

Monks and Cambodian Politics: Expressing Condolences for the Death of Somdej Phra Sangharaja Thep Vong

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ABSTRACT

The article, Monks and Cambodian Politics: Condolences for Somdet Phra Sangharaja Thep Vong, was written after the death of Somdet Phra Sangharaja Thep Vong to reflect and mourn his role in the situation of Buddhism in Cambodia. Using the interview method Total Participant Observation Research and related research documents are written in the form of academic articles. The study found that Somdet Phra Sangharaja Thep Vong became a monk after the change to the new administration of Cambodia. During the Khmer Rouge era with political experience Religion in a new beginning. As a result, Buddhism in Cambodia is closely connected to politics and is a link between them. Therefore, throughout his 45 years in the Buddhist situation He therefore has the status of being a monastic leader, head of the monastic order, and Somdej Phra Sangharaja. that brought Buddhism and passed it on until the present until the last day of his life and death on February 26, 2024.

Keywords

Somdej Phra Sangharaja, Thep Vong, Monks and Politics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Photo news of the death of Somdet Phra Sangharaja Thewongse who is the head monk or the highest ecclesiastical leader of Cambodia passed away in which the term that appears in public with his monk's rank uses the word "Sawaediwangkot" which simply means "dead" or "he has died". But the reason for writing to you is because of shared memories or activities with you in many different times. On many occasions Because in 2000/2000, I used to go for Buddhist Lent as a monk studying for a master's degree. in Asian History of Srinakharinwirot University and conducted research on the status of monks in Cambodia between 1975/1975-1979/1979. Therefore, throughout the period of one full year, I had the opportunity to mingle and observe meetings, interviews, and discussions, both directly and indirectly. And in 2002, I returned to stay again for the Buddhist Lent, as a research monk. Received funding from the University Affairs Office at that time. to study spatial After exploring the information use the process of spatial education or what he calls it. Area Studies, but one thing that is memorable as well as information about him is that he was one of the first or first generation of monks who were forced to resign or resign under political policy. "Communist" Khmer Rouge between 1975-1979 But when internal politics change, He received the right to become a monk again and participate in politics, called the Heng Samrin government, under the support of the Vietnamese government. with leaders such as Heng Samrin, Chea Chim or Hun Sen at that time and under the support of the Hanoi government at that time and he was the leader. Sangha administration

Continuously from that day until the present, the phenomenon that occurs is he served as Deputy Chairman of the Cambodian Legislative Assembly during his own successful government being the president of the Sangha and became the Supreme Patriarch that has continued for a long time until the present and the important thing is that after I, as People involved with Cambodia Have travelled in and out of Cambodia many times. I met him and paid homage to his grace. As the head of the Sangha, he was also the supreme leader. Working with the ASEAN Centre is good, working with other agencies is good in doing activities with you. and the fact that the author met him in Thailand at a conference Participate in Visakha Bucha Meeting together as the head of the Sangha of Cambodia is a long period of time, so we see his role. As a leader, he is also the head of the Sangha in terms of government, administration and Foreign Affairs at the end of his life he passed away (Divongkot), so the author would like to take this opportunity to write to express his condolences. and remember and then reflect on your role. As a monk and spiritual leader and ecclesiastical political leaders during the political transition within the country He was therefore a monk who had endured many hardships under the political and Buddhist crisis in Cambodia during the years 1975-1979. who have to wear under the policy of equality without class Everyone had to work in agriculture during the Khmer Rouge communist era, living in the rice fields in Siam Reap Province? and returned to become a monk who received the right to be ordained in the first period and held the status of monk until his death at the age of ninety-two on February 26, 2024, which can be considered a person who should be

mentioned in religious and political dimensions. The author would like to use this opportunity bringing him to be mentioned as an important figure in the religious circles in Cambodia for a period of 45 years (1979-2024).



Figure 1 News photo of the dedication of His Holiness Somdej Phra Sangharaja Thep Vong of Cambodia (online photo)

From figure 1, it is the event of Somdet Phra Sangharaja Thepvong Tiwongkot and appears as a news photo in public both in Cambodia and abroad which reflects that he was a religious leader and was honored as a leader or an important person died as shown in the news picture in a wide picture.

