

## **Translating Paratextual Elements in an Ecofeminist Work**

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**Abstract:** *This study intends to explore the concepts of ecosophy and ecolinguistic equivalence in the field of translation studies, highlighting the significance of recreating cognitively equivalent translations of ecolinguistic constituents in a target text and also adopting and transferring the author's ecosophy in the translation process. The study specifically focuses on the paratextual elements, fulfilling crucial communicative functions, present in Buket Uzuner's ecofeminist work, *Toprak*, and its English translation, *Earth*, to evaluate the translator's preferences in re-establishing the author's ecosophy at the paratextual level. The paratextual elements analyzed particularly encompass the peritexts, namely the dedication, epigraphs, foreword, footnotes, and illustrations, with a comparative analysis. The findings illustrate instances where ecolinguistic equivalence was successfully achieved, but also highlight significant losses, as certain important eco-cultural aspects were omitted by the translator in the target text.*

**Keywords:** *ecolinguistics; ecolinguistic equivalence; paratextual elements; ecofeminism;*

### **Introduction**

The idea of a strong relationship between ecology and language is attributed to Haugen who, in 1970, defined language ecology as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (225). Another support, then, came from Halliday with his assertion in 1990 that ‘classicism, growthism, destruction of species, pollution, and the like [...] are not just problems for the biologists and physicists. They are problems for the applied linguistic community as well’ (199). These two ideas have inspired many researchers in the field of language studies, and the connection and interdependency between ecology and language have started to be studied scientifically. The exploration of ecological equivalents has expanded beyond the biological realm and has been embraced by various disciplines within the social sciences as ecolinguistic equivalence, a phenomenon referred to as the “ecological turn” by Stibbe (7). Particularly within language sciences, the notion of ecological equivalents can be applied to ecolinguistic elements present in both source and target cultures, and achieving “ecolinguistic equivalence” entails creating similar conceptualizations related to ecology in the target text. This ecological perspective on language has garnered

significant attention and various research within literary studies (where texts are critically analyzed from an ecological standpoint) and in translation studies (where the transfer of the author's ecological perspectives and ecolinguistic elements from the source text to the target text are examined) have been conducted.

There are some scholars and researchers who have focused on this issue and regarded the ecolinguistic approach to translation studies, or ecotranslation, as a subfield of translation describing this field as the search for equivalence in the target text in terms of both ecological elements at the lexical level and ecological conceptualizations at the cognitive level. As put by Badenes and Coisson:

Environmental studies and Translation studies are interdisciplinary academic fields. When they come into contact, a series of unresolved matters intersect: How ecological values are deemed, which is the human perspective of the natural world and how this is conveyed through language, and how current environmental issues are represented and subsequently transmitted through translation into new cultural spaces where different notions about the environment prevail. (357)

In this context, researchers in translation studies have been trying to provide answers to these questions making ecotranslation a very specific field to study. In this sub-field of translation, within the linguistic dimension, ecolinguistic equivalence can be described as the transfer of each ecology-related culture-bound words such as flora, fauna, natural formation, names, etc. to the target culture and at the cognitive level, the formation of the source text author's ecosophy or ecological philosophy in the translated text.

At this point, it would be beneficial to elaborate on the term ecosophy which is “a philosophical worldview or a system inspired by our living conditions in the ecosphere” (Levesque 512). Ecosophy was first put forth by Arne Næss, the founding father of Deep Ecology, which is a philosophical thought resulting in environmental awareness worldwide. Forty years later, Stibbe (2015), the pioneer of ecolinguistic theory and methodologies, defined ecosophy as a “normative set of principles and assumptions about relationships among humans, other forms of life, and the physical environment. Analysts use their ecosophy to judge the stories that they reveal through linguistic analysis” (202). Thus, comprehending the author's ecosophy and re-presenting it in the target text is the key motivation in the translation process of texts with ecological concerns. Relatedly enough, as Aksoy argues, “translated texts are now regarded as the space where the existence and treatment of ecological concerns in the source text have either been expressed or subdued concerning

the cultural environment in which the translated text is allowed to exist” (2); thus, through the investigation of ecolinguistic equivalence between source and targets or by dwelling into and comparing the linguistic and cognitive constituents of these texts, the degree of transference of ecosophy at the cognitive and lexical level to the target text can be revealed.

