

## Textual Discourse of Political Tussle in Gloria Enerst-Samuel's *The Beautiful Masquerade* and the Nigerian Issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### Abstract

The study aims at interrogating the cause of political tussle in Nigeria and its effect on its fronts – political, economical, social, and otherwise as portrayed in Gloria Enerst-Samuel's *The Beautiful Masquerade*. This nuance, masterminded by corrupt political elites in the fabrics of the nation -federal, state and local strata, through intimidation of opponents, blackmail, bribery, collusion of the security agency in destabilizing the polity, mudslinging, and vote buying, thus has ironically and meticulously led to wrong choice of political leaders that indulges in corruption, nepotism, money laundering, favouratism, and divide and rule system. The gargantuan nature of this menace manifesting through acts of terrorism, which includes kidnapping, politically motivated assassination, pipeline vandalism, incessant killing, armed robbery, suicide bombing, lethal car bombing, and other means of agitation which threatens the existence of the nation. These negative activities have perpetually created fear, poverty, hunger, pain, sickness, and suffering of the people and underdevelopment to the nation. This menace has therefore generated lot of creative punches in argumentative and dramatic portraiture by dramatist and critics; yet, this malicious phenomenon is unequivocally increasing by electioneering periods. With content analysis method, this study investigates Gloria Enerst-Samuel's attempts to interrogate the cause and effect of corruption with the use of drama. The effect of it will create positive change amongst Nigerians, thereby effectuating change around societies. The study therefore recommends that law against political tussle be established and implemented, as that would create sanity and sanctity during and after electioneering periods and thus enhance development around the Nigerian society.

**Keywords:** *Textual Discourse, Political Tussle, Beautiful Masquerade, Nigerian Issues, 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

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### **Background to the Study**

Since before the second republic, the Nigerian political system has become a do or die affair where political gladiators with egocentric objectives employs coercive and pensive cum gargantuan militating means to gain political powers. These political means are often manifested through acts which ranges from intimidation of opponents, blackmail, bribery, collusion of the security agency in destabilizing the polity, politically motivated assassination, ballot snatching, mudslinging, and vote buying. Thus, this menace has ironically and meticulously led to wrong choice of political leaders that indulges in corruption, nepotism, money laundering, favoritism, and divide and rule system (Adebanwi, 2004). This ambiguous means of dominant by the zealous, egocentric and egalitarian political elites in the Nigerian state has therefore ridiculed the undeniable function of politics which is pragmatically concerned with preserving and furthering the interest of the state. It becomes pervasive when there appears to be little or no check and balance as it is prevalent in the Nigerian state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This according to Edigin (2010) is caused by corruption which is responsible for many of our unpatriotic behaviours.

Quite consistently, Nigeria has been considered to be among the first five most corrupt nations of the world. It is in the tendency of corruption fuelled by greed rather than patriotism that has resulted in the average Nigerian seeing governance and government as a vehicle for exploitation and self aggrandizement (Edigin, 2010), thereby, craving with all possible means towards attaining political power in a rather coax regime. Edigin went on averring that “while the Nigerian populace craves for a leadership to lift them out of economic and social doldrums, the political elites in their regime maintain mercantilism as their watchword and do everything in the hope of monetary gains and kickbacks”. However, political regimes do not simply regulate the scope for social participation in political processes; they also stipulate the rules and resources for the political game. Furthermore, Fishman (1999) opines that “political regimes determine not only access but also the “sources” and “resources” that actors employ to acquire political positions” and the interactions between political power and non-political power holders.

Extensively, the second problem according to Edigin (2010) which is easily identifiable as a source of conflict in Nigeria is the politics of “elitism”. Although this is widely in practice in all parts of the world, but here in Nigeria, it has assumed a disturbing and worrisome phenomenon. It has become pertinent to have an elite back-up or a strong political godfather before considering running for any elective offices or even political appointment. These godfathers offer the services of their support only in anticipation of financial returns that are alarmingly huge and extravagant as opposed to that of their service to the people.