II. PATRIARCH THEPVONG IN THE KHMER ROUGH SITUATION

His picture may not be clear as he is a young monk. that is local to Siem Reap province It is said that this may be a young monk who will progress to become an adult monk in the next era. When the elders were taken to be executed in the case of Somdet Phra Sangkharat Huat Tat, who had information that he had been killed, what about the other monks? It must be said that they were forced to die. and were used as laborers in the agricultural sector. [1] Most of them died in the event of the migration of people from various sectors to the agricultural sector. If translated easily, if you are old you will die, while you will be young. I felt like I had a permanent family. Based on the concept of marriage to create human energy Go through marriage and have children. Let it go and follow along like you have a family. He did not return to be ordained, but as for Thep Wong, who at that time was considered to be in his late forties or early fifties, he entered the mode of returning to be ordained as a monk. Under the rules, those who wish to ordain must be 50 years of age or older and have been a monk before. These conditions caused him to return to the ordination. Becoming a Buddhist monk again but during that time he would tell me that he used to work in the countryside. Work in the agricultural sector in the outskirts of Siem Reap Province. But it's all your own words. It is an experience that is apart from the experiences of your life.

As for the writer, I have met and paid respects to him many times during religious ceremonial activities, such as on the occasion of the Patimokkha day. at the monks at Wat Unalom will join together to perform the Sangha together Praying Even though the writer can hardly chant Khmer melodies but they often participate in this activity. Including the practice of entering Buddhist Lent, end of Buddhist Lent, and Kathin, etc., but all of them are encountered in rituals. or

mostly religious activities It's called becoming familiar as a monk in the same temple at that time.

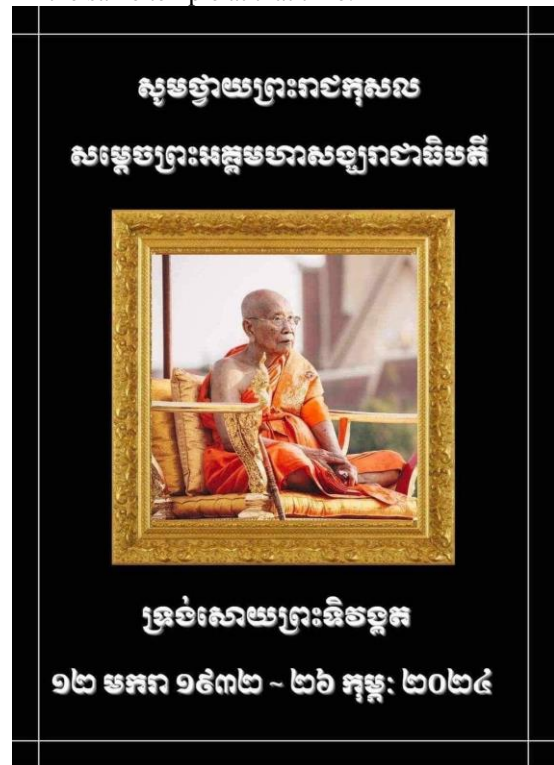


Figure 2 News photos that are communicated to the public and create widespread awareness about the consecration of His Holiness Somdej Phra Sangharaja Thep Vong of Cambodia. (Online photo).

Photo news of Somdet Phra Sangharaj Thep Vong that conveys that it is a loss in the clergy at the administrative level. This means the loss of the Supreme Patriarch in Cambodia. which is considered an important part in upholding and maintaining Buddhism throughout the past several years It's called going through hot and cold issues in politics. and religion since then until the present but the important thing about past events was that he was a part of participating in such important religious and political events as well.

