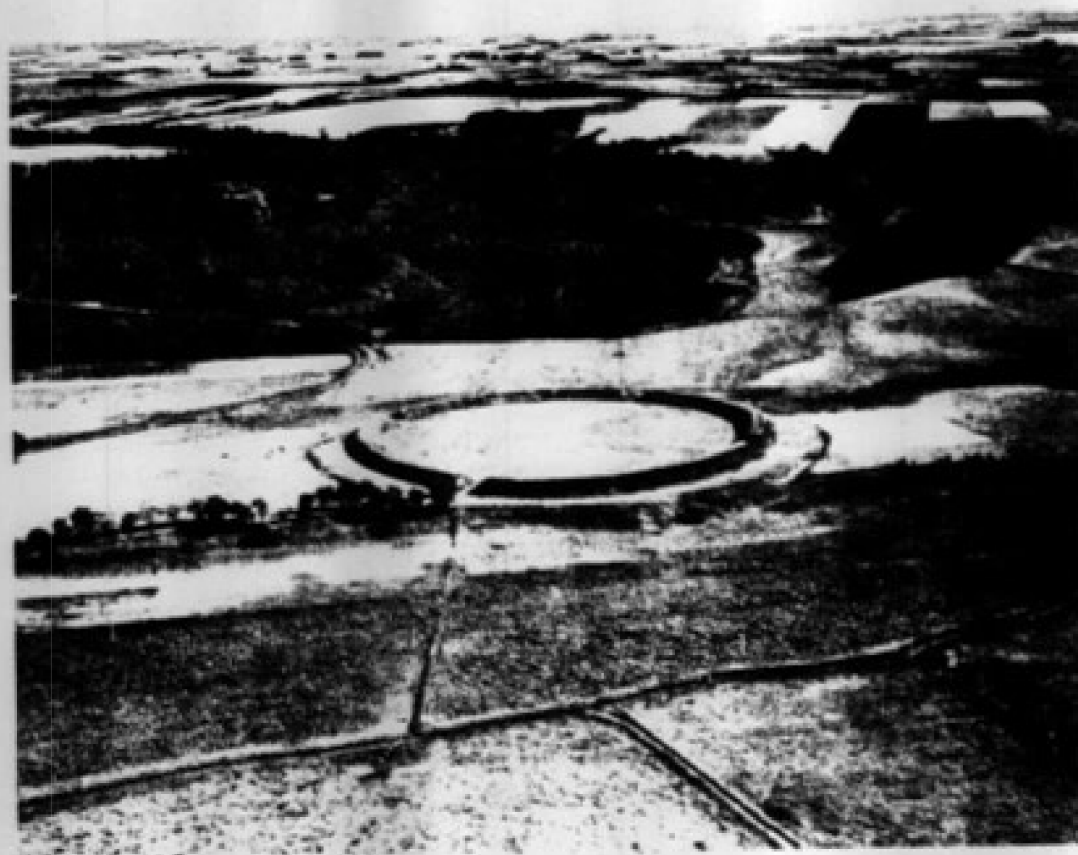


THE RUNESTONE

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Viking Age Fortress of Fyrkat

- courtesy Danish National Museum

THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the pagan Norse religion and is dedicated to the revival of that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the revival of the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

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## NORSE NOTES

We have commenced Odinnist action in The Runestone's new home--Berkeley, California. On 9 October (Leif Erikson Day) we had an organizational meeting and on 21 October this was followed up by leafleting on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue by Dick and myself. Several persons expressed immediate interest and overall reception was good. Odinnist "instant graffiti" in the form of gummed labels with individually pre-printed quotes and slogans are appearing around the area. Other projects of a more ambitious nature are planned--such as showing the movie *The Vikings* at which we will charge a modest admission to raise a little money, and deliver a short talk on the popular misconceptions about the Vikings. We are in the struggle almost full time now! This issue of The Runestone is being typed by volunteer labor (thanks, Hal!) which is saving a lot of money we can use to spread the word. We're also holding bi-weekly meetings to study the Eddas and discuss our religion-- and to plan more projects!

