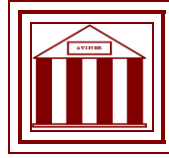


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**A Corporative Δημοκρατία: Dionysius
of Halicarnassus as a Political Scientist**

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Dionysius of Halicarnassus as a Political Scientist**

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Abstract

Historiographical critics often profiled Dionysius of Halicarnassus as an athenian classic imitator, sometimes as a recoverer of latin tradition, legendary or constitutional, either of some specific civil episodes of Roman history. Rather less often, a coherent idea of roman politics and its influence on international stage has been examined on his count. It is then possible, comparing his texts and that of other authors (specifically Cicero) to get a structured image of roman politics, reconstructed on historical basis, inspired to a model of corporative δημοκρατία. His reconstruction is original in respect of coeve historical issues, in Cicero and Livy. In the present study, we try to make clear this view through Dionysius historical work (Books II-VI). His vision is founded on ciceronian conception of concordia, but goes farther than that, grounding an original conception of corporative legitimacy, compromised, voluntaristic, between the different strata of Roman res publica. An innovative order, which values can be elevated to be a warrant for the mediterranean peace. These politological conceptions, emerging from the text, contradict conventional patterns of a Dionysius, if not a mere compiler, a passive remaker of tradition. On the contrary, the text restores to us, just through its cross references to classic rhetoric and in the main respect of the roman historical tradition, the thought of a philosopher of history, which work is mainly a politological testament or, as he probably would like to say, a πολιτικός λόγος about civil coexistence.

Key Words

Introduction

«Romans are Greek»¹. That is the substantial statement which, usually, we remember about the historical work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Effectively, studies conducted on this author couldn't avoid this conclusion, so originally and explicitly stated by himself. Behind statements as such, however, tends to remain subdued the idea of Dionysius as a compiler with a strong rhetoric content, useful to Greek readers, but not at all autonomous on his key arguments². Rhetoric and compilation³: two aspects which can scare modern scholars. More or less unconsciously, both these topics could seem difficult, if not unpleasant. We inherited, perhaps since Illuminism, the impression that intellectuals should avoid to insist on parenetic aspects of language, as they could reveal a want of critic capacity in applying at them. On the contrary, writers should force themselves to be original and not to plagiarize. If they cite someone, they should explicitly reveal whose statement are they reminding.

Though, even a superficial reading could be enough to assert that Dionysius' text not only doesn't respect, but neither knows such rules. In spite of them, Dionysius is persuaded that the best repertoire of θεωρήματα and παραδείγματα, if you want to compose these which he calls πολιτικοὶ λόγοι, comes from the study of a specific κανὼν of authors, whose flower are Isocrates and Demosthenes. Such a formalistic approach should not hinder us to get the point: Dionysius is convinced that imitation is the most useful toil to describe reality and reflect about it. But, if he thinks so, our problem is to deepen all possible aspects not only of Dionysius the narrator, but also those of Dionysius the thinker. The reading of Dionysius's work reveals that he is trying to explain to us a theoretic system, endowed of a proper internal coherence. Behind his dia-chronic narration, there are signs of a syn-chronic thought. On political topics, that is what he calls σχήμα πολιτείας.

¹D.H. 1.5.2: Ἕλληνας τε αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἐπιδέξειν ὑπισχυνοῦμαι; cf. N. Wiater (2011: 354-360).

²Such a mainstream, initiated with XIXth century critics and then represented by the famous article of Schwartz (1905: 934-961), is still sometimes to be noticed also in our days, see for example Lendle (1992: 242); also Mehl (2001: 114-116). Influenced by some pattern of ultra-hellenizing Roman/Greek relations based on social subgroups is the interpretation of Wiater (2011: 100-111), even with some risk of not distinguishing Dionysius by his Classicizing context, even if the author makes very clear how Classicism is not only a mere recovery and recollection of ancient texts. More open to the importance of Dionysius beyond his famous statement were, instead, Momigliano (1991: 503- 520 part. 513) and also Gabba (1996: 24-25), where the latter points on some creative element as a further explanation about the historical and historiographical context.

