RECOVERING IMAGES OF THE PAST: THE MEDIEVAL FORTIFICATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE CITIES DURING THE ESTADO NOVO REGIME (1933-74)

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ABSTRACT

For many centuries, castles and city walls conditioned the urban development of cities; however, the decay of those defensive systems, caused by the fact that they weren't prepared against fire arms, made them begin a slow decline. Their obsolescence made them be regarded as a physical barrier to the development of the cities and thus, there was, in many cases, a systematic demolition of those fortifications, especially in the 19th century. With the emergence of the heritage concerns, the old medieval defensive elements were gradually acquiring importance again, as part of the urban space, contributing and influencing the development of cities.

Analysing the Portuguese urban development since the middle of the 19th century until the present days, we can find an evolution in the way the city was faced, and how a patrimonial view over the urban space was developed. The contemporary images of our historic cities are also a product of what was made yesterday – and not only in the ancient times; in fact, the images that we have about the cities (or parts of cities) which are considered testimonies of the Past were, in many cases, built in the last two centuries, by deforming and rebuilding those ancestral memories. Actually, in some cases, we are presently seeing in the historic cities what people from yesterday thought the cities would be in the Past; and that image was crystallized to the Future by them, as part of their heritage concerns.

So, several principles were applied in heritage interventions involving military medieval structures in the urban space: considerable portions of cities were demolished on behalf of the value increase of military monuments, freeing them from buildings that were suffocating them, and thereby, recomposing the "original space frame", and large areas surrounding the ancient military structures were object of "beautification interventions", in order to requalify the ambience of the built sets. Nowadays, the city walls continue acting as elements that are conditioning the urban planning process (producing different urban programs), because the circumscription of historic cores by a walled perimeter set an unavoidable physical border with their inevitable consequences.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 5th century marked the end of the Roman Empire dominance over the Iberian Peninsula; with that, came the instability and insecurity produced by the Germanic invasions. Because of that, cities began, over the next few centuries, a process of fortification and renewal of their defensive systems – called encastlement –, which produced a deep impact in Iberian cities. After the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by the Muslims, new defensive elements became part of the cities, as a result of the introduction of innovative techniques and shapes in the military architecture: for instance, the new administrative system was established preferentially in the *alcáçovas* (fortified palace), a palatial system which was fortified in the highest point of the cities, in order to shelter the foreign Muslim court. This kind of fortified palace remained after the Christian reconquest, as well as the free building areas around the defensive walls, usually called as *devesas*.

With the reconquest of the territories which became Portugal, the urban evolution was increased, with the expansion of cities beyond its defensive walls. The 13th century brought a royal investment in defensive structures – specially the ones located in the Portuguese borders –, as part of a strategy of marking the national lands, defending it from Spanish invasions: the city walls acquired then a major importance, because to conquer a city meant to conquer their surrounding territories. So, in the end of the 14th century and beginning of the 15th century, cities' defensive requirements produced the construction of new city walls, surrounding the quarters which were built outside the ancient walls. The city walls,

besides introducing discontinuities in the urban space, marked a zoning that still exists, in some cases, until our days.

PATRIMONIAL CONCERNS WITH THE DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES

However, by the beginning of the 16th century, the city walls which were built in the Medieval Age began a process of decadence: the decay of those medieval defensive systems, mainly adapted to neuroballistics, was caused essentially by the fact that those structures were not prepared to resist against firearms. Their obsolescence made them begin a slow decline; thus, they started being regarded by populations as a physical barrier to the development of cities. In fact, the inhabitants of the walled cities were feeling that the defensive walls were some kind of "force belts" restricting the city's expansion, as well as a physical barrier to the traffic, delaying the arrival of progress to those places. So, in many cases, a systematic demolition of those fortifications was produced over the times, especially in the 19th century; thus, the materials of the demolished structures were reused in public (and private) building works, such as roads.

Perhaps the most paradigmatic case was de demolition of the city walls of Vienna in order to build the *Ringstraße* (encompassing some urban facilities), which was profoundly studied by Camillo Sitte along with some other cases (SITTE, 1889). In the end of the 19th century, when the *Ministério da Guerra* (Ministry of War) of Portugal gave permission to the municipal authorities to use materials from the defensive walls, the process of demolition of the defensive structures was increased – specially the city walls –, in order to follow some functionalist and hygienist perspectives.