These ambiguous menaces which has painstakingly and painfully contributed towards making Nigeria a terrorist centre and poverty capital of the world is most often masterminded by contracted thugs and militia groups which are often youths (Mark, 2015; Anasi, 2010). These youths are provided with sophisticated arms by the overzealous political elites who after their political obligations are achieved, abandon the contracted thugs and militia groups with little or no compensation, while most are blackmailed and sent to prison, some meet their

death while trying to execute the obligation of their compradors. Out of frustration, the contracted thugs and militia groups immediately takes to the street indulging in activities which include likes of armed robbery, oil bunkering, pipe line vandalism, rape, drug abuse, and other heinous activities which affects the people (Mark, 2015; Oladipupo, 2016).

Against this backdrop, Ifeanyi (2005) writes that “In recent times in Nigeria, thuggery has become an integral part of politics”. Notably, since 1960, that is, after the independence of Nigeria, thuggery has been an integral part of the Nigerian political and (in particular) electoral process that “the political sphere has become characterized with incessant intimidation, assault and in some cases bloodshed by warring party gangs or political opponents”. Most alarming about the situation is that youths who should be rational and confident of their future prospects are now experiencing a dirge of certainty about their future and the future of Nigeria (Oladipupo, 2016).

By definition, May distinctly avers that “thugs are young, violent and dangerous individuals, thus, thuggery implies the dangerous behaviour of thugs”. Extensively, Frank & Wagnalls (1975), according to May (2016) noted that “the term “thug” or “thuggery” was coined from the Hindu word “thag” or “thagi” which implies” murderer or swindler, an assassin, a cut throat or Rufian”. While Abikhuale & Tor-Anyin “2013” according to him avers that “to achieve their targets and set goals as expected by their master, thugs can eliminate any human or otherwise obstacle in their way, without any feelings of remorse”. This instance defines the notion that youths are usually full of excessive energy.

In line with the above, May went on insisting that “political thuggery can therefore be defined as any negative behaviour associated with violence, hooliganism, kidnapping, murder, assassination, gang action and trouble “shooting”, that is connected or related to any political process”. To buttress this statement, Ofem and Ajayi (2008) writes such as May (2016) that “political thugs are often criminals or social delinquents that are strongly instrumental in distorting electoral results, snatching of ballot boxes, alteration of election results, elimination of political opponents, under the influence of drugs and supernatural powers. By quoting Ortese (2004) May vehemently note that “they are constantly involved in organized acts of violence, intimidation and blackmail, directed against a political opponent to achieve political objectives”. Samuel (2013) according to May (2016) pointed out that “the fact about the existence of thuggery activities in Nigeria before, during and after election is not in dispute”. Echoing on this note, Adeyemo (2000) maintained that political violence and thuggery so to say develops as a feature of struggle for power. For example, May (2016) mentioned quoting Isichei (1984) that the political tussle between Akintola and Awolowo in the first republic (1960-1969) both of whom made use of the services of thugs that resulted in threats, assassinations, violence and the breakdown of law and order in Yoruba land, the use of the “yan daba” youths in Kano by the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) to intercept the victory of NEPU, also in the first republic and the snatching of ballot boxes by gunmen at polling stations which characterized the 2007 and subsequently, the 2012 elections (Ali, 2014).

The same issue became worst in 2015 general election in states such as Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, and even in some states in the Northern part of the country. It is against this backdrop that Kushee (2000) according to May (2016) notes that “the services of thugs are engaged during elections by party bulwarks or opponents and that in some instances employees, permanent secretaries and commissioners are mobilized in large numbers to work for the party and are mandated to deliver their wards, constituencies or local governments as the case may be”. While quoting Collier & Vincente (2008), May noted that “it has been observed that rival groups within political parties also use violence during contest and thugs play vital roles such as stifling and snatching ballot boxes”. The political patronage by the Nigerian elites since after independence according to him ushered in and has continued to retain, political thuggery. In conclusive note, May (2016) write that “political thuggery seems to have come to stay in Nigeria and is becoming entrenched not only in its politics but also in its context and culture of work or job as well as a way of life. It becomes even more worrisome for the youths of this nation, as it appears to have become a legitimate ladder of success.

It is to these that the study aims at discoursing the practices of political tussle in Gloria Ernerst-Samuel's *The Beautiful Masquerade* using textual analytical methodology and Social and Behavioural Change Communication Theory (SBCC) as guide.