*The Second Viking Age has begun -- Where are YOU?*

The following pagans are looking for contacts in their area:

Clarke Dunlop  
3825 Bluff Place, No. 10  
Point Fermin, CA 90731

Isaac Moll  
c/o Virginia L. Calvert  
P.O. Box 608  
Soap Lake, WA 98851

Patricia L. Potter  
81, Stein Avenue  
Wallington, N.J. 07057

Michael Hayden  
919 Ave. C,  
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501

Leaflets "What is the Norse Religion?" available at 5¢ each  
-- spread the word!

## Recapturing Jul

As I write these lines, it is December 24, 1975. When you read them it will be almost a year later, but I want to put these thoughts on paper while the urge is still so strong.

For days now I have been swamped with Christmas carols from the radio and streetcorner, some of them secular "Jingle-Bells" type stuff and others of a strong Christian religious character. It seems sad to hear nothing about the real nature of our stolen holy day, and we seem to have become history's casualties everytime someone speaks of the "true meaning of the season" as the birth of Christ. The amount of free mileage that Christianity gets out of our Jul (Yule) is simply amazing.

Originally, of course, Jul was the Norse festival, celebrated sometime after the winter solstice, which celebrated the return of the sun and its attendant promise of the rebirth of life in the springtime. The word *Jul* comes from the Old Norse word for "wheel" and symbolizes the turning of the sun in its long yearly course. For this reason the Nordic sunwheel--a circle divided into quarters by four "spokes"--is an appropriate symbol for Jul. The festival is also sacred to the god Frey, whose role is that of fertility god--again a connection with the life-giving implications of the return of the sun. As a result of this, the boar (sacred to Frey) is another pagan symbol of life.

Jul is a feast of the clan, to include both the family here on Earth and all the ancestors who have gone before us. It is at this time of year that we are most aware of the continuity of the clan and of our unique heritage. In the olden days, places were set at the Jul feast for those clan members who had died and who could no longer be here in body, but only in spirit.

Because Jul was our holy festival long before it was stolen from us, because of the use which Christians have made of this special day, and because of its potential role in bringing our people back to their old Gods, we must begin the recapture of Jul from the usurpers. This will be a long term effort, but it must be begun now. In doing so we must differentiate between those facets of the Jul celebration which are Christian impositions and propaganda and those which are compatible with our own traditions--for much pagan spirit, as well as outward symbol, survived the Christian takeover. The central thing which must go is the theme of the birth of Christ, the Christian message and the Biblical material. If this is removed, much of what remains is wholly in keeping with the pagan spirit --the feeling of family closeness, warmth, and generosity, and the gay, festive atmosphere. Our task then is to restore the original religious sense of the season while preserving the natural pagan feeling of the clan, generosity, and celebration. But there is something else we must do to liberate Jul, and that is to decommercialize it. Both Christian and pagan

can rightfully decry the abuse of the season, which has become nothing more than an excuse for boosting the economy by horrid advertising, a real exercise in bad taste. Why must gifts--Jul or Christmas--be so expensive and so compulsive, given with so little true spirit? Perhaps restoring the real religious meaning of the holy day will change this.

So much for the need to restore Jul to its original status. What can we do about it? I propose the following course of action:

First, observe the season yourself. Since not many of us have ever had a truly to-the-hilt pagan Jul, some tips are in order. You may rightly ask first how to go about it.

The Jul Tree--or "Christmas Tree"--can stay; it is a basically pagan symbol. Instead of topping it with a star or an angel, though, try a sunwheel. The tree can be decorated with tinsel and with sunwheels which you can make with cardboard or foil. You can also make small boar-shaped ornaments for decoration. Avoid lighting; candles are a fire hazard and electric lights use energy better conserved.

Eating is traditional to Jul, preferably in the form of the convivial feast which follows the Jul sacrifice. If your situation is such that there's no chance of a real ritual, you can still do the feasting. Pork is traditional, from the connection with the boar of Frey (the heroes in Valhalla also feast on pork, the Eddas tell us.) Mead, beer and wine are in order. Preferably, they have been brewed yourself, as part of a clan or family project in which everyone participates. Bread can be in many forms, but do not forget that bread and pastries can be made in the shape of the symbols of the season. Add other good food according to taste and in large quantities.