However, with the destructions of the fortified architectural heritage (and inherent historic values), opponents began appearing, filled with heritage concerns – which were also felt all over Europe in the 19th century. In fact, this century was the time of growth and assertion of the several nationalities all over Europe, and was also the time of the romantic new crusades, personified by the conflicts against the Ottoman Empire, which helped the Christian Greeks in achieving their independency. Needing to know the origins of the nations, history and archaeology suffered an enormous evolution; inspired by romanticist feelings, the arts brought images reflecting nationalisms and condensing signs of collective identities of the several people, such as their architecture, culture, traditions, heroes, monuments, etc.

So, medieval fortifications became a target for preservation attempts, because of their connection with the Medieval Age where the origins of nations were. Those historic and cultural elements were considered special places of juxtaposition of meanings, allowing emotional feelings that were connoted with them: the assertion of those meanings, through their aesthetic, artistic and symbolic dimensions, is part of the mental, emotional and physical organization of space by the people. On the other hand, as Kevin Lynch said, the creation of mental maps through strong images associated with an outstanding object makes easily the creation of mental images, providing the identification and structuring the spaces. The capacity to recognize those objects depends on their shape, colour and position; therefore, the castles dominating the urban landscapes became strong images. That space organization is important, because it allows the creation of cognitive maps, in order to able the orientation and location of elements with place, border and reference meanings.

The mental organization and space legibility gives a great emotional security to those who are living in that space, creating an identity feeling with that. The monuments became more and more part of people's life, not only because their physical presence, but also for their deep meaning in people's conscience, remembered every time the monuments were seen. That way, medieval castles became strong images, acting as referential urban elements and creating identity feelings for people. Due to that, several interventions were made in the medieval castles which were considered major symbols of the nations, not only to adapt them to modern conditions required at that time, but especially for their political and social symbologies.

Some of them suffered huge reconstructions or inventive interventions with creative and eclectic new elements, which cannot be considered as restorations (for instance, *Belvoir Castle* by James Wyatt, *Windsor Castle* by Jeffry Wyatville and Anthony Salvin, *Schloß Stolzenfels* by Friedrich Schinkel and Friedrich Stüler,

Schloß Hohenzollern by Friedrich Stüler, *Castello di Pavone Canavese* by Alfredo de Andrade, and *Castillo de Butrón* by Francisco González-Montes); other ones were restored according to the ideals of the stylistic restoration (for instance, *Château de Pierrefonds, Château de Roquetaillade,* and *Château de Vincennes* by Viollet-le-Duc) historic restoration (for instance, *Castello Sforzesco di Milano* and *Rocca Sforzesca di Soncino* by Luca Beltrami, and *Porta Soprana di Genova* and *Castello di Fenis* by Alfredo de Andrade), or even the latest scientific restoration (for instance, *Castelvecchio di Verona* by Carlo Scarpa). Those interventions allowed the reconstruction and reintegration of castles and even part of city walls, which returned to their (sometimes just supposed) original shapes through the rebuilding of lost parts of walls, towers, roofs, battlements and fenestration.

Besides the interventions in the medieval fortified structures, some urbanistic interventions were made additionally in many cases: the ancient fortifications started to be considered as historic monuments, which needed to be emphasized from its surrounding. The isolation of monuments began to be a common practice since the 19th century, and perhaps the most drastic example of that was the Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin*, presented in 1925, which proposed the demolition of vast parts of Paris, leaving only some isolated monuments as memories of the Past. In order to do that, a great number of small edifications, which grew attached to the fortifications through time, were demolished, liberating and producing breathing areas around the monuments. Some of those areas turned into green areas and parks, framing the monuments and giving them a picturesque image.

It was during the *Estado Novo* (New State) regime – which ruled as a dictatorship between 1933 and 1974 – that an aggressive philosophy of intervention in historic monuments was followed in Portugal. The regime, under the guidance of Oliveira Salazar, built a political scenery mainly based on the assertion of a set of historical and ideological values, with the motto of "*restauração material, restauração moral, restauração nacional*" (material restoration, moral restoration, national restoration). The medieval monuments were able to depict a heroic past existing around the Medieval Age, which was deliberately linked to the struggles for independency and territorial consolidation; related to it, some national heroes were also praised (MEDINA, 1994).

