

The rise and fall of Umayyad Caliphate from Ibn Khaldoon's perspective

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Abstract: The rise and fall of Umayyad Caliphate during the early centuries of Islamic Caliphate rise is one of the significant and historic events of the world of Islam. After the Prophet (PBUH) and the Rashidun Caliphs (AS), Umayyads could take control of a vast territory of Islam for 89 years. Governance of Umayyad over the world of Islam brought about consequences in Islamic discourse like the conversion of caliphate to monarchy and the shift from religion to secularism. As an important event of Islamic history, the rise of Umayyad Caliphate and the causes of its fall have only been studied from political perspective by Islamic historiographers. Ibn Khaldoon is probably the only historiographer that has reported this event differently in political, economic, and cultural perspectives. The present study was aimed at investigating how Umayyad Caliphate rose and why it fell from Ibn Khaldoon's perspective. In so doing, his views were scrutinized in order to review the cause of the fall of Umayyad Caliphate and also highlight this point that Ibn Khaldoon's views are different from those of the early historiographers of Islam. From Ibn Khaldoon's perspective, Umayyad rulers' transition from religion to secularism, violent behavior of Umayyad military governors and figures, depreciation of military commanders and ignorance of their achievements by Umayyad rulers, and success of Abbasids in stabilizing their legitimacy as real successors of the prophet are among the most important causes of fall of Umayyad Caliphate.

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1. Introduction

According to the truths available in the history of the world of Islam, Umayyad Caliphate has played a significant role in the trend of political and cultural changes and events in Islam's history. Regarding the rise and fall of Umayyad Caliphate, the early Islamic historiographers' approach was descriptive and chronological, although different. However, Ibn Khaldoon's approach due to referring to new and thinkable is different; therefore, investigating these events in the history of Islam, i.e. the causes of Umayyads' fall, is necessary because Ibn Khaldoon had an unconventional view on this issue. The present study is presented in three sections. The first section presents an introduction on Ibn Khaldoon and his historiography style. This section in turn has two subsections: the first subsection is allotted to his life and the second to his historiography style. The second section presents a discussion of causes of Umayyad rise from Ibn Khaldoon's perspective. And the third section is related to the cause of its fall. In this regard, other historiographers' views on rise and fall causes are also presented. Ibn Khaldoon's life and circumstances of his period Ibn Khaldoon (Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Hussein bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Abdurrahman) was born in Tunisia in 1337 (Al-

Thanji, 1951: 4). He started his education in seminaries in the fields of Fiqh, astrology, logic, and

history in a traditional method and under supervision of some famous Tunisian scholars. Despite of participating in political affairs, he never neglected learning and achieving high scientific levels (Al-Hasri, 1967: 50). Upset political circumstances forced Ibn Khaldoon to immigrate and stay in different cities of Islamic Caliphate territory; therefore, he could not reside a certain place so he had to travel from one city to another. In fact, he was fleeing the rulers' cruelty and violence. Finally at the age of about 45, he resided in Ibn Salama, Algeria for four years. Being away from political troubles and at peace, he spent this period of 4 years studying and writing, and he could publish his most important works such as "Al-Muqadama"¹ (Wafi, 1984: 73). After staying for four years in Salama, Ibn Khaldoon returned to his home upon the permission of Tunisia's ruler Abulabbas. His aim to return to Tunisia was to access to history resources in order to finish and complete his book "Al-Muqadama" (Wafi, 1984: 73). Therefore, after staying in his home for some while, he went to Egypt. Ibn Khaldoon was attracted by the beauty and vastness of Egypt. Afterwards, he started working as an instructor in Alzahra University and

