# The Relationship Between Legend of Kumphawapi City and Tai Local Beliefs

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Abstract—This study aimed to examine the relation between Kumphawapi City's legend and Tai local beliefs. From the study of fallen city of Kumphawapi, Udon Thani Province, findings revealed that the city was believed to have existed but then collapsed; the only thing remain is legend in oral literature. Development of the legends are divided into 6 chapters as follows: 1) citation of the City, 2) lifestyle of the people, 3) the meeting of the albino (white) animal; 4) the collapse of the city; 5) the aftermath; and 6) conclusion of the legend. In addition, the story also demonstrated relation between legends and local beliefs. For example, Albino (white) animal beliefs, Naga beliefs, Phaya Tan beliefs, Bun Bung Fai Festival (Rocket Festival), Seng Klong (Drum Competition), Phaya (Isan proverbs). Legends also used to explain about relations between the legend itself with geographical areas, e.g., the emerging of Ban Pan Don, Ban Nam Khong, Ban Na Baeng, Ban Don Nguen, Ban Yang Lor, Ban Lao Yai, Ban Mueang Preuk, Ban Muang, Ban Chiang Wae, Ban Don Keaw or Ban Don Mae Mhai, Sam Pad Brook, Nong Han Lake, and Lam Pao Canal, and etc. All of this story also indicates the integration of traditional beliefs and Buddhist beliefs. The integration of the two beliefs is exerted to be Buddhism. This leads to a power conflict between the old and new beliefs in the society of "Thai".

*Index Terms*—Legend, tale, narrative, folklore, legends of a collapsed city.

# I. INTRODUCTION

"Humans" are social animals that display communal living. When they gather to build a town, the stories, there always comes with legends, tales, and local literature to describe social phenomena along those periods. All of them are regarded preservative tools to maintain beliefs in the non-alphabet era, especially tales and legends transferred to "oral literature" also intrigue massive interest. With the creation method, this oral literature contains a lot of thoughts of people in the past; this makes it absolutely interesting. Unfortunately at present, tales and legends are fading away in time.

Royal Institute of Thailand (RIT), 2015 defined "Legend" as a story of place, people, or ceremony succeeded from

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generation to generation. [1]. This coincides with Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend (1972:778) that defined "Myth" as a true story of a ostensibly historical time[2].

Prakong Nimmanahaeminda (2000:18) has also defined "Legend" as the explanation of the origin of the universe, structure and system of human universe, natural phenomenon, super natural power, and background of governing class or privilege class and rules of human, including traditions, ceremonies, and human behavior. As mentioned, this can imply that a legend is a tale told from generation to generation. It's created with essence and convincing, and usually refers to a place, important persons which link or relate to history,[3] (Aree Thavornseth 2003:33 from Jacob Grimm) mentioned that a legend is close to a true story. Folklorist divided legends into 3 categories; 1) Explain-the-causes legend, 2) Related with sacred power or supernatural power or mystery power such as supernatural beliefs, 3) Religion or fairytales about God or heroes [4].

Patom Hongsuwan (2007) mentioned a legend is different from folklore tales or oral literature as it usually relates to tells of sacred power and supernatural power in many cultures. It usually appears in legend story explaining about the universe, origin of creatures and races, and the emerging of habitats and human cultures. Therefore, a legend is close to beliefs and religion of a community due to the story contents close to sacred mantra are considered expressing sanctity and being sacred as well. A study of legends often intrigues the study of meaning and implications hidden in the legends. For example, symbols of a legend, ceremonies and beliefs that related to a legend. Consequently, a legends can lead to understanding in human cultures and culture dimension of a community and society [5], [6].