III. THEP VONG AND WAY OF POLITICS

During the Khmer Rouge government Images of Buddhism and monks being victims of political violence as it turned out, Phra Sangkharat Huat Tat was killed. The monks, the monks, the monks So Hai, the monks Kum To, the professors of Pali Buddhist College, Wat Unalom, there is evidence that they were forced to wear and be imprisoned. At Tuol Slang Prison Even the Khmer Rouge themselves deny the massacre of Cambodian monks. Especially if any monks agree to abide by the rules and live like other members of democratic Kambodian society. It means that the monks work together in hard work, not acting as parasites.” It means supporting and submitting in this sense. As for the image of Patriarch Thep Wong, it appeared during the Khmer Rouge period. It appears in evidence that during the sentencing of the Khmer Rouge, he was forced to work as an agricultural labourer. And after that, when there was a change of government, he returned to be ordained under the condition that he was over 50 years old and had been ordained as a

monk before. So, there is evidence that there is information that on September 19, 1979, at Unnalom Temple, there was a monk ordination ceremony. who were forced to serve during the Khmer Rouge period and were over 50 years old, with Phra Yew Gheem invited to be a preceptor, Phra Tuch Taing Kul and Phra Theaw Ngeed Phrakru Suat All of them were Theravada monks from Vietnam? There were 7 monks who were ordained for the first time, including Phra Koout Vay, age 82, Phra Chot Park Dith, age 67, Phra Non Nget, age 55. Phra Den Srun (Den Srun) is 55 years old. Phra Et Sum (Ed Sum) is 55 years old. Phra Ken Vong (Ken Vong) is 54 years old. Phra Thep Wong is 47 years old. He is a monk who has come the first group of monks ordained. [2][3][4][5]

Phra Thep Wong was appointed as the president of the Sangha. (Like the president of the Sangha of communist Laos) between 1979-1992 and received the title of Somdet Phra Sangharaja in 1992, being the youngest monk in the group. who was ordained in the beginning but was appointed as the head monk in the Heng Samrin Yang Sam period [6] analyzed the case where Phra Thep Wong received the position of head monk that “Was Thep Wong the youngest monk and Easy to adapt and accepted the change that made him different from other elderly monks?” This is the reason why Phra Thep Wong was selected by the Heng Samrin government to be the monk's president. But Lee Suwee gave a different reason: At first it was appointed to appoint Phra Kot Wey, who was 82 years old, to be the monastic leader and preceptor, but he was in poor health. When traveling to be ordained as a monk in another province, he became ill. For this reason, Phra Thep Wong was selected. Let it be instead because you are the youngest. Or there are people who have passed on the story, such as Phra Nian Chum, aged 79 years (abbot position) of Wat Damnak, Siem Reap Province, on 12 July 2001. He said that Phra Thep Wong, before returning to be ordained, found a chest of gold (where? How much? It doesn't appear, it's just hearsay) and take this gold to the Revolutionary Party for the development of the country. But the storyteller does not confirm whether it is true or not because he only states that it is a sentence that has been passed down through history. But the writer, as a researcher at that time. It gives similar information, like it's a whispered historical sentence. Both giving gold as an asset It is one of the reasons why Thep Wong, who was younger than the group, returned to be ordained and as a result he received the position of president of the Sangha, ruling the Sangha throughout the country. at that time as well. [7] [8] [9]

before the change of government during the Khmer Rouge period. (Online picture)

By Somdej Thep Wong considered to pass the religious situation That is, he was a monk who was laid off and moved to the countryside to do farming until there was a change in government. He returned to be ordained under the political situation that needs to be revived by being the first batch of monks after the change of government from the Khmer Rouge government. The preceptor is a Theravada monk from Vietnam. He was the first set of monks to be ordained along with Somdej Phra Sangharaja Non Ngaet of Wat Pathumwadi. Until he became the leader of the monks and played a part in their development until the end of his life.

Table 1 Periods in the history of the state and administrative changes that had an impact on Buddhism.

