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Sentence structure in the works of J. Arbes, A. Jirásek, and J. Zeyer

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the use of the sentences in the selected texts by Jakub Arbes, Alois Jirásek and Julius Zeyer. On the basis of a set of frequency analyses, the contribution summarizes selected individual aspects of the prose style used in the works of Jakub Arbes, Alois Jirásek, and Julius Zeyer. The paper deals with linear sentence length of simple sentences and commplex/compound sentences in texts of the selected authors. The focus is on characteristic features of the narrative style of these very much different 19th Century Czech Authors as well as on similarities relating their style.

This paper scrutinises selected individual (singular) aspects of the prose style used by three authors representative of Czech literature at the turn of the 20th century, specifically, Jakub Arbes; Alois Jirásek; and Julius Zeyer. Because of the content delimitation, the objective of our study is not to produce a coherent (stylistic) analysis of sentences and compound sentences used in the works of the selected poets, rather it is focused on one particular aspect of a particular theme in terms of contemporary stylistic research. The paper explores the (linear) sentence length of the simple sentence and the compound sentence in the texts of the discriminated authors, namely, it specifies the parameters marking their characteristics and interconnecting the narrative style of three all but compatible figures in the 19th-century classic Czech literature. Our enquiry is based on the assertion that the narrational style of the given authors is grounded in the long epic sen-

tence (for Jirásek see e.g. Haller 1958; Horálek 1953; for Zeyer see Mathesius 1942; Schacherl 2001, 2013; Arbes' language is as yet to be examined). The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the use of the sentence and the compound sentence in the selected texts with the support of completed frequency analyses. The sentence is conceived here as a simplified unit with "a particular morpho-syntactic structure and a semantic structure" (Karlík 2016); the compound sentence is defined as "a syntactic combination of two finite sentences" (Karlík 2016). The measured length of the simple sentence, the compound sentence, as well as a single sentence in the compound sentence is a measured unit between two full stops; one unit is a word presented as a graphic unit. In order to achieve the desired goals, our research will implement the methods of comparative and mathematical stylistics.

Comparative and mathematical stylistics

The purpose of comparative stylistics is to contrast general or individual styles within one language or, potentially, to compare single general styles in different languages (Jelínek, Krčmová 2017). This study makes comparison of subjective 'authorial' styles, implementing a time-honoured method indicative of Czech linguistics and literary scholarship. It facilitates a better understanding of the authorial or singular style used in a particular work where the individual pattern is specified through mutual comparison of combined sets of marked divergences from the stylistically neutral norm. Quantitative stylistics has developed within the expertise of authorship detection (or checking plagiarism) aiming to attribute a text to the assumed author (Kraus 2017). The quantificative approach to stylistic analyses is justified by implementing the methods of mathematical statistics and probability theory, namely in the analysis of the stylisation of various texts or types of texts. In stylistics (as well as in linguistics), mathematical and statistical methods create an objectivised condition for qualitative research enabling a better grasp of a specific (linguistic) phenomenon. In linguistic stylistics, quantificative analyses prove instrumental,

mainly because these methods help us draw generalisations from empirical data and assess to what extent random empirical quantities correspond with the probabilities of a random quantity with specific distribution (Uhlířová 1971).

Jakub Arbes, Alois Jirásek and Julius Zeyer

Our textual corpus comprises works authored by three classics of the 19th-century Czech literature. Within this literary scope, Jakub Arbes (1840–1914); Alois Jirásek (1851–1930); and Julius Zeyer (1841–1901) represent three diverse types of writers and specific human types. They differ in their family origin and background; in their personal disposition; in the conception of their artistic works. On that account, Jakub Arbes was born in a poor shoomaker' family on the outskirts of Prague (Smíchov today); Alois Jirásek came from an old yeoman family of a weaver and later baker; Julius Zeyer was a descendant of an old Prague noble family of a wholesale wood trader.

