

LINGUISTICS AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS—II

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THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. The nineteenth century marked considerable advances both in linguistics and in Christian missions. Missionaries contributed greatly to the knowledge of foreign languages, and linguists in turn developed concepts that were destined to have a big influence upon both missionary work and Biblical scholarship, especially in the twentieth century.

Language materials. During the nineteenth century Biblical translations were made in about 450 new languages and dialects, or over six times as many as in the entire period prior to 1800. Many of these languages were reduced to writing by missionaries, and for many of them the Biblical materials were the first or only documents. Many missionaries who worked on these translations also prepared word lists, grammatical materials, and other data on the languages in question.

Of great immediate relevance to the work of nineteenth century comparative linguists was the bringing to their attention of Sanskrit, which had been discovered by missionaries of the preceding period. At the outset of the modern Protestant missionary movement—which is generally reckoned as beginning with William Carey, who went to India in 1793—missionaries were working with Sanskrit and other languages of India. Carey himself became an outstanding Bible translator and Bengali scholar, and in 1801 was appointed Professor of Sanskrit, Bengali, and Marathi at Fort William College in Calcutta. One of his first accomplishments was a translation of the New Testament into Bengali, published in 1801. Together with his colleagues Joshua Marshman and William Ward, and with the aid of qualified Indian helpers, Carey directed the preparation of Biblical translations in some 34 languages. These included both Indo-European and Dravidian languages. He also left a vast volume of data on the structural and comparative analyses of languages of North India, having prepared, or helped to prepare, grammars and dictionaries in Marathi, Punjabi, Bengali, Telugu, and Bhutanese, as well as in Sanskrit.

M. Monier-Williams (1819–99), orientalist and Sanskrit scholar, was influenced by missionary motives and travelled extensively throughout India to study native religions. One of his works which is still relevant to the missionary is a brief treatise which demonstrates the value of a knowledge of Sanskrit for the Christian missionary in India. His linguistic works include: *A Practical Sanskrit Grammar* (1846; 4th edn. 1877); *An English and Sanskrit*

Dictionary (1851); *Introduction to Hindustani* (1858); and *A Sanskrit and English Dictionary* (1872; 2nd edn. 1899). This last book is based on the larger *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* of Boehtlingk and Roth, and is of value chiefly in that it makes some of the material of the German lexicon available to the English reader.

For Persian, there had been a translation of the Pentateuch made by Jews and published as early as 1546 in a polyglot edition with Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic; at the beginning of the nineteenth century Henry Martyn, friend of Carey, directed the translation of the New Testament by Persian scholars, and himself made a careful study of the Persian language.

Modern missionary work among the Dravidian-speaking peoples of India began even before the time of Carey, with the arrival of Lutheran missionaries in Tranquebar in 1706; the New Testament was published in Tamil in 1714–15. The New Testament in Telugu was translated by colleagues of Carey and published in 1818; the Gospels were published in Malayalam in 1811. An extensive treatment of the Dravidian languages was made by the English missionary R. Caldwell, who wrote *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*.¹ Although hardly a comparative grammar in the modern sense of the term, it contains much valuable material on these languages.

In Burmese, the first western scholar to make an extensive study of the language was the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson. Beginning with a small dictionary and grammar made by Felix Carey (son of William Carey), Judson learned Burmese, translated the Bible into it (1835), and later prepared a Burmese grammar and dictionary which has been used both by missionaries and by other students of oriental languages. Judson also prepared a Pali dictionary sometime after 1834.

Robert Morrison was one of the first Europeans to study Chinese seriously; he went to China as a missionary and made a translation of the Bible which was published in 1823, also preparing a dictionary, grammar and translations of the Chinese classics that were used by his successors. At about the same time Joshua Marshman and John Lassar, working with Carey in India, produced a translation of the Bible in Chinese, and Marshman prepared a Chinese grammar which was of aid to later scholars and missionaries. In the field of Chinese lexicography, the large dictionary written later by R. H. Mathews still appears to be considered as a standard work.