¹ Arabic: Introduction

Al-Ghamhiya School (Almaghrizi, 1970: 513/3). After teaching in Alzahra for some while, he started working as a judge in the court of Cairo in 1384. His independent and impartial judgment caused him to confront the rulers and even other judges' wrath; therefore, he faced with numerous problems (Ibn Khaldoon, 1951: 258) Following the invasion of Timurids to Egypt in 1400, Ibn Khaldoon joined the army in order to fight back against the invaders. He also went to Tamerlane's camp in order negotiate with him. His wisdom and cleverness caused Tamerlane to ask him to write a book on Islamic West and the unique one of Egypt; therefore, Ibn Khaldoon wrote a book on that issue in later years (Ibn Khaldoon, 1951: 370). Egypt's attractiveness caused Ibn Khaldoon to stay there until his death in 1405 (Sakhavi, ?: 146). Ibn Khaldoon's life was a mixture of war, conflict, envy, wrath of the rulers and his tendency to study and write. Therefore, he was always traveling and attempting to seek a resort so that he could study and write. His stay in a place depended on the rulers' kindness and his travel was the result of their cruelty. These circumstances have left their trace in Ibn Khaldoon's writings (Yazeji, 1979: 323).

Ibn Khaldoon's historiography style

In his book "Al-Muqadama" under a discussion on history entry and the importance of history and historiography, Ibn Khaldoon deals with the importance of historiography and believes that history is one of the arts that have always been paid attention to by different nations and generations and is full of events related to victories and defeats and rise and fall of states. Here, the important point, as he states, is to examine and reread the causes of these events, i.e. reasons for their defeats, victories, rise, and fall (Ibn Khaldoon, Al-Muqadama: 282/1). After considering the importance of history and historiography, Ibn Khaldoon deals with early historiographers and criticizes their approaches and arguments. In so doing, he criticizes their superficial look by mentioning some examples. More importantly, he mentions their faults and mistakes. He makes enormous attempt in order to provide history readers with necessary information on this level. Here, for the first time in the trend of Islamic Ibn Khaldoon historiography emphasizes the issue of research, its importance and how to conduct it, especially the issue of truthfulness and honesty in historiography. After providing a detailed discussion he writes: there are many writers who have recorded events and re-written the history of states and nations as historiographers; however, there are few ones who have observed honesty and truthfulness (Ibn Khaldoon, Al-Muqadama: 283/1). Afterwards, he

puts emphasis on points whose observance is highly necessary. For example, he writes that the historiographer's responsibility is not mere re-writing of the events, but he should study the events in regard with their quality, quantity, and accuracy. And if he fails to do so, he will certainly make mistake. For example, in regard with the number of forces, if the historiographer does not pay attention to the accuracy of the reports delivered by the witnesses, mistakes may be made. The historiographer not only needs epistemological attitude and scientific capability in order to record and reread and re-write the events but also should adopt an honest approach in order to understand the events; however, understanding the events needs examining them from cultural, political, social, and economic perspectives. Unfortunately, most historiographers suffice with partial re-writing of the events by oral witnesses without paying least attention to the accuracy of the reports. In other words, they do not examine and study the reports. They do not take an intellectual approach in dealing with such reports; therefore, they make clear mistakes and deliver partial historical information, which finally results in illogical discourses by such historiographers (Ibn Khaldoon, Al-Muqadama: 293/1).

The rise of Umayyad Caliphate from Ibn Khaldoon's perspective

The concept of state from Ibn Khaldoon's perspective

In fact, Ibn Khaldoon has not obviously defined the concept of state because in his view state is an ambiguous and multifaceted concept that cannot easily be placed within a specific framework or identified and defined. For him, state refers to emphasizing and highlighting civilization in reality (Ali Alverdi, 1977: 282). Ibn Khaldoon has put enormous emphasis on this concept because he believes that state is a place for individuals to gather systematically, a necessary key to achieve progress, and in fact a situation where human necessities are collected (Ibn Khaldoon, Al-Muqadama: 773/2). According to Ibn Khaldoon, the process of the rise and expansion of a state and more importantly its fall are related to the concept of Asabiyyah (Arabic: social solidarity). In other words, in his view the rise and fall of states are related to presence and absence of social solidarity (Sa'b, 1985: 318). This concept, i.e. social solidarity, is the product of early societies (Foroukh, 1985: 191). Therefore, he considers the social character as the rise cause of states. However, Ibn Khaldoon's approach toward state is not just restricted to the framework of social characteristics; it also includes other characteristics like natural features of the states which affect their rise. In his

view, natural factors play an effective role in religious approaches and intellectual styles of the states (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 392/1).

