

# Brazilian Party Formation: Questions of Ideology, Party Labels, Leadership, and Political Practice, 1831-1888

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**Jeffrey D. Needell**

Professor in the Department of  
History at the University of Florida  
(College of Liberal Arts & Sciences/  
UF – Flórida/EUA)  
e-mail: [jneedell@history.ufl.edu](mailto:jneedell@history.ufl.edu)

**Abstract**

This is a response to comments by R. Salles and M. Dantas, and discusses the use of Gramscian terminology, ideological differences between the parties, party names used during the Regency and Second Reign, and political practice at the provincial and national levels. It argues that the saquaremas were not a hegemonic party, that their leaders were organic, that the differences between the parties were fundamental on certain points, and that the use of party names in the text debated derive from contemporary usage and meaning. The response also comments on the fundamental differences involved in the Additional Act, on the significance of the reactionary centralizing legislation, and, finally, on the success and limitations of both State power and of provincial political mobilization in affecting provincial government, national policy, and imperial political practice.

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**Keywords**

political practices, monarchy, slavery, legislative power, parliamentary debates, liberalism

In responding to the comments of my colleagues during the forum, I thought it best to address the more salient points, in order to entertain questions and comments from the audience. Now, however, I take the opportunity afforded by the *Almanack Braziliense's* published format to respond at greater length and detail to some of the issues brought up during our exchange and in the written comments given to me on the eve of the forum itself. I shall do so in the order of the comments, taking up those of each colleague in turn, beginning with those of Dr. Ricardo Salles.

### Ricardo Salles

For the most part, in reading through the comments made by Salles, I find little with which to disagree. On the contrary, in terms of general perspective and a good deal of our understanding of the period and its analysis, I believe our positions are very much the same. However, there is a very significant divergence between us regarding the value of the Gramscian analysis he (and, before him, Ilmar Rohloff de Mattos) defends and regarding the archival-based analysis of political detail, process, and biography central to my approach. This is best explored in my attempting to respond to a phrase or so from his item 4.b):

No centro desse processo, como força aglutinadora, organizadora e de expansão de um *éthos* e um *habitus* próprios, estava a Coroa enquanto partido gransciano, como bem notou Ilmar Rohloff de Mattos. A ação dos saquaremas e dos conservadores e a atuação da Coroa encarnada na figura de dom Pedro II constituíram, ainda para usar o instrumental gramsciano, a direção moral e intelectual do Segundo Reinado, ou, mais precisamente, do bloco histórico imperial-escravista.<sup>1</sup>

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SALLES, Ricardo. *Notas de um debate*. Comentários sobre o texto de Jeffrey Needell *Formação dos partidos políticos no Brasil da Regência à Conciliação, 1831-1857*. *Almanack Braziliense*, São Paulo, n.10, p.51, nov.2009.

However much I accept the need to understand socio-economic context and interests, and the way in which ideology and material interests influence one another, and however much I admire the insights of Gramsci, and the potential of his work for our own, I am unwilling to accept the idea that hegemony and a hegemonic ideology or party, as I understand Gramsci's concepts, obtained in the period and place in question. I should note, at the outset, that in the late 1980s, when I conceived of an intellectual history of Brazilian conservative social thought, 1830-1940, I expected to find something close to such a hegemonic ideology, and I expected to find it through studying the use made of history, the state, and race over the generations by a half-dozen key intellectuals. However, research into the specificity of the political history of the period when the Brazilian state was debated and restructured has convinced me that the conflicts, particularly political and ideological, were more complex and contingent. Hegemony, as I understand it, does not mean the simple domination of society by one class, but a situation in which all other classes accept the ideological project of the ruling class as appropriate and explanatory with respect to their own interests. Spontaneous consent among them is critical. Although, for example, the saquaremas triumphed over the *lúzias* in the 1840s, the Liberal party persisted and regained strength, without great differences in its ideology, over the next decade. In a phrase, they did not accept the ideology or the state associated with the saquaremas; they contested them. For hegemony to obtain, would Gramsci not expect an ideology which all political actors accepted as "natural"? The ideology of the saquaremas was certainly not accepted as such: it was explicitly contested by

the Liberals, who proposed a significantly distinct view of both the state and the society. More intriguing, regarding the fundamental issue of slavery, the saquaremas were actively contradicted by the monarch.