In Japanese, Karl F. A. Gutzlaff provided invaluable data, producing a translation of the Gospel of John in Singapore in 1837, twenty years before Japan was opened to foreigners.

For Africa there exist Biblical translations in over 350 languages; in many of these the Scriptures and other Christian literature are the only materials published. Many of them were reduced to writing by missionaries, some of whom left grammatical materials and other language data as well. We can here do no more than cite a few of the nineteenth century missionaries who contributed to the study of African languages.

¹ R. Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, London: 1856; 3rd edn., abridged, 1913.

Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–82), a German who went to East Africa under the Church Missionary Society in 1844, was the first European to make any adequate study of Swahili. He published a *Swahili-English Dictionary* (London: Trubner, 1882), which has more recently been revised by Archdeacon Binns, translator of the Swahili New Testament, and is still a standard work.¹ Krapf also produced, in the field of Hamitic languages, a *Vocabulary of the Galla Language* (London: 1842), and had a part in the translation of Biblical materials in some eight languages and dialects, including representatives of the Bantu, Hamitic, and Semitic groups.

J. L. Döhne, of the Berlin Missionary Society, who translated the Psalter into Kafir (about 1841) and helped with the Psalter in Zulu (1850), produced a *Zulu-Kafir Dictionary* (Cape Town: 1857). This dictionary contains one of the earliest attempts to describe the clicks of South African languages.

Alexander Mackay reduced the Ganda language of Uganda to writing about 1878, and together with R. P. Ashe published the first Biblical selections in 1886.

Mbundu of Loanda had been reduced to writing much earlier, by Jesuits who in 1641 issued a catechism in Latin, Portuguese and Mbundu. Heli Chatelain, a Swiss-American missionary, made the first Biblical translation (1888) and published a *Grammar of Kimbundu*.

Alexander Hetherwick, of the Church of Scotland Mission, translated the Gospels and Acts into Yao (1889), and produced an *Introductory Handbook of the Yao Language*. The Rev. D. C. Scott, of the same mission, wrote *An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Manaŋja Language of British Central Africa* (1891) and translated parts of the New Testament into Nyanja (1893–94). The Rev. Holman Bentley wrote a *Dictionary of the Congo Language* (1891), and translated the New Testament into Kongo (1893). *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Bobangi Language* (London: 1899) was written by the Rev. John Whitehead. *A Vocabulary with a Short Grammar of Xilenge*, by Bishop Smyth and John Matthews, was published in 1902 (London: S.P.C.K.).

A Comparative Grammar of the South African Bantu Languages (1894, incomplete) was written by Father J. Torrend. *A Comparative Handbook of Congo Languages* was written by the Rev. W. H. Stapleton, who also made Biblical translations in Bangala, Kele, Western Swahili and Heso.

I. G. Krönlein, who completed the New Testament in Nama, a Bushman language (1866), wrote *Wortschatz der Khoi-Khoi* (1889).

H. Goldie, of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, translated the New Testament into Efik of Nigeria (1862) and produced a *Dictionary of the Efik Language*. I. G. Christaller, translator of the Gospels in the Twi dialect of Ashanti of the Gold Coast (1859), wrote *A Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language called Tshi* (1881). R. Lepsius, who translated Mark into Nubian of Egypt (1860), wrote *Nubische Grammatik mit eine Einleitung über die Völker und Sprachen Afrikas* (1880). Nineteenth century missionary contributions to Hausa include a grammar (London, 1862) by J. F. Schön of the Church Missionary Society, who also translated Matthew into Hausa

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edn., Vol. 21, p. 629.

(1857) and Mende (1871), revised parts of the New Testament in Ibo (1864–66), and helped edit the Yoruba New Testament (1862).

