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CIRCASSIAN ANTIPASSIVES AND THEIR RELATION TO SYNTACTIC ALIGNMENT

1. Antipassives: some general issues[1]

According to the standard definitions (Cooreman 1994; Polinsky 2005; Say 2008; Kulikov 2011: 380–383; Janic 2013), antipassive is a valency-changing operation which is applied to a transitive verb with two core arguments (A and P) and makes it intransitive, with the A argument realized as S of an intransitive predicate. The original P argument is either left unrealized (1) at all or demoted to an oblique grammatical function (2).

transitive			antipassive	
I	II	$\rightarrow$	I	II
A_i	P		S_i	(Obl)

(1) MATSES (Panoan, Peru, Brazil; Fleck 2006: 559)

    a.   *aid opa-n   matses   pe-e-k.*
         DEM dog-ERG   people(ABS) bite-NPST-IND
         'That dog bites people.'

    b.   *aid opa   pe-**an**-e-k.*
         DEM dog(ABS)   bite-AP-NPST-IND
         'That dog bites.'

(2) WARRUNGU (Pama-Nyungan, NE Australia; Tsunoda 1988: 598)

    a.   *pama-ngku kamu   yangka-n.*
         man-ERG   water(ABS)   search-NFUT
         'The man looked for water.'

    b.   *pama   **kamu-wu** yangka-**kali**-n.*
         man(ABS)   water-DAT   search-AP-NFUT
         'id.'

➢ It should be noted that some linguists include the possibility to express the omitted object with a peripheral syntactic device into the definition of antipassive, cf. (Aikhenvald, Dixon 2000: 9):

    "This argument can be omitted, although there is always the option of including it".

We assume that both cases where the object of antipassives can be expressed and those where it cannot be grouped together due to their functional similarity.

➢ Antipassives are often morphologically marked on verbs, though P-demotion without any formal marking ("A-lability") is also quite widespread, cf. (3).

(3) ENGLISH

    a.   *John is **reading** a book.*
    b.   *John is **reading**.*

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[1] The present talk is an updated and extended version of the paper presented at "*Syntax of the World's Languages V*" in Dubrovnik, October 2012.

➢ Traditionally, antipassive has been considered to be mainly characteristic of ergative languages (cf. Dixon 1994: 147; Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000: 10), and the function of the antipassive has been taken to demote the syntactic status of the P in transitive constructions. Indeed, in ergative languages, the P argument of transitive verbs shows signs of syntactic prominence, and therefore it is relevant for the grammar whether P is present or absent. However, as recent studies by Saj (2008) and Janic (2013) have shown, antipassives are found in many languages with accusative alignment as well.

➢ The definition of antipassive implies that this operation affects only transitive verbs, and is not used to demote or eliminate an indirect object of a bivalent intransitive verb.
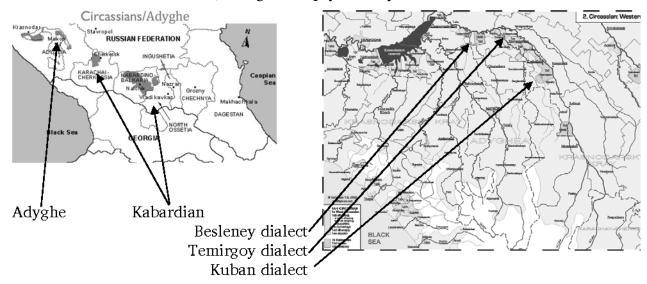
In our talk we will present a typologically unusual case of an antipassive construction in an ergative language which applies indiscriminately to both transitive and intransitive two-argument verbs thus operating on accusative rather than ergative basis.

2. Circassian languages

A branch of the North-West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) language family, comprising two major languages (or rather groups of dialects): **Adyghe** (West Circassian) and **Kabardian** (East Circassian).

