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NATIONAL HERITAGES AND THE NEW EUROPE

Abstract: This paper argues that the use of national heritage, principally as formed in the built environment, is significant in the formulation of a Europe-wide sense of belonging. National heritages have been widely manipulated in the past to serve nationalist purposes, and the long history of Europe has led to a heritage characterised by conflict implying a form of 'supra-nationalism': war, oppression, persecution, even genocide. Yet for purposes of integration, planners and economic development authorities are now marketing heritage. Which heritage, and whose, are important questions. Any heritage planning is an overtly political action; but it is suggested that, rather than manufacturing a new, trans-European heritage which would be patently artificial and superficial, a trans-national regional heritage should be built up. Europe has many heritages; they are often very local; and they should be used to the best advantage in the changing socio-political climate of the next two decades.

Key words: European integration, geography of culture, political conflicts.

1. INTRODUCTION

In considering the problem of the re-shaping of Europe currently in progress, and the evident desires on the part of many to form some type of socio--economic and political unit on a much larger scale than any of the individual participating countries, a number of significant problems arise. These include that of assessing, first, how the concept of heritage may be used in shaping, or re-shaping, national identity, and secondly, how this process may be applied to the changing conception of Europe as a single supra-national unit.

The first problem has been addressed by a small, but growing, number of studies, including Graham's penetrating view of heritage and Irish national identity (GRAHAM, 1994). Outside Europe, there are parallels with similar

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studies of colonial heritage in newly-independent countries (e.g. McQUILLAN, 1990). Implicit within this problem is the question of how heritage may benefit the nation. Such benefits have recently been widely discussed, admittedly usually on the smaller scale of the city or region (ASHWORTH, 1991; ASHWORTH and TUNBRIDGE, 1990). In tangible terms, benefits are often financial, with the range of heritage-related economic activities using existing urban structures and services, and thus bringing income into the system, and re-using redundant areas and relict features. Intangibly, the identification and marketing of heritage to tourists and residents alike can strengthen local identity, pride in place and confidence: "the value of this to local creativity and enterprise, as well as to attracting investment, commercial establishments and residents from elsewhere, is incalculable" (ASHWORTH, 1991, p.124). These benefits can clearly be extrapolated to a nation state, or a supra-national new Europe. Financial benefits are, of course, advantageous; and the possible burgeoning of the tourist industry, given the changing socio-demographic structure and working conditions, easier access to previously inaccessible areas, and easier financial transactions, would lead to considerable benefits in many areas. Of possibly greater importance, however, would be the generation of a Europe-wide place-identity: a sense of belonging to Europe as much as (not instead of) to a particular country or region. Heritage, the sense of the past, is a crucial factor in the generation of a place-identity, and may thus provide a strong unifying force in a new Europe which, it would seem, is simultaneously undergoing pressures for fragmentation and unification.

But, of course, any use of heritage is fraught with problems. It is important to recall, in the context of this theme, that Canadian experience may be appropriate to parts of Europe:

> When heritage becomes linked to tourism it risks losing control of the historical message being selected and presented. If, for example, market research showed that 'ethnic' food, 'ethnic' architecture and casinos were what attracted tourists [...] then the heritage movement might find that money is only then made available for projects which enhance that image. This distorted vision then becomes adopted by the community itself, and so the creation of a 'playground' for outsiders begins to alter the historical consciousness of a community. [...] Heritage-in-the-service-of-tourism can become too closely linked to economic development [...] when the historical message offered in such projects is geared primarily to an 'outside' market or transient visitor, then it does long-term disservice to its own community members and their sense of the past (FRIESEN, 1990, p.197).

But we are looking, in our context, at a heritage wider than a national scale. Who, then, are these 'outsiders'? Heritage production and consumption then becomes utilized for the European 'insiders', wherever their origins within Europe; the 'outsiders' are the tourists from outside Europe to whom CARR (1994) makes reference. Insider and outsider uses and requirements of heritage, at whatever scale, are thus different. This brings us to the second problem.