Leo Reinisch, who supervised the translation of Mark into Bogos (1882) and Falasha (1885), languages of Ethiopia, later published *Die Somali Sprache* (Vienna, 1900 *et seq.*) and *Das persönliche Fürwort und die Verbal-flexion in den chamito-semitischen Sprachen* (1909). A. C. Hollis, Secretary of the British East Africa Administration, translated Mark into Masai of Kenya and Tanganyika (1905); he is the author of *The Masai* (1905) and *The Nandi: Their Language and Folklore* (1909).

In the Western Hemisphere, the publication in 1851 of a grammar of Greenlandic Eskimo by the Moravian missionary Samuel Kleinschmidt, based not on Latin grammar but upon the language's own structure, was an important landmark in American linguistics.¹

For languages of the North American continent, important pioneering linguistic work was done by a number of early missionaries in the United States. Special mention should be made of that done about the middle of the nineteenth century by Cyrus Byington in Choctaw, R. M. Loughridge in Creek, and David Zeisberger in Onandaga. The Russian priest Ivan Veniaminov developed the alphabet which is still used for Aleut, and wrote an Aleut grammar.²

The following languages of North America are listed by E. M. North³ as having Biblical translations published in the nineteenth century for the first time: Aleut (three dialects), Algonquin, Beaver, Blackfoot, Cherokee, Chipewyan, Choctaw, Cree (three dialects), Creek, Dakota, Delaware, Eskimo (three dialects), Haida, Hidatsa, Iroquois, Kwagutl, Maliseet, Micmac (two dialects), Nez Percé, Nishga, Ojibwa, Oneida, Osage, Oto, Ottawa, Potawatami, Seneca, Shawnee, Slave, Tukudh, Zimshian. (Massachusetts is the only one listed prior to the nineteenth century.)

In Middle and South American languages there was less new work done by missionaries in the nineteenth century than in the preceding period. Special mention, however, should be made of that done in Miskito of Nicaragua and Honduras, in which Alexander Henderson prepared a translation of some Biblical selections and a grammar (1846), and Moravian missionaries were responsible for the Gospels (1889) and later the New Testament (1905).

Languages of Middle and South America listed by North as having Biblical translations in the nineteenth century are: Acawoio, Aymara, Carib, Guaraní, Maya, Miskito, Quiché, Warau, Yahgan. (He lists Arawak and Otomí as having Biblical materials prior to the nineteenth century.)

Theoretical work. With the nineteenth century the relationship between linguistics and Christian missions begins to take on somewhat of an aspect of mutuality. Whereas in preceding periods the contributions were made for

¹ Otto Rosing, 'Kleinschmidt Centennial II: Samuel Petrus Kleinschmidt', *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 17.63 ff. (1951).

² Ivan Veniaminov, *Opyt grammatiki aleutsko-lis'yevskogo yazyka*, St. Petersburg, 1846. English translation by R. H. Geoghegan, *The Aleut Language*, Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1944.

³ E. M. North, *The Book of a Thousand Tongues*, New York: Harper, 1938.

the most part from missions to linguistic knowledge, we now find the beginnings of a genuine two-way interchange. With the organization of the accumulated knowledge of languages (especially Indo-European) into a science for the first time by nineteenth century scholars in the field of historical linguistics, there began an influence upon Christian scholars that affected both Biblical studies and the quality of Bible translation work. The influence began to be felt in the nineteenth century, especially in reference to the study of Biblical languages and texts, and reached its fuller implications in the twentieth century.

As Indo-European comparative linguistics developed in the nineteenth century, there was also extensive comparative study of Hebrew and related languages. With the discovery and study of other Semitic languages it was no longer possible to consider Hebrew as the original tongue, and thus the foundations were laid for applying more objective linguistic criteria to the study of Hebrew and to the interpretation of the Old Testament documents.

