

Appendix: List of Performances by Akram Khan Company

- 1999 *Loose in Flight*. Directed by Akram Khan and Rachel Davies. Performed by Akram Khan. Broadcast by Channel 4 Television in September 1999.
- 1999 *Duet*. Directed by Akram Khan and Jonathan Burrows. Performed by Akram Khan and Jonathan Burrows. Premiered on 14 July 1999 at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.
- 2000 *Loose in Flight*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan. Premiered on 11 March 2000 at Tron Theatre, Glasgow.
- 2000 *Fix*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan. Premiered on 11 March 2000 at Tron Theatre, Glasgow.
- 2000 *Rush*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan, Moya Michael, Gwyn Emberton/Inn Pang Ooi. Premiered on 5 October 2000 at Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham.
- 2001 *Polaroid Feet*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan. Premiered on 8 April 2001 at Purcell Room, London.
- 2001 *Related Rocks*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan, Rachel Krische, Moya Michael, Inn Pang Ooi, Shanell Winlock. Premiered on 9 December 2001 at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.
- 2002 *Kaash*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan, Rachel Krische, Moya Michael, Inn Pang Ooi, Shanell Winlock. Premiered on 28 March 2002 at Creteil, France.
- 2003 *Ronin*. Directed by Akram Khan and Gauri Sharma Tripathi. Performed by Akram Khan. Premiered on 11 April 2003 at Purcell Room, London.
- 2004 *ma*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan, Eulalia Ayguade Farro, Anton Lachky, Nikoleta Rafaelisova, Shanell Winlock. Premiered on 28 May 2004 at Singapore Arts Festival, Singapore.
- 2005 *Zero Degrees*. Directed by Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Performed by Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Premiered on 8 July 2005 at Sadler's Wells, London.
- 2006 *Sacred Monsters*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan and Sylvie Guillem. Premiered on 19 September 2006 at Sadler's Wells, London.
- 2008 *In-I*. Directed by Akram Khan and Juliette Binoche. Performed by Akram Khan and Juliette Binoche. Premiered on 18 September 2008 at Lyttleton, National Theatre, London.
- 2008 *Bahok*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Eulalia Ayguade Farro, Young Jin Kim, Meng Ning Ning, Andrej Petrovic, Saju, Shanell Winlock,

- Wang Yitong, Zhang Zhenxin. Premiered on 25 January 2008 at Tianqiao Theatre, Beijing, China.
- 2009 *Confluence*. Directed by Akram Khan and Nitin Sawhney. Performed by Akram Khan, Nitin Sawhney, Eulalia Ayguade Farro, Konstandina Efthymiadou, Young Jin Kim, Yen Ching Lin, Andrej Petrovic. Premiered on 27 November 2009 at Sadler's Wells, London.
- 2010 *Gnosis*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan and Yoshie Sunahata/ Fang-Yi Sheu. Premiered on 26 April 2010 at Sadler's Wells, London.
- 2010 *Vertical Road*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Salah El Brogy, Konstandina Efthymiadou, Eulalia Ayguade Farro, Ahmed Khemis, Young Jin Kim, Yen Ching Lin, Andrej Petrovic and Paul Zvkovich. Premiered on 16 September 2010 at Curve Theatre, Leicester.
- 2011 *Desh*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan. Premiered on 15 September 2011 at Curve Theatre, Leicester.
- 2013 *iTMOi*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Kristina Alleyne, Sadé Alleyne, Ching Ying Chien, Denis 'Kooné' Kuhnert, Yen Ching Lin, TJ Lowe, Christine Joy Ritter, Catherine Schaub Abkarian, Nicola Monaco, Blenard Azizaj, Cheng-An Wu. Premiered on 14 May 2013 at MC2, Grenoble, France.
- 2014 *Dust*. Directed by Akram Khan. Performed by Akram Khan, Tamara Rojo and English National Ballet. Premiered on 2 April 2014 at Barbican Theatre, London.
- 2014 *Torobaka*. Directed by Akram Khan and Israel Galván. Performed by Akram Khan and Israel Galván. Premiered on 2 June 2014, at MC2, Grenoble, France.