### **Causes of Political Tussle in Nigeria**

Political tussle in Nigeria is caused due to some fundamental issues. These issues are as follow:

**1. Political Ideologies:** The ideology of “do or die” and godfatherism among Nigerian politicians is one of the root causes of political tussle in Nigeria (May, 2016). The Nigerian political gladiators in their parties, craves for political power because they believe it's an avenue of embezzlement, looting, and protection of their heinous activities. They believe that if they lose in any election, their rival would thereafter used crime machineries against them. They believe that the winner controls all machineries which include the military, police, and other crime related agencies. With the fear of the unforeseen, they go extra miles to attain political positions.

**2. Political Process:** The draconian political system in Nigeria abhors, such as it has given room to all sort of malicious mayhem, before, during and after electioneering process. This is pragmatically fathomed when nuances such as vote buying and weak judicial system is prevalent in the Nigerian space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The electoral body favours the elites clubs whom they find palpable and capable in providing their heart desires.

### **Social and Behavioral Change Communication Theory (SBCC)**

SBCC as explained by Crosby Richard can help understand why people act the way they do and why behaviors change. The theory exposes why people change from good to bad, considering the fact that so many phenomenon may trigger a good person into doing things that affects his immediate society and his people. It can as well help change people's ideology from bad to good.

Comprehensively, SBCC is an interactive process of any intervention with individuals, communities and or societies to develop communication strategies and to promote positive environment which will enable people to initiate, sustain and maintain positive and desirable

behavioural outcomes. This theory can also help to direct attention on what or who to address for social change. SBCC helps in explaining behavioural change and area of focus-the individual, their intention to change their behavior or their surrounding environment (Crosby & Noar, 2010). Therefore, the goal of every behavior change campaign is to induce long-lasting behavior change.

### **Methodology**

This research work employs the case study and content analysis research approaches of the qualitative research method. It involves explaining the issue, describing, analyzing and interpreting data on the bases of cognitive study of political tussle as portrayed in *The Beautiful Masquerade*. It is qualitative because it deals with the analysis of political dichotomy as pinpointed by a notable Nigerian playwright and descriptive because it involves the use of ideas by the researcher to describe and analyze the nature and effects of political tussle within the play contexts, which unequivocally summarizes the primary source of its ideological tendency. On the other hand, the secondary source of idea includes materials from the institutional publications, articles, journals, text books, internets, research materials, amongst others.

### **Synopsis of *The Beautiful Masquerade***

The play revolves around Amauche, a young, ambitious, deceitful, wicked, corrupt, brutal, and malicious man who was loved by the people of Alaike because he succeeded in defeating Egwuatu, a tyrant, who for long had pragmatically enslaved Alaike people, thus brought about death, suffering, hunger, and pain of the people and underdevelopment to Alaike community. Egwuatu's death paved way for instant development and civilization to the community and peace of the people. To further stabilize these fathomed gesture and end acrimony and catastrophe of any sought, the people of Alaike, led by Nwabueze (the acting youth leader), unequivocally decides that Amauche, their late sister's son from Edo, whom they jointly saw through education, be crowned as ruler of Alaike community. Nwabueze decided to pay more attention towards making sure that Amauche becomes the ruler of Alaike because he wanted Amauche to confirm and extend his tenure as leader of the community warriors.

As the custodian of norms and tradition, Chief Izudike, distinctly insisted that Amauche be made a regent, to oversee the activities of the community owing to the fact that the kingship position according to tradition and culture of the Alaike people is hereditary and considering the fact that Chimere, the rightful heir to the throne is still young. Chief Izudike was painfully shouted down and later imprisoned by Amauche.

To achieve his egocentric desire of becoming the ruler of Alaike community, Amauche meticulously sponsored Chimere to study medicine abroad and later took Akwaeke, a betrothed of Nwabueze, as wife, thereafter, employs Okute, a thug, as his personal assistant, who meticulously executes his dirty plans. Angered by this betrayal by a man he has fought for and willing to kill for; Nwabueze decides to visit and form alliance with Uduka, who had long suspected and questioned Amauche's genuinity in his quest for transforming Alaike community. Nwabueze sworn making sure that Amauche is not coroneted as ruler of Alaike

community without knowing that Amauche, with the help of Okute had earlier contracted some assassins who later killed him as he was going home after visiting Udoka. On hearing Nwabueze's screaming, Udoka quickly rush to rescue Nwabueze from the hands of the assassins but was severely stabbed. At the point of death, Udoka reveals to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Women who came to rescue him that Amauche sent the Killers that killed Nwabueze because of Akwaeke and also stabbed him.