To start with, the obstinate journalist and warrior Jakub Arbes, was a discontented wandering debater, an "omniscient faultfinder and trenchant critic of everything". A distinctive characteristic of his is "a kind of precipitousness in the process of literary creation" evincing "the obvious features of journalese and his inborn tendency towards verbosity linked with fluency", manifesting itself mainly in the spoken form of communication and "in his propensity to loosen the factual content, many a time quite slight". Paradoxically, Arbes' clumsy style is typified by "almost arduous effort to find a desired phrase" in order to render a particular idea in the best way (N.B. his fiction was subject to repetitive rewriting; many of the paragraphs and idioms used in his manuscripts were pruned ten or more times). "He wrote his prose feverishly, in part motivated by his inner needs and partly compelled by his financial situation"; fast and easy, without any prelimimary draft" (since he skipped out heuristic research, in contrast to Jirásek and Zeyer, who never checked anything, his works are not spared mistaken data; incorrect composition; discordances between

the titles and the stories; etc.) and thus they "failed to give him satisfaction with the result" (Krejčí 1946). As if the natural literary gift should have been replaced by enormous effort; stamina; and immense assiduity.

In reference to Alois Jirásek, we cannot overlook the insightful observation once made by Josef Holeček (1853–1929), who confessed:

I have known Alois Jirásek for 27 or 28 years, but throughout all those many years nothing happened to us that would be worth mentioning. As long as I have known him, Alois Jirásek has remained the same guy: quiet, modest, obliging, high-minded, ardent, tirelessly assiduous. I remember him being none other than a whole, poised man [...] This is what he seemed to be when I made his acquaintance, and what he appears to be now (Tuček 1907, pp. 17–18).

The genuinely hardworking systematist and perfectionist Jirásek meticulously prepared the scenarios of his subject constructions, characters, surroundings. The unpretentious nature of his made him refuse, under the influence of realist aesthetics, to be photographed to prevent his appearance from affecting the perception of his texts. Privately, a very thrifty man earning a lot of money to be spent mainly by his family; as a non-conflictive individual avoiding polemics he was fixed solely on his writings. Nation-wide, he was attached the label of a boring wordsmith producing long novels, in the main chronicles, while paradoxically ranking among the Czech authors boasting the widest range of genres from erotic poems to feuilletons and political addresses. His bias towards the left was praised by Z. Nejedlý, who highlighted him as a symbol of revolution and popular culture, just as Jirásek rejected T. G. Masaryk's appointing him the minister of education in a rightest cabinet; let alone Jirásek's being elected to the senate by a conservative rightest party and awarded the Order of Franz Josef; etc.

Unlike both of his professional peers, Julius Zeyer was spared daily toil. Contrary to Arbes and Jirásek, he relished free and leisurely life, unburdened by boring duties and commitments; he lived an extravagant life without compromise, indulging in many lavish hobbies, such as collecting antiquities; travelling; bibliophilism. Displaying

aristocratic manners, the man of peculiar communicational charm inclined to narcissism, as he embodied the exoticism and exceptionality of a sensitive individual with a strong eidetic bias. A staunch aesthete suffering from multiple neuroses and a contemplative humanist stylised as a proud and inflexible aristocrat within the contemporary art of literature, Zever assumed the role of a wistful loner who is unhappy in real life, a poet not understood by his contemporaries. Our approach to this authorial triad discriminates the contrasting features of their creative personalities. Thus Arbes' mediocrity and ordinariness of a lifelong outsider is typically contrasted with his commendable perseverance, a strong will, and wish to overcome adversity; Jirásek's assiduity, modesty and self-realisation is linked with a success in this society unparalleled; and Zeyer's pride and consistency as an artist, typically ensuing from the conscious, in many respects stylised, unity of life and works, is related to the increasing divergence between his personal expectations and desires and the concrete reality.

Sharing one common ground, Arbes and Jirásek were respectful to each other, the former holding the latter in great esteem. Incidentally, Jirásek paid irregular visits to Mahabharáta, a table company meeting in the St. Thomas Brewery. With their homes being situated not very far from each other, across the river in fact, they would meet on their walks along the riverside. When Arbes' son ran into problems at grammar school, Jirásek put a good word for him. With Zeyer, the two writers were on neutral terms, nevertheless, with the successful Jirásek, Arbes was slightly embittered. Arbes and Zeyer attended the same secondary school, as evidenced by a draft of Arbes' letter, dated from June 1867 and preserved in his inheritance, where the author confesses to another classmate: "I still remember the three of us, you, Zeyer and me, sitting close to each other... I remember the subject you two were vigorously pursuing then, yes, I recall Ertl gaping at you being better at the geography of Africa than himself..." (Krejčí 1946, p. 28). Arbes was an average pupil whom Zeyer, a shy, dreamful and keen student, may not have noticed or have probably ignored. Jirásek and Zeyer met in person only on two occasions. Once in Vodňany in