This is that of application to Europe, and this is a more elusive topic. There is a fundamental problem in that, over the past few years in particular, Europe has undergone radical political changes which have opened up entirely new avenues for the use, or abuse, of local, national and international heritages. No longer can Europe be seen merely as the Western capitalist-centred European Community of a mere dozen states. Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Malta, Turkey and Sweden are pressing hard for admission. Profound changes in the former communist bloc necessitate a much wider view – the centre of gravity of the 'new Europe' is, for the first time in several hundred years, moving eastwards. Recent advertising material for the large Polish textile-manufacturing city of Łódź suggests that this is now the 'crossroads of the new Europe'.

Nationalism is once more a potent social force in Europe. Many of these nationalisms are, clearly, based on some form of awareness of national history; and these nationalisms are, equally clearly, coming to the fore with the removal of the threat of the cold war and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc. Many such nationalisms are xenophobic to a greater or lesser extent. The future of a new Europe is thus problematic.

2. THE NEW EUROPE: UNITY OR DISUNITY?

Within this new, large-scale Europe, socio-economic and political conditions are anything but stable. The limitations of the relatively small-scale view of the EC are shown by the EC's response to the initial changes in Eastern Europe consequent upon Gorbachev's rise to power. De la SERRE (1991, p. 303) noted that "a new era has started concerning the relationships of the Community with the East that should result in the gradual setting up of a commercial and cooperation policy adjusted to the situation of each country". The rapid fragmentation of the East renders this gradual approach of dubious value. De la Serre also showed the economic problems faced by the East, despite EC agreements to remove quantitative restrictions imposed on Eastern imports, and the large sums of foreign aid being granted (for example, France granted 4 billion francs i.e. about US$ 800 million to Poland for three years, and the Federal Republic of Germany granted DM 3 billion, i.e. about US$ 1500 million) (de la SERRE, 1991, p. 305, 312). There are major debates over the potential problems of this approach in possibly generating an aid-based economy. Moreover, the EC adjustment to the re-unification of Germany has been largely a reactive process, and has revealed differences between the member states and division amongst EC institutions; these are significant despite the eventual possible successful adjustment of the EC to the new Germany (FELDMAN, 1991).

Differences are clearly also evident at a popular level. In 1992, Denmark voted in a referendum to reject the Maastricht treaty. France accepted the treaty, but by the narrowest of margins. At the same time, two public opinion polls in Britain showed a rising trend against further integration, or 'federalism', ranging from smaller – but nevertheless emotive – items such as a single currency to more fundamental issues such as the granting of more power to European political institutions. These trends were clear across the whole UK electorate and, significantly, amongst Conservative voters. Yet these evidences of diversity are relatively minor, albeit pervasive in several countries.

Of possibly greater concern is the rise, during the last two decades in particular, of political extremism in a number of countries. Such extreme parties, usually right-wing, profess an extreme nationalism often manifest in attacks upon minority groups, usually of recent migrants. The political power of the extreme Right in France is rising. The British National Front has been implicated in attacks on Jewish cemeteries, and there have been recent attacks by young right--wingers upon refugee hostels in a number of German cities including Rostock and Magdebourg. It is worrying that these latter attacks were watched, with no evident concern but rather some implicit support, by many of the populace, and official reactions have been tardy.

Of equal significance is the conflict between ethnic and religious factions in parts of the former Eastern bloc; a crisis so severe and so recent that reports are limited to those filtering into the news media. Yugoslavia has been split, and EC recognition of some of its constituents as nations has been a major setback to Yugoslavian federalism. The recognition of Slovenia and Croatia is, however, likely to be counter-productive; their sources of cheap raw materials and main markets – Bosnia-Herzegovenia and Serbia – are now closed. The tourist industry, dominant on the Dalmatian coast until recently, and which brought in some 40% of Yugoslavia's foreign earnings, is now virtually nonexistent (WEST, 1992). Ferocious Serbian attacks on Dubrovnik, Zadar and Sibenik have damaged or destroyed the historic monuments and much of the character which drew the tourist crowds. Even early in the attack on Dubrovnik, targets were clearly the old city and the new suburbs: neither of great military value.

A much greater human disaster has been the phenomenon of 'ethnic cleansing'. This has hit the world headlines, along with a graphic portrayal of death, looting, 170 detention camps filled with civilians, and wholesale population movement – ostensibly by agreement but, all interviews suggest, in practice at gunpoint. The character of the Yugoslavian landscape is changing. Entire villages have been emptied of their populations and burned; churches and mosques have been destroyed; whilst other settlements have been re-populated by those of an 'acceptable' ethnic or religious background.