Monuments were used as an ideological instrument by the dictatorial government, in order to rebuild a new truth based on historical believes which were intending to legitimize the regime. In order to spread easily those ideological messages, a character (supposedly) matching the original – a pure medieval shape – was considered essential to reach the people, making easier their identification with the Past. Because of that, actions were taken in order to recover the Past and to crystallize it, "removing" the progress from many places. That way, Medieval castles became a natural object of interest for the regime, not only for their artistic and historic values, but also because they turned into symbols of the origins of Portuguese nationality, as well as honourable testimonies of the birth of Portugal, which was necessary to preserve for the future generations – castles became a fundamental element to the construction of the Portuguese identity. So, those buildings were a suitable device for the ideological policy of the *Estado Novo*, not only for their dominance over the territory, but also for the symbolism that they had – at that time, the *Estado Novo* regime pretended to increase some kind of "refoundation of the Nation". The medieval military buildings, emptied from their primary functions and, in many cases, without any kind of occupation, became then one of the preferred targets to the heritage interventions during the dictatorial regime.

During the *Estado Novo* regime, the *Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais* (General Bureau for the National Buildings and Monuments) – usually known as *DGEMN* – was the entity responsible for the public works, including the interventions in the architectural heritage. The *DGEMN*'s activity in the Portuguese heritage was conditioned by ideological rules, emanated by the high cupules of the regime, as well as by pragmatic criteria of efficiency, economy and easy execution. In fact, the regime imposed its own political agenda, using the architectural heritage as an important propagandistic piece; that way, a primacy of political reasons was established, over the artistic and documental interests of monuments. In many cases, *DGEMN*'s technicians were turned into mere executors of those policies. The privilege that was given to the historic and symbolic values became more visible, especially in the dramatic character attributed to the reintegration of the historic structures. The aim of giving back the original shape to the monuments

by using the architectural reintegration, presupposed the sacrifice of contributions made through time; that way, as well as rewriting the History according to its own convictions, the regime also rewrote the messages transmitted by the monuments – the erased contributions of more recent times became like ripped pages of a book which suffered an ideological clean up.

The *DGEMN*'s leaders never elaborated an official methodology for the restorative interventions over the classified monuments, with principles and philosophies to be followed up by the technicians; in fact, only in a few texts, displayed between several publications, were enounced some standards used in the restoration works. Nevertheless, the director of *DGEMN*, Gomes da Silva, was the only one who expressed more explicitly the rules by which all the interventions should be guided: the monuments should be restored in order to return to its primitive shape; for that, it was necessary to repair the mutilations made by men and time, and purge later excrescences – however, if those additions had artistic value, they should be repaired and conserved (SILVA, 1935). In the *DGEMN*'s texts was implicit the understanding of the architectural object as an irreplaceable ornament of the scenery which was framing it. The *DGEMN* considered that castles and churches always constituted signs of identification and territorial control, as part of an ideology strongly stipulated by the nationalist agenda; due to that, those historic monuments had suffered, in some cases, huge restoration works, in order to put them back to their "original and pure shape", as they were supposed to be in the Medieval Age (NETO, 2001). That was the case of the castle of Leiria, which suffered a massive reconstruction remembering the stylistic restoration enunciated by Viollet-le-Duc.

Some of the most important Portuguese military buildings of Medieval Age were restored according to a cultural image which was produced in the 19th and 20th century, and which might be different from the real shape that they had in the Past. In fact, the castles of the Portuguese cultural image usually had walls with battlements and several towers distributed along it; they had also a major gate protected by defensive towers; in front of the wall usually was a barbican with cubic turrets; and dominating the building was always the main tower. This image, based on the castle of *São Mamede* in Guimarães (the supposed birthplace of the first Portuguese), but also based especially on the castles of the Portuguese borders which were depicted by Duarte d'Armas in the 16th century, became different from the cultural images of other countries' castles, like the Germanic *schloß*, the British *castle*, the Francophone *château* or the Italian *castello*. The cultural image of the Portuguese castle was passed (or emphasized) to other Portuguese castles when they were been restored in the middle of the 20th century – even when the cultural images' shape were not like the pristine shape pretended to be recovered in the restoration works, like what happened, for instance, in the castle of *São Jorge* in Lisbon.