As a result of Nwabueze and Udoka's death, the youths of Alaike, led by Okwuaka and Iweka, insisted that the coronation of Amauche be halted till the killers of Nwabueze and Udoka are found and justice meted but the elders led by Ichie Onugha insisted that such as they are mourning Nwabueze and Udoka, the coronation should be done on a low key. In conclusion, Emenike suggested that the coronation be held on a low key. Emenike also insisted that Chief Izudike be released from the prison, and a committee be formed to investigate the death of Nwabueze and Udoka, which was generally accepted.

On disclosing the new development to Okute, Amauche was advised to build a Church in Ikenga's shrine in order to frustrate the effort of Chief Izudike, towards communicating with Ikenga (Alaike deity) regarding the revelation of the true killers of Nwabueze and Udoka, believing that the God of the Church people is slow in judgment. Chief Uzudike, on arriving Ikenga's shrine, fervently offered sacrifice to Ikenga to fight and protect Alaike community against power seekers. Earlier, Amauche had disclosed to Akwaeke and Ugoye (his mother's sister), his plans and how he has succeeded looting and embezzling Alaike fund and his new mansion that he is building at Edo, his native land.

Ichie Odugha later queried his wife, 2<sup>st</sup> Woman into telling him the truth behind Udoka's death considering the countless nightmares she had been having of recent. She disclosed to him that Udoka at the point of death revealed that Amauche sent the killers that killed Nwabueze because of Akwaeke, his betrothed and also stabbed him. Ichie Odugha quickly alerted the chiefs regarding the new development and later suggested Amauche be stripped of his position as the king of Alaike community and sent out of the community, considering he is the son of their late sister. Immediately, the message that Akwaeke, the pregnant wife of Amauche giving birth to a dead child was announced by a town crier; which made Ichie Odugha to affirm that Ikenga has finally visited Amauche with his wrath.

Ichie Onugha and Ichie Ibekwe run in to inform Amauche before Akwaeke and Ugoye that it has been revealed that Amauche killed Nwabueze and Udoka. Akwaeke slumps but was quickly revived. A messenger runs in with a letter bearing the news that Okute's wife died while trying to abort a baby she claim was for Amauche. Akwaeke unable to withstand the shock, slump the second time and died as Okute queries Amauche bitterly. The play comes to conclusion when Amauche goes in and shot himself while Okute is sent to the evil forest after he reveals that Ichie Onugha and Ichie are included in the malicious act with Amauche and him.

### ***The Beautiful Masquerade and Theme of Political Tussle in Nigeria***

The thematic thrust, subject matter, character delineation, and plot structure of the play is a microcosm of the macrocosm of the Nigerian space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the thematic note, it is fathomed that the central idea in the play which is the antics and effect of political tussle in Alaite community is also prevalent in the Nigerian space where political leaders due to their egocentric quest for power and wealth distinctly employs malicious means which painstakingly affects the people and destroys the fabric of the fronts of the nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Due to the meticulous antics of luring the youths into becoming their political thugs and thereafter discarding them to wander the society hopelessly, resulted to an increase in other issues which often creates pain, death, and suffering to the people. For example, in the play, Amauche due to his quest of becoming the ruler of Alaike community, decided to buy the mind of Alaike community people thereafter employs the services of Okute, a dreaded youth as his personal assistance, who helped him execute Nwabueze that had been fighting and supporting him in his quest of becoming the ruler of Alaike community.