³The important role of Dionysius on the development of ancient rhetoric is well evidenced today by the study of Jonge (2008: 6-10), who particularly underlines how too much modern literary critics based their study about sources, while even the Dionysius' arguing about linguistic topics often shows the author's ideas, even when he cites someone else. Even Gabba (1996: 140), always interested in *Quellenforschung*, sometimes incurs in underlining Dionysius' strict fidelity to compilation, perhaps neglecting how even the choice of a source could be also a sign of autonomy.

In this respect, sometimes Dionysius is compared to Polybius; they both identify in the *πολιτεία* the basis of Rome's hegemony¹. But the meaning which they give to the word is different. In Polybius, *πολιτεία* means, strictly, how political decisions could be made. Rationality of the structure closely mirrors the efficiency of the pragmatical results. In this way, Polybius claims that the rational connections of *πράγματα* can show the validity of his political approach. In Dionysius, we still find the connection between theory and practice: the best constitution is that one, which can assure *ἀρχή* and *ἡγεμονία*. But he extends also that connection to other terms, which to Polybius remain obscure. In Dionysius *πολιτεία* is much more than a practical organization, on which basis it is possible to construct imperial egemony: it means also how to manage *ὁμόνοια* and *στάσις*. Or even, thing which has been not so much appreciated, it means to establish *βοήθεια* between *πλούσιοι* and *πένητες*, the two social counterparts which, for Dionysius, animate the City. We should observe with more attention how Dionysius calls such counterparts precisely in this way: "rich" and "poor". Plebeians and *patricii*, people and senators are just secondary terms. When we are on the spot, the *πόλις*'s division is strictly connected to the economical pattern. Of such economical pattern, Dionysius claims to evaluate some functional and institutional elements: *πολιτεία* is connected to the City's economy, it works thanks to her. Polybian model is accepted by Dionysius, but it is also opened to new horizons and approached, as to say filmed, in a dynamical perspective. Readers should well understand how could Romans do to manage both elements together, Dionysius is engaged in such a *Discourse on Principles* of the Roman society: a further meaning for his title, *Ἀρχαίων-λογία*.

Even on behalf of the coming out of Dionysius's political thought could be useful to dwell upon relations between some lexical cues and terminologies of his own, with some similar patterns in Cicero's *De re publica*². Two orders of motives make ground to such a comparison. The first, which we are going to hatch in the present study, resides in the textual references to this who, for Dionysius, is a very important predecessor. It is useful to take account of these references, because in respect of them it will be more easy to evaluate Dionysius's innovations. The other motive for a comparison is that a bridge is unquestionable between the two generations: the elder so "desperately" republican, the younger immersed in a totally new scene. Well conscious of that was Emilio Gabba³, even if such

¹The comparison of the concept of hegemony in both authors was already searched by S. Gozzoli (1976: 149-176); also Delcourt (2005: 42). The choice of contemporary history and his rejection of genealogy renders almost even today most evaluated Polybius as a credible historian. But, that the aims and methods of the two authors were not quite the same it doesn't means directly that Dionysius can be declared a sort of myth-teller of the glory of Rome. See N. Wiater, cit. 194-198 about the distinctive topic, in Dionysius, of the *εὐθὺς ἐπ' ἀρχῆς*

²We used *De re publica* in this study only for a comparison with Dionysius. For a resume of the research about such a complex opera, we limit ourselves to send back to the still important essay of Schmidt (1973: 262-333), and, for the intricate composing question, see Schmidt (2001: 7-16).

³E. Gabba (1996:139) and, on his "catonian" lecture of Cicero, Zevi (1999: 286-293 part. 288).