The nineteenth century was also the great period of textual criticism of the Greek New Testament, in which techniques were developed that were later used by philologists and linguists on secular texts. New Testament scholars of the eighteenth century, including Richard Bentley, J. A. Bengel and J. J. Wettstein, had been interested in the variant readings in the text of the Greek New Testament and had proposed certain critical principles. These were further developed in the first part of the nineteenth century by Johann J. Griesbach, K. Lachmann, Samuel P. Tregelles and Constantine Tischendorf; the techniques were further refined and applied later in the century by B. F. Westcott, F. J. A. Hort, J. Weiss and others.¹

The language of the Greek New Testament also became an object of serious study during this period. Lexical studies of about the middle of the nineteenth century led to the publication of Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon* (1886), based on the work of C. G. Wilke and C. L. W. Grimm, which was the standard lexicon in English until the middle of the twentieth century. The finding of the Egyptian papyri later in the nineteenth century led to the discovery of Koine Greek as a language in its own right. Credit for this discovery goes primarily to Adolf Deissmann, whose outstanding work extends into the beginning of the twentieth century but is a reflection of the preceding period. A. T. Robertson's extensive grammatical work,² first published in 1914, was the result of a quarter century's work and was based primarily on the nineteenth century historical approach to linguistics.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. For this century the mutual influences between linguistics on the one hand and Christian scholars and missionaries on the other, have reached a much fuller development, with twentieth century structural linguistics now contributing heavily to the work of the Christians. We therefore begin this section with a statement of some of the contributions of linguistics in this situation, followed by a statement of some of the more specific results for Christian missions, Biblical scholarship, missionary

¹ M. N. Parvis, 'New Testament Text' in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4 (R-Z), New York: Abingdon Press, 1962; pp. 594-614.

² A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, New York, 1914; 4th edn., Nashville: 1923.

language schools, and linguistic preparation for missionaries. We reserve for inclusion in the final section the treatment of the twentieth century contributions of missionary translators and missionary linguists to linguistics in various specific aspects.

Contributions of structural linguistics to twentieth century Christian scholarship and missions. The following dominant ideas, developed by twentieth century linguists, have influenced the work of missionaries and Biblical scholars in the twentieth century:

- (1) The concept of the phoneme.
- (2) The emphasis upon structure, differentiating between historical and descriptive linguistics.
- (3) Study of the dynamics of interaction between languages, with concepts of borrowing, prestige languages, etc.¹
- (4) Information theory, with its implications for translation.

We here mention briefly some of the linguists who had a special influence upon Christian missionaries during this period.

The work of D. Westermann and C. Meinhof in Germany exerted a considerable influence on German missionaries, and helped to make many missionary translators in Africa more keenly aware of the relationships among African languages and of their distinctive characteristics.

In the meantime, the growth of the London School of Oriental and African Studies was having an increasing effect on missionaries, particularly through the writings of Ida C. Ward, who for some time was director of the Africa Department; the book by her and Westermann on phonetics² became especially important for missionaries in West Africa, and was widely used as a textbook by European missionary candidates. A. N. Tucker, also of the School of Oriental and African Studies, did extensive field work with missionaries in East Africa, and thus influenced their work in that area.

C. M. Doke was a missionary and Bible translator who later became professor of Bantu in the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Besides his work on phonetics³ and his lexical work, he led the drive for conjunctive writing of Bantu languages, whose words had been badly cut up into meaningless strings of grammatical particles, since missionaries had usually analyzed the languages on the model of English or French rather than as languages having their own distinctive structures.

Daniel Jones and his school of English phoneticians had an important influence upon missionaries in all parts of the world, beginning in the prephonemic period of linguistics. The development, partly by them, of the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association enabled missionaries to

¹ These concepts have been developed especially by Einar Haugen (*The Norwegian Language in America: A Study in Bilingual Behavior*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953; and *Bilingualism in the Americas: A Bibliography and Research Guide*, Publication 26 of the American Dialect Society, University of Alabama Press, 1956) and Uriel Weinreich (*Languages in Contact*, New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953).