Likewise, legends of a fallen city in the old time appear around the world. For instance, Mekong sub region countries, especially in Thailand, where there has been a legend like a collapsed city that later becomes an enormous lake. This story is long told and becomes sanctity legend of a society for centuries like Legend of Kumphawapi, Legend of Pa Dan -Nang Ei in Udon Thani province. This legend is about a doom city that becomes enormous lake. Siraporn an Nathalang (2009:195-196) [7], [8] has cited in Theory of Folklore about methodology for analyzing legend or folktale. Catastrophe caused by consuming albino (white) animal that results in collapse of a city, for the northeastern (Isan) region, this kind of story is noticed to have been reproduced in a legend of Kumphawapi or Pa Dang- Nang Ei, another tale of consuming of Albino (white) squirrel (that actually was a disguise of Phaya Naga Pangki) affecting in the city collapse

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and becoming a huge lake in Sakon Nakhon province named Nong Han Lake. This kind of similar stories is "reproduced" to geographically explain about other lakes in the northeastern (Isan) region. Encyclopedia of the Northeastern Cultures also indicates the typology of Non Lom, Mueang district, Loei province about the consuming of albino (white) montjac then causes a heavy rain, flood, and villages drowned under water. This story implies phenomenal caused by consuming an albino (white) animal that could result in catastrophe to the city to drown in the lake. This kind of tales can capture the minds of the storyteller and perception of villagers who then "adapted" the original story about consuming of albino (white) muntjac, to albino (white) deer, or even "reproduced" to albino (white) catfish to describe about bodies of water in the areas.

From the above, it can show that legend of a fallen city has massive correlation with thinking system of people in the old days. Legends still have influence on people's beliefs intimately, despite the passage of time and changes.

The collapsed-city legends are counted as tales that have great influence on the local people. They are not just oral literature but also are escalated from ordinary urban legends to sanctity legend that affects the lifestyle of the local people in the areas. Moreover, legends assist in describing the emerging of villages, highlands and surrounding areas. It even represents conflicts between old and new beliefs which attract the writer's attention. Therefore, this study aims to research legends about enormous lakes and bodies of water related with the fallen city legend. In this study, legend of Kumpawapi, Pa Dang Nang Ei in Udon Thani is chosen a case study.

#### II. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This study aims at relation between Legend of Nong Han Lake and Thai local beliefs, Kumpawapi city Pa Dang Nang Ei in Udon Thani is chosen the case study; applies from Wakul Mitphraphan. (2012) who studies The co-relationship and relationship between Pathamakappa In Peab of Tai Lue, Pathamamulamuli of Lanna and Pathamakappa of Esarn [9].

# III. RESULT OF STUDY

The study of fallen city legends in the past which become an enormous lake or swamp, based on analysis data, can be categorized into 2 types: 1) Development of a legend; 2) the relation between Legend of Kumphawapi City and Thai local beliefs. Study results are as follows:

# 1) The development of legends and city destruction

From the study of the fallen city, development periods are divided into 6 chapters:

- Chapter 1 Citation of the City
- Chapter 2 Lifestyle of the people
- Chapter 3 The meeting of the albino (white) animal
- Chapter 4 The collapse of the city
- Chapter 5 The aftermath
- Chapter 6 Conclusion of the legend

The incidents are divided into 6 chapters as in the comparison chart:

#### TABLE I: DEVELOPMENT OF LEGEND WITH COLLAPSE OF A CITY

Legend of Pa Dang Nang Ei, Udon Thani [10]

#### Chapter 1: Citation of the city

- Phaya Khom, King of Ekcha Thita city, has a notably beautiful daughter named "Nang Ei" or "Nang Ei Kham". Her beauty is spread out to far away kingdoms so reputedly many princes want to have her as their own wife
- Pa Dang from Pha Pong city has a passionate feeling for Nang Ei as in the past lives, they were husband and wife before
- Pang Khi, son of Sutthonaga king of Mueang Ba Dan (the Underworld), one of the candidates, also desires to meet the beauty. This is a result of Nang Ei wish the past life and that caused King Pang Khi and Nang Ei in this life. With the reason, Pang Khi king is enamored with Nang Ei at first sight

#### Chapter 2: Lifestyle of the people

- Phaya Khom sent invitations for other city to have the rocket competition at Ekcha Thita city, in order to pay respect to Phaya Tan for seasonal rainfall and to challenge every prince to wed Nang Ei on the 15<sup>th</sup> day on the 6<sup>th</sup> month of waxing moon
- The festival was organized grandiosely and also conducts Seng Klong (Drum Competition) and a joyful ball where both King Pa Dang and King Pang Khi also came to attend in this festival