In regard with the lifetime of the states, Ibn Khaldoon talks about three phases: early phases of the state rise, shifting from barbarism to civilization, and finally emergence of differences between the practices of the states and those of people who have been familiarized with changes (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 553/1). An important point in Ibn Khaldoon's approach is the talk about the lifetime of 120 years of the states and each phase takes 40 years (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 547/1). This approach has attracted many researchers' attention in the field of philosophy of history. This lifetime determination is likely to be utilized as a basis for specifying the lifetime of any state.

Ibn Khaldoon and the rise of Umayyad Caliphate

After the Prophet's immigration and by 656 (AH), the Islamic state had experienced abnormal and unconventional circumstances, and the ongoing fight and conflict within sections of the state had caused a lot of Muslims to be killed. Ibn Khaldoon has scrutinized this situation and believes that Arabs were mostly concerned with superiority of their tribe and more importantly looking for conquering Iran and Rome. They were not much familiarized with the Prophet and his leadership; therefore, they later on disobeyed Quraish Tribe and started fight against them (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 619/2). From Ibn Khaldoon's perspective, beside tribal social solidarity, economy is another cause of conflicts and fight among the Muslims. Victories and spoils changed the Arab's economic status, and they shifted from a bad economic condition to a good one. In other words, hungry and poor Arabs reached enormous wealth after their victories (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 602/1). Therefore, during the caliphate of the third caliph, the Muslims had luxurious lives (Mas'udi, 1987: 333). Although Mas'udi exaggerates about the Arabs' wealth type and spoils and expensive tools, their good economic conditions resulted from their victories caused conflict and hostility among different tribes. However, some Muslims became wealthy following Islamic principles, they also spent their capital according to Islamic orders (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 603/1). Breaking the Prophet's promise and disobeying the Prophet's orders were included among important causes of such hostility and even the third caliph's murder. Therefore, Ibn Khaldoon talks about Islam history in two different ways: one indicating barbarism and one indicating civilization. He also considers the issue from an economic

perspective and explains about the second caliph's travel to Levant and his criticism of Muawiyah, who like Sassanid kings, was looking for luxurious life. In responding to the second caliph, Muawiyah talks about the necessity of such magnificence in order to conquer the enemies of Islam. Therefore, the second caliph keeps silent, which is interpreted by Ibn Khaldoon as his acceptance of the new circumstances and luxurious life. This acceptance; however, does not equal to confirming the social solidarity of Sassanid kings; but it means acceptance of Muawiyah's new method (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 600/2). These events, as Ibn Khaldoon believes, indicate emergence of new approaches in Islamic civilization, and the caliph had to accept and keep silent. Ibn Khaldoon also considers the hostility and disagreement between Ali and Muawiyah over the issue of the Muslims' succession and leadership. He refers to the fact that both Ali and Muawiyah believed that they were right on this issue (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 603/2). Regarding the conflicts between Ali and Muawiyah during the era of the third caliph, Ibn Khaldoon believes that behavior of both (Ali and Muawiyah) and their followers was erratic and based on personal interests, which led to tension among the Muslims and crisis in the caliphate. To confirm his argue, he provides several real examples. For example, when Ali was taking the oath of allegiance from Mughira ibn Shu'ba, Mughira suggested that Muawiyah, Talha, and Zubair should stay in their posts, which could cause other Muslims to take oath of allegiance with Ali. However, Ali acted differently and told Mughira that this was true in your view while it was far from any truthfulness (Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqadama*: 607/2). Such hostile behaviors that were based on personal interests caused tension to continue between Ali and Muawiyah. As the crisis intensified, the two sides decided to negotiate and resolve the problems and disagreements. Therefore, they gathered in a place called "Duma Jandal". This event in Islam is known as "Hakamiyat"². The consequence of this meeting attended by the representative of the two sides was that Ali and Muawiyah should be removed from caliphate and people select someone as their caliph. Abu Musa Ash'ari, Imam Ali's representative, agreed with this proposal and announced it in the public at once, but 'Amr ibn al-'As, Muawiyah's representative, prevented Muawiyah's removal from caliphate and introduced him as the Muslim's caliph in case of Ali's removal (Ibn Khaldoon, 1987: 635/2). This event cause Muawiyah's army to carry the Quran on their halberds and celebrate Muawiyah's caliphate, and Imam Ali's army had to retreat.