Governing system	time period,	political leaders	Sangha leader
French colony [10]	1863-1955	France/King	2 Sect/Nikaya
Kingdom of Cambodia	1955-1970	King/ Sihanouk	2 Sect/Nikaya
Khmer Republic	1970-1975	Lon Nol	2 Sect/Nikaya
Khmer Rough) Democratic Kampchea	1975-1979	Pol Pot	Buddhism was abolished the monarchy was abolished.
People's Republic of Cambodia (Before changing to) the State of Cambodia	1991-1979 (During the last 4 years)	Heng Samrin	Thep Vong Mahanikaya
1991 Peace negotiations to end the Khmer civil war on different sides. Leading to the establishment of elections by the United Nations in 1993.			Thep Vong Mahanikaya
1993 Kingdom of Cambodia Elections by the United Nations The monarchy returns King Norodom Sihanouk be king The Thammayut sect was brought back again in Cambodia, etc.			The Dhamma Yutaka Sect was reintroduced in Cambodia.
Kingdom of Cambodia	B.E.2536/1993	Narodomronnarith & Hun Sen	Thep Vong & Bou Kry
Kingdom of Cambodia Several elections were held by UNTAC and the situation within the country returned to normal, ending a long civil war.	B.E.2541/1998	Hun Sen	Thep Vong & Bou Kry
	B.E.2546/2003	Hun Sen	Thep Vong & Bou Kry
	B.E.2551/2008	Hun Sen	Thep Vong & Bou Kry
	B.E.2556/2013	Hun Sen	Thep Vong & Bou Kry
	B.E.2561/2018	Hun Sen	Thep Vong & Bou Kry
	B.E.2566/2023	Hun Manet	Thep Vong & Bou Kry

According of table link to Thep Vong, politics and religion are reflected. Interpretation of religion as excess or is religion an opiate? During the Khmer Rouge communist period (1975-1979) Buddhism became the perpetrator until it disappeared from Cambodia [10] [11] Therefore, his time is like a symbol of Buddhism in Cambodia because of his return to being ordained as a monk in Buddhism again and maintaining stability. Therefore, it is treated as a representative image and confirms the identity of Buddhism continuously until the present. It might not be wrong to use the word Thep Wong, which refers to Cambodian Buddhism, such as monks and elections. Monks and new patterns even though it is very much mixed with politics and society, it is something that the Khmers have jointly designed for the benefit of the Khmer people themselves, as the author has experienced during a period of time as a person in the religious circle. And as an outsider, it is Thai people who look from the outside into Buddhism and bring it to study, write and share in the form of research studies, etc.



Figure 3 Somdet Phra Maha Sumetthibodi (Prak Hin Sudhammatthero សុដ្ឋមត្តេរោ) Suthammatthero, Wat Salavan (1863-1947/1863-1947) Somdet Phra Maha Sumethathibodi (Chuan Nat Chotayano) (1883- 1969/1883-1969) Somdej Phra Maha Sumethibodi (Huat Tat Vajirapañño) ហ្គតតាត វជិរាប៉ាណ៍, Wat Una Lom (A.D. 1892-1975/1892-1975) Monastic leaders



Figure 4 Political leaders over time in Cambodia's political transformation, during the period between 1954-2024 that has connections and affects Buddhist institutions (Online images)

IV. WAY OF RELIGION

He is the highest Sangha head. He therefore had the opportunity to work in foreign affairs and within the country, such as participating in the Visakha Bucha festival in Thailand, Vietnam and many other countries when there was a meeting of leaders or monastic leaders. The author has met and paid respects to him at many international events, especially in Thailand. His image reflects that he is an international representative and image of Buddhism in Cambodia. When the writing team on behalf of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Therefore went to pay respects on various occasions as a study tour group in Cambodia as shown in pictures 5-6, etc.



Figure 5 The author's team studies and pays their respects. Somdej Phra Sangharaja of Wat Unalom (Photo: ASEAN Studies Center, 24 April 2018)



Figure 6 The author paid respects and met Somdej Phra Sangharaja Thep Wong on April 21, 2023. His health may not

be very good. Look at his reaction and appearance that he had to have someone supporting him and while he was still sitting, it was as if he was on his neck. (Photo by the author on 21 April 2023)

Because the author has written about Cambodia in many dimensions, such as Thai-Cambodian relations: in the dimensions of Buddhism and monastic education, Thai-Cambodian Relations: in the dimension of Buddhism and Sangha Education [12] or Dhammayutta sect in Cambodia: Religious and political relations between Thai-Cambodian [13] Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia: Post-Angkor period [14] "Buddhism in Cambodia" in the report of the international seminar on Buddhism: Common Cultural Heritage: Cambodia, Laos and Thailand by the Institute of Asia Pacific Studies. Srinakharinwirot University [15] "Buddhist Studies: Past, Present, and Future" [16] "Experiences of Life under the Khmer Rouge System" [17] Theravada Buddhism: identity, ethnicity, and the persistence of the "Khromapocalypse" in Vietnam. [18] Therefore, I saw the development of Buddhism in many dimensions by both studying and living in Cambodia for a period of time and studying and writing about the involvement of monks in the political situation. So, it was concluded that Cambodian monks and Buddhism are under a stream of transitions from period to period, from event to event until the present, with changes and developments, both at the lowest point known as disappearing from the country. and develop back with the expectation that there will be better development.