Allow me to elaborate. The *exaltados* and their heirs, e.g., T. Otoni, Tavares Bastos, basically retained the same critique of the positions associated with the saquaremas over the decades; they certainly did not accept such ideas as "natural." Basic aspects, from the *regressista* legislation to the concept of the emperor's role, remained targets of their pamphlets and speeches; indeed, over the 1860s, they strengthened. On a more particular level, while I certainly agree that both parties and their followers accepted slavery as a "natural" component of the social order, this both contradicts the idea that it was specifically part of a saquarema ideology and runs squarely against the idea that it was part and parcel of the monarch's position, who was well known to be abolitionist and, as I attempt to demonstrate in my book, was the key figure in promoting the Law of the Free Womb in the 1860s up through to its triumph in 1871. This picks at a critical aspect of Salles's and Rohloff de Mattos's analysis; for them, and I paraphrase here, the Crown operates as a Gramscian party, combines with the actions of the saquaremas and Conservatives, is incarnated in the person of Dom Pedro II, and provides moral and intellectual leadership for the Second Reign, comprising the "bloco histórico imperial-escravista." How does one accept the emperor as participant in a unified Gramscian party including the saquaremas, when published and unpublished documents of the era demonstrate that he successfully struggled to promote abolition and the saquaremas lost in their bitter struggle to prevent his imposition of the project?

Salles notes this divergence in our analyses and perspectives with great sensitivity and concern in his next paragraph. He understands but does not necessarily agree with my choice for a "more factual narrative of the events of this historical process" going on to note that "a certain frustration remains" regarding my "lack of dialogue with Rohloff de Mattos's interpretation." Salles wants more discussion of this, particularly since he senses (if I may hazard an impertinence) a kind of intellectual kinship between himself, his mentor, and me in my use of "organic intellectual" for the saquaremas with respect to the fluminense oligarchies which they led and represented. I used "organic" to describe the Conservative party's founders, traditional leaders, and their heirs because, as I understand Gramsci, it is the appropriate term for intellectuals who derive from a social group and represent its interests, and such describes the origins and/or interests of the men of whom I wrote. However, clearly one can have organic intellectuals and they can have the ambition to establish a hegemonic ideology and hegemony, and still fail. That is, in effect, what I argue in my book happened with the Conservative party and its traditional leadership. Here, Salles' comments during the forum (and in item 3 among his commentaries) are extremely useful: he pointed out the great difference between what one intends, what one does, and the impact of what one has done. My book describes the intent of the party's founders, their actions and ideas, and the way in which the State they helped to define and to lead took on a relative autonomy in the hands of the monarch, who turned upon them and their interests with fatal success.

I believe Salles may be mistaken in attributing to me the idea that all of the Conservatives' leadership was organic. I believe that, in discussing

the moderate Conservative ministers of the Conciliação and post-Conciliação era of the mid 1850s and 1860s, I am explicit in distinguishing between those Conservatives put in power by the monarch (former saquaremas such as Paraná, who had become more pragmatic, and less ideological, more moderate crown servants, such as Paranhos, Caxias, et al.) and those who refused ministries after 1853 and attacked both the Conciliação and what they perceived as the opportunism of the moderate cabinets and the Liga Progressista which followed (saquaremas such as Eusébio, Rocha, et al.). The saquaremas and their heirs, the traditional ideological leadership and political chiefs associated with the party's fluminense heartland, were clearly organic and, for the most part, remained clearly on one side of the party; the emperor's men, those willing to serve him rather than the party's leadership or its ideology, were on the other. It is the difference between the saquarema triumvirate and such heirs or associates as Paulino José Soares de Sousa filho, Andrade Figueira, Justiniano José de Rocha, et al. and such men as Caxias, Rio Branco, and Nabuco de Araújo. It is the sort of thing that helps explain why some of the moderates would be willing to leave the Conservative party altogether (e.g., Nabuco de Araújo, Zacarias, et al., who left the party entirely by the early 1860s to form up the Liga, and later became Liberals). It is precisely my approach to the past, in which the factual analysis is critical to the narrative of the historical process, which highlights these distinctions and their critical impact on the twists and turns of political history. It is true that these men had a great deal in common, in terms of class interests, devotion to the Monarchy, and commitment to state service. However, unless one understands their critical differences in approach to party, state, and monarch, I do not believe it is possible to make sense of the historical process and the nature of the monarchy's politics – and these were my goals. It is significant that Salles can describe 1871 and 1888 as associated with Conservative preeminence; in my book, I sought to demonstrate how 1871 was a defeat for the party's traditional leadership and ideology. In my next book, I expect to demonstrate the same for 1888. The abolitionist laws of these two years were the triumphs of reformists within the party and whose who joined them under political pressure. These were political *tours de force*, to be sure, but not Conservative triumphs, at least, not if one associates "Conservative" with its historical origins and leadership. As far as these were concerned, the laws of 1871 and 1888 were the party's signal defeats, fatally wounding saquarema tradition, ideology, and interests.