Although the defensive buildings, the spatial context around the fortified structures was also object of attention: those spaces were understood as the formal and functional extension of the castles, because they were part of the ancient defensive system. Therefore, besides freeing the monument of the amalgam of "spurious buildings" which were suffocating it, the demolition of buildings around those military monuments was made intending to assume the purpose of recompose their original spatial frame. So, the *DGEMN*'s technicians frequently projected the demolition of buildings inside the medieval castles' surroundings, also defining a road waist around them in order to allow the visual contemplation and perception of those buildings. Beyond that, the restructuring of arboreal masses was planned to take advantage from some chosen perspective views (TOMÉ, 2002). So, between the end of the 1930 and the beginning of the 1960 decades, perhaps the most radical practices involving urban demolitions around military structures were applied in Portugal, as part of preliminary works for some historic celebrations. In view of that, the regime could not forget living testimonies such as castles, which were authenticating the old glorious moments of the nation. For that reason, the *Estado Novo* planned their rehabilitation, in which some castles experienced huge urban interventions around and inside them.

Usually, those projects consisted in the creation of a vast green space involving the monuments, in order to recover the ancient *devesas*; that was partially produced by taking dramatic actions of raze above entire assemblages of buildings which were near the defensive structures; that way, the monuments became artificially isolated from the remaining urban mass. Consequently, some new public gardens

were constituted, which were bordered by roads allowing the outside apprehension of the castles by people. These new green parks were also proposed for the enjoyment of the populations, becoming breathing areas in the middle of the dense urban masses. The arboreal masses and the pedestrian roads were meticulously studied, in order to take advantage of the better view points over the monuments, as well as allowing new mental maps; those green areas necessarily caused a strong visual impact in the urban landscape. For instance, it is possible to see it in the castles of Lisbon, Oporto, Vila Viçosa, Beja, Lagos, Trancoso or Chaves. Those kind of interventions over the medieval defensive structures produced drastic consequences in the urban morphology, particularly in the nearest urban areas.

Despite the existence of heavy interventions in the urban areas surrounding the castles, only a few cases like these were reported in Portugal. As a matter of fact, just in some circumstances the principle of inventive reintegration was used. The *DGEMN* used to condemn those practices, because they forged the true values presented by the monuments; however, when the stylistic reintegration was used, it was through formal analogies with similar buildings, historical investigations and archaeological excavations, which would allow filling the existing gaps in the castles.

RELATIONS BETWEEN DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES AND URBAN CORES

The gradual reach of consciousness about the historic centre's value (due to its character which allow settle the collective identity, the cultural memory and the social ways of life) evolved from the fragmented protection focused in the monuments to the patrimonialization of entire cities – or at least vast parts of themselves. Concerning the medieval defensive structures, the city walls kept on acting as restrictive elements in the process of urban planning – even when the walled perimeter coincide with the town limits; the circumscription of the historic urban mass by a walled perimeter turns more evident the fragmentary character of that core, comparing it to the whole city. So, that area became an island with its own specificities. In some cases, while the morphology of the enclosed areas maintain the homogeneous characteristics which were predominant in the medieval cities, the surrounding areas right outside the city walls have other ones, such as regular quarters, larger road's grid, many squares and green spaces, another cadastral system of land parcels, higher buildings, different building materials and constructive techniques, and many other aspects. More than the ancient historic areas which have not any defensive structures surrounding the ancient cores, the medieval city walls (as well as the modern fortifications around the cities) shape a physical border that cannot be forgotten. Even for the common citizen, the defensive walls appear as a physical limit of the town's ancient part, and so they can personify a touchable border opposing the other ones (which exist, but only can be seen in plans).