references were by him perhaps too rigorously interpreted. This scholar opposed Dionysius to Cicero on the base that, in Dionysius, Roman constitution is already perfect at the time of the kings, while Cicero, on the base of Cato (rep. 2.1.1-2) represented it as a progressive construction in the context of the Roman *ius*. Following this view, we should have to say that Dionysius would take from Cicero the form of the constitution, but then would render it hypostatical, with Roman kings at his guide. But such a perspective doesn't take in count that, in Dionysius, the form of the constitution is always felt as problematic, also between the various kingdoms and republic, as we'll come to see. Felicity (2.10.4: τὸ μακάριον) during the Roman kingdoms is effectively a Dionysius's issue but, variously articulated as it is, gets only the aim to put in discussion the contents of social harmony, which will be lost and then recuperated. The modes and ways through which such a recovery could take place, that is precisely the object of Dionysius's discussion, all but hypostatical. The final picture could be not the one of a lost monarchical paradise, but that of a progressively (and time to time) regained corporative order, where δῆμος has an emerging role¹. Surely, Dionysius doesn't reach the point of admitting that the συγχώρημα of Mons Sacrum is synonymous of δημοκρατία: he has to respect the tradition, which impose the naming of μικτὸν γένος to Roman constitution: not monarchy, not oligarchy, not democracy. Already Aristotle defined such a theory and Roman constitution was traditionally identified with such μικτή by Polybius, by Cicero, perhaps even by Dicaearchus, Panetius and Posidonius, as to say all the secular knowledge about ancient politics. So, even in Dionysius Roman constitution is a μικτή (7.55.2). Even though, it is clear that his idea of μικτή πολιτεία is very different either than that of Polybius or Cicero. He asserts that not always and not naturally δημοκρατία worsens in τυραννία, but rather a δῆμος φρόνιμος σωφρονῶν πολιτεύμενος (7.55.4) could take a steady power. Its upsetting it is not more natural, as in Polybius, but only eventual. The difference should not be underevaluated.

The Route of Dionysius's Political Lexicon

Dionysius's political reflection begins with a very particular *Discourse of Romulus* (AR 2.3-4)². Apart from the contextual elements, also important, but which we can not opportunely examine in this place, in this passage we find the basis of most of the Dionysius's political lexicon and axiomatic values. Inside it, a dualistic vision is expressed: internal civic concord (πολιτευομένων ὁμοφροσύνη) and external hegemony, particularly based on arms (κατ' ὅπλων κράτος). In the view of obtaining these goals, citizens have to be trained and self-restrained: ἀσκεῖν τὰ πολεμιά and κρατεῖν τῶν

¹Dionysius somewhat seems to suggest that his scheme is figured as a δημοκρατία, even if he formally denies such a possibility, when calls such scheme a μικτή (7.55.2). Δημοκρατία is often positively evaluated (4.72.3; 7.56.1), otherwise who blames it is plainly contradicted (6.60.1).

²About the evaluation of a perfect forfathers' order in this particular *Discourse*, see Wiater (2011: 176-198) and Delcourt (2005: 241-299).

ἐπιθυμιῶν. This would make a σώφρων καὶ δίκαιος βίος¹, but for Dionysius that would not be sufficient for the ends which he has perspected. Virtues as such should be organized. And this is possible with two other virtues, prerogative of any good government, competence and knowledge: φρόνησις and σοφία. And, if the govern is monarchical, he adds also the δεινότης.

From whence could come to Dionysius such ideas?

Athenian classics should naturally be our first choice. Plato, for an example, often puts φρόνησις and σοφία at the base of a good government². Aristotle adds to φρόνησις also ἐγκράτεια and makes both parts of the best educated soul³. Also Isocrates⁴ links φρόνησις to παιδεία and, implicitly, good government. Then, Diogenes Laertius⁵ explains to us how and why could δεινότης be associated also with σοφία: it was an epistemological virtue, particularly recommended to stoic students, as to correctly organize sensations, finding new connections between different items: in English, we perhaps could translate δεινότης with “perspicacity”. But here, as we already observed, classics and stoics are not the only references.

In a similar textual circumstance, Cicero⁶ makes appeal to the same thucydidean theme⁷ of the state founded not only on buildings. Then he continues arguing how any republic needs a *consilium*, if it wants to be *diuturna*, and how the king should be *aequus et sapiens*.

We’ll see how Dionysius’s discourse is more complex, but though comparisons are possible. Most of all, dionysian and ciceronian lexicons concord: the φρόνησις corresponds to the *consilium* and, afterwards, dionysian appeal to the City’s lasting ἐπὶ μήκιστον reflects the *ut diuturna sit* of Cicero. Finally, about the king’s qualities, dionysian σοφία reflects ciceronian *sapientia*. Not all is traced and there is, in Dionysius, a great share which should be explained in another way. For example, Cicero says that the king should be *aequus et sapiens*, but Dionysius says πολλήν δεινότητα....πολλήν σοφίαν. The parallel δεινότης/σοφία descends by stoics doctrines⁸, as we have already said.