Notes

Preface

1. In 2005 Khan was appointed associate artist at Sadler's Wells, London's premiere contemporary dance venue. In 2006, already a lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton for five years, I started my doctoral research at Royal Holloway, University of London.
2. It is worth noting that while at university my own performance training began to encounter nearly as eclectic a range of movement languages as Khan's training at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, as discussed in detail in Chapter 1.
3. Nearly a decade later *Polaroid Feet* became the basis of the classical half of *Gnosis* (2010), which I examine in detail in Chapter 2.

Introduction

1. I note here that my analysis of *Abide with Me* rests on the live television relay of the Opening Ceremony on the evening of Friday 27 July 2012.
2. This is not the first time that a host nation has referenced the threat of global terrorism and its impact upon their national identity in their Opening Ceremony for the Olympics. Analysing the staging of national identity in Olympic Opening Ceremonies, sociologist Jackie Hogan argues that the USA's hosting of the Games in Salt Lake City (2002) clearly referenced potent nationalist symbols that were deployed to signal the nation's position on the 'War on Terror' in the wake of 9/11. These included the battered flag that flew on the World Trade Centre, the national anthem alongside a ubiquitous presence of the US military and police forces as a warning to future perpetrators. Britain's tribute to the victims of 7/7, however, was a celebration of the value and humility of life. This difference in approach between the USA and Britain to very similar national tragedies may well explain why NBC, the American television network exclusively responsible for broadcasting the Olympics, chose not to include Khan's section of the Opening Ceremony. This segment was replaced with an interview with the American Olympic champion Michael Phelps by the *American Idol* host Ryan Seacrest. Defending NBC's decision to edit Khan's performance out of their broadcast, Greg Hughes, NBC's sports spokesman claimed that the Olympics programme had not given any clear indication that Khan's segment was a tribute to the 7/7 victims and that editorial decisions had been driven by the need to tailor the broadcast for the US television audience.
3. The role of the Boy was performed by Reiss Jeram, a nine-year-old British-Asian boy of Indian descent who auditioned for the part and was selected by Khan himself.

4. In an email exchange between Reiss Jeram and myself, as mediated by his mother, Sonal Jeram, Reiss recognised the intergenerational nature of his relationship with Khan in the *Abide with Me* section as that of a father and son. He went on to say that the piece was driven by the fear of letting go of loved ones as demonstrated in his need to hold on to Khan.
5. In the *Mahabharata* Ekalavya is a young, low-caste prince who is denied the tutelage of the great sage Drona to train as a warrior. Ekalavya tutors himself in the presence of a clay-statue of Drona and believes he is still guided by Drona's blessings. Years later, when Drona encounters Ekalavya's superior skills at warfare, he demands *gurudakshina* (a tutor's fee) by asking Ekalavya to cut off his right thumb. Ekalavya promptly does so, demonstrating his loyalty and respect for the devious Drona, whose intention is to taint Ekalavya's skill and destroy his future chances of becoming a superior archer.
6. It is interesting to note that Sonal and Dinesh Jeram, the parents of Reiss Jeram who plays the Boy, recognise that Reiss's role in *Abide with Me* can be read as a younger Khan. And that the interactions between Khan and Reiss symbolise Khan's own tensions and struggles while growing up as a diasporic subject caught between multiple identity-positions and negotiating for himself what to hold on to and what to let go of, to shape his own destiny.
7. Over the years the term diaspora has shifted from being associated with a group of people who are dispersed from their homelands to, firstly, a condition that permeates the experience of migrancy in a host culture; secondly a cultural and (maybe) artistic identification process through which these experiences are articulated; and finally to the field of study that enquires into this immigrant experience and its articulations. For an excellent overview of these multiple associations of the term, please see the article 'Theorising Diaspora: Perspectives on "Classical" and "Contemporary" Diaspora' by Michele Reis.
8. For scholarship on *kathak* please see *Bells of Change* by Pallabi Chakravorty, 'Courtesans and Choreographers: The (Re)Placement of Women in the History of Kathak Dance' by Margaret Walker, 'Transcending Gender in the Performance of Kathak' by Purnima Shah, and *India's Kathak Dance – Past, Present, Future* by Reginald Massey.
9. The *Natyashastra* is believed to have been written over a long period of time between the sixth century BC and the second century AD. While its authorship is popularly attributed to Bharata, scholars have suggested that the name of Bharata has come to stand for an oral tradition generated over several centuries and by several authors (Vatsyayan, *Bharata* 5–6), in keeping with a long tradition of anonymity of authors as evidenced by historical Indian texts, and a 'self-conscious transcendence of self-identity' (Vatsyayan, *Bharata* 2).
10. While Burt aims these views at his analysis of *Kaash* (2002), I believe they are just as applicable to Khan's oeuvre as a whole.
11. It is important to note here that while examples of intercultural theatre do exist where non-Western practices have been influenced by Western performance principles and traditions, giving rise to forms that are born out of such dialogues, like Japanese Butoh or Indian *kathakali* production of Shakespeare plays, somehow, historically, these examples have not been considered as part of the discourse on intercultural theatre in quite the same way as Western experimentations with non-Western cultures and traditions.