### **Implicâncias?**

#### **Por que reacionários e não regressistas?**

I used the word "reactionary" as the best translation of "*regressista*." Both have to do with a political return to a position threatened or overcome, and, in the way in which such publicists as Evaristo used the term to slur Vasconcelos and his associates, it was an attempt by one liberal to attack another for returning to a political position they had both opposed before (the strong state and monarch of the First Reign). Here is the definition from the Oxford English Dictionary, which provides the historical analogies I also found attractive:

**A. n.** A person inclined or favourable to reaction, esp. one who is against radical political or social reform, and in favour of a reversion to a former state of affairs.

In the earliest examples representing or translating French *réactionnaire*, an opponent of the French Revolution; in later Marxist use freq. denoting an opponent of communism.

**1799** *Reply L. N. M. Carnot to Rep. Conspiracy 18th Fructidor* 149 When in the Directory, I contributed to extricate it from new dangers, wherein these same villains, then acting as factious *reactionaries* [Fr. *comme réacteurs*], had plunged it. **1799** tr. F. D'Ivernois *Hist. & Polit. Surv. Losses French Nation* 11 The reign of the Moderatists..gave birth to what is called the *reaction royale*... The royal reactionaries [Fr. *les réactionnaires royaux*] committed crimes of which the histories of the most barbarous nations afford no example. **1844** *Southern Q. Rev.* Jan. 93 As soon as the system of terror was overthrown..the convention..had two sets of enemies to contend with. The violent revolutionists opposed to the reaction, and the *violent reactionists*, (*reactionaries*)..who wished to hasten the government back to monarchy.

Evaristo and the other moderados sought to use regresso and regressista precisely to imply that Vasconcelos and others who supported him were, precisely, reactionary, with regard to the liberal reforms. Indeed, Vasconcelos, who had been closely associated with the 1834 legislation, did debate aspects of it before the passage and then turned against it altogether, working with Paulino José Soares de Sousa on the "Interpretação" that successfully revised it. In the liberal milieu of the Chamber, this attack by Vasconcelos's enemies was politically intelligent and, in terms of the position Vasconcelos and his followers were defining, a not entirely inappropriate term. You may recall that Vasconcelos initially ridiculed the term as meaningless in terms of what he had done and what he was doing. Later, as occurred in the 1840s' terminology regarding statesmen called *lúzia* and *saquarema*, the term passed into common usage by both sides.

### **Por que Partido da Ordem e não Terceiro Partido?**

In my research, the idea of a Terceiro Partido emerged in the middle 1830s, closely associated with Vasconcelos's particular dissidence with the moderados. I did not find it used associated with the party that emerged as a majority in the Chamber by 1837. I used Partido da Ordem (for "*partido da ordem*") because that majority party's spokesmen used it explicitly in both speeches and in their party periodical, *O Brasil*, to refer to their party. Salles has seen it in reference to *pernambucano* politics, but I did not. Members of the national party used the term to make a distinction between themselves and their opposition, whom they wished to slur as "anarchists." I gave the term emphasis in the book's title because it seemed to point to the most significant ambition of the party's founders, leaders, and their heirs: the maintenance and security of the political, social, and economic order.