² Arbitration

Although Ali announced Muawiyah's conspiracy, his army insisted on accepting it, so Ali had to accept the arbitration (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 633/2).

Therefore, Muawiyah could cause dispute and division among Ali's followers and army, which led to formation a group called Khawarij in Islam history. This group accused Ali of violating God's order (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 637/2). This event threatened the territory of Islamic caliphate and resulted in crisis and tension and creation of erratic groups. After the fourth caliph's death, people took the oath of allegiance with his older son Hassan. Once Muawiyah received the news, he announced himself as the caliph. Ibn Khaldoun believes that Muawiyah had consolidated his caliphate after he became the governor of Levant (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 637/2). In regard with Hassan's caliphate, Ibn Khaldoun believes that although people had taken the oath of allegiance with him, they opposed him following Muawiyah's actions. People were even about to cruelly overthrow him. Therefore, Hassan was forced to write a letter to Muawiyah and promised him to ignore caliphate if he accept his demands (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 648/2). Muawiyah sent him back a blank paper with his signature as acceptance of Imam Hassan's demands. Therefore, during an address among people of Kufa Imam Hassan talked about the peace established between him and Muawiyah. Consequently, Muawiyah came to Kufa in 661 (AH) and took the oath of allegiance from the people (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 650/2).

The rise of Umayyad Caliphate

Ibn Khaldoun takes two different approaches in explaining the causes of Umayyad Caliphate rise. The first one is the philosophical approach. From Ibn Khaldoun's perspective, Umayyad Caliphate rise is the result of a phenomenon that he calls social solidarity. The second one is the historical approach. Here, the rise of Umayyad Caliphate is the product of events that occurred in the early years of Islamic caliphate, especially after the third caliph was killed. The era that Ibn Khaldoun has written his history in is actually the second stage of Islamic historiography. This period is called the period of honesty, preservation of events, and extensive information (Jaberi, 1982: 138), which can be seen in Ibn Khaldoun's historiography and thinking style. On the other hand, historiographers like Tabari, Mas'udi, Arabi, and Khalifa bin Khayyat and later ones have affected Khaldoun's perspective. During re-writing Umayyads' history, Ibn Khaldoun made enormous attempt to keep his independence and his own style, and that is why he has had a remarkable influence on the later historiographers. If Ibn Khaldoun's approach

in re-writing and reviewing of Umayyads' history is considered in a thematic and evidence way, it can be observed that he has saved his independence to some extent. For example, he refers to Ali and Muawiyah's dispute over Levant although he has adopted most of the data from Tabari with an inclusion of his own style. More importantly, he has reported some contradicting information. For example, in a case he considers the narration of the Prophet's speech weak, where the Prophet says, "After me, caliphate will continue for 30 years, and then it will fall into the hands of an oppressive king" (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 650/2) while in another case he resorts to this narrative of the Prophet in order to confirm his idea. And in some cases, he doubts the data while in other cases uses them as reliable information to prove his arguments (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 622/2). At the same time, in the issue of arbitration, Ibn Khaldoun describes the behavior of 'Amr ibn al-'As against Abu Musa as deception and conspiracy and considers Muawiyah's success as the result of such deception (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 636/2). In an analysis, he counts Muawiyah's willing to take revenge for the third caliph as a wish inclined toward coming to power during the time before the caliph's death. He believes that Ottoman's vengeance was an excuse to hide his desire for power (Ibn Khaldoun, 1987: 625/2). However, this matter depends on considering the dimensions of the Arabs' tribal structure and the priority of the tribes' interests. Nevertheless, this general assumption that Muawiyah was seeking to take revenge for Ottoman's murder merely to hide his willing to come to power cannot be accepted to a large extent.