The recreation of ecological concern of a source text author and the transference of the ecolinguistic patterns from a source text to the target one can not only be observed through the investigation of the main text but also through the analysis of paratextual devices which have been revealed to be one of the most important integral parts of a text. Paratextual elements in a work can be regarded as the ingredient “what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” (Genette xviii). In other words, investigating paratextual elements is very significant during translation analysis, and it can even be highlighted that without paratextual analysis, a thorough, complete, and satisfactory translation analysis cannot be fulfilled. The paratextual devices can be categorized as the ones placed within (peritexts) such as titles, subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, footnotes, epilogues, and afterwords and outside the book (epitexts) such as authorial correspondence, oral confidences, diaries, and pre-texts, adverts, conversations (Genette xviii). In addition, Batchelor asserted that paratexts can be considered “as any material additional to, appended to or external to the core text which has functions of explaining, defining, instructing, or supporting, adding background information, or the relevant opinions and attitudes of scholars, translators, and reviewers” (27). In short, the pragmatic and cognitive functions of paratextual devices are very important for the text and the text receiver, and they deserve to be regarded as an independent field of study. Although Genette, the forerunner of paratextual studies, did not touch upon the translation dimension of paratextual elements in her work, paratextual devices within the context of translation studies have been paid close attention by translation researchers since the last decade. In Turkey, for instance, Tahir-Gürçağlar has a very considerable contribution to the field with her theoretical points of view. On the significance of paratextual elements in translation, she mentioned: “They also have an independent existence since they stand physically separate from the translated text and are more likely to meet the reader before the translation itself” (113) revealing how influential paratextual elements for readers of translations.

Within this theoretical framework, this work intended to contribute to the literature of translation studies by investigating the translation of paratextual devices through ecolinguistic senses. It aimed to reveal to what extent the translator of Buket Uzuner’s *Toprak*, one of the most successful eco-feminist works published in contemporary Turkish literature, achieved to

recreate the author's ecosophy at the paratextual level; in other words, to what extent ecolinguistic equivalence was established through the translation of paratextual elements in the English version, *Earth*.

### **Uzuner's *Toprak* (Earth) as an Eco-Feminist Novel**

Buket Uzuner, a highly acclaimed contemporary Turkish author, stands out as one of the pioneer writers whose works received support under the TEDA (Translation and Publication Grant Programme of Turkey) Project. TEDA is "a subvention project for the publication of Turkish cultural, artistic and literary works in foreign languages" ("TEDA") which was initiated to promote Turkish culture by translating Turkish literary works into foreign languages. In line with the TEDA Project's objectives, since then, Uzuner's literary works have been translated into numerous languages, solidifying her reputation as one of the most accomplished and influential authors in Turkish contemporary literature. Especially with her tetralogy *Su* (2012), *Toprak* (2015), *Hava* (2018), and *Ateş* (2023), collectively known as *Uyumsuz Defne Kaman'ın Maceraları*, which were translated into English as *Water* (2014), *Earth* (2018), and *Air* (2020), respectively, with the hyper name *The Adventures of Misfit Defne Kaman*, she has attracted the attention of both English and Turkish readers, as each falls under the category of eco-feminist literature due to its portrayal of the interconnectedness between women and the natural world, as well as its critique of patriarchal structures and exploitation of the environment.

In the second book of the series of *The Adventures of Misfit Defne Kaman*, *Earth*, the author portrays the earth as a living entity, highlighting the interdependence between human beings and the natural world by including Shamanist values and mythological ingredients. The novel's characters often have a close bond with nature, actively resisting the destruction of nature and advocating for ecological preservation. The novel was set in one of the cities of central Anatolia, Çorum where the main character was lost and the other characters tried to find her who was taken hostage by smugglers of historical artifacts at the museum. Throughout the whole adventure, Uzuner referred to Shaman traditions, *Kutadgu Bilig*, and *Tabiatname*, and in the narrative, the reader faces the ecofeminist traces as exemplified in the quotation below:

In the beginning, there was earth. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We are the renters of the earth who cannot pay their dues. Earth is mother. It is birth. Earth is the womb of the planet. It is the home and mother of water. It is the land, the world. It is base and ground. Earth is seed, blessing, and prosperity. It protects and preserves. Earth is life, it is vitality. It means field, root, sprout, tree, and forest... (132)

As can be inferred, the earth is associated with a human being, a woman, a mother, a womb, birth, life, etc. The adoption of the conceptual metaphor EARTH IS MOTHER can be considered a clear example of the ecosophy of the author. Throughout the novel, women are depicted as being closely connected to the earth, embodying its nurturing and life-giving qualities. The work suggests that the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment stem from the same patriarchal mindset that objectifies and exploits both.

### **Data Analysis**

For the investigation of the paratextual elements, mainly peritextual ones, a qualitative analysis was conducted and the ecolinguistic equivalence between the dedication, epigraphs, illustrations, foreword, and footnotes in the source and target texts was analyzed. The data was selected from the peritextual elements in which there are ecology-related items.

#### **a. Dedication**

As Genette defines it, dedication is “offering the work as a token of esteem to a person, a real or ideal group, or some other type of entity” (117). The first example of the translation of peritextual devices is the dedication section of the work which is as follows in Turkish:

Bu romanı:

Toprak kadar sessiz ve esirgeyen anneannem Zehra Anar Özar ile  
Toprak kadar sağlam ve dayanıklı babannem Kamile Hediye Uzuner’in  
anıları

İLE

Tabiata zararlı projelerin önüne göğsünü siper ederek dikilen, asırlık yerler tohumları çeyiz sandığında en değerli mücevher olarak saklamayı akıl etmiş, her biri Toprak’ın kızı ve aslen Tabiat Ana Umay’ın torunu olan Anadolu’lu çiftçi-köylü kadınlara ithaf ediyorum.

The literal translation of the dedication section is as follows: “I dedicate this novel to the memories of my grandmother Zehra Anar Özar, who was as silent and sparing as the Earth, and my grandmother Kamile Hediye Uzuner, who was as strong and resilient as the Earth, and to the Anatolian farmer-peasant women, each of whom is a daughter of the Earth and originally a granddaughter of Mother Nature Umay, who stood up against projects harmful to nature, who had the wisdom to keep the seeds of centuries-old places as the most precious jewel in their dowry chests”.

The dedication section of the target text is as follows:

This book is dedicated to the WOMEN FARMERS of Anatolia who have passionately protected heirloom, organized seeds in their personal treasure chests for generations despite legal measures preventing the trade of local seeds. I am deeply thankful to those WOMEN FARMERS who try to protect the land, the trees, the water and the air of Anatolia against all hazardous power plant projects despite serious pressures. These women must be the great granddaughters of Umay-the Mother Nature Goddess of ancient Turkish Shamans.

As presented in the target text, the dedication section is composed of two parts with only one sentence in the original version, but the target text includes one part with three sentences. This structural difference between the source and the target text was also kept semantically. The translator deleted the first part of the dedication, consisting of the dedicatees. For Genette, “The existence of the dedication is more factual than textual, unless the name of the dedicatee is mentioned in the text itself and, more precisely, in its preambles – in many respects the forebears of our peritext” (118). The translator kept the main essence of the work while omitting the names of the dedicatees. However, a very influential metaphor was omitted from the text “Toprak kadar sessiz ve esirgeyen anneannem” (literally “my grandmother as silent and compassionate as Earth” in English) and “Toprak kadar sağlam ve dayanıklı babaannem” (literally “my grandmother as strong and durable as Earth” in English). The metaphor cognitively refers to WOMEN and they are associated with strong and durable Earth, while at the same time referring to the title of the novel. Nevertheless, a very important strategy was used in the translation of this peritext which was the use of the expression “WOMEN FARMERS”, although this expression was not used in capitals in the source text, the translator translated it in capitals which can be a trace for the transference of the ecofeminist philosophy of the author.