Christmas cards are out, but Jul cards are in. We have three ways of doing this: you can make your own Jul card from scratch using our religious symbols and sentiments, you can use the secular "Season's Greetings" type of cards and write in a brief pagan message, or you can take a Christmas card and deliberately alter it to make a Jul card. Any of these will provoke mental activity and maybe even questions on the part of your non-pagan friends.

The family spirit is very important to this holy time of year, so family Jul gatherings are encouraged. If you can't be there in person, write or telephone. Jul time is a good time for recalling family history or establishing family customs which will become hallowed by time.

Musically, any of the secular popular songs are appropriate for the pagan Jul. Many of them deal with family-oriented themes more pagan than Christian. Soon we hope there will be pagan songs for us to sing. (By the time you read this, there may be!)

All of this individual action is the start, and for a long while will remain the mainstay of our campaign to recapture our holy day. Beyond that, we must introduce pagan cultural material, such as songs, plays, stories, and children's tales about Jul. The themes of the clan, of the return of the sun, and the god Frey must become known outside our own circle of interest, and people must be made aware that Jul belonged to us in dim antiquity. By such gradual cultural penetration, we can make real progress towards freeing our people from Christian slavery. If you've got any creative talents, this is something you can begin!

As a final note, I want to urge each of you to attempt to observe the full seasonal rituals of our religion. But those who cannot do this can perhaps do other things--reading from the Eddas, drinking the minnep, pausing to meditate upon the significance of the day, decorating their houses and doors with our symbols.

This will be our task--to restore Jul for our spiritual delight, and for the generations yet unborn, let us make it a merry, loving task to be done with devotion.

HAIL, the turning sun! HAIL, to all our clan! HAIL, to the god FREY!

## The Norse Community

It seems likely that, if our religion continues to spread, followers of our religion may wish to band together for mutual protection and fellowship in communities which will reflect our cultural and religious ideals. What form will such a community take, and what will be its impact on the non-pagan society around it? These are the two points which we will briefly discuss in this article.

For a model which reflects to a great degree our religious and cultural values (the two are inseparable) we can look to the Icelandic free state, pagan Iceland from the time of the Norse settlements until the Conversion. This "free state" was so free that it was hardly a state. There was no all-powerful authority, no particular ruler, no taxes, no class of priests. Governing was done by the impartial administration of the law, and was largely limited to that legal function. Social controls were obtained not by the state, but by deep and powerful social *moros* and the rugged religious values of the people. Only when the Icelanders abandoned their religion did the island lose its independence and, as a result, a great deal of the liberty that its populace had enjoyed.

Iceland was an island in which the god Thor was supreme, as befitted the pastoral and agricultural nature of Icelandic society. As important as the red-bearded hammer-wielder is to our religion, he does not complete the picture. Odin, who was relatively neglected in Iceland, is needed to represent another aspect of our people and our culture; namely, the warrior aspect. Or, to translate into sociological and economic terms in keeping with the theme of this article, the raiding warrior and far-traveling trader is needed to balance out the close-to-the-earth farmer if one is to comprehend the totality of the Norse *ethos*. Though it may be puzzling to some, these two aspects and lifestyles were quite often combined in the same individual.

In summary, then, the Norse community and lifestyle must combine parts of the Icelandic phenomenon and parts of the Norwegian-Danish-Swedish phenomenon if it is to be vital and realistic. The essence of each must be preserved and applied with knowledge and understanding, for they each were influenced by their particular situation in history (for example, Iceland might have been much more rigid and authoritarian had there been a pertinent external military threat).

The Norse community of the future will be primarily rural, with individual homesteads some convenient distance apart. There will be a tendency toward local self-sufficiency in the staples of life and a feeling of self-reliance combined with a spirit of community between neighbors (and in most cases for the foreseeable future, everyone will be neighbors). The closest comparison, apart from ancient Scandinavia, would perhaps be pioneer America. In many respects it will realize the aims of the general "back to the land" movement of the sixties and early seventies in that it will be a return to a simpler, more natural and healthier way of life.

The Norse community will be religiously homogeneous, that is, one must be an adherent of Norse paganism to live there. If this seems like a contradiction with our belief in liberty, we must state that residence in our settlement is a privilege, not a right. Those who will not adhere to the relatively few basic rules which must exist are free to move. In this sense, our social system is contractual. Without a few basic rules, the liberty which we seek to promote could not be preserved. One of the faults of anarchy is that it is unstable; while it gives maximum room for freedom and responsibility for a time, eventually a despot will ascend to power and will take everyone's freedom.