In the Nigerian space, most political elites in the local, state and the federal strata indulges in employing the services of the youths as personal thugs. This youths does so many ludicrous tasks for them, which often times includes assassination of their political opponents, ballot snatching, armed robbery, kidnapping, incessant killing, suicide bombing, lethal car bombing, and other means of agitation which threatens the existence of the nation. This is candidly explained in the play, when character of Okute explains:

**Okute:** It includes protecting you and your interests, getting rid of any nuisance in your way, being your eyes and ears in this town, representing you in cases or situations where your position will not allow you, and paving way for your success in everything (p. 28). All these are targeted at achieving their oblivious ambitions once voted into office. They pragmatically use their positions to loot and defraud the nation of her treasures. Evidence of this is seen in the play when Amauche proudly explains to Akwaeke and Ugoye that:

**Amauche:** That is why I am commissioning a lot of projects...as many as possible to impress them and buy their support. Outwardly, it gives the impression that I am working, but inwardly, it enables me access fund for our family growth... (p. 58).

To further buttress this statement, Amauche further explain that he accumulates wealth from contractors through giving of tips. His statement clarifies it:

**Amauche:** Not at all. The contractors give me tips or PR when I endorse their contracts, simple...that's why only the contractors from the city are awarded contracts. They understand the set-up (p. 58). This nuance is most visible by Nigerian commissioners, ministers, federal and state house of assemblies members, governors, and all corrupt political elites in high and low offices who often demands for ten percent compensations for every contracts awarded.

After achieving their political obligation, they often times betrays the youths whose destinies they ironically destroyed. Evidence of this is seen in the play were Amauche betrays

Nwabueze by picking interest in marrying Akwaeke, a young maiden that is betrothed to Nwabueze without considering the efforts which Nwabueze had put towards making sure that he is crown as the ruler of Alaike community. In the Nigerian space, the youths contracted by these zealous political elites are often times betrayed as most of them are presently serving life sentence in Nigerian chronic prisons while some loses their lives while trying to execute the tasks handed to them by their compradors. In the play, Amauche with the help of Okute employed the services of some youths who assassinated Nwabueze and Udoka. Okute's wife also died why trying to abort the child she got with Amauche, which defines the cruelty nature of Amauche.

Most significantly, the subject matters discussed in the play which includes illicit activities, bribery, assassination, incessant killings, backstabbing, betrayal, pain, and suffering are also plausibly noticeable in the Nigerian society. Characters like Ichie Onugha and Ichie Ibekwe on so many occasions betray and most times backstab their fellow Alaike elders and people. It is as a result of this that 2<sup>nd</sup> Woman decided to run to her maternal home when she observed that Ichie Onugha her husband had decided to betray her trust by revealing that she told the elders that Udoka confines with her before he died that Amauche was the person who sent the killers that killed Nwabueze and also stabbed him. Amauche also betrayed the love and trust that the people of Alaike had in him. First, they educated him with their community fund and later pleaded he should be their king to avoid a repeat of Egwuatu's slavery. Evidence of this is seen in the play as character of Ichie Onugha explains that:

**Ichie Onugha:** Amauche, while you're talking to our people, the elders of this community made a decision on behalf of the entire people of Alaike, and authorized me to convey this message to you. It is the wish of these people that you rule Alaike from now onwards. Alaike, do I speak for you (p. 5)?

Ichie Onugha went further to assert:

**Ichie Onugha:** You have excelled as a leader, not even as a ruler. You have shown a sense of patriotism and commitment to the welfare of the people of Alaike. You have presented yourself as a sacrificial lamb for the course of our people. You have been a shepherd when we are like lost sheep in a desert. Alaike wish that you continue. Preparation for the coronation will continue in due course (pp. 5-6)

Rather than protecting the image of the people, Amauche decided to punish them. His statement below buttresses this notion:

**Amauche:** As for your men, you better procreate a new bunch, because the ones I see in this town do not release sperm but slime. Alaike is yet to produce a real man. I am the only real man (p. 27).