#### Chapter 3: The meeting of the albino (white) animal

- King Pang Khi transforms himself to albino (white) squirrel as Isan dialect called "Kra Rok Don"
- At rocket competition, only rocket of King of Fah Daed Song Yang city and King Xianghian of Xinghian city were able to go up to sky.
   However, nobody got married with Nang Ei because the two kings are her Nang Ei's uncles
- Nang Ei was satisfied by the albino (white) squirrel; she sent a hunter to
  look everywhere for the white squirrel, starting from Ban Pan Don, Ban
  Nam Khong, Ban Na Baeng, Ban Don Nguen, Ban Yang Lor, Ban Lao
  Yai, Ban Mueang Preuk, until Ban Muang. Finally, with his previous
  deeds, when the Pang Khi squirrel stopped for eating a fig, the hunter
  killed Pang Khi squirrel with his poisoned dart shoots
- The Pang Khi squirrel knew his death was coming near; he left a message with his follower to inform his father
- Before he died, Pang Khi squirrel had had a wish that his meat was equal to 8,000 bullock-carts for everyone to consume sufficiently

### Chapter 4: The collapse of the city

- The hunter cut the squirrel meat at Ban Chiang Wae and shared with everyone except for Ban Don Mae Mhai and Ban Don Keaw; this is why the villages have been safe from the flooding disaster and remain intact until present
- After, Phaya Naga was informed of King Pang Ki's death, he was seriously furious and destroyed Phaya Khom's city with his temper. In that night, the Ekcha Thita was quaked and collapsed down under water which now becomes Nong Han Hoi (Small Nong Han Lake) or the origin of Lam Pao river. Pa Dang and Nang Ei rode the Sam horse to Sam Pad brook, heading to Pa Pong city. Sadly, during the escape, the Naga came after and used its tails to lash on her. She fall down and disappeared in the underground

#### Chapter 5: The aftermath

• Only Ban Don Keaw and Ban Don Mae Mhai have remained as they did not consume King Pang Khi squirrel meat

### Chapter 6: Conclusion of the legend

- King Pa Dang was anguished and committed suicide as he planned for his next life to get reincarnated as Head of spirits and sent the troops to fight with Phaya Naga for Nang Ei's return. The Naga city surrounds by spirit troops, both of them fought for 7 days and 7 nights, but no one lost and no one won the war
- Elderly Naga named King Si Suttho of the underworld, who did not want to make sins as he wanted to be born in the Sri Ariya Mettaya Era, had consulted with Giant King Wessuwan for judgment. King Wessuwan said that "This story is caused from previous deeds (Karma)." He asks the spirits and the Nagas to forgive each other and also to preserve the 5 Buddhist's percepts with meditation and great patience. For Nang Ei, she has to stay in the underworld to wait for Sri Ariya Mettaya's judgment. Finally, Pa Dang and Naga forgave each other and stayed peacefully since then

#### Chapter 1: Citation of the city

The primary incident of Kumphawapi, Udon Thani province, called the legendary city as Ekcha Thita; ruled by Phaya Khom, father of Nang Ei. King Pa Dang lived in Pha Pong City while King Pang Khi; son of King Suttho Naga, lived underworld. The underworld was assumed by many academics to have existed in northeastern region of Thailand where geographical features underneath buried layers of cities and civilizations.

### Chapter 2: Lifestyle of the people

The second incident was about the city of Ekcha Thita ruled by Phaya Khom who wanted to organize the Bun Bung Fai Festival (Rocket Festival) to make merits for Phaya Tan and to wish for seasonal rainfall. The legend here implies clearly the origin of tradition of praying for rain has descended from the past to the present. For Lao tradition, festivals of praying for rain usually fall on the 15<sup>th</sup> day on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the waxing moon. In addition, the legend also reflects people's traditions in that society, such as Seng Klong (Drum Competition), Court Dance, or Phaya Singing (Isan proverbs) all appeared.