The Nordic lifestyle, as I see it, will be a sort of combination freeholder-farmer and warrior. This last one will be hard to realize in today's world, for though there are many soldiers there are few warriors to be found in present culture. Still, culturally true outlets can be found, perhaps in mercenary activity (the soldier of fortune is a much slandered individual--but more of that some other time). However, this is an ideal. Not everyone can be a warrior.

What effect will this physical grouping of our co-religionists have on them, and on the larger non-pagan society of which they are a part? For the pagans, such a settlement would have the effect of strengthening personal religious commitment, allowing for the conduct of group rituals, and perhaps most importantly, giving each person a deeper insight into our religion by helping him or her to live it. It would also become a laboratory, an ongoing experiment in our lifestyle from which we--and the rest of the world--could learn much about low-intensity government, kinship dynamics, non-authoritarian social controls, and that delicate balance between total freedom and responsibility. The outside world will be watching our progress via newscast, feature articles, and--more importantly in the long run--scholarly books and research papers. Curiosity will be aroused which will offset the disadvantage of having fewer face-to-face contacts with non-pagans (though these would be encouraged by every possible means). It would be an error to get all of our people into such settlements simply because we need people to serve as missionaries, so to speak, in the outside world.

Consider for a moment the ecological impact of the Norse settlement as envisioned here. Farming methods, to be in keeping with our nature-oriented religion, must not harm the environment by poisoning the soil or water. Foods produced in the community would be free of harmful cancer-producing additives, and the very fact that these were strictly local products would mean that almost no fancy, non-biodegradable packaging would be used, nor would fuel be used to transport these food items for hundreds of miles. If power was produced by each household, by means of wind, water, or sun, there would be no energy load on the non-pagan society. Furthermore, no right-of-way would have to be cleared to allow access of the tall electrical towers which parade across so many landscapes.

The Norse settlement or community is a concept which has a definite place in our future. It represents an alternative to the city, which alienates us from our Mother the Earth and which strains both our nerves and the capacity of the environment to withstand attack. It is in keeping with the religious, cultural, and political heritage of our pagan ancestors of long ago, and will provide us with a safe and healthy environment for our sons and daughters.

The Norse community--and it will appear as an actuality within a few years--may help inspire the West with the will to survive, and may turn the cultural tide which today runs against us. Failing that, it will at least give us a relatively safe and protected haven in which to survive, and from which to rebuild our heritage.

\* \* LIFESTYLES -- NOTES AND REFLECTIONS \* \*

The matter of lifestyles appropriate to our religion and our culture is one which will receive a thorough examination in the pages of The Runestone. Some months ago I wrote the article on "The Norse Community" which precedes this one; since then I have thought more on this vital subject and feel compelled to offer these thoughts as a sort of postscript.

The Norse community as outlined in the article of that name is historically and culturally valid. There is no reason why it would not work admirably on the scale in which it is envisioned. However, if the scale is greatly expanded--if, for example, we begin talking about millions of people as opposed to a dozen or so colonies of a couple of hundred people each--we run into problems. The two difficulties which are most painfully obvious are these: Such a nation or community would be solely rural and thus at the mercy of nations or factions which possessed an industrial base, and rural communities require a considerable amount of land, which is becoming more and more scarce because of mounting population pressure.

One can envision several possible solutions to the first problem: We as a nation could abandon modern technology altogether and revert to a non-technological society. This I reject out of hand for several reasons, namely, such a move would leave us vulnerable to any group which retained modern technology. It would not, moreover, be in the tradition of Western Man, who created the technology in the first place. Finally, I happen to