Ruskin was perhaps the first who defended the urban cores as a whole, not only the monuments, but also the common architecture which characterized it. For Ruskin, the ancient cities had important values such as the religious, cultural and social ones, which should be preserved; to do that, it was necessary to conserve the picturesque physical remains from that time. The intervention made in *Carcassone*, by Viollet-le-Duc, was maybe the first time where an entire walled city was attempted to be preserved, following a plan in which the city walls and the castle acquired a major role. Alfonso Rubbiani and Giosuè Carducci were protagonists of another plan intending to preserve the picturesque ambience in Bologna, using aesthetic operations for pure beautification of façades and public spaces.

However, only with Gustavo Giovannoni was it possible to have a theory in which the concerns about urban heritage were focused. Indeed, Giovannoni was against the usual practice of *sventramento*, which use to lead entire settlements to be destroyed; denying the practice of isolation of monuments and encouraging the concept of urban environment – which was exposed in 1933 on the Charter of Athens –, Giovannoni proposed the concept of *diradamento edilizio*, which allowed the creation of breathing areas and equipments inside the ancient urban tissues and gave more substance to the ancient cores. The ancient cores inside city walls were considered monuments and historic testimonies, but also as receipt sources through their touristic potential; that way, the musealization of those cores was carried out, being valorised the existing picturesque and traditional aspects, like it was made, for instance, in Dubrovnik. All the interventions produced in those places tried to be inserted harmoniously in the whole, attempting to respect the

morphological characteristics from there. The development of those planning criteria gave origin to several protection programs of the ancient cores, which could be considered as a bridge between the old planning processes and the new generation plans, in which a strong component guided to the immaterial heritage can be found.

This way, nowadays the planning criteria must imply acting beyond the cosmetic interventions, the rehabilitation of the built area or the simple creation of infrastructures. The urban renewing, based on the reconstruction and substitution of existing buildings, was gradually replaced by a complementary social and economical policy, coming along with the increase of the tourism economy; if, in the beginning, the conservation of the areas around the monuments was done in order to maintain the picturesque ambience, the functional importance of those ancient areas was progressively recognized; nevertheless, the conditions for a contemporary normal life for the original citizens from those places should also be ensured. That fact conditioned the development of the urban planning policies, and even the regional policies. With the inclusion of policies coming from other areas (such as economy, sociology, culture, history, anthropology and others) in the last decades, there was a natural repercussion in the way how the problematics of historic cores – or, more properly, ancient cores – were seen and perceived by several sectors and persons. Some paradigmatic situations of that can be seen in the plans for Bologna made by Campos Venuti and Pier Luigi Cervellati, for Urbino made by Giancarlo de Carlo or for Bérgamo made by Coppa and Angelini (VARAS, 1999).

In Portugal, during the *Estado Novo* regime, an official action of national propaganda was developed, called *Política do Espírito* – "Spirit Policy". That policy was initially dominated by an ideology that adopted traditionalist and nationalist values and images. The activities undertaken included the scenographic reappropriation of ancient traditions, laden with virtues which were important to emphasise. That way, the cult of tradition and the stimulation for national regionalism were intended to be instilled in Portuguese people. The economic potential of those sceneries based on heritage regeneration and on historical, ancestral and traditional values, was then congregated with the touristic interests. Since 1932 that the Portuguese legislation had considered a protection area around the monuments; that area usually was dimensioned with a radius from about 50m surrounding the monument, in which all the building interventions should be approved by the authorities. However, when the protection area implied medieval city walls, that fact made possible the inclusion of all the enclosed part in the protection area, allowing an integral management of the resulting patrimonial core. That was verified in the first experiences of protection of ancient cores in Portugal, which were, in fact, employed in circumscribed cities, where the villages were surrounded by city walls (TOMÉ, 2002).

These safeguarding experiences, integrating huge parts of cities, were improved in the 1950 decade, with some "improvement plans" which begun appearing in Portugal. More than mere beautification plans of façades and public spaces framing the monuments, those new plans intended to create better infrastructures, as well as recover the built space. With that, the quality of those urban areas was enhanced: interventions in the public spaces were made (like the regularization of paving of streets and squares, for instance), several buildings were rehabilitated in order to reach a formal depuration attempting to get a presumable "original shape", typologies which were considered traditional were recovered, and some elements that were regarded dissonant have also been replaced (for instance, windows and doors changed their shapes to pointed forms, plasters were removed leaving the stone visible, buildings were painted massively with white lime, etc.) – beside the effective creation of better infrastructures such as the sanitation or electrical. Nevertheless, those plans were limited by the expensive costs, and so, they were applied only in a few preserved cores with touristic potentialities, such as in the village of Óbidos or with the historic core of Guimarães (TOMÉ, 2002).