This nuance is vehemently visible in Nigerian society where due to the love that most Nigerians have for some politicians in the federal, state and local government, either as



president, governor, senator, commissioner, or as political leader of different political strata's, believing they would lead them out from poverty, pain, suffering and underdevelopment incurred during and after the last regime, the reverse is the case that the people are presently pleading for a divine intervention from the gods, due to the persistent hardship, suffering, death, and sickness in the society. Escalation of the prices of goods and services in the Nigerian society such as in the plays is so enormous that the salaries and wages of the Nigerian workers can't solve. These political leaders pretentiously, like the title of the play "the beautiful masquerade" craves into political ladder to loot, embezzle; ransack the nation's treasury, for their selfish aim. Just like in the play where Amauche decided to award contracts to contractors who are willing to give him tips that he used to erect mansions in Edo, his native home, Nigerian politicians also build or buy mansions and store the accretions of their lot in banks in other parts of the world. They also decided to vie into political offices to revenge against the people for their past failures during past elections. Against this backdrop, they inflict suffering and pain on the people by way of tightening all avenues aimed at improving the life of the people.

On a general note, the title of the play is also used to describe the Nigerian political elites who often times present themselves so beautifully, providing avenues such as scholarship, pipe borne water, free medical treatments and every other social amenities which attracts love of the people but once they got the vote of the people, they become so dreadful forgetting the promises they made to the people. The people on the other hand are blinded by their unholy love and provision towards them that they are ready of killing themselves just to support the corrupt political elites towards achieving their political obligations. They undermine the warnings of religious leaders. Evidence of this is seen in the play when the people led by Nwabueze decided to shout down on Chief Izudike, the mouth piece of the gods who was against Alaïke people's opinion that Amauche be crowned king.

The play therefore concludes by instigating that the present menace in the Nigerian space can be curbed amicably if Nigerians could willingly seat up to fight against the corrupt political elites in her society who daily oppress and repress the people. They should know that inasmuch as they voted them in, they can as well vote them out with their precious votes.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

From the study, it is pragmatically fathomed that the issue of power tussle by power seekers in the Nigerian society is the major reason for the prevalent suffering, pain, death and poverty that has besieged the people this past few years due to the fact that the people prefers selling their rights in detriment of their future. This act is fathomed through selling of their precious votes which is their only means of selecting adequate leaders, to unscrupulous and overzealous power seekers who ironically mask themselves with fragrance of beauty; portraying what they are not.

It is also observed that the issue has therefore resulted to the fact that unpatriotic politicians who lavished their wealth on buying the votes and conscience of the people are given mandates to rule the people. The resultant effect of electing these political elites into political

offices is the increase in corruption, nepotism, looting, embezzlement, money laundering, favouritism, and divide and rule system, which is prevalent in the Nigerian space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The study also reveals that despite buying the mandate of the people, the corrupt political elites also employ the services of some willing youths in order to execute their terrorism acts, likes of kidnapping, politically motivated assassination, incessant killing, armed robbery, disruption of electoral process and ballot snatching. After acquiring the political positions, most of the contracted youths are thereafter employed as personal thugs who perpetually maim anyone who questions their unpatriotic services, thereby creating fear in the mind of the people; tampering freedom of speech. On the same note, some of the contracted youths are ironically blackmailed and killed or imprisoned by their contractors, while others are left to wander in their immediate societies with the ammunitions provided to them by their compradors. With these newly acquired ammunitions, they engage in armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, drug abuse, pipeline vandalism, and other forms of terrorism which creates pain, suffering and sickness of the people and underdevelopment to the nation.

It therefore entails most significantly that Nigeria is a great nation with good people but bad leaders. Situation of trying to coup in the mundane society makes the good people of Nigeria to engage in activities which ridicules the identity of the nation before other nations of the world. To avert this ludicrous and malicious temerity, Nigerian youths should be informed that they are only destroying their future by allowing the political elites to continually use them as thugs who do their heinous jobs. Secondly, Nigerian people should be aware that their votes are weapon of either positive or negative change depending on how they wheel it. They should also know that politicians who buy their votes are capable of enslaving them with their votes such as prevalent in the Nigerian space in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thirdly, Nigerians should not be deceived by the beautiful frivolities presented to them by power seekers; rather, they should critically consider the implication of making a wrong choice of leadership. Fourthly, Nigerian government should propound laws against vote buying and also regulate the activities of the electoral body as the issue of favouritism, nepotism, and corruption are gradually overwhelming the system. Lastly, law against political tussle be established and implemented, as that would create sanity and sanctity during and after electioneering periods and thus enhance development around the Nigerian society.

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