12. Such celebratory reviews continue into more recent times. Even in 2006, Milly S. Barranger wrote that '[Brook's] efforts to transform a Hindu myth into universalized art, accessible to any and all cultures, are triumphant' (Barranger 234). Barranger uses problematic and long-challenged terminology like 'Eastern' theatre and 'Eastern' martial arts to commend Brook's use of traditional art forms to depict a sense of universalism within *The Mahabharata*.
13. In claiming that the *Mahabharata* is a primarily Indian text Bharucha seems to not fully acknowledge those other South Asian and South East Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia whose cultural histories have not just borrowed the Indian epic, but are just as intrinsically informed by it, and whose performance traditions continue to narrate stories from the epic in locally specific ways. Thus, to regard the epic as primarily belonging to India, as a lot of scholars do when critiquing Brook's *The Mahabharata*, is an idea that needs loosening. I clarify here therefore that while I continue to use India and Indian culture in my terminology when discussing the epic because of referencing scholars whose analysis is located from within India, I acknowledge through these terms a wider reach of the epic and its impact on other South and South East Asian cultures.
14. Anthony Giddens distinguishes between pre-modern and late-modern relationships to the role of tradition in shaping social interactions and identity constructions (Giddens, 'Living'). He proposes that while, in the pre-modern era, a lack of choice meant conforming to tradition, leading to a dominance of collective identity, in late modernity the focus shifted to individual identity construction through challenge to norms and traditions. Giddens refers to the latter form of sociality as a 'post-traditional society' where the individual is free to construct oneself as desired, without subscribing to formulaic norms and specificities. The breakdown of tradition has generated for individuals an abundance of choice and the relative free will to decide how they wish to construct their sense of self 'amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities' (Giddens, *Modernity* 3). Giddens suggests that such choice leads to a self-reflexivity in identity constructions in the post-traditional society.
15. Alongside bringing world dance companies to London, Sadler's Wells is also patron to sixteen Associate Artists and Companies including Ballet Boyz, Matthew Bourne, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Jonzi D, Sylvie Guillem, Russell Maliphant, Wayne McGregor, Nitin Sawhney, Jasmin Vardimon, Hofesh Schechter and Akram Khan, who it supports by commissioning new work and providing resources, technical expertise and office spaces.
16. While this book examines seven pieces from Khan's extensive repertoire, I have included a list of his entire trajectory so far in the appendix to provide chronological context to my choices. For a fuller summary of Khan's oeuvre please see Stacey Prickett's entry, 'Akram Khan', in *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers* (2nd Edition).

1 Khan's Body-of-Action

1. Khan's biographical details are collated from the following key sources: 'An Artistic Journey' by Lorna Sanders, available on the Akram Khan Company website, and from interviews conducted by myself with Akram Khan and

his mother Anwara Khan in July 2009. These are referenced in the text as (Sanders, 'Akram'), (Ak. Khan, Interview) and (An. Khan, Interview) respectively. Interviews with Khan available in the public domain in newspapers and video clips also inform this biographical narrative and have been specifically referenced as such.