Figure 7 Event on April 23, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. The author pays respects to Somdet Phra Sangkhanayok Non Ngaet (សុខដ៏ត្រី) or Somdej Phra Maha Sumetthibodi. His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch of the Maha Nikaya Order of Cambodia today at Wat Pathumwadi, Phnom Penh, gave blessings. In meeting and paying respects with Ven.Koson Om (Phra Koson Um), a master's degree student. Department of Social Development Alumni of the Bachelor of Economics program on behalf of the Khmer President, Cambodian students (pronounced Kh-ma-ra-ni-sid) joined together to pay homage and pay homage.



Figure 8 is an event on April 23, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. The author met and Pay respect to Somdet Phra Sangharaja Bua Kri (ប្តី វត្តត្រី) or Somdet Phra Apisiri Sukontha Maha Sangharajathibodi. (Thai people) Somdet Phra Apisiri Sukantha Maha Sangharajathipati Somdej Phra Maha Sangharaja of the Dhamma Yutaka Sect in the Kingdom of Cambodia at Wat Pathumwadi, Phnom Penh [19] (Uthen

Wongsathit ,2006; Santi Phakdee Kham, 2012). [20] In this regard, His Royal Highness has given a speech about education management. at Phrasamuni Raja University which is a university of the Dhamma Yutaka Sangha with thousands of students nationwide There are both minorities and people of different religions as well. It is education to truly support the development of Cambodian people. This was a story that His Majesty had informally told during his visit to pay respects.



Figure 9 Meet the administrators of Phrasihanurat University. and Sihamunee Buddhist University (Author's photo on April 21, 2023)

From figure 9, it is an event on April 21, 2023. The author traveled to discuss ways to create academic cooperation. Between the universities, meet Most Ven. Chuon Savoeun, Vice Rector Sihanoukrāja Buddhist University) Mahanikaya Division Preah Sihamoniraja Buddhist University Thammayut Nikaya Division On the occasion of participating in the Seminar on the brief overview of Buddhism and State Education organized by Preah Sihanoukrajā Buddhist University (SBU) collaborated with Department of Policy, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and ASEAN Studies Center of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand Friday, April. 21. 2023 Meeting location: Preah Sihanoukrajā Buddhist University. In simple terms, there were activities organized and the author used the opportunity to travel and combine academic activities. After that, he went to pay respects to Somdej Phra Sangharaj Thep Wong along with the group at that time as well.

From all the pictures that the author has used to write this. I would like to explain that I had the opportunity to meet with the Supreme Religious Leader of Cambodia, the Patriarch of the Thammayut Nikaya and the Maha Nikaya, and meet with Somdet Phra Maha Nikaya, Non Ngat, all three of whom were religious leaders during a time of transition. of the history of Buddhism in Cambodia and monks and the past political situation, the author had previously encountered all three images, both officially and informally throughout the past twenty years The pasts of all three are similar, namely two monks who were forced to work as agricultural laborers during the communist period. Both Somdej Phra Sangharaja Thep Wong and Patriarch Non Ngaet returned to be ordained together as 7 monks in the first batch until the time the author went to meet and pay respects on 21 April 2023 until their deaths. As for Phra Sangkharat Bua Klee, he was not able to escape being forced to work as a laborer in the countryside or get married. but fled to a refugee camp in Thailand and fled the country to France until returning to the position of Supreme Patriarch during a time when domestic politics had begun to calm down. When there are elections and the monarchy is restored. Including the raising of the Dhammayutti Sect again in 1993 [22] and continuously until

the present including driving the Dhammayutta Sangha Sangha to return to playing an important role in Cambodian society again. Since disappearing from the land of Cambodia for many decades.