Our fieldwork data comes from three Circassian varieties spoken in the Republic of Adygeya (Russian Federation):

➢ Temirgoy dialect of Adyghe, village Haqwerinehabl (very close to standard Adyghe)
➢ Besleney dialect of Kabardian, village Ulyap (very different from standard Kabardian)
➢ Kuban dialect of Kabardian, village Blešepsyne (very different from standard Kabardian)

Important typological features of Circassian languages:

➢ very little distinction between nouns, adjectives and verbs (Lander & Testelets 2006);
➢ polysynthesis: pronominal affixes expressing all arguments of the verb (S, A, P as well as various indirect objects such as recipient, benefactive, and even location, cf. e.g. Smeets 1992) and a rich system of affixes marking aspectual, temporal and modal meanings (Korotkova & Lander 2010, Lander & Letuchiy 2010, Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011):

(4) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

sə-qə-zer-a-xʷə-č'erə-mə-ṭetə-č'ə-ž'-a-r
1SG.ABS-DIR-FCT-3PL.IO-BEN-LOC-NEG-tie-ELAT-RE-PST-ABS
'that they could not untie me'

➢ rich system of valency increasing operations, including causative and a large set of applicatives: benefactive, malefactive, many locatives etc. (Letučij 2009a,b, Paris 1995);

➢ ergativity in both head- and dependent-marking (Smeets 1992, Kumakhov & Vamling 2009, Lander 2012, Letuchiy 2012), coupled with an impoverished case system comprising only Absolutive (*-r*, marks intransitive subjects (5a) and direct objects (5b)) and Oblique (*-m*, marks transitive subjects (5b), all types of indirect objects (5b), and adnominal possessors (5c); NB personal pronouns, possessed nominals and proper names, as well as non-referential common nouns normally do not admit case marking (see Arkadiev & Testelets 2015).

(5) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)

    a.   *č'ale-r* $\varnothing^2$-*me-čəje.*
           boy-ABS   3SG.ABS-DYN-sleep
           'The boy is sleeping.'

    b.   *č'ale-m*   *pŝaŝe-m*   *txəλə-r* $\varnothing$-$\varnothing$-*r-j-e-tə.*
           boy-OBL   girl-OBL   book-ABS   3SG.ABS-3SG.IO-DAT-3SG.ERG-DYN-give
           'The boy is giving the book to the girl.'

    c.   *ç̂əfə-m* $\varnothing$-*jə-wəne*
           man-OBL   3SG.PR-POSS-house
           'the man's house'

Existing sources on Circassian morphosyntax:

➢ in general on Circassian: Kumaxov 1971 (in Russian); Kumakhov & Vamling 2009 (in English);
➢ on Adyghe: Paris 1989 (in French), Smeets 1984 (in English), Rogava & Keraševa 1962, Testelec (ed.) 2009 (in Russian);
➢ on Kabardian: Colarusso 1989, 1992, 2006, Matasovič 2008 (in English), Kumaxov (ed.) 2006 (in Russian);
➢ on Besleney: Balkarov 1952, 1969 (in Russian); Alparslan, Dumézil 1964 (in French);
➢ on Kuban: Kumaxov 1969 (in Russian).

3. Two-argument predicates in Circassian

Transitivity is a formal morphosyntactic feature of verbs in Circassian reflected in the kind of cross-referencing prefixes they take:

➢ Transitive verbs have at least two arguments: the A cross-referenced in the prefixal position closest to the verbal stem by a special set of person-number prefixes which we gloss ERG(ative) (in particular, the 3SG.ERG prefix is overt, while other 3SG prefixes are zero), and the P cross-referenced in the word-initial position by a different set of prefixes glossed ABS(olutive).
➢ Intransitive verbs have an S argument cross-referenced in the word-initial position by prefixes from the Absolutive set.

Both transitive and intransitive verbs may have an indirect object argument introduced either by one of the numerous specific applicative prefixes or by the semantically bleached "Dative" applicative prefix *(j)e-*. All applicative prefixes occur in slots intermediate between those of the Absolutive and the Ergative arguments.

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[2] Henceforth we will not mark and gloss zero morphemes.

➢ transitive

(6) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

  a. **wə-s**-λeʁʷ-a
     2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-see-PST
     'I saw you.'

  b. **w-jə**-λeʁʷ-a
     2SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-see-PST
     'S/he saw you.'