2. For a detailed history of Bangladesh please see William van Schendel's *A History of Bangladesh*.
3. The British genre of physical theatre has a long-contested genealogy. Franc Chamberlain suggests that there are two lineages to the genre: first is the mime tradition as developed in the practice of Copeau, Decroux and Lecoq, and the second is the aesthetic embodied in the practice of the British company DV8 Physical Theatre's challenge to contemporary dance (Chamberlain 119). Simon Murray and John Keefe situate its multi-lineaged history in the experimental theatre practice of Grotowski in the late 1960s, in Steven Berkoff and his Lecoq-inspired aesthetic in the 1970s, and finally in DV8 Physical Theatre, signalled in their endorsement of the label in its company name in 1986 (Murray and Keefe 14). To deliberately not emphasise one of these lineages over others, Murray and Keefe champion a pluralistic approach to the genre by claiming for physical theatres or the physical in theatres (Murray and Keefe 1). Such a broad remit for engaging with the genre is inherently problematic as it fails to consider the genre as a hybridised aesthetic that has emerged at the interstices between the disciplines of dance and theatre. Instead of seeing the experimentations in these disciplines as parallel and co-existing practices, Ana Sánchez-Colberg's approach identifies a commonality between them. This enables her to frame the genre of physical theatre as an interdisciplinary and hybrid entity between dance and theatre.
4. I acknowledge here that Janet O'Shea notes that Jeyasingh's work does generate a certain kind of signification through a newly negotiated nexus of signs and their interplay through the use of body, space and technology. However, I would contend that this level of signification is not narrative-driven as in the case of Khan's aesthetic.
5. In a publication entitled 'Performing Cultural Heritage in "Weaving Paths" by Sonia Sabri Dance Company', I have examined what Sabri means by taking *kathak* to new spaces, contexts and audiences by analysing her site-specific project 'Weaving Paths', which was created in response to and performed within Bantock House, an Edwardian manor house in Wolverhampton, UK.

2 Corporeal Gestures in *Gnosis* (2010)

1. *The Mahabharata* was created originally in French, premiering at the Avignon Festival in 1985. However, this chapter will focus primarily on the English version.
2. I must emphasise here that by pointing out Bharucha's Indian-centric discussions of the epic, I am not aligning him with the Hindutva philosophy.
3. While Margaret Jolly writes about motherhood in colonial and postcolonial contexts in South Asia itself, a lot of her material is equally applicable to the conditions that governed motherhood amongst the South Asian diaspora.

4. In the first tour of *Gnosis*, Gandhari's role was performed by the Japanese taiko drummer and dancer Yoshie Sunahata. In the subsequent tour, Sunahata was replaced by the Taiwanese dancer Fang-Yi Sheu. However, my analysis of *Gnosis* rests on the first version, which I saw live, and therefore refers to Sunahata throughout as Gandhari.
5. In frustration Gandhari is believed to have beaten her womb with a rod, from which emerged a hardened mass of grey-coloured flesh. To console her from devastation, Vyasa, the sage and author of the epic, divided the ball of flesh into one hundred equal pieces, and put them in pots which were sealed and buried in the earth for one year. At the end of the year, the first pot was opened and Duryodhana emerged.
6. I note here that while Margaret Trawick's ethnographic study focuses on the different displays of love in a Tamil family from the south of India, it is also relevant in most South Asian contexts because the significance and valued status of a mother's love for her son is shared across most South Asian cultures (Mandelbaum, Haddad, Zaman, Bhopal and others).
7. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad has written on the relationship between mother and son in Islamic South Asian contexts.
8. In Hindu philosophy the related concepts of *dharma* and *karma* refer, respectively, to every human being's duty-bound path in their present life to determine their fate in the next. It is through observing a righteous life of good morals, led by observing *dharma*, the cosmic laws that govern our actions, that our actions, our *karma*, are judged and evaluated to determine our fate in our next incarnated form.