This is, admittedly, rather an extreme case, and parallels already being drawn with the Holocaust in Nazi Germany are fallacious. Analysts point to the long history of the Balkans as a racial and religious mixing-ground.

> The Croats are more politically divided than the Slovenes. They include Catholics (of various leanings) and anti-clericals, some of them liberal. Then again, different parts of the country have quite different traditions [...] Dalmatia is Italianate; the north fell under Germano-Hungarian influences; further south, Slav ways prevail [...] The variety is such that the literary language is to some extent (opinions vary) artificial (STONE, 1992).

There are clear parallels with much of the rest of Europe, widely defined. Nationalist conflicts are occurring in parts of the former USSR; the Baltic states have become independent again; terrorist bombs explode in northern Spain, Corsica and Northern Ireland, while Welsh Nationalists have been more active in arson attacks on English holiday homes. Even Sweden has an explicitly racist New Democratic Party, founded only two years ago and already holding the parliamentary balance of power.

Czechoslovakia, too, is riven with discord; but the political problems evident between the Czechs and Slovaks, particularly following economic restructuring which seemed to be much more economically detrimental in Slovakia than in Czech areas, are accompanied so far by relative peace. But opinion polls in Slovakia have suggested that only 13% support a wholly independent Slovakia, while 60%, although nationalist, wished the unitary or federal state to continue in some form. Although there is little overt conflict at present, over half of the Slovaks apparently fear ethnic violence, and feel that independence would bring territorial claims from Hungary and Ukraine.

There are fears haunting the corridors of power in Central and Western Europe that, with turmoil in Europe's Balkan periphery and instability on the fringes of the former Soviet Union, ethnic tension, economic instability and renewed security problems could now emerge in the very heart of the continent (HALL, 1992, p. 251).

The largely 19th century concept of the European nation-state is now evidently outdated. Alone, European countries are no longer world powers; and this is becoming more the case with the trend to breaking up some of the 'artificially' created states into their constituent regions. The concept of rootedness – *enracinement* – is more clearly tied to this smaller regional scale. At a variety of scales, therefore, conflict is endemic in a Europe which has frequently been a battleground, migration and colonization route, and where nationalism rose most pointedly only in the 19th century. Changes in borders, political control, dominant religion and ethnic grouping are all commonplace in European history, and popular memories of previous oppression, atrocity and injustice run deep throughout the continent. England, with no successful foreign invasion since 1066, is lucky to remain in relative peace; indeed, here, tracing one's an-

cestry to the Norman invaders is a booming industry. Earlier ideas of integration and multi-culturalism are now at risk from the rampant nationalism, intolerance and xenophobia. Opposing political groups are seeking to manipulate heritage for their own, nationalistic, ends.

3. MAKING AND HEALING WOUNDS

History as perceived is distorted, used, interpreted, re-written (cf. LOWENTHAL, 1985). The re-written past is particularly problematic. It poses considerable problems for the immediate future since some of the relatively recent re-writings, particularly from the former Soviet bloc, have explicitly deleted great areas of history, razed monuments and introduced a degree of xenophobia. The case of Romania is instructive. Here, following the 1974 Urban and Rural Systematization Law, it was planned to demolish between seven and eight thousand of the 13,000 villages in the country by the year 2,000, replacing them with 500 'agro/industrial centres'. The 1977 dissolution of the Directorate of Historic Buildings showed the value, or rather lack of it, placed upon the past and its heritage. By the fall of Ceausescu in late 1989, 29 towns had been completely reconstructed and 37 were still undergoing that process. Manifestations of the past were being comprehensively removed in favour of a very different future (GIVRESCU, 1989). Such damage to both physical aspects of heritage and national senses of identity and belonging are difficult to repair.