➢ intransitive with an indirect object

(7) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

  a. sə-q̇ə-**w**-e-ž̌-a
     1SG.ABS-DIR-2SG.IO-DAT-wait-PST
     'I waited for you.'

  b. ∅-q̇ə-**w**-e-ž̌-a
     3SG.ABS-DIR-2SG.IO-DAT-wait-PST
     'S/he waited for you.'

Circassian languages possess a large and heterogeneous class of two-argument intransitive verbs. These can denote both physical activity ('hit', 'bite', 'drink', 'kiss' etc.) and mental activity, speech, or perception ('read/learn', 'look at', 'scold', 'talk to', 'smell', 'think about' etc.). Many of these predicates are translated by transitive verbs into SAE languages.

4. The Circassian antipassive: the "normal" case

When applying to transitive verbs, the antipassive in Circassian either eliminates the P argument, thus producing a single-argument intransitive verb, or demotes the P to the indirect object (the latter option being limited to a small number of lexicalized cases).

	transitive				antipassive	
	I	II			I	(II)
	A_i	P_k	$\rightarrow$		S_i	(IO_k)
cross-reference	Ergative	Absolutive			Absolutive	(IO)
case-marking	Oblique	Absolutive			Absolutive	(Oblique)

There are two morphological subtypes of the antipassive: marked and unmarked.

The marked antipassive is formed from verbs whose stem ends in /ə/ (in some positions this vowel is elided) by substituting it with /e/ (in some positions /e/ changes to /a/).

(8) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE

  a. njewəš' š'jeʁež'aʁew cʷəmpe-r qə-č̣'-a-č'ə-ze a-šxə-š't...
     tomorrow beginning.with strawberry-ABS DIR-LOC-3PL.ERG-pick-CNV 3PL.ERG-eat-FUT
     'From tomorrow on they'll eat strawberries right after having picked them...' [GišKr: 111]

  b. ž̌ədedem ŝʷə-z-ʁe-**sxe**-š't.
     now 2PL.ABS-1SG.ERG-CAUS-eat.AP-FUT
     'And now I'll give you something to eat.', lit. "I will make you eat" [GišKr: 42]

(9) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

  a. pŝaŝe-m ž̌ane jə-**də**-n xʷje.
     girl-OBL dress 3SG.ERG-sew-POT must
     'The girl must sew a dress.'

  b. nataše deʁʷ-wə jəč'jə dax-wə ma-**de**.
     Natasha good-ADV and beautiful-ADV DYN-sew.AP
     'Natasha sews well and nicely.'

(10) KUBAN KABARDIAN (elicited)

  a. s-jə-q̇ʷeš'ə-m s-jə-txəλə-r jə-**ž̌'ə**-ne.
     1SG-POSS-brother-OBL 1SG-POSS-book-ABS 3SG.ERG-read-FUT
     'My brother will read my book through.'

  b. s-jə-q̇ʷeš'ə-r s-jə-txəλə-m j-o-**ž̌'e**.
     1SG-POSS-brother-ABS 1SG-POSS-book-OBL DAT-DYN-read
     'My brother is reading my book.' (elicited)

The unmarked antipassive occurs with verbs whose stem ends in /e/ and is manifested by the valency change alone, marked by the number and position of cross-referencing prefixes and the case-marking of corresponding NPs.

(11) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)

    a.   *ʁʷəneʁʷə-m*   *xate-r*   *j-e-pč'e.*
        neighbour-OBL   garden-ABS   3SG.ERG-DYN-weed
        'The neighbour is weeding the garden.'

    b.   *a-r*   *mafe*   *rjenə-m*   *pč'a-ʁe.*
        DEM-ABS   day   whole-OBL   weed(AP)-PST
        'He was busy weeding whole day long.'

(12) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

    a.   *ƛə-xe-m*   *ʁʷefə-r*   *ja-ve-n*   *xʷje.*
        man-PL-OBL   field-ABS   3PL.ERG-plough-POT   must
        'The men must plough the field.'

    b.   *ƛə-xe-r*   *ma-ve-xe.*
        man-PL-ABS   DYN-plough(AP)-PL.ABS
        'The men are busy ploughing.'