1876, when Alois Jirásek did not receive a warm welcome from Zeyer when he paid a visit to the local verse writers. The pretext for Zeyer's lapse then was Jirásek's improperly addressing František Herites as an apothecary. Next they crossed each other in Prague outside the house in Vávrova Street where they both then lived and Zeyer purposely avoided meeting Jirásek the moment he caught sight of the professor. Both of these encounters are referred to in Jirásek's *Paměti* [Memoirs]. The first of the two events marking the mutual contact between both men of letters was later mentioned in the volume published to celebrate Jirásek's 70th birthday (Herites 1921).

Last but not least, mutual antagonism between the poets can be detected in their creative conceptions. Although Jakub Arbes' works were grounded in the Máj generation realism, their romantic background made them ahistorical, demoted to action. Typically lacking in erotic scenes, his fiction inclined to hyperbolic expression, featuring a high frequency of superlatives and deminuitives whose expressiveness enhanced the persuasive aspect of the text. The characteristic accumulation of language material and the descriptive analytical documentary potential with distinctive marks of personal and life limitations are affected by the tendency bolstered by journalistic approach, i.e. reporting quickly and clearly on current affairs to a wide public readership. The fiction produced by the excellent narrator Jirásek is either dominated by action (until *Psohlavci* 1884) [The Dog Heads] or by space (the visual style is what links him with Zeyer). His literary works are slightly discredited by the omnipresent didactic function commonplace to their author, (a teacher by profession, notwithstanding the fact that he actually did not spend much time teaching). The dominant feature of Jirásek's language is the "linguistic simplicity" of literary realism which consequently fails to focus on literary expression in favour of the content (affected style that Jan Werich exemplified by the words "sedl na kůň" [he ascended a horse]. Zeyer's literary works are contrariwise distinguished by extremely idiosyncratic style, turning attention also to the formal aspect of a work of art as an entity fusing the elements of literary New Art; neo-Romanticism; Gothic; or possibly Decadence or Baroque. Typical is Zeyer's endeavour to use standard, literary language marked by archaisms, artistic quality and exclusivity, even within the contemporary usage.

The textual corpus (Il Divino Boemo; Balada z rokoka [The Roccoco Balad]; Inultus from Tři legendy o krucifixu [Three Legends of the Crucifix])

The textual corpus comprised Il Divino Boemo, authored by Jakub Arbes (1885, romaneto, 11273 words); Balada z rokoka by Alois Jirásek (1900, ballad, 4548 words); Inultus from Tři legendy o krucifixu by Julius Zeyer (1892, legend, 5963 words). Our selection criteria: A) epics; B) written in prose; C) (intentionally) different genre of minor epics; D) within the author's production in the same period; E) "minor works" within the context of the author's creations; F) smaller works (within the context of the author's creations. Romaneto (from Italian romanetto = little novel) denotes a prosaic genre typical of Czech literature, whose origin and development is linked with the name and works of Jakub Arbes. The narration develops an ingeniously structured fantastic or adventure story whose episodes and episodic events are interwoven with the central theme as the principal organising and constructive element of this genre (Vlašín 1984, p. 322). Within the limits of singular style analysis, the romaneto II Divino Boemo, written in 1885, belongs to the final stage of Arbes' creative career. The story about the rise and fall of the Czech composer Josef Mysliveček in Italy, telling about the fickleness of popularity, is interwoven with the fantastic motif of look-alikes, which is finally explained by the existence of the composer's twin brother. The ballad genre (from the Romance word ballare) can be fittingly characterised as a tragedy presented in the form of a song, combining all poetic genres: epics; lyrics, and drama. The composition of the ballad follows a concise gappy pattern not allowing epic length, and, in the most dramatic spots, changing into dialogue (Vlašín 1984, p. 40). Balada z rokoka first appeared in Zlatá Praha magazine in 1900 and so it corroborates (within the limits of singular style analysis) the author's "mature mastership" (Haller 1958, p. 250). Balada z rokoka tells an 18th-century tragic story of three courtesans murdered and robbed by their servants when the girls' lovers were absent. The legend (the Latin expression meaning 'what is to be read'), originally referred to the public reading of selected chapters from canonised lives of saints, held on their feasts in the church during the mass, or in the convent during the common evening meal. It is a religious narration, usually about a saint, featuring a strong "epic tone with attractive motifs of miracles and self-sacrifice for belief" (Vlašín 1984, p. 198). The Prague legend Inultus, the first of his Three legends of the Crucifix was first published in Lumír in 1892, together with the Toledo legend El Cristo de la Luz [Christ of the Light] and the Slovak legend Samko pták [Samko the Bird]. The dating of the text places it at the peak stage of Julius Zeyer's vast prosaic writing. The story of *Inultus* is set in Bohemia in the aftermath of the Battle of the White Mountain. A Spanish sculptress is captured by a beggar on Charles Bridge and makes him a model for her statue of the crucified Jesus. Inultus dies a hero death to render her a truthful expression of agonised suffering.