#### **b. Epigraphs**

The following peritextual element analyzed in this study is the epigraph and Genette defined the epigraph as “a quotation placed en exergue [in the exergue], generally at the head of a work or a section of a work” (144). The first epigraph analyzed in the source text is a very significant one revealing the ecological stance of the work. It was taken from the poem “Kara Toprak” (Black Earth) by Minstrel Veysel Şatıroğlu who is considered one of the most prominent figures in Turkish folk literature and is celebrated for his heartfelt poetry and musical talents. The quotation is as follows:

İskence yaptıkça bana gülerdi  
Bunda yalan yoktur herkes de gördü

Bir çekirdek verdim, dört bostan verdi  
Benim sadık yarım kara topraktır.

Aşık Veysel Şatıroğlu, “Kara Toprak”

The literal translation of the stanza is as follows:

She laughed at me as I tortured her  
There's no lie in this, everyone saw it  
I gave her a single seed, she gave me four orchards  
Black Earth is my faithful beloved

Minstrel Veysel Şatıroğlu, “Black Earth”

The poem resonates deeply with audiences for its profound and philosophical themes reflecting on the transience of life, the impermanence of worldly possessions, and the inevitability of death. “Black Earth” expresses the poet's contemplation of mortality and the timeless connection between humanity and the earth. However, this philosophical content is not transferred to the target culture despite its richness and depth in terms of ecosophy, as it was not translated into English.

The second epigraph to be analyzed is a Hittite proverb from The Context of Scripture:

Ağaçlar uçlarını kırar, çalı çırpı yapraklarını bağlar,  
Geyik yavrusunu öldürür mü hiç?

Hitit Sözü William W. Hallo, The Context of Scripture, Hittite  
Proverbs (1997)

The literal translation of the epigraph above is as follows:

Trees break their tips, brushwood binds their leaves,  
Would a deer kill its fawn?

This epigraph carries ecolinguistic elements and points of view in itself as it is an imagery from the natural world to illustrate the concept of safeguarding and nurturing one another by challenging the idea of a natural and instinctual bond between living beings in nature. But this epigraph does not exist in the target text which can be seen as an incompleteness in re-creating the ecological context in the target culture.

### **c. Foreword**

The foreword is the other important peritextual element that deserves to be analyzed in terms of the ecolinguistic equivalence between the source and target texts. In the original work, the author says:

Bu romandaki karakterler yazar tarafından kurgulanmış olup yaşayan insanlarla benzerlikler tamamen tesadüftür. Çorum valisi (...) kurmaca karakterlerdir, asıllarıyla ilgisi yoktur.

Bu romandaki olaylar, bugün Anadolu'da yaşayan halk kültürlerinin hepsinin günlük yaşam adetlerine yansıyan kadim Türk Kaman gelenekleri ve Orta Asya- Sibiryta mitolojileri ile M.Ö. 1650-1200 yıllarında bugünkü Çorum'da başkent kurup, Anadolu ve Mezopotamya'da hüküm sürmüş Hitit İmparatorluğu mitolojisinden esinlenerek kurgulanmıştır. Bu bir biyografik roman değildir.

The literal translation is as follows:

The characters in this novel are fictionalized by the author and the similarities with living people are purely coincidental. The governor of Çorum (...) are fictional characters, they have nothing to do with the real ones.

The events in this novel are inspired by the ancient Turkish Kaman traditions and Central Asian-Siberian mythologies, which are reflected in the daily life customs of all the folk cultures living in Anatolia today, and the mythology of the Hittite Empire, which established a capital in today's Çorum in 1650-1200 BC and ruled in Anatolia and Mesopotamia. This is not a biographical novel.

Nevertheless, the foreword in the translated version is as follows:

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, events, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used factiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, and locales is coincidental.

The analysis of the translation of the foreword seems like a summary of the original version. But in this summary, a very crucial amount of ecolinguistic items were deleted especially in the second paragraph resulting in the loss of very important historical, cultural, and mythological background information for the target reader which can be regarded as a hindrance for the target reader to deeply comprehending the background of the novel.



d. **Footnotes**

Translators use footnotes with different intentions and they can be scattered in the text “emerging and becoming visible at specific moments during the reading of the text” (Genette 151). Although there are many footnotes in the source and the target texts, it should be emphasized that only the footnotes with ecological contexts were included in the study. Thus, three examples are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The examples for the translations of the footnotes