The antipassive mostly applies to verbs denoting specific activities with a strong manner component ("manner verbs" in terms of Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1998), e.g. 'eat', 'wash', 'sew', 'knit', 'dig', 'sow', 'cut', 'wipe', 'write', 'steal' etc., and is used when no particular P argument is implied and the speaker's focus in on the activity itself. The bivalent antipassives of the kind shown in (10) are opposed to their transitive counterparts as less telic, i.e. also focusing on the activity rather than on its endpoint.

5. The referential status of the omitted argument

An important question concerns the referential status of the omitted argument. Several theoretical possibilities (see Shibatani 1988 where several alternatives are proposed for agent demotion in passive constructions) are available:

- the P-argument is unknown;
- the speaker does not want to mention the P due to its irrelevance or other reasons;
- the P is indefinite or non-specific;
- the P is omitted/demoted due to syntactic reasons (e.g., the language does not have an A relativization pattern, and the A must become S to be relativized).

In Circassian, the antipassive with an omitted P is almost exclusively used when the P is non-specific. For instance, in (13), the use of the antipassive is impossible because the object ('dirt') is specific, even though it has not been overtly mentioned.

(13) KUBAN KABARDIAN

    a.   *Mədje*   *ḟəʔje-dəde-t-jə*   *s-jə-q̇ʷe-m*   *jə-ƛeŝ-a.*
        here   dirty-very-IPF-ADD   1SG-POSS-son-OBL   3SG.ERG-wipe-PST
        'It was very dirty here, but my son wiped it.'

    b.   **Mədje*   *ḟəʔje-dəde-tjə*   *s-jə-q̇ʷe-r*   *ƛeŝ-a.*
        here   dirty-very-IPF-ADD   1SG-POSS-son-ABS   wipe.AP-PST
        Intended: 'It was very dirty here, but my son wiped.'

By contrast, (14) is a good context for the antipassive, because we do not know what the girl washes and wipes — the sentence refers just the activity.

(14) KUBAN KABARDIAN

    pŝaŝe-r   *me-thaŝe,*   *me-ƛaŝe.*
    girl-ABS   DYN-wash.AP   DYN-wipe.AP
    'The girl washes and wipes.'

6. The "indirect antipassive" in Circassian

The application of the valency-reducing operation described in the previous section is not restricted to morphosyntactically transitive verbs but can also apply to two-argument intransitive predicates suppressing the indirect object.

	bivalent intransitive				antipassive	
	I	II			I	(II)
	S_i	IO	$\rightarrow$		S_i	—
cross-reference	Absolutive	IO			Absolutive	—
case-marking	Absolutive	Oblique			Absolutive	—

➤ Marked antipassive from intransitive verbs:

(15) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)

a. *č'ale-r   pŝaŝe-m   **je-bewə-ʁ.***
   boy-ABS   girl-OBL   DAT-kiss-PST
   'The boy kissed the girl.'

b. ***bewe-nə-r***   *jə-č'as.*
   kiss.AP-MSD-ABS   POSS-love
   'S/he loves kissing.' (lit. 'To kiss is his/her love').

(16) BESLENEY KABARDIAN

*ʁʷegʷə-m   **je-pλ-te-q̇əm**   a-r   jə-ŝha*
road-OBL   DAT-look-IPF-NEG   DEM-ABS   POSS-head

*mədč'e   **pλe-w**   mədč'e   **pλe-w**   že-t   gʷəš'əʔe-r-wə.*
there   look(AP)-ADV   there   look(AP)-ADV   run-IPF   talk-CNV-ADV

'He didn't look at the road, he would drive talking and looking here and there.' [TlinJiM: 4]

(17) KUBAN KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. *se   ŝale-m   **s-je-ʔʷənŝə-ne.***
   1SG   guy-OBL   1SG.ABS-DAT-push-FUT
   'I will shove that guy.'

b. *sabjə-xe-r   **me-ʔʷənŝe***
   child-PL-ABS   DYN-push.AP
   'The children are jostling.'