On the other hand, the rural world was considered by the *Estado Novo* regime, in a certain way, a space that had sanctuary values, where people could reconstitute their ancestry and national identity. The heritage conservation there was based on the preservation of popular virtues, which were the guardians of culture and traditions from the Past – meanwhile the cosmopolitan progress destroyed those virtues. Because of that, actions were also taken in order to recover and crystallize the Past, removing the progress from some predefined rural villages which still

maintain picturesque characteristics, such as their castles and city walls. As happened in the little towns of Évoramonte, Monsanto or Monsaraz, the urban interventions tried to produce the maintenance of the picturesque characters of the ancient villages, the reconversion of the existing medieval castles and other important buildings to be cultural and tourist equipments, the development of cultural routes inside those landscapes, and preservation of ways of life in those villages, allowing to increase their specific values.

CONCLUSION

The question of the people's identity is answered by several social, geographical, cultural, historical and other issues that show common behaviours to a set of people. This "national identity" concept acquired a new meaning against the threats of de-characterization, which seem to be something from the contemporary society since the Industrial Revolution, such as the quick cultural homogenization, market globalization, abolition of borders, interbreeding, etc. The perceptible dilution of differences demanded a need to pursue the origins as a set statement of the Individual opposing the Global. Historical places and their surrounding landscapes became essential elements to contemporary society, because their meanings; it was the case of the urban landscapes, in which the Portuguese medieval castles acquired a capital importance. Deep-rooted in people's memory, the medieval castles, guardians of the Portuguese nation, became great national symbols, admired and protected. The establishment of emotional relations between those castles, the landscape where they are located, and the Portuguese society, emerged strongly during the 19th century, with the beginning of the heritage concerns. With those concerns, an ideological image was brought, which was often exploited, manipulated, reinvented through different kinds of actions and, somehow, still is a need to preserve for the future.

Figure 1 - *Castle of Leiria, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 2 - *Castle of S. Jorge in Lisbon, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 3 - *City walls of Oporto, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 4 - *Castle of Vila Viçosa, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*
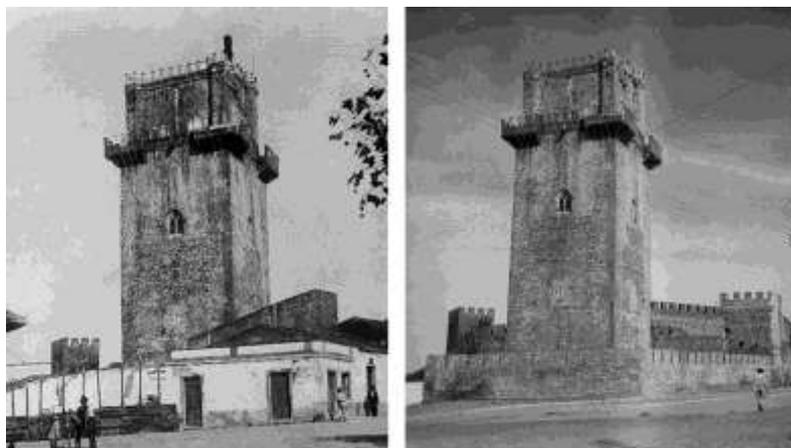
Figure 5 - *Castle of Beja, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 6 - *City walls of Lagos, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 7 - *City walls of Trancoso, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 8 - *Castle of Chaves, before and after the interventions (source: IHRU).*

Figure 9 – *Views over the village of Óbidos (source: IHRU).*

Figure 10 – *Views over the historic core of Guimarães (source: IHRU).*

Figure 11 – *Views over the village of Évoramonte (source: IHRU).*

Figure 12 – *Views over the village of Monsanto (source: IHRU).*

Figure 13 – *Views over the village of Monsaraz (source: IHRU).*

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