Causes of Umayyads' fall from early Islamic historiographers and Ibn Khaldoun's perspective

Regarding Umayyad Caliphate, there are different approaches adopted by Islamic historiographers and scholars who have considered and judged the issue from their own perspective. Although the historiographers before Ibn Khaldoun lacked a certain theory, their views on Umayyad structure were superficial though comprehensive. Such views have failed to provide analytical reports on the causes of Umayyads' rise and fall (Riyadh, 1985: 212). For example, Ibn Khayyat in his book on Umayyad Caliphate has only provided short, incomplete, and limited explanations (Ibn Khayyat, 1977: 1352). As one of the well-known early Islamic historiographers, Dinavari has also provided a short report on the last years of Umayyad Caliphate; however, he does not devoted much space to the its fall causes (Dinavari, 1988: 212). Moreover, Tabari has provided a comprehensive report on Umayyads' period. He prioritizes political reports of the period

without analyzing them. He also emphasizes on the internal structure of Umayyad Caliphate and its effect on its final years; therefore, he provides a short report on the conflicts and hostilities of final years of the caliphate (Tabari, 1960: 240-270/7). It seems that Tabari believed that political events during the final years of Umayyad Caliphate were among the main causes of its weakness and fall although he has also referred to the weakness of some Umayyad caliphs (Tabari, 1960: 230-251/7). Shortly, Tabari states that Umayyad caliphs did not have sufficient capability to control the affairs of the state. In this regard, Mas'udi as another early Islamic historiographer has not paid much attention to the causes of Umayyad Caliphate fall and has more focused on the caliphs' personality. An important point in Mas'udi's report is that except for Omar bin Abdul Aziz he has not called other rulers as caliph, and seemingly he has not accepted the legitimacy of their caliphate (Mas'udi, 1986: 273-293). This issue can also be the effect of Abbasids Caliphate; therefore, he has completely neglected the causes of Umayyads' fall. As another early Islamic historiographer, Ibn Athir also provides reports on the Umayyad caliphs' governance practices, problems, and challenges, but like other historiographers he has not referred to the causes of its fall (Ibn Athir, 1982: 240-282/5). Ibn Kathir is another early Islamic historiographer who has shortly dealt with unsuitable situation of the final years of Umayyad Caliphate, i.e. Walid ibn Yazid and Marwan ibn Muhammad, and has frequently referred to weakness and inability of Umayyad caliphs. He did not directly explain the cause of Umayyads' fall, either (Ibn Kathir, 1982: 280-299/7). Ibn Khaldoun's reports on this issue; however, is different from that of other authors because he has referred to the causes of Umayyads' rise and fall. Therefore, he directly highlights issues that are effective in their fall. The first cause that he refers to is social solidarity which was the result of the tribalism feature of Umayyad Caliphate and tribal conflicts that appeared in hostility and dispute between Abdul Malak and his nephew Al-Walid, then between Walid and Yazid, and also between Abdul Malak and Walid and other governors and those who claimed caliphate. Ibn Khaldoun writes on the concept of social solidarity: Umayyads' power is based on two things. The first one was influenced by social solidarity and that it depended on its social solidarity and power, i.e. existence of military and war-seeking force. And the second one was its capital that depended not only on military forces but also on its governmental structure. Umayyad Caliphate faced serious problems in regard with these two factors. Generally, legitimacy of Umayyad Caliphate was based on the social solidarity of 'Abd ibn Manf (Ibn Khaldoun, Al-