# Chapter 3: The meeting of the albino (white) animal

The third incident was about the meeting of albino (white) animal transformed from Naga which caused the the city to subside. As the legend, the albino (white) animal was used as the main character, as well as the excerpt massage "With desire to get close to Nang Ei as much as possible, King Pang Khi transformed himself to albino (white) squirrel". This indicates that people in the area or practiced the same culture looked up on the albino (white) animal than colored animals. Using an albino (white) animal related with mystery to carry on the story plots corresponds with a study of Siraporn Nathalang(2552:195-196) who cited in Theory of Folklore about methodology for analyzing legend or folk tale, in the chapter of the consuming of albino(white) animal then lead to the collapse of city. Noticeably, folktales in the northern and northeastern regions use the story about consuming of albino (white) animal to explain about local lake's environment: In northern region, the legend named "Singhanawat Kuman" stated about Yonokna Nakhon and people consumed albino (white) carp and then Yonokna Nakhon fall down under. Chiang Sean legend has similar story with some different details. In the Northeast, legend of Nong Han Luang or Pa Dang Nang Ei was about the albino (white) squirrel which actually was a transformation of King Pang Khi and caused the collapse of the city and became enormous lake named "Nong Han" in Sakon Nakhon province. These legends was "reproduced" to describe about the bodies of water in other areas in the North and Northeast (Isan) of Thailand and also found out in northern encyclopedia that indicates the typology of bodies of water; for example, Nong Khiow, Phan district, Chiang Rai province, and Nong Khiew, Mae Ai district, Chiang Mai province all were the results of consuming of albino (white) eel; Nong Saliem San Pa Tong district, Chiang Mai province was told to have the villagers taking albino (white) muntjac to eat then resulted in a huge rainfall, flooding, and subsided under water. This clearly shows that the legends about catastrophe caused by consuming white

animals are in the local people's mind and their perceptions so much they reproduced their own legends simply by "changing" the types of white animals to white muntjac, white deer, white Anabas fish, or was "reproduced" to white eel and white carp to explain the bodies of water geographically.

### Chapter 4: The collapse of the city

The fourth incidents tell about the city's collapse as a result of people eating white animal. The motif explains that many cities were destroyed by Naga and its troops. This destruction was not only for some parts of the city, but the entire city. As the detail in the legends mentioned about people consuming white squirrel meat (Pa Dang Nang Ei legend and Khumphawapi City, Udon Thani), only widows who did not taste the squirrel meat. When the night comes, King Naga and his troops invaded Kumphawapi city and destroyed the city with his anger for the gone son.

All the city was completely destroyed, except for small islands because they were places of those widows who didn't eat the squirrel meat.

#### Chapter 5: The aftermath

The incident in chapter five explains the remains of the city after the invasion of Naga. Being condemned by consuming of white squirrel meat, people came to the end of their lives and all the city was gone, only widows' houses that existed as they were not permitted to consume white animal. Therefore their houses were intact and then became islands, islets, and deltas until now; (Nong Han Noi lake, Udon Thani,) for instance. This clearly shows that the legend gives importance to "widows" as the cause of the emerging of islands and deltas.

### Chapter 6: Conclusion of legend

In this chapter, it is the conclusion of the legend and the explanation of area related with the widows that result in the existence of wetlands, islands, islets, and deltas. The legends explain about this point in the same way, i.e., the emerging of Ban Chiang Haew and Ban Don Mae Mhai (Ban Don Kaew). In addition, the legend also stated the Giant King Wessuwan who was the middleman between Naga and King Pa Dang spirit for forgiveness and to wait for judgment from the Buddha Sri Ariya Mettaya

# 2) The relationship between the collapsed city legend and locality

The study of the collapsed city legends, the results indicate that the legends has relationship with local beliefs and society as follows:

#### a) Naga beliefs

Naga belifes was an outstanding story of legend in Mekong sub region as the result of all of the legends is related to river and naga. Thai society usually has Naga pictures or symbol. No matter in invisible pattern or fine art, e.g., wall painting, sculptures, architectures or handicrafts, etc. Naga is the main elements of architecture, especially temple buildings, roofs built as the symbolic of Royal institute and Religion institute as the belief of Naga has a great power and worthy for the elite society. The arts containing Naga can be seen at Buddha statue, temple ladder, Khon or Naga figurehead; therefore, "Naga" is considered gods of river or symbolized as river in