3 Auto-ethnography and *Loose in Flight* (1999)

1. I acknowledge here that, as discussed in Chapter 1, Khan and his family do not represent the deprived Bangladeshi migrant population who are residents of East London, and whose lives were arguably marginalised by the regeneration of the Docklands region. I propose instead that Khan's relationship to and reclamation of this landscape becomes symbolic of an alternative kind of migrant reality that may not be deprived, but none-the-less seeks articulation and representation in mainstream culture.
2. It is important to note also that Rachel Davies, who created the film in collaboration with Khan, also made another dance-film for the *Per4mance* series called *Khooyile* in collaboration with another male South Asian dancer, Mavin Khoo. This further emphasises the proactive promotion of contemporary South Asian culture within the public domain by the Labour government supported by its policies on multiculturalism.
3. This information on the making, broadcasting and exhibition contexts for the dance-film *Loose in Flight* has been obtained from the website of Rachel Davies and also the British Film Institute (BFI) website.
4. This segregation of the upper and lower body is reminiscent of some sections of *abhinaya* in *kathak* recitals where, while the feet and the lower body remain mostly static, the upper body, arms, hands and facial expressions deliver meaning through mobile and codified gestures.

4 Third Space Politics in *Zero Degrees* (2005) and *Desh* (2011)

1. A *dhoti* is a traditional garment worn by men in some parts of South Asia, particularly in West Bengal in India and in Bangladesh. It is a long, rectangular piece of unstitched fabric that is worn in different ways on the bottom half of the body, depending on which part of South Asia one is from. In *Desh* Khan's *dhoti*-like trousers are reminiscent of the way a traditional *dhoti* is worn in both West Bengal and Bangladesh. This is an important visual reminder that despite distinct national narratives Bengalis from both India and Bangladesh share a common cultural heritage and social practices.
2. Kantor was inspired by Edward Gordon Craig's call for the replacement of the live actor with the 'über marionette'. However, he believed that the solution was not to replace the live actor but to enhance his presence and inject 'life' into him by juxtaposing him against an inanimate and 'dead' replica of him in the form of a mannequin. His piece *Dead Class*, created in 1975, made use of live actors alongside mannequins in interaction with each other. The latter represented dead manifestations of students and through them the live students confronted their dead selves.

5 Mobility and Flexibility in *Bahok* (2008)

1. I conceptualise this idea of flexibility in dialectic with dance scholar Anusha Kedhar's doctoral thesis entitled 'On the Move: Transnational South Asian Dancers and the "Flexible" Dancing Body'. In her thesis Kedhar deploys the term flexible to evoke a need for British South Asian dancers to be adaptable in their skill sets and practices in order to 'negotiate the effects of globalization on their dance practices, work, careers, and bodies' to reconcile the different tensions between 'the global, the national, and the local in and through dance' (Kedhar vi). She further argues that global late capitalism has not just created 'flexible citizens' but also 'flexible bodies' (Kedhar vii). I concur with Kedhar's position and propose that late capitalism and globalisation has triggered flexibility as both a conscious and strategically discerning set of artistic choices (as argued by Kedhar), and an organic and embodied living condition amongst artists like Khan, triggered by their multistitial embodied realities.
2. In a DVD on the making of *Bahok* entitled *Bahok: Lettres sur le Pont*, Khan reveals that the piece went through several working titles before settling on *Bahok*, which was suggested to him by his mother. He listed them chronologically as *Built to Destroy*, *Bridges* and *Nomads*.
3. NBC was founded in 1959 and prides itself on being 'the only Chinese national ballet' (NBC website). Its artistic mission is twofold. Firstly it wants to promote Western classical and contemporary ballet to Chinese audiences. And secondly it wants to explore the 'unique fusion possible between classical ballet and Chinese culture' (NBC website). *Bahok* is proclaimed as NBC's first ever dialogue with the language of contemporary dance.