² Diedrich Westermann and Ida C. Ward, *Practical Phonetics for Students of African Languages*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

³ C. M. Doke, 'The Phonetics of the Language of the Chu Bushmen', *Bantu Studies* 2.129-65, 1925; *The Phonetics of the Zulu Language*, Johannesburg: 1926.

transcribe languages more systematically, and Jones's book on phonetics was an important landmark in the field.¹

Edward Sapir² and Leonard Bloomfield,³ with their writings and teachings in the United States, contributed perhaps more than any others to the approach now being used by missionaries in many parts of the world. This contribution has been mediated to missionaries and Bible translators in large measure through the Summer Institute of Linguistics, the Hartford Seminary Foundation, and the American Bible Society. Many of the contributions of missionaries to specific aspects of linguistics as mentioned below are traceable to these sources.

Language materials produced in the twentieth century. The twentieth century has marked a tremendous development in both the quantity and the quality of language materials produced by missionaries. Biblical translations have appeared in some 500 new languages, and at present the pace of both translation work and revision is greater than at any other time in history.

Missionaries are now working in over 300 more new languages, besides continuing work in many of the others. Many of these missionaries either have been prepared in descriptive linguistics or have received some linguistic orientation, and for this reason the materials now being produced are much more useful to linguists than ever before. Besides Biblical translations and other missionary literature, and often prior to or in connection with the preparation of such materials, there have been prepared phonemic and grammatical sketches, lexical materials, and transcriptions of native text materials.

Besides this work in new languages, there is scarcely a major language in the world in which there is not a revision of the Bible under way at present. Such revision work reflects (1) the availability of better Biblical texts in the original languages, and (2) a greater sensitivity to linguistic problems such as grammar, orthography, and the nature of translation as effective communication.

We make no attempt at listing specific languages in which work has been done in this century, since for them the materials produced by missionaries include not only Biblical translations but the other types of material mentioned above, much of which may be located by reference to contemporary bibliographies of the various areas.⁴ A few of the outstanding contributions in certain fields will be mentioned in the following sections and included in the bibliography.

Biblical scholarship in the twentieth century. There has been a greatly extended study by Christian scholars of the languages of the Middle East, together with archaeological studies of the area. Of special importance are

¹ Daniel Jones, *An Outline of English Phonetics*, 2nd edn., Leipzig & Berlin, 1922.

² Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921.

³ Leonard Bloomfield, *Language*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1933.

⁴ The Summer Institute of Linguistics bibliography as of 1960 lists materials in 140 aboriginal languages and dialects produced by members of that organization; the titles include elementary reading materials, non-linguistic materials and technical linguistic materials, but exclude reading materials of Biblical and other religious nature, and also exclude materials published in *The Bible Translator* and *Practical Anthropology*.

the Tell-el-Amarna letters of Egypt, discovered by peasants in 1887. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University is perhaps the best-known Biblical scholar in this field. The Ugaritic texts discovered at Ras Shamra in Syria have made possible an important study of this language and its linguistic and cultural affinities with the others of the ancient Middle East.

Work on the Qumran or Dead Sea scrolls, since their discovery in 1947, has been of special importance both in the field of Old Testament textual criticism and in matters of pronunciation, grammar and lexicon of Hebrew, as well as for a study of Aramaic at an earlier stage than was formerly possible. The bibliography on studies of the Qumran materials has rapidly grown to many hundreds of items.¹

Textual studies of the Greek New Testament have continued, with Herman Von Soden's work early in the century and others who have continued in this field. At present the Bible Societies, whose principal concern traditionally has been the translation and distribution of the Scriptures in various languages, have undertaken the sponsorship of these studies on a scale far exceeding earlier programs.

Koine Greek studies in this century have been carried out along structural lines, especially with the grammatical work of J. H. Moulton and of F. Blass and A. Debrunner. Outstanding lexical work has been done in Moulton and Milligan's work on the papyri² and by W. Bauer, whose lexicon has now been translated and adapted into English by Arndt and Gingrich.³

The work of Matthew Black on Aramaisms in the New Testament⁴ is an important linguistic approach to the 'translationisms' in Greek which reflect idioms and constructions that were present in the spoken Aramaic of Palestine and which affected the language of the Greek New Testament.