the Tai minority who believe in Naga. When talk about Naga in Thailand, the regions which are close to the Mekong River mostly believe in Naga legend such as the northern and northeastern regions. Especially, the northeastern region which is familiar with Naga story so much Naga is mentioned and related in every belief. For example, the origin of Mekong River was mentioned about a quarrel between two Nagas, then Indra god allows them to compete in building a river for a new city, then it became the legend of Mekong and Nan River. And the Pa Dang Nang Ei story also mentioned the collapsed city from Naga and Nong Han Luang legend in Sakon Nakhon was told that the city was established with the collaboration of Phaya Khom and Naga: on the contrary, Nong Han Luang is also collapsed by Naga. Even Buddha's relic tale which is the ancient tale in northeastern region is also cited about Naga. This belief indicated that the northeastern (Isan) people are familiar and truly believe in Naga. Notice from the legend, architecture, temple, and daily life equipment, they are all related to Naga, included Fireball phenomenon, Bun Bung Fai (Rocket Festival): at the end of Buddhist lent or the nirvana day of Buddhist, All of Naga is delighted and sets the fireball to pay respect to Buddha when coming back from heaven and became annual festival. All of the story is linked to Naga beliefs includes Pa Dang Nang Ei in Udon Thani. As noticed, it was found that Phaya Naga or Naga story has been important to the Thai people in many aspects: people's beliefs, art, and elite institute and religion institute, for so long.

#### b) Phaya tan beliefs

Pa Dang Nang Ei legend in Udon Thani version described and stated about Phaya Tan beliefs which makes it clear that Phaya Tan beliefs is with the northeastern life style for years. As appeared in the legend, Phaya Khom wanted to organize a Bun Bung Fai to pay respect and pray for rain from Phaya Tan. It shows that this belief exists and maintains despite the changing of time.

Phaya Tan or Phi Fah Tan; both the northeastern people and Lan Xhang cultural group believe as god more than ghost. Phi Fah is a higher level ghost. And "Tan" comes from the combination of god. The biggest "Tan" is Tan Luang which is believed as Indra god and has different names depending on the area. People believe that Phi Fah Tan is able to terminate hardship or expel obstacles and also helps the poor. The causes of illness in human come from the offends of a ghost, offends of ancestors, of which cure or treatment needs to have Phaya Tan to get inside a medium called "Phi Fah Nang Tiem". For Isan singing, there are 4 elements: singer, Phi Fah, Khene player, patient, and sacrifice stuff.

Besides, Phaya Tan or Tan being looked up the highest god in Lan Xang culture, not only does expel the hardship, but also Phaya Tan provides rain for human as some part of legend cited "Phaya Khom has noticed that his daughter is ready for wedding, then he sent invitations to other city for rocket competition in order to respect Phaya Tan and pray for seasonal rain, and other purpose is to find the prince to marry Nang Ei, judging the winner whose rocket is able to fly up in the sky.

# c) Bun bung Fai (rocket festival)

In this chapter, the beliefs about "Bun Bung Fai (Rocket Festival), according to the Phaya Tan beliefs has related with the northeastern people intimately owing to northeastern folklore; he is a powerful god and gives the rain, corresponds with the environment in the northeastern where geographical area is mostly loamy sand; therefore, many areas need water for agriculture and is the significant reason for Bun Bung Fai tradition. This tradition still remains and descends until now. This reflects that the beliefs has relationship between society and lifestyle in that locality from the past until present, through the legend as cited "Phaya Khon, the father of Nang Ei, is the king who admires Rocket festival: significantly that, the praying for seasonal rain from Phaya Tan as exciting activities, and has descended to hold the activities annually in the middle of 6<sup>th</sup>month. In order to invite the other cities to attend the festival, he informs those cities, Pa Dang hears the news, and suddenly make the fire rocket for competition, as well as, Phaya Khom aslo knows Pa Dang's purpose to win the contest in order to marry his daughter. Phaya khom bet with Pa Dang, if Pa Dang's rocket can go up to the sky, he will give Nang Ei as rewards. Anyway, at the competition; Phaya Khom's rocket did not move and Pa Dang's rocket was exploded, so the bet between Phaya Khom and Pa Dang was even. Pa Dang have to return to his city with disappointment.