4. I use the adjectival term nomadic to conjure lives that are shaped by itinerancy and relentless relocations driven by choice and finances, and delineate it from the richly theorised condition of nomadism as pertinent to the lives of nomads whose reasons for travelling and settling over and over again do not stem from either privilege or choice. While I acknowledge that apart from the actual reality of endless travel and resettlements there is perhaps little in common between the lives of Khan's nomadic subjects in *Bahok* and nomads themselves, I am drawn to their subversive potential vis-à-vis the social spaces and structures that they infiltrate and transform as a result of their temporary presence. My considered choice to deploy the term nomadic therefore signals this subversive quality in both groups, without suggesting that Khan's nomadic subjects in *Bahok* are indeed the same as nomads.
5. Fraser cites Graham Marsh's formulation of the *community of circumstance* in her study of communities.
6. *Kalaripayattu* is a martial art form originating in the southern Indian state of Kerala which has received recent attention in Western performance studies scholarship in the study by Phillip Zarrilli entitled *When the Body Becomes All Eyes: Paradigms, Discourses and Practices of Power in Kalaripayattu, a South Indian Martial Art Form*. Zarrilli writes about the value of employing this somatic art form as the foundation of Western actor training and uses this as the basis of his own practice. Characterised by athleticism, flexibility, clean straight lines, impossibly high leaps and deep centred lunges, *kalaripayattu* is energising and meditative, engendering a body that is both supple and compliant while being simultaneously grounded and focused. It is often used as part of the training regime for other south Indian classical dance forms such as *kathakali*.
7. During the course of the piece the digital noticeboard shifts from displaying clinical instructions such as 'PLEASE WAIT', 'DELAYED' and 'RESCHEDULED' to being used as a translation medium for the story that the South Korean man recalls of home. In this final scene, the noticeboard takes on the role of a commentator that communicates directly with the travellers.

6 Queering Normativity in *iTMOi* (2013)

1. I acknowledge here that the presence of male *gurus* in *kathak* is only unusual in the diasporic context where the majority of *gurus* tend to be women. In India, however, *kathak* still continues to be taught by male *gurus*.
2. I have analysed the choreographic strategy of non-touch in the work of the late Indian choreographer Chandralekha as an empowering quality that operates beyond narratives of human sexualities by rejecting the titillation and objectification encoded by touch and moving towards constructing non-touch as an active sexual choice. Please see 'The Parting Pelvis: Temporality, Sexuality and Indian Womanhood in Chandralekha's *Sharira* (2001)' in the *Dance Research Journal* (2014). It is not a coincidence that Khan mentions Chandralekha as a choreographer who he is inspired by, and whose aesthetic stands apart from other South Asian dance artists as an embodied form of lived reality.

Conclusion

1. See Uttara Coorlawala's insightful article entitled 'Writing Out Otherness' and its examination of Khan's innovative movement vocabulary vis-à-vis its decontextualisation of *abhinaya* within his art, through an analysis of *Zero Degrees* and *Bahok*.
2. *Lest We Forget* comprised an evening of four pieces of which Liam Scott's *No Man's Land*, Russell Maliphant's *Second Breath* and Akram Khan's *Dust* were new commissions. The fourth piece was a revival of ENB associate George Williamson's award-winning production of *Firebird*.
3. Khan and Rojo do not perform in the Glastonbury version of *Dust*. Instead, ENB dancers and husband and wife duo James Streeter and Erina Takahashi perform the *pas de deux* at the end.
4. It is vital to note here that this is not the first time Khan has collaborated with the popular and mainstream. The first instance was Khan's choreography of 'Samsara' for the Australian popular singer Kylie Minogue in the 'homecoming' version of the *Showgirl* (2006) concert that marked her return to her illustrious career after her brief hiatus due to breast cancer treatment. I have written about this project in an article entitled 'Akram Khan Re-writes *Radha*: The "Hypervisible" Cultural Identity in Kylie Minogue's "Showgirl"'. The second was Khan's choreography for the televised advertisement of Yves Saint Laurent's (YSL) classic perfume *Belle D'Opium* (2010).
5. My analysis of *Dust* rests on the performance of the solo male dancer's role at the beginning by Khan himself and the *pas de deux* being performed by Rojo and Khan. However, in other versions, the principal solo male role is performed by Fabian Reimair and the *pas de deux* is danced by husband and wife duo James Streeter and Erina Takahashi.
6. See Susan Foster's 'Ballerina's Phallic Pointe' for a detailed discussion of the objectification of the female ballerina by the male dancer and for male desire.

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