Throughout much of the continent, it appears that time alone does not heal these wounds. In September 1992, two leading German aerospace companies planned a celebration of 50 years of German aerospace technology. At the last moment, however, Chancellor Kohl and the government withdrew support from this celebration, which featured the wartime V2 terror weapon, bowing to widespread international pressure that celebration of such a weapon was insensitive (TOMFORDE and SHARROCK, 1992). Earlier, in June 1992, the Queen Mother unveiled a statue in London to Sir Arthur Harris, leader of the wartime Bomber Command and responsible for the '1,000-bomber raids' and resulting devastation of many German cities. The occasion released controversy in Britain, and from Germany, where the event coincided with the 50th anniversary of the first major raid on Cologne. Joachim Becker, Lord Mayor of Pforzheim, stated that the statue was inappropriate: "a Europe united in peace and freedom needs other symbols than the honouring of a man who is responsible for the death of 20,000 people in this city" (VICTOR, 1992). Others, however, saw it quite differently, as part of Europe's anti-fascist struggle of the early 1940s, which should be remembered lest collective amnesia leads to the need to repeat it.

Statues and monuments are often very powerful images evoking a particular past. The Harris statue commemorates the RAF bomber offensive during the Second World War in the same way that the Kiel U-boat monument commemorates Doenitz's naval offensive, but these monuments have a very different significance in the cities bombed or for the ships sunk. Reports of the possibility of a memorial on the site of the Berlin *Führerbunker*, made available through the fall of the Berlin Wall, similarly provoked anger in both Britain and Germany. The new statue opposite the Moscow building once occupied by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which attracted great public interest on its unveiling, commemorates Saints Cyril and Mephody, two Bulgarian Greeks who invented the Cyrillic alphabet. Russian – or Slavic – nationalism or national culture is showing a resurgence. Russians are apparently complaining at the insidious takeover of the Latin script – a literal re-writing – as one interviewee said:

> Today there is a new form of aggression facing the Russians. It starts with our language being pushed aside. Why do you have to speak a sort of Esperanto to make yourself understood these days? Why are all the signs for western companies in Latin scripts? We are being pushed into a new world order where money governs. Russians will never join this order (quoted in HEARST, 1992).

A last statue of note is that re-erected in October 1990 in Zagreb, to Governor Jelacic, who had put down a revolution in 1848. This event prompted vast crowds to congregate, and a nostalgia for the old Austro-Hungarian Empire was widely apparent. Yet not all was happy under Imperial rule, and there was discrimination against Orthodox Serbs by Catholic Croats. "The Croats who greeted the statue of Jelacic seem to forget, if they ever knew, that his army consisted of Serbs whose descendants are now fighting in places like Karlovac and Vukovar" (WEST, 1992, p. 25).

This last example appears to show some of the popular re-writing of history, or reclaiming of heritage, which so often occurs in times of great political unrest. In the aftermath of the break-up of the USSR, when Leningrad was renamed St Petersburg, some had warned that the recent re-writing and popularising of pre-revolutionary Russian history may be leading to the invention of a "mythical Russian golden age of benevolent autocrats, a benign aristocracy, a toothless police, indulgent censors, satisfied intellectuals and merry muzhiks" (WOOD, 1992). This idealized view recently emerging is contrary to the results of a "solid body of non-partisan Western scholarship" (WOOD, 1992). The re-claimin or re-interpretation, of history is, of course, important in the pacifying or subjugation of a populace. But some populations – refugees in alien countries and cultures – face the choice of whether to adapt and assimilate or to strive to preserve their cultural uniqueness. Europe's history of conflict has produced many such refugee populations, and is still doing so today. The wounds felt by

such groups rarely heal fully, leading to uneasy relationships with host communities and claims and counter-claims to original territories.

4. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

There are many socio-cultural and historical elements that are held in common throughout much of the wider Europe. The importance of ancient Greece and Rome in shaping society is acknowledged, although in Britain at least, their history and languages are vanishing from our schools. SIMMS (1992), for example, explores the unifying features of Roman urban traditions in those countries once part of the Roman empire, and the differences with the non-Romanized part of Europe. Much of Europe shares the Christian faith; although there are many branches of Christianity and its own history is riven with bloodshed and discord. But as one looks to the more recent past, large-scale unifying features become difficult to identify. Nevertheless, the continent's long and rich history provides fertile ground for exploration.