The (linear) length of the sentence and the compound sentence

The sentence length is a potential stylistic characteristic instrumental in describing the text as well as its author or, possibly, the stylistic area/ functional style, through statistic data on the sentence length (Uhlířová 1971). In the Czech language, the speaker (writer) commands a high degree variability of different use of sentences of various length. The sentence length reflects e.g. the system potentialities of the language; the theme and its content; specific norms in the given area of communicational style. Further on, our scrutiny will gradually reveal also the impact of individual (authorial) differences on the textual stylisation and composition. There are inconsistencies in the stylistic capacity, or rather, in the relevance of this parameter, in particular, in determining the kind of information on the sentence

length quantification or its utility. It is necessary to realise that the informative value of the statistical characteristics of the sentence length is far from being inclusive, it only covers one particular aspect.

Frequency analysis of the chosen devices in the explored texts shows that the simple sentences used in Jirásek and Zeyer have a slightly higher incidence than compound sentences (Jirásek 309 sentences; 161/52,25% SS, 148/47,76% CS; Zeyer 545 sentences, 283/51,93% SS, 262/48,07% CS), whereas in Arbes it is opposite – the compound sentence shows a higher frequency than the simple sentence (565 sentences, 256/39,02% SS, 400/60,98% CS). Compared to Jirásek and Zeyer, the simple sentence incidence in Arbes is markedly lower. The comparison of the average simple sentence length in the explored text distinguishes Zeyer's text; Arbes' and Jirásek's simple sentences are in the examined texts substantially longer than Zeyer's simple sentence, which on the average comprises fewer than five graphical words. Arbes, whose simple sentence has the lowest occurrence, in the explored *romaneto* by contrast shows the longest simple sentence of all three authors. Jirásek's simple sentence comprises seven graphical words (Arbes 8,45 words; Jirásek 7,27 words; Zeyer 4,61 words). Comparing the simple sentence length with the compound sentence length reveals 40,21% of the compound sentence in Arbes; 34,60% of the compound sentence in Jirásek; and 25,98% of the compound sentence in Zeyer. Arbes reveals the smallest contrast between the simple sentence length and the compound sentence length; by contrast, the greatest difference between the average sentence length and the compound sentence length is evidenced in Zeyer (Arbes SS 8,45 words / CS 21,02 words; Jirásek SS 7,27 words / CS 18,33 words; Zeyer SS 4,61 words / 17,75 words).

The highest simple sentence occurrence was evidenced in the utterances of Zeyer's characters (107/19,63%), followed by Arbes' (94/16,64%); a significantly lower incidence was evidenced in Jirásek. The shortest simple sentence in a character utterance was evidenced in Jirásek (3,6 words), followed by Zeyer (4,85 words), and Arbes (7,53 words), who features the longest simple sentence both in

the characters' utterance and in the narrator's utterance, with variations in the average sentence length within the vertical textual arrangement thus being insubstantial. Comparing the average linear simple sentence length and the average simple sentence length in the character's utterances reveals that in Arbes and Jirásek the simple sentence in the character's utterance is shorter; in Jirásek, incidentally, more distinctly than in Arbes. Zeyer's figures, by contrast, are just the opposite: the character's average simple sentence length is slightly longer than the narrator's. In Zeyer, in contrast to the other two poets, the vertical textual arrangement is significantly related to the linear simple sentence length and shares in the rhythm of Zeyer's narrative.