Even though, similarities are evident: we should observe how Dionysius assigns to a well governed City the same virtues, σώφρων καὶ δίκαιος, which Cicero awards to a good king, *aequus et sapiens*; vice versa, Dionysius assigns φρόνησις to the king, while Cicero ascribes *consilium* to the *populus*. On behalf of the content, the inversion is negligible, because the comprehensive meaning is just the same. Still, it proves that Dionysius is reading Cicero, even if he has disguised it and mixed up in a new synthesis, with cues from other authors.

Then, if we consider, at AR 2.3.4: «ταύτην δὲ τὸν σώφρονα καὶ δίκαιον ἑκάστου βίον.... ἰκανώτατον ὄντα τῷ κοινῷ», we can observe that σώφρων

¹Same expression in Demosthenes: Dem. Olinth. 2. 18; Arist. I 25.77.

²We limit ourselves to cite just some quotation by the *Republic*. As to φρόνησις : 4.431d; 433 b-d; 6.505b; 9.586; 591b. As to σοφία: 1.349a -350d; 351 a-c; 4.429a-431e.

³Arist. de Virt. 1249b

⁴Isoc. Pan. 30-32.

⁵Diog. Laert. 7.42; 48.

⁶Cic. rep. 1.25.41-42.

⁷Tuc. 7.77.4-7.

⁸The same juxtaposition δεινότης/σοφία in Diog. Laert. 7.42; 48.

καὶ δίκαιος βίος is a demosthenic expression, that the moral use of the adjective ἱκανός is properly isocratean; nevertheless, in spite of that, let's see the following comparison with Cic. de fin. 3.28:

dignam esse beatam vitam, quod non possit nisi honestae vitae iure contingere.

(de fin. 3.28)

ταύτην δὲ τὸν σόφρονα καὶ δίκαιον ἑκάστου βίον... ἱκανώτατον ὄντα τῷ κοινῷ.

(AR 2.3.4)

As it could be seen, the sequence σόφρων δίκαιος ἱκανός is at all similar with the latin one: *dignus beatus honestus*. Still, the πόλις εὐδαίμων and πολυτελός recalls some Plato, Aristotle and Isocrate's lexicon but again, quite afterwards, the topic about the τὰ σώζοντα πόλεως is a plain remind of the *ad salutem civium civitatumqueinventas esse leges* (Cic. leg. 2.11).

Furthermore, it is not only the letter of the text which more strictly recalls Cicero's features, but also the axiological context, which terms put the discussion on Roman political organization just as Cicero could do. The Arpinate's assertions are made a starting point for further considerations. We will expose further on some coherent scheme of Dionysius's political philosophy, but for now we can already attest that here, in the *Discourse of Romulus*, are not so much in discussion, as important as they could be, Demosthenes and Isocrates's themes like wisdom, knowledge and all which, in general, could be the virtues of a king. The argument here is, instead, legitimacy of political leadership. And that is, precisely, a quite Ciceronian theme.

Nevertheless, in spite of such arguments justifying compilation and imitation of Cicero, we will see how the general political vision of Dionysius is quite different even from Cicero's.

Differences emerge in particular if we move through the process about the creation of tribunes. Cicero¹ grants to the people the tribunes, but that is possible only *per seditionem*, it is a *medendum*², while the consensus-scheme of people and senate, based on virtue, is presented as perfect in itself, even without tribunes. When Cicero endows his model with such a formal and organical perfection, he consents to the story, as it was really narrated, to fall down: he pretends to ignore that tribunician institution was under all aspects a legitimate republican institution, just as the consuls, or the senate.

We can explain his choice if we observe that, lessening the origin of *tribuni plebis*, Cicero is catching a point of no return in the fact that the structure which he puts on, if really should give a good proof on her account, should also have social tension to be resolved without any further guarantee. He removes the tribunes from his model, because in this way senatorial virtues can purpose themselves as a perfect model for getting solved civil tensions not only in the past, but even in the future.

¹ Cic. rep. 2.34.59.

² Cic. rep. 2.34.59.