Source Text	Target Text
<p>1. UNESCO'nun haberi olsa, hiç şüphesiz bu dört defteri Evliya Çelebi'nin eseri gibi başyapıt sayar.” (82).</p> <p><b>No Footnote</b></p> <p>Literal Translation: If UNESCO knew about it, it would undoubtedly consider these four notebooks as masterpieces like Evliya Çelebi's work.</p>	<p>1. If UNESCO knew about these four volumes they'd list them as masterpieces right up there with Marco Polo and Evliya Çelebi” (p. 80)</p> <p><b>Footnote:</b> Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682): an Ottoman Turk who recorded his travels over 40 years in a 'Book of Travel' the Seyahatname. His 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary was officially celebrated by UNESCO.</p>
<p>2. Cove belgeseli için davetli aktivistler arasındaydım. Afrika ve Arap ülkelerinde çocuklar ölürlen, sen yunusları kurtar!’ diyen mesajlar almıştım. (p. 175)</p> <p><b>No Footnote</b></p> <p>Literal Translation: I was one of the invited activists for the Cove documentary. I received messages saying, "While children are dying in Africa and Arab countries, save the dolphins!</p>	<p>2. I was one of the activists they invited when they were making The Cove. I got messages saying You go and save the dolphins while children are dying in Africa.” (p. 166)</p> <p><b>Footnote:</b> The Cove: a 2009 documentary film that questions dolphin hunting in Japan, awarded the Oscar for Best Documentary feature in 2010.</p>
<p>3. BİR DAĞ GİBİ DÜŞÜNMEK*</p> <p><b>Footnote:</b> “Bir Dağ Gibi Düşünmek”: Amerikalı çevreci yazar Aldo Leopold'ün (1887-1946) efsanevi eseri Bir Kum Yöresi Almanağı'nda yer alan ünlü makalesi. (Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, çev: Ufuk Özdağ)</p>	<p>3. THINKING LIKE A MOUNTAIN</p> <p><b>No Footnote</b></p>

Literal Translation: "Thinking Like a Mountain": A famous essay by American environmentalist writer Aldo Leopold (1887-1946) in his legendary work A Sand Country Almanac.	
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As for the first instance of footnotes, Uzuner did not give a footnote when she referred to Evliya Çelebi who was a renowned Ottoman explorer and writer who lived from 1611 to 1682; however, the translator also included Marco Polo in the main text who was an Italian merchant and explorer who lived from 1254 to 1324 by providing a footnote to introduce Evliya Çelebi to the target reader. The translator opted to establish a relationship between these two well-known explorers living in different periods but shared important similarities in their journeys and writings which were published in *Seyahatname* (the Book of Travel) and *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

In the second example presented in Table 1, the author again did not choose to give a footnote for the “Cove documentary”, while the translator acted visibly and provides a footnote for the description of the documentary. The Cove documentary is very crucial for the environment as it plays a significant role in exposing the cruelty of dolphin hunting, raising awareness about the importance of marine conservation, and inspiring efforts to protect dolphins and preserve marine ecosystems. Although the footnotes are considered hindering the flow of reading for readers, such ecological information could be efficient in this context.

For the last instance of the footnotes in Table 1, the author, for the subtitle “Bir Dağ Gibi Düşünmek”, provided a footnote defining the reference of the expression. Nevertheless, the translator did not give a footnote for introducing this essay to the target reader, although it is very important for ecological issues. As was briefly emphasized in the footnote, "Thinking Like a Mountain" is an influential essay written by Aldo Leopold, an American ecologist, forester, and environmentalist. It was originally published in his book "A Sand County Almanac" in 1949, a cornerstone of modern environmental literature, in which he emphasized the importance of understanding the intricate relationships between species and their environment. The essay's central message is that human actions have far-reaching consequences on the natural world and humans must learn to appreciate the intrinsic value of biodiversity and understand the importance of preserving natural processes. The target text did not include a footnote describing this essay which may be because the translator thought that the target reader already had information related to it.