VI. THEP VONG HIS DEATH

The author last saw him on April 21, 2023. In that meeting, if you look at his physical age, you are unlikely to be able to live for a long time. It is said that in his ninety years of age, his physical age required his disciples to carry him out to receive guests. And in the most recent time at the end of the year our group will travel again on 30 November 2023 on schedule to meet you. But it was informed that he was ill or sick because his age would not allow him to use the word “inconvenient” to welcome guests, and subsequent events until the present Therefore, pictures appeared on the news of his death, which is therefore a relief according to the age of the body. or illness that is due to death It wouldn't be wrong either.

As there is a picture in the news about his death that

His Holiness Somdej Phra Akharam Maha Sangharajathibodi Thep Wong, Somdet Phra Sangharaja of the Kingdom of Cambodia passed away. Somdet Phra Sangharaja (Tep Wong) of the Kingdom of Cambodia passed away on Monday, February 26, 2024 at 5:40 p.m. at Wat Ounnalom, Ratchathani, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia. His Majesty is 92 years old, 72 years of age. His Holiness Somdet Phra Maha Sangharajathibodi Thep Wong was born in 1932, ordained in 1953 at the age of 21, and was established as the Supreme Patriarch of the Maha Nikaya in 1981 and held the position of abbot of Wat Ounalom in Phnom Penh.

Therefore, from his death it may be reflected that:

(1) He was one of the first generation of monks in what is known as Cambodia during the era of genocide. civil war and the political situation may use the term new Cambodia There were elections until it was Cambodia. It is therefore considered to be the beginning of a new history of Buddhism that occurred after the change of the extreme swing government.

(2) He is a symbol of Buddhism in the transition period. that the new generation of monks will have knowledge and education You yourself may use the word ‘not studied much’. Compared to monks, they also lead the Nava religion of Cambodia. Because while the author spent his life together in Cambodia, he would hear sentences saying that he was not smart. or do not have knowledge and are therefore tools of political groups This might be used as a supporter of Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party, but it might also be used as a group of shared political interests. But on the other hand, he led Buddhism to change and overcome difficult situations. until the image of Buddhism becomes international. Monks and novices have come out to study at Thai Buddhist universities, in Burma, and/or in Sri Lanka and India, but all of this reflects his shared and leading role.

(3) Your image at the international level It is as if there were international meetings of Buddhism in various countries, including Thailand, Vietnam, or other religious forums, so he was considered as Cambodian Buddhism, or being a city that has freedom in Buddhism or being a

representative of Buddhism that has gone through hardships in his era

(4) Throughout the period of more than 45 years (1979-2024), his return to ordination was equivalent to working for Buddhism. You can call it your inheritance, or it may be interpreted as bringing Buddhism to be the basis that Buddhism has been preserved over time or to be a voice for Buddhism in Cambodia. As shown in his leading role in the House during the return to power of the new political group under the Heng Samrin government, his being the Vice President therefore equaled religious space and political group acceptance and approval at that time. The fact that the Heng Samrin government still adheres to communism but they were communists who still had a religion in Laos and Vietnam until the government changed. But the situation of the religion under his leadership was carried on and passed on until his last days at the age of 45, as shown in his death in the present year.

Therefore, his death marks the end of his life and role in Buddhist work in Cambodia. and the steps of a person like you Reflect on the history of the past with the introduction of Buddhism and will be passed on to the new generation or new teams in a new way or in a new way. will continue to appear continuously.

CONCLUSION

Writing about Somdej Phra Sangharaj Thep Wong, while writing this, the author may not be writing in accordance with his position. But it is written in the capacity that he is an important person in the history of the new Buddhist nation-state of Cambodia. which contributed to the foundation of the new history of Buddhism after the change of government Make it even longer due to the mechanism of the time period since the change of government from communism during the Khmer Rouge (Chinese style) to communism in Vietnam in the backdrop of the Soviet Union until the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War, came down. along with the weakening of the communist system This affects the phenomena of politics, economy, society, and culture, which continue to move forward from the past until the present. Somdej Phra Sangharaja Thep Wong is considered to have played a part in driving Buddhism against the backdrop of collective politics. to happen and be driven forward together by the political leadership group at that time and brought Buddhism in Cambodia until the present day, until images appeared on the news of his death in February 2024, as appeared for 45 years (1979-2024), therefore, these messages were used as a channel for communicating to the public and expressing condolences for his death with tributes.

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