Dionysius catches from Cicero the sense that the model should include all social differences. Even though, people is really emerging in the Dionysius's narration. Plebeians want to adhere to the *coetus* / φιλοχωρεῖν, so that the tribunes will be the object of the senate's ἀγαθοῦ μεταδιδούση. Dionysius makes an economical theory on benefits one of the better defined topics of his history. All the topic, as other times throughout his work, takes a sort of trial form, endowed with large discourses. But we should not be distracted by superficial contradictions due to debates. Neither we should be amazed by the circumstance that some discourses contain at his inside ciceronian topics, where *opera* is translated as βοήθεια and *humanitas* as φιλανθρωπία. We should take in evidence that Cicero's juridic theory is on the main respected, **but** it is translated in the sense of an economic organicism, which in Cicero is absent. Such a new feature obtains to include the tribunes in the constitutional system and, either, that the popular element comes into evidence.

Through the tale of plebeian struggles, two positions will be debated by Dionysius. The most conservative, that of Appius Claudius¹, enacts the former *clientela* as the economical form of the tradition. But this view, so well examined which could be, will be finally rejected, on the behalf of an alternative option, which topic is that a political appeasement is possible only on the condition that an economic management should be installed as sovereign, which could grant the τὸ σωφρόνως ζῆν² to the people, as the foundation of the φιλοχωρεῖν/*coetus*. Appius Claudius says that rich and poor have different tasks and that precise economical ties intercur between them, based on loans (τὰ χρέα). The matter of fact is that, if debts will be totally repaid (5.66.3): «neither the husbandmen would any longer sow and plant their lands, nor the merchants sail the sea and trade in foreign markets, nor the poor employ themselves in any other just occupation».

When Manius Valerius and other senators oppose to Appius's standing, even then they never deny such a statement. This is the proof that Dionysius, if he doesn't approve the entire Appius's line, nevertheless he **does** agree on that single sentence. In his continuation, senators suggest an appeasement, which includes a more wide solution, rather than a simple ἄφεσις τῶν χρεῶν: otherwise, a συγχώρημα which gives to the poor some important guarantees, but **do not** solve debts at all. People should pay, but just not so much to be thrown in jail. This solution Dionysius calls for the μέτριον (a middle term), a solution which gives an eminent role to the tribunes.

This is perhaps the most high point of Dionysius's political thought, just where more, we'll see, he diverts from Cicero's views. But we can appreciate the moment as well as much we reach to understand his ciceronian root. This root consists on the intention to give to the πολιτεία an organicistic and functional structure, instead of a simple compromise of three independent powers, as was for example in Polybius. Such an organicistic structure is by

¹AR 5.66-68, in particular we are referring to 66.3-4.

²AR 2.28.1: the passage on Romulus constitution is strictly connected to the Discourse of Appius Claudius on clientela.

Dionysius named, with a very sounding term, δημοκρατία, as much as his principles are explained by the δημοτικώτατος Manius Valerius¹.

Manius Valerius says that, if you want a ὁμονοῦση πόλις and avoiding στάσις, you should let the people participate to public decisions *and* that those decisions should include also their particular interests. Precisely in this sense, even if defined yet as a μικτή πολιτεία, for Dionysius a structure like that could be nevertheless a δημοκρατία, at the extent which gives ear to people's interests and, most of all, people play an active role in creating laws².

Then, neither the Appius Claudius', neither the Valerii's solution is good for Dionysius, but there is a third one, where *clientela*'s bounds as in the Romulus' scheme are preserved, but differences are just «put to cease»³. As Maeneni Agrippa⁴ says, we have here an aut-aut. Or they decide to talk each other, or they should fight. Just or not that the διαλλαγαί could be, says Dionysius, it doesn't have importance anymore if, as a first instance, they don't restore some authentic communication.

Such a management takes in care the instances of a subject class in a general frame, that of the συγχώρημα⁵. Even this is a Demosthenic word but, one more time, with a wider range of meaning: that of a voluntary pact, third over two pre-socialized parties. The proposal of such a political theory should not to be undervaluated, because it is unique in his genre – even Cicero is very far on this point- and will be not else resumed, neither by imperial scholars, who will prefer to concentrate on monarch's virtues. After Dionysius, the people will not have any more a better constituent theoretical place where to see his prerogatives discussed, in a context where the “whole” takes care of the “parts”: an οὐ κακίστη δημοκρατία.