### **Por que não conservadores a partir de mais ou menos 1840 e certamente para o gabinete de 1848-53?**

In *The Party of Order*, I tried, in small matters and great ones, to avoid anachronism, since it tends to misshape the reader's perception of the past and of change over time. While "*partido da ordem*" appears in speeches and in *O Brasil* by 1844, "*conservador*, *partido conservador*" do not. I found them in contemporary sources only in 1855.<sup>2</sup>

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NEEDELL, Jeffrey D. *The Party of Order. The Conservatives, the State and Slavery in the Brazilian Monarchy, 1831-1871*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p.366, n.81 e p.371-372, n.41, for particulars.

### Monica Duarte Dantas

The nature of Dantas's comments is more along the lines of a series of questions and points in response to my text. In most cases, I find myself agreeing with the points. What follows, then, is a response to the questions or to the points with which I disagree.

The quotation from the viscount de Albuquerque, used so often to dismiss the idea of ideological distinction between the parties, has for that reason had an unfortunate impact on this historiography. However, it can also be used to get at one of the salient issues of the Liberal Party. Albuquerque was, indeed, very much like the saquaremas in terms of his background, his class interests, and his monarchism. As such, when he or his wing of the Liberals were in power (that is, the moderate, monarchist Liberals who dominated the cabinet of the Majority or the cabinets of the Liberal Quinquennium), they tended to defend the idea of a strong state and the constitutional prerogatives of the emperor. However, they were also subject to consistent attacks by the more reformist, radical wing of the party, associated with such men as Teófilo Otoni. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why such cabinets were ephemeral; they had trouble securing support from the Chamber. During the Quinquennium, in particular, the frustration of the reformist Liberal deputies with their cabinets was noteworthy and led to increasing radicalization over those years. What would have been more precise (and honest) would have been the dictum, "There is nothing so like a saquarema than a lúzia *such as the viscount de Albuquerque* in power." Lúzias such as Otoni were never brought to power precisely because the emperor did not trust them. Such radicals or reformists were generally left marginalized, a minority in the Chamber, rarely significant in the cabinets, and consistently opposed to the regime reconstructed and set in place by the saquaremas. In a phrase, the saquaremas won, but they did not go uncontested, and more radical liberalism was very much in place in 1848, in 1860, and in 1868-69, in defeats, in pamphlets, in political mobilization and the 1869 manifesto. They lost, but they were not absorbed and they did not cede. They were not much like the saquaremas at all.

I have not had the pleasure of studying the work of Miriam Dolhnikoff. However, at least in this abbreviated summary of her work, I must admit to some doubt. The essence of 1834, as I understood it, was the idea of a substantive shift in power away from the center and towards the provinces. The essence of the Interpretation and 3 December, as I understood them, was a reaction against this, affirming, in contrast, the reaffirmation of the center's authority down to and through the provinces to the municípios. Clarification of the center's over-all power was a key to this. This is one reason why the Liberals, particularly the reformist-radical wing, remained critical of the status quo and called for Federation. There is no contradiction between this and the creation of provincial assemblies. As for the extinction of the Council of State being done tranquilly, I would have to review the debates. You must recall that, at the time, the third legislature of 1834-37, reform was the *raison d'être* of the legislature and there was a general fear among the moderates of both wings that Dom Pedro, duke de Bragança, having secured the Portuguese monarchy for his daughter, Maria da Glória, might be on the verge of returning to Brazil to secure the monarchy for his son. It might well be that, in that particular, ephemeral context of a rising tide of reform and fear of restoration, there

were few moderados ready and willing to defend the institution associated with the first emperor's alleged absolutism. However, once the danger of Dom Pedro's return was over, those who believed in the necessity of the monarchy and its strength, began the process of reaction. This culminated in the reactionary majority of 1837, which was succeeded by the still more solidly reactionary fourth legislature of 1838-41, which not only brought in the Interpretation and the 3 December legislation but the restoration of the Council, in late November 1841 (ten days before 3 December). This legislature thus differed from the third, which had shifted back and forth over the issue of a centralized, monarchist government in a dramatic fashion, from the reform of 1834 to the reaction of 1837, which rather undercuts the idea of "relative tranquility." Indeed, the fact that the Chamber in 1834 would extinguish the Council of State and then, in joint session, vote to sustain the Poder Moderador, suggests that there was more drama and volatility involved.