James Barr has now injected into Biblical studies a healthy corrective influence for some of the extravagant etymological meanings that were current in nineteenth century Biblical scholarship and which have been carried into our time by people working in the field of Biblical theology. This field, developed by theologians rather than linguists,⁵ has been heavily influenced by the nineteenth century ideas of Alexander Von Humboldt and others on the effect of language upon thought, and has tended to perpetuate mentalistic interpretations of the Biblical documents and some rather extreme etymologizing in vocabulary studies of the Bible. Barr, influenced by

¹ Among the best general treatments are those of Millar Burrows (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York: Viking Press, 1956 and *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York: The Viking Press, 1958) and Frank M. Cross, Jr. ('The Dead Sea Scrolls' in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 12, New York: Abingdon Press, 1957; pp. 645-7).

² James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930.

³ Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*, 4th edn., Berlin: 1949-52. English edition by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich entitled *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

⁴ Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, London: Oxford University Press, 1946; 2nd edn., 1954.

⁵ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961; p. 21.

Bloomfield and yet aware of the values of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, has endeavored to correct some of these tendencies and to direct Biblical scholars toward a linguistically sounder approach to their materials.

Missionary language schools. Another result of twentieth century linguistics has been the great development, within the last two decades, of missionary language schools in different countries, using modern methods and concepts. These followed upon the intensive language courses in the United States and Great Britain during World War II, and have applied their principles to teaching languages to missionaries.

Four of these schools deserve special mention. The one in San José, Costa Rica, sponsored by the United Presbyterian Church, gives an intensive course in Spanish to approximately 150 missionaries each year. A similar school in Campinas, Brazil, prepares missionaries in Portuguese. In Seoul, Korea, Yonsei University has over 60 missionaries studying Korean. The Inter-Mission Language School in Manila, prepares missionaries in Tagalog, Ilocano and Cebuano.

Linguistic preparation for missionaries. Many present-day missionaries have received some preparation in linguistics and thus have a different outlook and approach to their language studies and translation work than was formerly the case. Among Protestants in the United States some elementary linguistic studies were introduced into the curricula of a few seminaries, e.g. Hartford Seminary Foundation and Biblical Seminary of New York, largely for the purpose of teaching missionaries how to learn foreign languages more satisfactorily. The greatest impetus to the use of modern linguistic methods in Bible translating and in the making of technical language analyses by missionaries came with the growth of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (also known as the Wycliffe Bible Translators), which was begun in 1935. At present it conducts summer training programs in Australia, England, Germany, and on the campuses of three universities in the United States. Through the years several thousand persons have taken the courses, and more than one thousand are now in the field working directly under the supervision of the Wycliffe Bible Translators. From the beginning the courses of these institutes have incorporated the results and insights of contemporary linguistic science into the program, with the result that not only have certain basic linguistic concepts been widely disseminated among missionaries, but a number of Bible schools and seminaries have now introduced courses which parallel the program of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and make use of their published texts.

The Translations Department of the American Bible Society has also developed a team of well-trained linguists who have supplied technical help to Bible translators in more than sixty countries. These men conduct field institutes for translators, assist translators in linguistic and exegetical problems, and prepare published helps for translators, including books on Bible translating, introductions to descriptive linguistics, and techniques of language learning. They, as well as the missionaries of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, have also contributed a number of articles on linguistics to such journals as *Language*, *International Journal of American Linguistics*, *Word*, *Lingua*, *The Bible Translator*, and *Practical Anthropology*.

The Hartford Seminary Foundation has, under the leadership of H. A. Gleason, developed an increasingly effective program for the training of missionary linguists and Bible translators.

Among Roman Catholics in the United States, Georgetown University has developed an outstanding Institute of Languages and Linguistics which has had considerable influence on linguistic studies and attitudes of Roman Catholic missionaries.

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