Conclusions

Is it a vision such that, finally, a corporative one? Cicero's without doubt was. As the celestial spheres, in the *Somnium*, hold up the universe, spinning one over the other, so the reciprocal consensus of people, senate and (eventually) the monarch convalidate each other. There is no element which could be autonomous, they should move always together. But, in Dionysius, the popular element reveals itself as “eccentric” in respect of the perfection of such spheres. When Dionysius underlines the βοήθεια/φιλανθρωπία/εὐ ποιεῖν as a center of virtue, all the traditional, mirroring ethic/physic relation is evicted. The reader has now the opportunity to catch a glimpse of new landscapes, opened to some new perspectives of agreement. Two are the key-

¹AR 5.64-65.

²Book VII is especially dedicated by Dionysius to such a topic: people is legitimated to create laws, at almost by the tribunicial activity.

³AR 6.83.4: παῦσαι διαφορᾶς αἰτίαν.

⁴AR 6.49-54.

⁵AR 6.71.2; 90.3;

words of these new approaches, both voluntaristic: συγχώρημα¹ and φιλανθρωπία². Two classic words, used even by Demosthenes, and also two ciceronian words: *coetus* and *humanitas*. Nevertheless, the Dionysius's political theory has many point of difference by that of Cicero. First of all the role of the *populus*: «what do you desire, and upon what terms you would consent to return to the city?»³. Neither Cicero nor Livius could never allow a similar question to the secessionists, because it would imply that the *populus* could be autonomous to choose his way out of the secession, as if whatever answer could be possible. Livius⁴ allows to people only the Menenius's *fabula*, to convene to the “scientific” matter of fact that, of course, inferior parts obey to the superior one. Otherwise, the City should die. We have also already seen how, for Cicero⁵, the tribunes are just a *medendum*, not a φιλάνθρωπον. So we can see how Dionysius takes elsewhere his topics, but then compose it in a new fashion: a new range of social relations.

Finally: what relation could be found between such a coherent political picture and history? What kind of history is that, which structures facts in the view of a political picture? Is it history yet?

We could for a long time discuss on a topic like this⁶, but first we should take in account Dionysius' work only as what the author wants to tell, whatever could be, and who really is, he who is writing. Imitation and compilation: that's the real way of thinking of Dionysius, and it is a very creative one, we *should* admit⁷. We should not forget that all our rationalism and all our criticism is that also a son of a specific time, which could even change, or either end, now or then, also for us. But even then, Dionysius would be always there for us to be read, just as he wrote, two milleniums ago. And it's up to us to see reality just as he would see to it, not as we woul'd like him to see. So, for him, it is not so important if *really* Romulus created the senate, or if the first republican assembly of the people, in front of Brutus, *really* voted with the consent of the senate. *Of course* it should otherwise, how could we learn about how to take correct assemblies? How could we explain our time, if past doesn't give us such a coherence? The real question we should see beneath Dionysius's history is: what I, Dionysius, really think about Roman politics?

¹συγχώρημα: AR 6.90.3; 7.41.4; 52.3; 11.49.5; 61.2; συγχωρηθέντα : 7.49.1.

²Φιλανθρωπία is a very key-word for Dionysius. It recurs rather 30 times through the entire history in the substantive form and rather 40 in other forms. Rather than give the quotes, perhaps is more useful to give the definition which stoics gave to it, SVA 3.72.4 : φιλική χρῆσις ανθρώπων ὑπάρχουσα, «a friendly disposition which connects people». We should remember also that Augustean Roman papyri consider φιλανθρωπία as a main administrative value, Bell (1949: 31-37). Obviously, the term also claims for the comparison with Cicero's *humanitas*, Layer (2006: 66-71); Hiltbrunner (1992: 189-201).

³Dion. AR 6.48.1.

⁴Liv. 2.32.9-10.

⁵Cic. rep. 2.34.59.

⁶A very deep discussion of this topic in Wiater (2011: 120-132) with many references to modern narratology and philosophy of history.

⁷A concept also enhanced by Porter (2006: 301-352).

The opportunity we have to catch, is the issue that such a question is of some importance for us, because it gives a picture, even if a subjective one, about political approach to social problems at the time when the text was written.

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