# d) Seng klong (drum competition) and Phaya singing (Isan proverbs)

Seng Klong or Drum competition has appeared in Khumphawapi Pa Dang Nang Ei legend as told in a part that "The 15<sup>th</sup> day on the 6<sup>th</sup> of waxing moon, Phaya Khom hold the Rocket festival, many princes attend in this festival. Rocket festival in this year is very huge and interested by people around the city and others. Not only rocket competition in this festival, but also has Seng Klong (Drum competition) and Phaya Singing for courting each other joyfully. The Seng Klong festival is one of Tai traditional that makes it joyful and builds good relationship for members in community. Likewise, the Pahaya Singing for flirting women in the past also appeared in Tai- Kadai cultural group which succeed from old people to the present generation.

# e) The conflict and compromising of ancient beliefs and buddhism beliefs.

The beliefs is the cultivated things from some society, likewise, legend group- as case study in this research- also the basis of beliefs affected to life style. Analysis results found that the main chapter expressed the conflict and acquisition of beliefs between ancient beliefs (Naga and Ghost) and new beliefs (Buddhism) and ancient beliefs: Naga and ghost beliefs, tend to be defeated by new beliefs (Buddhism) as follows:

"Pa Dang commits suicide as planned to be the head of spirit and take the troops to fight with Phaya Naga for Nang Ei returning. And Naga side, the Elderly Naga King Si Suttho of the underworld, who does not want to make a sin because he wants to get born in the Sri Ariya Mettaya Era, has consulted with King Wessuwan for judgment. King Wessuwan says "This story is caused from the previous

deeds" and he asks the spirits and the Naga to have mercy for each other and also preserve the 5 percepts with meditation and be patient. For Nang Ei, the giant said, stay in the underworld and to wait for the Buddha Sri Ariya Mettaya's judgment." (Pa Dang Nang Ei, Udon Thani version, 2011). [10]

Therefore, from the analysis of the exert part, it can be cited that some phenomena are related with local people in both ancient beliefs and new beliefs has conflicted in term of power and beliefs in contexts. The ancient belief: belief in Naga and ghosts, is an Animism belief that all the things has a ghost being inside and possesses everything to human no matter how good or bad. This belief faces with new belief in Buddhism which believe in "Karma" as the results of good or bad actions, then affects in this present life and next life. Karma consist of previous deeds: the old karma in past life and karma in the present life. As committing suicide in order to be head of ghosts will achieve the goal, believe in the next life, ghost has a power to fight with Naga as well as Naga beliefs: has a supernatural power, possesses the water and fertility. However, Naga and ghost belief was combined by Buddhism as appeared at the end of legend that King Wessuwan tells the cause of the war of ghost and Naga come from the previous deeds. King Wessuwan not noly introduced dharmic principle: mercy, patience, and the 5 percepts, but also mentioned the waiting for incarnation of Buddha Sri Ariya Mettaya's judgment about the fighting for Nang Ei which tends to be that Buddhism has conquered ancient beliefs and be a part of beliefs in Isan for decades by legend. For this reason, it's clear to see that both beliefs slightly collided and compromised with each other in terms of cultural and integration beliefs which become Semi-Animism and Semi-Buddhism at present.

### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the city was believed to have existed but then collapsed; the only thing remain is legend in oral literature. Development of the legends are divided into 6 chapters as follows: 1) citation of the City, 2) lifestyle of the people, 3) the meeting of the albino (white) animal; 4) the collapse of the city; 5) the aftermath; and 6) conclusion of the legend.

In addition, the story also demonstrated relation between legends and local beliefs. For example, Albino (white) animal beliefs, Naga beliefs, Phaya Tan beliefs, Bun Bung Fai Festival (Rocket Festival), Seng Klong (Drum Competition), Phaya (Isan proverbs). Legends also used to explain about relations between the legend itself with geographical areas, e.g., the emerging of Ban Pan Don, Ban Nam Khong, Ban Na Baeng, Ban Don Nguen, Ban Yang Lor, Ban Lao Yai, Ban

Mueang Preuk, Ban Muang, Ban Chiang Wae, Ban Don Keaw or Ban Don Mae Mhai, Sam Pad Brook, Nong Han Lake, and Lam Pao Canal, and etc. All of this story also indicates the integration of traditional beliefs and Buddhist beliefs. The integration of the two beliefs is exerted to be Buddhism. This leads to a power conflict between the old and new beliefs in the society of "Thai".

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