The idea that the great part of the Additional Act was left untouched, or that the opposition party, once in power, saw the need for some revisions of it, are both ideas used here to suggest a great deal of common ground between the two parties on these reforms. On the points mentioned, that may be so, but I wonder if the points related to the Additional Act mentioned (the ones untouched, the ones revised) are the points of greatest importance. After all, the legislation of 3 December remained a battle standard of the Conservatives and a target of the Liberals over the course of the Second Reign, and its revision was undertaken only in small steps and with great hesitation. There is also the furor that erupted when Paraná sought to undertake the judicial reform during the Conciliação. In sum, to use less essential points as the basis for suggesting that the distance between the parties was not so great seems problematic. It is further undercut by the political debates (sustained by some of the more noted pamphlets of the Second Reign, particularly in the 1860s) between the parties on such key issues as 1) the role of the emperor and his relationship with the cabinet, 2) the role of the state in local government, 3) electoral reform (desired by both parties, but for different reasons, and, thus, with different reforms in mind – Liberals wanted to ensure minority representation, the Conservatives wanted to limit cabinet intervention and increase restrictions on the subaltern) and, 4) the role of the state in economic development (after 1850). I would agree, as Dantas suggests, that differences over slavery, both the traffic and slaveholding itself, were imperceptible between the majority in both parties. Nabuco makes it clear that the Liga's announcement of the need to address abolition was a shock to both parties, and the history of Abolitionism (1878-88) makes it clear that the majority of both parties was strenuously opposed to abolition.

On a less important point, I believe Dantas is mistaken in reading my text to mean that the opposition sought to put the emperor on the throne in 1840 to avoid the passing of 3 December; I meant to suggest they sought to take power before the law passed, because they feared being locked out of power afterward if the others were in power with 3 December in hand. I agree with Dantas's interpretation of the relationship between 3 December and the "election of the club." That is, that the opposition required greater violence to assure electoral results precisely because they did not have 3 December in place yet. The new law made

electoral fraud easier, avoiding the scandalous level of violence which was so unprecedented the new Council of State could press the emperor to annul the results (one of the provocations leading to the Revolts of 1842). Once in place, both the moderate wing of the opposition party and the reactionary party could use 3 December to create amenable majorities in the Chamber and they did, as I indicate in my book. This aggrandizement of the state suited both the regressistas and the moderate wing of their opposition, and both began using it in the 1840s, establishing a pernicious tradition which would help to undercut the legitimacy of representative government.

In response to Dantas's comment about the Mota letters from Piauí, that is, that they should not exist if the state's power were as great as suggested by 3 December, I would respond that Mota was complaining about pressure; he was not yielding to it. He was writing to the minister of justice because he understood that the provincial saquaremas were important to the minister and he was looking for advice, support, and direction. What he got was relief from the difficulties of his position, as Eusébio decided it would be better to secure local support than enforce the "civilizing mission." (Nor was Mota thereafter punished or disdained by Eusébio; he was assigned other positions and the two became kinsmen.) The larger question is that of state power, to be sure, but the saquaremas clearly understood this as being secured through negotiation with the local elite. They prioritized enlightened intervention below the state's survival, which required local support and votes. Apparently, Mota was withdrawn (as was Honório, in the other case I cite) to preserve local electoral support. The fact that the state had the power to effect its policies did not mean that it was always wise to use it. And if that power were ineffective, then it would not have been the object of such concern to the radical/reformist opposition. I believe something similar obtains in response to the question as to why radicals and reformists from the opposition party would be elected during the Liberal Quinquennium, if they were obviously opposed to the moderates of the opposition cabinets of the time, and cabinets were so strong in their capacity for electoral fraud and intervention. Again, it was doubtless a question of negotiation and local realities. The cabinets needed to reach out to their enemies' local opposition in the elections, to secure what they hoped would be a majority. They could not create moderates at the local level at that point in time; they had to work with the opposition members available. In this period, in the immediate aftermath of the polarization of the mid and late 1830s and early 1840s, this doubtless meant that many or even most of the opposition at the local level were associated with the militants of the opposition's left wing. The cabinets supported them in the elections, *faut de mieux*, to supplant the regressistas. Afterward, with such men seated in the Chamber, they had to face their criticisms, attacks, and frustrations. As with the regressista cabinets, the obtaining and retention of state power, in a political milieu of partisan warfare, had the highest priority – even if it meant unreliable support in the Chamber.