Yet relatively little has been done in this turbulent and troubled continent to weld together the disparate socio-political groups to form a coherent, continent-wide body. It is easy to point to the nature and scale of the continuing disruptions, intimating that the task is too difficult. Certainly there has been a recent trend towards the identification of smaller and smaller national units which, bolstered by often spurious tradition, have sought increasing degrees of freedom from larger national units, which were themselves often formed following conquest or dynastic marriage. Scotland, for example, using the spurious history and trappings popularized by the Victorians and the large tourist revenues thus generated, together with oil revenue, has made various moves towards greater independence throughout the late 20th century. It is a matter of considerable concern in this respect that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr Boutros Ghali, suggested in 1992 that, over the next decade, the world could splinter into some 400 economically-crippled mini-states, following the example of Yugoslavia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe (LEOPOLD, 1992).

It has already been shown, that any and all heritage planning is explicitly or implicitly political. Some features of the physical heritage are selected for re-creation or preservation; some historical incidents are emphasized, others forgotten. The process is inherently selective; what is important is the nature and number of those who are disinherited, as their heritages are not selected or are not portrayed in a favourable light. Any consideration of a supra-national European heritage must regard this as a major problem. It would be folly to thus disinherit minorities at a time when ethnic, religious and other groups are responding to pressure by attempting to create more small nation-states. Instead, Europe requires a culturally – and ethnically-pluralist perspective.

This has been lacking, for the most part, in much of the continent. Little has been done to integrate the cultures of recent immigrants, from the Middle East, Africa and India in particular, but also increasingly from Asia. In the Netherlands, for example, the largely urban Turkish and Moroccan cultural minorities are, as yet, unrepresented in a heritage interpretation that is strongly oriented to the 17th century 'Golden Age' (ASHWORTH and de HANN, 1990). History has, as the saying goes, been written by the victors. Heritage has been decided by the powerful: the victors, the wealthy, the educated middle-class. Hence the heritage guarded by the official Welsh heritage body Cadw is that of the conqueror, the invading Anglo-Norman, the castle and church, rather than the indigenous Celt (CARR, 1994). It has taken centuries of relative peace for the culture and history of the invading Normans to become assimilated into the history of England. In post-communist Poland, the Palace of Culture in Warsaw is a piece of typical Stalinist architecture, dominating the city by its height and scale. As a "gift of the people of Russia" in the 1950s, this is now seen as a great symbol of cultural oppression, and there have been many calls for it to be demolished. Yet it clearly represents an important part of Poland's 20th century social history; its retention and re-use could be a much more appropriate way of coming to terms with the past than its demolition. In other contexts, the problem of differing religious heritages arises with increasing frequency as immigrant groups bring their traditions with them. Hence an eastern European church nestling in a leafy suburb of Birmingham is a surprise, as are the stranger forms of mosque minarets and domes in the city centre. The planning battles that can arise over these unusual, unfamiliar urban forms show considerable polarity of cultural groups.

This should not lead to the conclusion that heritage interpretation, generation or planning are, on balance, socially undesirable and divisive activities. It must, instead, be realized that the generation of a European heritage would provide no panacea, but that the distribution of social and cultural costs and benefits should form an integral part of heritage planning (ASHWORTH, 1991).

Will there, therefore, ever be a pan-European identity and culture, with all the trappings, heroes, villans and history that this would entail? Languages, currencies and other unique features of individual nation-states may decline, as we have seen those nation-states themselves declining, and as the advantages of a Europe-wide identity become more and more evident. However, although it is clearly in the interests of all countries or regimes to collaborate closely in a new Europe, some areas dissent; looking back, perhaps, to their histories of conflict, superiority or isolationism. Yet any new Europe does not require the subsuming of individual place-identities or national cultures; rather, perhaps, the acceptance of diversity and plurality.