➤ Unmarked antipassives from intransitive verbs:

(18) STANDARD ADYGHE (newspaper "Adyge maq" ('Adyghe Voice') http://www.adygvoice.ru)

a. *č'ele-jež'aḳʷe-r ...   sportə-m   neməč'-xe-m-jə   **ja-gʷəpšəse-š't.***
   boy-pupil-ABS   sports-OBL   other-PL-OBL-ADD   3PL.IO + DAT-think-FUT
   'The pupil ... won't think about anything but sports.' [AM 18.05.10]

b. *č'ale-r   mə-dej-ew   adəγa-bze-č'e   me-gʷəš'əʔe,*
   boy-ABS   NEG-bad-ADV   Adyghe-tongue-INS   DYN-speak

*me-**gʷəpšəse**,   wered   q-j-e-ʔʷe.*
DYN-think(AP)   song   DIR-3SG.ERG-DYN-say

'The boy speaks, thinks and sings in Adyghe.' [AM 31.07.12]

(19) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. *ha-r   q̇ə-š'ə-w-e-**ʒaġe**-č'e   vračə-m = djə   ḳʷe.*
   dog-ABS   DIR-TEMP-2SG.IO-DAT-bite-INS   doctor-OBL = to   go(IMP)
   'If a dog bites you, go to the doctor.'

b. *ha-r   **me-ʒaġe.***
   dog-ABS   DYN-bite(AP)
   'The dog bites.'

To this class belong such verbs as *je-bewə- / bewe-* 'kiss', *je-χʷenə- / χʷene-* 'scold', *je-γəjə- / γəje-* 'rebuke, avenge, curse', *je-pλə- / pλe-* 'look', *je-pemə- / peme-* 'smell', *je-wəpčə- / wəpče-* 'ask', *je-deʔʷə- / deʔʷe-* 'listen', *je-benə- / bene-* 'fight', Ady. *je-ceqe- / ceqe-*, Kab. *je-ʒeġe- / ʒeġe-* 'bite', Ady. *je-gʷəpšəse- / gʷəpšəse-*, Ady. *je-tχʷe- / tχʷe-* 'catch'; Besl. *je-ʔʷənč'ə- / ʔʷənč'e-* 'push', Kub. *je-ṗestχə / ṗestχe* 'scratch', *je-ṗesḳʷə / ṗesḳʷe* 'pinch', *je-ʔebə / ʔebe* 'touch', *je-λeʔʷə / λeʔʷe* 'ask' and a number of others.

7. Discussion

With respect to the Circassian languages we believe that it is fully legitimate to treat both the "direct" (transitive-based) and the "indirect" (intransitive-based) instances of the valency-reducing operation described above uniformly as antipassive whose function is to eliminate or demote the second (non-subject) argument of a two-argument verb.

Though in Circassian languages with their predominantly ergative morphosyntax there are not many diagnostics of grammatical relations such as subject and object, there still exist some, such as reflexivization and "inversion" marking, which group together the A and the S arguments to the exclusion of the P and the IO arguments.

➤ Reflexivization is expressed by the prefix *zə-* behaving as a pronominal affix: it occupies one of the valency slots corresponding to the participants which enter into the reflexive relation. With transitive verbs, as in (20a), the reflexive prefix occupies the absolutive (P) slot, while with intransitive ones it occurs in the IO slot (20b). In both cases the reflexive is controlled by the subject argument, i.e. A of transitive verbs and S of intransitive verbs, which are expressed with regular cross-referencing prefixes.

(20) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)

a. *zə-sə-wəpsə-ʁ.*
RFL.ABS-1SG.ERG-shave-PST
'I shaved (myself).'

b. *ʁʷənǯe-m-če   s-jə-z-e-pλə-ž'ə-ʁ.*
mirror-OBL-INS   1SG.ABS-LOC-RFL.IO-DAT-look-RE-PST
'I looked at myself in the mirror.'

Thus, reflexivization is sensitive to grammatical relations "subject (S,A)" vs. "object (P,IO)", and not to the distinctions either between Agent and Absolutive or between transitive and intransitive verbs.