like the nice things which technology can provide. A second solution would be for all who chose our religion and our way of life to gradually become the farming class within a nation, the remainder of which continued to develop and implement its industry and technology. A sort of symbiotic relationship would then exist in which we provided the food and the non-pagan world provided industrial products. This is certainly a better approach than a world-wide abandonment of technology, but is not without problems. It is questionable just how stable such a society would be, and it does not allow for the possibility of paganism becoming predominant in the West. A third possibility, and the one which has the best hope for success, lies in the search for a way of establishing an industrial system which is consistent with our religious and traditional cultural beliefs. Monopoly capitalism was an attempt which failed, as power tended to concentrate and largely put an end to free enterprise. A form of capitalism with strict legislation to preserve free competition shows much more promise, though care must be taken that legislative interference does not extend itself to include legislation which is egalitarian in nature or otherwise results in the stifling of freedom. Fascism was a classic attempt to compromise between the traditional rural way of life and the influences of modernization, but it has incorporated in its essence elements which are opposed to the native values of our people. Other forms of socialism are equally repugnant.

The above list pretty well eliminates the economic forms known today. Some of them are wholly unsuitable, others less so. The search for something better must continue. Luckily, we can proceed with small rural colonies and test our basic premises before having to completely solve this problem. In fact, such actual experimentation may be the only way to find the solution we need.

Now to the second problem--that of an increasing population and the result of less *Lebensraum* such as is required by our traditional agrarian lifestyle.

The first mistake which we must avoid is that made by so many well-meaning people, who tell us that we must stop reproducing in order to end the crisis of over-population on this planet. At the present time, people of Northern European extraction, the ethnic group which originated and supported our religion, are multiplying at a very slow rate while the peoples of the Third World are increasing at a high rate of growth. To limit the size of our families at this point in history can only insure the destruction of our people, our culture, and our religion. Let the people in the "underdeveloped countries", who have contributed so little to human progress, limit their growth!

If we are hounded by lack of available living space to the point that the overall implementation of a rural society becomes impossible or extremely difficult, there are ways of mitigating the effects of urban existence. Having been a resident of Germany for the last three and a half years while in the Army, I have observed a compromise of this sort on the part of many Germans. To be sure, Germany has its high-rise apartments which are glass-and-steel cages such as one might find in any modern, industrialized nation, but on the whole Germans have gone to extraordinary means to preserve a rural setting and to keep the individual citizen related to the soil. This is reflected in the large numbers of small farming villages which persist in the countryside, and in the general viability of small farms. It is

reflected in the extent to which Germans flee to the countryside on holidays and weekends or even in the afternoons during the week to walk for several kilometers in the forests for pure enjoyment, or in the popularity of small hide-away cottages tucked away in the woods.

Even in an urban environment, the Germans have enacted both laws and customs which serve to buttress personal privacy and solitude. It is regrettable, and even distasteful, that laws must be passed to insure privacy in an urban environment, but at least the very existence of these laws is evidence of concern in this area.

Of all the facets of modern Germany which harken back to the pagan past, and the one having the most bearing on our discussion of rural versus urban lifestyles, is the great reverence and importance attached to the growing of trees! Despite its high population density and the large amount of land under cultivation or serving as pasture land, Germany is a heavily forested country. This is not by accident, but rather by careful planning. The German countryside abounds with tree nurseries, and the cost of damaging these trees is enough to discourage any destruction. I remember a remark made by a frustrated tank commander who was annoyed by the elaborate precautions needed to avoid "maneuver damage" while in the field, particularly in regard to trees: he spat out a remark that "In America we protect trees. In Germany they build temples to them!" It would have been pointless for me to have explained that in fact for untold thousands of years the trees were the temples of the Germans, the groves being used for religious ritual and communing with the gods.

Such means of compromising with a lack of space are not wholly acceptable, but they provide examples of possibilities which, at any rate, are better than the city as it commonly exists today. Disregarding for the moment sheerly economic factors, such compromises are only partial solutions.

One point, as unpleasant as it is, is this--after we establish our communities, there will most likely come a time that powerful interests will seek to drive us off of them. The reason may be envy, or greed, or fear of our success, or it may be that the pressure of population will give government the excuse to appropriate land to parcel it out to others. If this happens, we will fight--by legal means so long as that is possible, and then gun in hand to protect what is ours.

The two problems of how to retain an industrial base without sacrificing our cultural essence and how to promote the Norse community in a world of shrinking space are difficulties which must eventually be solved. They are relatively long-range problems, and they will not prevent our formation of the first experimental Norse communities, but in due time, if we are to become more than a historical footnote, they must be solved.