**e. Illustration**

The inclusion of the deer figure as a non-verbal peritextual element surrounding the text at the beginning of each section has a special aim in Uzuner's *Earth*. Although the cover illustration is the same in both the original and the translated version, the deer illustration within the source text narration was not used in the target text, despite its semiotic importance. As put forth by Gezer (2392), the deer is an animal mostly associated with polytheistic beliefs and mysticism in Central Asia and is considered sacred. The deer figure holds significant importance in Turkish Shaman traditions as it is believed that a deer has a guiding nature and carries the soul of the dead to the afterlife. A deer is also known as the animal-mother related to Creation showing the female power standing out against the masculine power with its intelligence and wisdom (Uğurlu 90-91). Uzuner used the figure of a deer throughout the novel and at the same time, she referred to it many times in the narration. For instance, she included the poem "Geyikli Gece" by the Turkish poet Turgut Uyar and in one of the instances she stated: "Geyik bir tanrı nimetidir, eski Türklerin geyiğe verdiği önem, kurttan ve aslandan çok daha büyüktür. Çünkü geyik olmasaydı, ne eski Türkler, ne de şu konuştuğumuz Türkçe kalırdı yeryüzünde!" (114) and in the translated version it says: "Deer are a blessing from God. The ancient Turks attached much more importance to them than wolves and lions. Because it wasn't for deer, there'd have been no ancient Turks, nor the Turkish we're talking at this moment!" (110). She also added:

(...) eski Türkler sürücülük ve avcılık geleneğine dayanan yaşayışlarında geyik sayesinde hem hayatta kalmış, hem de destanlarından efsanelerine, masallarından ninnilerine, sonra türkülerinden halk şiirine, efendime söyleyeyim, resimlerinden totem kutluluğuna kadar, hep bu uğurlu hayvan sayesinde mevcudiyetlerini korumuşlardır. Bizim kadim Kamanlık geleneğimizde geyik, kuşkusuz yüzyıllara bağlı bir borçluluk duygusunun sonucu olarak baş tacı edilmiştir. (115)

This paragraph is revealed in the translated version as the following:

(...) the ancient Turks' way of life was based on traditional herding and hunting so they owed their survival to the deer, plus their epics and legends, fairy tales and lullabies, then the folk songs. What else, their paintings and totem pole blessings, their very existence was all down to this auspicious animal. And in our ancient Shamanic tradition deer were always glorified, no doubt because of a centuries-old feeling of being indebted to them. (111)

Although the importance of the deer was transferred directly to the target text without any change through linguistic elements, the illustration of the deer was not used in the target text at the beginning of each part resulting in non-equivalence between the source and the target text in terms of this peritextual element.

### **Conclusion**

This study was an attempt to shed light on the crucial concepts of ecosophy and ecolinguistic equivalence within the realm of translation studies, emphasizing the importance of recreating cognitively equivalent translations of ecolinguistic constituents in a target text. By investigating the paratextual elements present in Buket Uzuner's ecofeminist work, *Toprak*, and its English translation, *Earth*, this research aimed to evaluate the translator's choices in re-establishing the author's ecosophy at the paratextual level. The analysis of peritextual elements, specifically dedications, epigraphs, forewords, footnotes, and illustrations provided insights into the translator's preferences and decision-making process.

The findings of this study provided instances where the translator successfully achieved ecolinguistic equivalence, effectively transferring the eco-cultural aspects embedded in the original text to the target language. However, it is important to note that significant losses were also identified, as certain essential eco-cultural elements were omitted in the translated version. The data analyzed in this study highlighted the importance of dealing with ecolinguistic constituents and the transfer of ecosophy in the translation process revealing the need for translators to be aware of the intricate interplay between language, culture, and ecology, and to make conscious decisions that maintain the eco-cultural integrity of the original text.

Further research and attention in translation studies should be directed towards developing strategies and methodologies that enhance the achievement of ecolinguistic equivalence and the careful and accurate transmission of ecosophy. This research is thought to contribute to the literature of translation studies by raising awareness of the importance of encouraging translators to engage deeply with the source text, its eco-cultural nuances, and the author's ecological worldview to ensure a more comprehensive and accurate transfer of ecosophy in the target language. Ultimately, these efforts are thought to support the overarching objective of cultivating ecological consciousness and nurturing cross-cultural comprehension in an increasingly interconnected world.

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