Arbes's romaneto as explored here is characterised by a slight prevalence of compound sentences over simple sentences. In contrast to the other two poets, Arbes' simple sentence is relatively long while his narrative style is typified by linearly fluent diction comprising a relatively small number of long simple sentences, without distinct linear contrasts between the narrator's and the characters' zones and between the simple sentence and the compound sentence. The typical diction of Jirásek's ballad comprises a slight prevalence of the simple sentence over the compound sentence, with the simple sentence being a rough third of Jirásek's compound sentence length. The average simple sentence is distinctly shorter in the characters' utterances, which enhances the impact of dialogues upon the thematic structure of the narrative and signals a genre affinity with ballad. Julius Zeyer's legend, in contrast to Arbes' romaneto and Jirásek's ballad, features the greatest differences in the simple and compound sentence length, despite the balanced ratio of their representation and minor increase in the characters' utterances. The average simple sentence in Zeyer is manifestly shorter in contrast to Arbes and Jirásek. The author's tendency to a more frequent segmentation of the text into simple sentences results in communicational disengagement and increases the simple sentence ratio in the text. In *Inultus*, the short simple sentence signals through contrasting functional shortening of the narrator's diction the important moments in the action and situation of the legend's subject. The quantitative analyses of the simple sentence length can be supplemented by the obtained data about the sentence equivalent. The authors do not differ in the ratio of its representation: in Julius Zeyer, the sentence equivalent is markedly shorter (representation Arbes 49x; Jirásek 44x; Zeyer 30x; length Arbes 6,78 words; Jirásek 7,57 words, Zeyer 2,9 words).

In the explored texts, the sentence length differences between the authors are more obvious in compound sentences than in simple sentences. The mean compound sentence is the longest in Arbes, the shortest in Zeyer (Arbes 21,02 – 20,13 HCS, 22,26 PCS; Jirásek 18,33 -21,01 HCS, 16,45 PCS; Zeyer 17,75 - 14,99 HCS, 18,74 PCS). In all narratives, an average compound sentence consists of approximately three sentences, with Zever's legend featuring slightly lower figures (Arbes 3,02 – 2,73 HCS, 3,31 PCS; Jirásek 3,06 – 2,89 HCS, 3,22 PCS; Zeyer 2,76 – 2,46 HCS, 3,09 PCS). There is a relative congruence also in the ratios of hypotactic and paratactic sentence lengths, with hypotactic compound sentences comprising more and paratactic compound sentences fewer clauses in all. While the ratio of their mutual relations is relatively identical, the hypotaxis and parataxis ratio varies. In Arbes, hypotactic compound sentences prevail over paratactic ones, in Jirásek and Zeyer it is quite the reverse Arbes 58,25% HCS, 41,75% PCS; Jirásek 41,18% HCS, 58,82% PCS; Zeyer 26,36% HCS, 73,64% PCS). In Zeyer, the prevalence of paratactical compound sentences over hypotactical ones is basically distinctive. The higher proportion of paratactical compound sentences manifests the authorial endeavour to enhance stylisation intricacy; to extend the facts through further paratactical information. Comparing the linear compound length with the number of sentences comprising the compound sentence reveals that Zeyer's long (paratactical) compound sentence does not result from the growing number of sentences but from the cumulation of words, namely the 'figures' produced by gathering the language material (Schacherl 2013). The high proportion of these figures in a prosaic text diverts attention from the communicational content, letting it enhance the expressive element. The

conspicuous rhythm of Zeyer's prose is created by the specific structure of the authorial sentence, enabling diverse types of repetition of phonetic elements, yet mostly of the grammatical, lexical and semantic features. The mutual proportion of the hypotactical and paratactical sentence lengths shows shorter hypotactical compound sentences and longer paratactical compound sentences in Arbes and Zeyer, the proportional difference in their lengths being more explicit in Zeyer. Jirásek's hypotactical compound sentence is longer than his paratactical compound sentence, actually, it is the longest in all explored authors, just as in Jirásek, the ratio of the mutual hypotactical and paratactical length is the highest in all three authors. Contrariwise, the lowest ratio of the average hypotaxis and parataxis lengths is evidenced in Arbes. This does not apply to the number of clauses comprising individual compound sentences. The differing numbers of sentences making up average hypotactical and paratactical compound sentences show similar mutual ratios in Arbes and Zeyer, whereas in Jirásek the difference between hypotaxis and parataxis is smaller. The shortest hypotactical compound sentence is evidenced in Zeyer. Typical of Zeyer's *Inultus* is a hypotactical compound sentence consisting of two sentences: the main clause and a subordinate clause.