In thematic terms, given the diversity of the continent, it would be impossible to prescribe a European heritage. The problem of the dispossessed in any

such marketing is too great, as the controversies over the V2 and Sir Arthur Harris commemorations showed. In a multi-cultural Europe, even themes such as 'trade' or 'exploration' impinge upon the minority migrants from the countries explored and, later, exploited. But these would form powerful linking themes to a number of individual national heritages. The heritage given tangible form by the *SS Great Britain*, now restored in her original dock in Bristol and redolent of Victorian technological innovation and trade, or the remnants of the wreck of the *Amsterdam*, a Dutch East India Company vessel wrecked off Hastings in 1748 and still visible at low tide, form actual and potential features for such trade-based heritage planning. Even the controversial theme of warfare is currently well-represented by warships that were, in practice, complete failures: the *Mary Rose* and *Wasa*. Invaluable for archaeological study, these two vessels were national disasters, both sinking under the very eyes of their monarchs. They are difficult to market, or be interpreted, as nationalist heritage (although, in both cases, the attempt is made to do so). Indeed, in the UK, Portsmouth naval dockyard now has a collection including *HMS Victory*, the *Mary Rose* and *HMS Warrior*: a wide-ranging and heavily-visited collection of militaristic history of which part, the *Victory*, is symbolic of a major victory over what is now a close European partner.

It is this conception of nationalism, particularly in the representation of the might of the late 19th century nation state, that must be overcome in a new Europe. What was good for one state had clear implications, often adverse, for others. The might of Empire cannot form the basis for European heritage. What may be more appropriate, however, is the fostering of national, regional and even local diversity. In many senses, heritage has been commodified – it is now a product, marketed in the same way as any other. And, in the same way that productive industries specialize, so may the heritage product of countries and regions be specialized. The new Europe need not, despite the fears of many among the populations of the EC countries at present, lead to greater bureaucracy, standardization and sameness. This is not what harmonization of necessity implies. Neither would a continent-wide sameness to heritage be desirable. After all, it is diversity – the desire to see different places and things – which fuels tourism, particularly heritage-related tourism. RELPH (1976) coined the term 'placelessness' to describe what he saw, and feared, as the loss of individual place-identity in the Westernized world. The same is happening to heritage in minor ways, such as the diffusion of standardized, mass-produced 'heritage' cast-iron street furniture in the UK. Every historic street and town now has its black-painted, gold-trimmed bollards, litter bins and lamp-posts, purchased from just one or two large suppliers. In planning for a new Europe, a heritage that will reflect the diversities of local culture and history must be encouraged. There should be no *faits accompli* or directives from any central European administration: it is difficult enough to legislate for one country's conservation areas, as

current debate in England shows (JONES and LARKHAM, 1993). There needs rather to be widespread acceptance of existing diversity in parallel with the development of linking themes of Europe-wide relevance. Some themes will, admittedly, 'disinherit' some groups; the 'nastiness' of a continent-wide history must be accepted, for it cannot be swept away. Other themes may over-emphasize the history of other groups, arguably substituting hype for history: but this may be a valid way of exploring the past of minority and exploited groups, as the 'Roots phenomenon' arguably did for the American slave trade after Alex HALEY's book in the 1970s. This, too, must be accepted both by policy-makers and by consumers. But the exact nature of such a heritage requires further work, with detailed studies in each of the countries contributing to the new Europe. Such a Europe-wide project in itself may contribute, in some measure, to a sense of unity. Two major international projects, both related to urban history (and thus, indirectly, heritage) are currently in progress: the Historic Towns Atlases, a long-term project involving considerable research, but which has received criticism in terms of changing goals over the years and problems of data presentation and interpretation (BORGWIK and HALL, 1981; SLATER and LILLEY, 1992) and the new *Historical atlas of European cities*, a 10-volume project supported by the Catalan regional and Spanish national governments, co-ordinated by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona. This latter project suggests a way forward for heritage studies in terms of large-scale multi-disciplinary, multi-national co-operation, aiming to produce a good overview (albeit of a sample of cities), using high-quality computer cartography, publishing rapidly and to an attractive standard, and aiming at a wide interested public. This project, much more than the scholarly Historic Towns Atlases, should bring a Europe-wide comparative urban history to public attention. It could serve as a model for studies of heritage, heritage-related tourism and the identification, and development, of key elements for a Europe-wide approach to heritage which would serve as a significant unifying factor in a continent wherein strong pressures for unity and fragmentation are currently plainly evident.

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This paper develops some arguments put forward in the author's summary chapter in ASHWORTH, G. J. and LARKHAM, P. J. (eds), *New heritage, new Europe;* a collection of essays to be published in 1994.

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