\* \* \* \* \*

All great discoveries and undertakings spring from the joy strong men feel in victory. They are products of individuality, not utilitarian thought.

-Oswald Spengler

## BOOK REVIEW

THE SAGA MIND, by M. I. Steblin-Kaminskiĭ

This erudite book is not a book about the Icelandic sagas as such, for there are many books dealing with the history, chronology, and literary features of this genre. *The Saga Mind*, as its name indicates, is rather about the world view of the saga audience--how they conceived of good and evil, truth, time and space, the human personality, life and death. This sort of subject matter is much rarer than books dealing with the content of the sagas themselves, and also is much more relevant to those of us who profess the Norse religion.

Modern scholars, according to the author, do not have a comprehension of the cultural gap, the differences between essential features of the world-view, which separates the mind of the people in a typical saga audience from those who read such material in our day. The psychology is fundamentally different, and one must beware of interpreting the sagas with the modern mind.

Steblin-Kaminskiĭ's section on time as perceived by the ancient Icelanders is most interesting. Where we today think of only the present as being real, the Icelander believed that past, present, and future were all laid out, all existing now, in a spatial sense. Portents and omens foresaw that which existed "now," though that "now" was in the future. Likewise, the past was very real, and the time intervening between the past and the present was not abstract, objective time but was intimately linked to the present by the genealogy of one's ancestors. Steblin-Kaminskiĭ takes all this a step further by stating that the concept of the "living dead" in Norse society, in which the dead person continued an essentially human existence after death in the grave mound, a sacred mountain, Hel, Valhalla, or wherever, is related to this concept of stable and continuous time. He believes that for the individual, time did not end with death but encompassed it and all that followed.

In his article "What is good and what is evil?", the author exposes the Christian atrocities and persecutions necessary to effect the conversion of Northern Europe, and speaks highly of the pagan system of vengeance described in the family sagas. As he says, "The abdication of his rights and obligations (to take vengeance) to the state or to a punishing and rewarding God, with His hell and paradise, was a restriction of the independence and freedom of the individual, a diminishing of his moral responsibility, and a blow to his self-respect and dignity, and thereby a prerequisite for the development in him of an inferiority complex."

Lest this be taken as a rationalization of unbridled killing, Steblin-Kaminskiĭ points out that the family sagas tell us of most of the killings in Iceland over a period of about a hundred years. From this period 297 acts of vengeance--not all of which were killings--are recorded in the sagas. That's a yearly average of about three killings a year for Iceland's population. Even considering that some sagas might have been lost and that non-vengeance killings presumably not counted, that's a pretty low per capita average. Could we today, with our institutionalized and non-personal warfare, match that?

*The Saga Mind* is an extremely thought-provoking book. It is available from the Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1, England.

\* \* \* \* \*

The moral and social maxims of the Norsemen are represented as being uttered by Odin himself in the Havamal (high song of Odin), the second song of the Elder Edda, and by the valkyrie Sigdrifa in the Sigdrifumal (the lay of Sigdrifa), the twenty-first poem of the same work. Read these poems and maxims, and judge whether they will warrant the position repeatedly taken in this work, that the electric spark that has made England and America great and free came not from the aboriginal Britons, not from the Roman enslavers, but must be sought in the prophetic, imaginative and poetic childhood of the Gothic race. Read these poems and judge whether the eminent English writer, Samuel Laing, is right when he says:

"All that men hope for of good government and future improvement in their physical and moral condition,--all that civilized men enjoy at this day of civil, religious and political liberty,--the British constitution, representative legislation, the trial by jury, security of property, freedom of mind and person, the influence of public opinion over the conduct of public affairs, the Reformation, the liberty of the press, the spirit of the age,--all that is or has been of value to man in modern times as a member of society, either in Europe or in the New World, may be traced to the spark left burning upon our shores by these northern barbarians."

In the old Gothic religion were embodied principles and elements which had a tendency to make its votaries brave, independent, honest, earnest, just, charitable, prudent, temperate, liberty-loving, etc.; principles and morals that in due course of time and under favorable circumstances evolved the Republic of Iceland, the Magna Carta of England, and the Declaration of Independence.

-From *NORSE MYTHOLOGY* by R. B. Anderson, 1875

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