Conclusion

The completed frequency analyses provide material pertinent to valid generalisation. The resulting quantifications corroborate that the basic element typical of the narrative style of the selected authors is the long epic sentence. In Arbes, Jirásek and Zeyer, the long epic sentence comprises rich syntax, which in Zeyer features an exquisitely structured rhythm. Typical of Arbes is the long epic sentence consisting of a long simple sentence and a long compound sentence with compound sentences prevailing over simple sentences; with hypotaxis prevailing over parataxis; with relatively small differences in their lengths; without striking linear contrasts between the narrator's and the characters' zones. Arbes develops his long epic sentence, combin-

ing the simple sentence and the compound sentence, mainly through clauses. Typical of his style is a higher incidence of hypotaxis; and starting the hypotactical compound sentence with the main sentence, often with the inserted subordinate clause. Arbes simple sentence is characterised by the established repertory of set phrases, most frequently in a character's utterance. His uncomplicated syntax corresponds with the analytically descriptive, documentary diction without higher figurativeness, synonymity and lexical exuberance. The indicative feature of Arbes' journalistic style is its direct, straightforward expressivity permeating the text at all language levels: on the lexical plane, it is inclination towards hyperbolisation; overusing superlatives and deminuitives; on the syntactic plane, a larger representation of appellative sentences. Jirásek's diction is typified by a moderate prevalence of the simple sentence over the compound sentence which is noticeably shorter in the characters' utterances (this enhances the importance of dialogues in the thematic structure of the narration and signals genre affinity with the ballad); moreover, it shows a prevalence of paratactical compound sentences over hypotactical compound sentences, with a difference in their mutual linear length, the greatest of all explored texts. Our quantification of the long hypotactic compound sentence proves that Alois Jirásek achieves a profusely stratified long epic sentence mainly by gathering independent sentence members: the loose attribute, and in particular, the loose apposition. Jirásek often purposely extends the stratification of his sentence through subdivision. His sentences comprise detailed enumerations of particular items, often arranged in long sequences. In order to prevent the disintegration of his sentence structure, Jirásek successfully implements the inner thought linkage of sentences; uses parallel structuring, i.e. the repetition of the same sentence scheme; demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, and especially elliptical sentences without finite verbs. His significant marker is the tendency towards not mentioning the relations; towards enhancing the impression of fixedness and peace through a high incidence of verb less sentences (out of the total number of simple sentences, Balada z rokoka contains the whole

quarter of one-member elliptical sentences with a finite verb). Typical of Zeyer is a shorter simple sentence (functionally extended to the characters' zone - the vertical arrangement of the text is in Zeyer meaningfully related to the linear length of the simple sentence and has a share in the rhythm of Zever's narrative); also typical is a greater difference between the simple sentence length and the compound sentence length; and further, the prevalence of parataxis over hypotaxis (with the dominance of parataxis). Except long paratactical compound sentences, Zeyer's sentence is mainly developed through the determined independent sentence members and additionally attached sentence members (namely, gradually added and multiple attributes). Separated by a marked pause, the determined sentence member helps Zeyer to enhance the tension between the textual rheme and theme. The inner dynamics of Zeyer's sentence is importantly impacted by the contrast between loose, additionally inserted multiple and secondary attributes and the closely connected adjectives and past participles in the predicate. These transitions between the static and dynamic sections, together with the overloaded syntax, furnish Zeyer's sentence with a kind of baroque contradiction and ornamental touch. Also typical in Zeyer is a high frequency of half-sentence structures. Though on the face of it, the differences between the three authors are less pronounced, they are significant for a particular authorial style, with potential implication for discerning the peculiarities of an authorial style.

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