➤ "Inversion" marking concerns the use of the directional prefix (Ady. *qe-/qə-*, Kab. * q̇e-/q̇ə-*) in those instances when the IO outranks the subject on the person hierarchy "1 > 2 > 3" (the directional prefix may also be used when the P is higher on the person hierarchy than the A, but in transitive verbs its use is optional). Notably, the use of the directional prefix is insensitive to the distinction between transitive (21) and intransitive (22) verbs and, thus, between A and S.

BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

(21) a. *q̇ə-z-e-p-t-a*
DIR-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST
'You gave it to me.'

b. *ja-p-t-a*
3PL.IO + DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST
'You gave it to them.'

(22) a. *∅-q̇ə-w-e-ž-a*
3.ABS-DIR-2SG.IO-DAT-wait-PST
'S/he waited for you.'

b. *w-ja-ž-a*
2SG.ABS-3.PL.IO + DAT-wait-PST
'You waited for him/her.'

On the face of it, the antipassive is clearly another morphosyntactic process in Circassian which groups together S and A into a "subject" relation.

However, the behavior of the Circassian antipassive can be also accounted for in semantic terms (cf. Letuchiy 2012). What is eliminated in the antipassive is the least agentive argument of polyvalent verbs. This is supported by the fact that the vowel change in ditransitive verbs like *tə* 'give' is associated with the elimination of the theme, not of the recipient:

(23) BESLENEY KABARDIAN

a. *jə-de-q̇əm   mašine-r   q̇ə-r-jə-tə-n-wə.*
3SG.ERG-agree-NEG car-ABS   DIR-DAT-3SG.ERG-give-MSD-ADV
'[He] does not agree to give him the car.' [HadPod: 7]

b. *sedaqe   p-tə-nə-r   deʁʷe.*
alms   2SG.ERG-give-MSD-ABS   good
'It is good to give alms.' (elicited)

c.   *a*   *λ̣ə-r*   *ma-**te**=zepət.*
        DEM   man-ABS   DYN-give.AP=always
        'That man is always charitable', lit. "always gives". (elicited)

8. Typological outlook

The "indirect antipassive" found in the Circassian languages is a cross-linguistically fairly infrequent phenomenon.

In general, an asymmetry exists between valency increase and valency decrease in their relations to transitivity. Two features: 'valency increase' vs. 'valency decrease' and 'change in transitivity' vs. 'no change of transitivity' yield four possible values shown in the table.

	transitivity changes	transitivity does not change
valency increase	applicative adding a DO	applicative ('version') adding an IO
valency decrease	antipassive	??

If we consider only operations that affect object arguments, one of the four cells remains empty: applicatives can add either a DO (the cross-linguistically most common case, see Peterson 2007) or an IO (Kartvelian and North-West Caucasian languages), but antipassives only eliminate a DO, not an IO. Most languages, when they need to eliminate an IO argument, do not employ any special marking (such option, as we have seen, exists in Circassian as well, but is a minor pattern). Circassian languages fill this empty cell with the indirect antipassive.

Such an asymmetry between direct and indirect object demotion can be explained semantically: when there is need to remove an IO argument, languages usually do not employ any special marking because IOs are low in prominence and not always clearly distinguishable from optional adjuncts. By contrast, the addition of an IO is nevertheless often marked, because the exact semantic role of the IO is not always obvious (recipient, benefactive, malefactive, instrument, etc.), and its addition can change the semantics of the whole situation.

Abbreviations

A – agent, ABS – absolutive, ADD – additive, ADV – adverbial, AP – antipassive, CAUS – causative, CNV – converb, DAT – dative, DEM – demonstrative, DIR – directional prefix, DYN – dynamic present, ELAT — elative, ERG – ergative, FCT — factive subordinator, FUT – future, IMP – imperative, IND – indicative, INS – instrumental, IO – indirect object, IPF –imperfective, LOC – locative prefix, MSD – "masdar" (nominalization), NEG – negation, NFUT – non-future, NPST – non-past, OBL – oblique, PL – plural, POSS – possessive, POT – potential, PR – possessor, PST – past, RE – refactive, REL – relativizer, RFL – reflexive, SG – singular, TEMP – temporal subordinator.

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