consonant reduplication, cf. Arb. politeness formula *ṣaḥḥa!* ‘Bless you!’.

V. The Taif Accords-French history and culture⁹

5.1. La Fontaine's fables

Text of the WLO [F] original notation	La Fontaine's fable original text
Les Libanais ayant guerroyé de tous côtés Se trouvèrent fort dépourvus Quand l'accord fut venu.	La Cigale, ayant chanté Tout l'été Se trouva fort dépourvue Quand la bise fut venue.
	<i>La Cigale et la Fourmi</i>

⁸ Cf. *Scoudes, toujours prêts!* ‘Scuds always ready!’ [AT], homon. with the scout motto by Baden-Powell *Scoutes, toujours prêts!* ‘Scouts Always Ready!’.

⁹ Cf. § 2.2.6, § 2.2.7 and § 4.1.3.

Rien ne sert de réagir; il faut souffrir à point.	Rien ne sert de courir; il faut partir à point. <i>Le Lièvre et la Tortue</i>
La paix, j'en conviens, est fort bonne de soi Mais de quoi sert-elle avec des ennemis sans foi? Ceci ressemble fort aux débats qu'ont parfois les petits souverains se rapportant aux Roi.	Petits princes, videz vos débats entre vous: De recourir aux rois vous seriez de grands fous. Il ne les faut jamais engager dans vos guerres, Ni les faire entrer sur vos terres. <i>Le Jardinier et son Seigneur</i>
Flattez-les, payez-les d'agréables mensonges.	Apprenez que tout flatteur Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute. <i>Le Corbeau et le Renard</i>

- 5.2. Deformation of Mirabeau's apostrophe (June 23, 1789): *Allez dire à votre maître que nous sommes ici par la volonté du peuple et que nous n'en sortirons que par la force de baïonnettes* 'Go and tell your master that we are here by the will of the people and we will go out from here only by the force of bayonets'.
- 5.2.1. *Je suis là par la force du Peuple et je ne sortirai que par la force d'un bail honnête! rétorque Micho à Elias* 'I am here by the force of the People and I will go out only by the force of a honest lease! retorts Micho [: Aoun] to Elias [: Hrawi]' [AT], homonyms: iron. *bail honnête* 'honest lease' [: the Taif Accord]-*baïonnettes* 'bayonets', cf. "Chez Michou" club for homosexuals at Pigalle in Paris. We observe the clipping of the proper names peculiar for the colloquial language [v. (Marchand) Mańczak - Wohlfeld 1995: 86]; cf. in Arabic hypocoristic forms with suffix -o: *Hamdo* < *Ḥamīd*, < *'aḥmad* [Ferguson 1997 (1956): 187].
- 5.2.2. *Nous sommes là par la force d'allah* [minuscule] ... *H: Et vous resterez dans la fosse aux marionnettes!* 'We are here by the force of allah ... H: And you will stay in the ditch with the marionettes [: Maronites]!' [CRI].
- 5.3. vulg. paronomasia *canards* 'geese'-*connards* 'prats', in: *Faut pas prendre les enfants d'Allah pour les connards sauvages* 'It won't do to take Allah's children for savage prats' [CRI], deformation of the title of Audiard's film (1968): *Faut pas prendre les enfants du Bon Dieu pour des canards sauvages* 'It Won't Do To Take God's Children For Wild Geese'.

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The inventory must be perceived in the context of the propaganda materials, published by the WLO (and the Christian Lebanese Diaspora), about the Taif Accords (1989) reinforcing Lebanese *waḡh 'arabī* 'Arabic face'. As we mentioned, the corpus bears a strong resemblance to the anti-Palestinian *samizdats* in MSA and in Lebanese dialects, analyzed in [Płonka 2004]. The carnivalisation is expressed by textual ambiguities, words

yielding two meanings, counting-out rhymes, code words, homonyms, riddles, puns, portmanteau words and anagrams. The state of balance, ethno-religious *convivialité* in Lebanon, changed into anomie, is expressed by metathesis, nonce words, paronomasia and changing spelling convention.

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