Muqadama: 755/2). About expansion of the state from rise to fall, in other words, from its strength to its weakness, Ibn Khaldoun writes: Any state has a set of governors and agents. As the state expands, the number of its governors and agents increases, which finally becomes a challenge because with an increase in capital and properties as a result of caliphate territory expansion, the state's social solidarity weakens; therefore, laziness and internal competition replace tribal social solidarity, which finally brings about the state's weakness in terms of military, and it will fall (Ibn Khaldoun, Al-Muqadama: 760/2). Ibn Khaldoun has utilized the social solidarity theory in analyzing the causes of Umayyads' fall and writes: Aster Umayyad Islamic state had achieved victories and collected capital, the stage of laziness, senility, and sloth started, which was effective in the fall of Umayyad Caliphate and power gain of Abbasids (Ibn Khaldoun, Al-Muqadama: 763/2). Ibn Khaldoun believes that being proud of glory of social solidarity in nature and behavior of the state agents cause to give legitimacy to the first-born son's caliphate. During Muawiyah's period, Umayyad Caliphate was suffering social solidarity and solitariness. He believes that Muawiyah did not act for the sake of his tribe, but he acted in accordance to his tribal social solidarity; therefore, he transferred power to his eldest son because if Muawiyah were in another situation, he would certainly act differently (Ibn Khaldoun, Al-Muqadama: 604/2). Marwa in Hakam's behavior toward his son Abdul Malak indicates this reality. Therefore, from Ibn Khaldoun's perspective, disappearance and weakness of tribal social solidarity was among the key factors for the fall of Umayyad Caliphate. Umayyad caliphates' getting away from religious principles and dealing with worldly affairs, i.e. transfer from religion to secularism, was another cause of their fall. This situation was quite obvious during the famous caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz, such that after him caliphs and agents forgot their previous practices and adopted secularism, which caused people to turn back to Umayyad in favor of Abbasids (Ibn Khaldoun, Al-Muqadama: 606/2). He also believes that transition of Umayyads from caliphate to monarchy cause their legitimacy to encounter serious challenge. More importantly, after this transition, people were oppressed by the Umayyad caliphs under the name of caliphate; therefore, caliphate and monarchy mixed, which weakened their legitimacy and resulted in conflict between people and state. In addition to social solidarity and secularism, Ibn Khaldoun refers to some other effective factors in weakness and fall of Umayyad Caliphate. These factors include political corruption, social predicaments, and the caliphs' self-indulgence, which are shortly referred to

by Ibn Khaldun. In this regard, he presents an example by Mas'udi: Instead of thinking of enforcing their state, Umayyad caliphs were only busy with their self-indulgence and neglected religious texts; therefore, God deprived them from His blessings and debased them, as a result Abbasids could conquer Umayyads (Mas'udi, *The Meadows of Gold*, 283/2). Ibn Khaldun also explicitly refers to the challenges and predicaments of Umayyad caliphs especially those after Hisham bin Abdul Malak and considers disrespecting and forgetting the loyal military commanders' services. For example, he refers to Muhammad bin Qasim Soqfi and Qatiba bin Muslim Baheli who changed their positive attitude towards the state due to the caliphs' misbehavior, which caused military affairs to weaken and prevented people from defending Umayyad Caliphate (Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqadama*: 83/3). He also explains about characters that through their cruel and oppressive actions caused people's negative attitude towards Umayyads. For example, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf through his extreme oppression caused people to turn back to Umayyad Caliphate (Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqadama*: 84/3). In addition to the abovementioned factors, Ibn Khaldun refers to Abbasids' missionaries who could successfully encourage people to support Abbasids as the family of the Prophet. As a result, people supposed Umayyad in favor of Abbasids in order to return caliphate to the family of the Prophet. Therefore, Umayyads' legitimacy was faced with serious challenge. The beginning of this challenge, as Ibn Khaldun explains, dates back to the period of the caliphs after Uman bin Abdul Aziz, who caused people's hatred and Abbasids' claim for return of the Prophet's family to caliphate. Walid bin Yazid's behavior was among the most outstanding factors that people turn to Abbasids and turned back to Umayyads (Ibn Khaldun, *Al-Muqadama*: 129/3). In short, the rise and fall of Umayyad Caliphate was an important and crucial event in the history of Islam because it influenced the process of Islamic sovereignty. Muslim caliphs' turn to secularism and the change of caliphate to monarchy were among the most significant effects of Umayyad Caliphate. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun's approach in dealing with the factors involving with the rise and fall of Umayyad Caliphate was different and adopted from his philosophical attitude. Unlike other Islamic historiographers, Ibn Khaldun has referred to the causes of Umayyads' rise and fall, and for the first time in the history of Islam he has considered this issue from political, cultural, and economic perspectives.

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