This idea of local realities at the provincial level and negotiation with the cabinets is something congruent with Dantas's call for research exploring how provincial politics and justice actually functioned. It is why I find this call and her suggestions about how things might have worked so



compelling. Barman, years ago, pointed out to me the critical role of the fluminense provincial assembly to the mobilization and articulation of the regressistas, and I tried to convey this in my book; here, again, Dantas calls for research along similar lines for the other provinces.

In response to Dantas's mention of the Liberal origins of Honório's electoral reform, I agree, and I believe I noted this in the book. The question, to me, at least, is why it surfaces again in the Conciliação. Both regressistas (such as Vasconcelos and Honório) and the opposition had called for electoral reform of various kinds in the 1840s. Now, as I understand it, Honório saw this particular reform as one which could be abused to weaken the parties and to favor the cabinet's power, and the emperor either accepted that for its own sake or, as was Honório's intention (in my view), specifically to weaken the saquaremas. Here, the prime minister's instincts for self-preservation and revenge may have mingled. Remember that the saquaremas had just forced the Paraná cabinet's defeat on judicial reform in the first test of the cabinet's power against that of the saquaremas in the Chamber and in civil society. Indeed, one must remember that the judicial reform had brought forth the articulated reaction of the great coffee planters of the Paraíba Valley under the leadership of Vassouras's most powerful clan, the Teixeira Leite family – a reaction coordinated with, and supported by, Eusébio himself, as my book shows. Both to move forward in strengthening the cabinet's position and to cripple the role of the saquaremas, electoral reform made sense. Neither the prime minister nor the emperor would have been comfortable with the earlier defeat, given their temperaments and the larger issues of power at stake. The prime minister would have realized that he had to reverse that defeat and that the electoral reform would do so nicely. Such a reform directly undercut the saquaremas' electoral strength by sapping the use of provincial slates organized by the party's leadership in the Court. It would also, by dramatically weakening the intervention of the parties and forcing the electoral struggle down to the more local "circle," force local influences to compete with one another, a scramble for power in which the advantages associated with the influence of the cabinet would become relatively stronger.

Dantas wonders if the Additional Act's decentralization, and the mobilization and articulation of provincial elites, might not have led to the intervention of those elites at the national level, against the interests of the national parties or the emperor himself. There is no doubt that something of this nature is involved in the *pernambucano* struggle with the saquarema cabinet in the 1848-53 period. At least at the level of forcing favors and patronage, the province's deputies organized enough of a bloc to force the hand of the cabinet (I discuss this in terms of the cabinet's increasing frustration in the book).

Accommodating provincial interests along such lines afterwards seems likely from what I have seen, as well. However, by the very nature of provincial level organization, intervention in larger policy issues would not seem plausible; they would have to have captured the cabinet and controlled its direction, and they did not. Instead, what I observed in the cabinets after 1853 were ministers put there by the emperor in negotiation with his prime ministers; while there were clearly ministers there representing blocs of regional interests, or wings of one or both of the two

great parties, grand policy remained in the hands of the monarch and the ministers he favored through repeated appointments. I applaud the idea of exploring this further, of course. It would be important to know to what extent the negotiations involved in forming cabinets and in the cabinets' subsequent negotiation with Chamber delegations involved blocs organized at the provincial level and then articulated into the provincial delegations in the Chamber. However, I suspect that will give us an idea of how patronage functioned, and how it impacted upon cabinet policy (to effect it, to slow it down, or to block it) rather than how it shaped such policy or originated it. This is why I do not see this as a process that contradicts my sense that the monarch's impact and the state's autonomy grew steadily over the Second Reign. Monarch and cabinet could and did use patronage to secure votes on the policies they wanted. They might have been forced to trade patronage for such votes, but they apparently were not forced to accept direction in exchange for support. Rather, the negotiation speaks to the complications of politics and the cost of doing political business. If the more significant question is, who determined state policy on the most significant issues, domestic and foreign, research along these lines will enrich our sense of how policy was made to happen (or not), but not who was in charge of it.

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