

## Workshop Summary:

## 工作坊結案報告

## Friendship and Politics: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

## 友誼與政治：跨文化的觀點

*Graham M Smith, Huang Chiung-chiu, and Astrid HM Nordin*

**ABSTRACT:** This workshop brought into conversation some of the interlocutors from the Chinese and Western traditions who have argued for the study of politics to turn its focus from the prevalence of enmity to the possibility of friendship. There is a wealth of thinking about friendship in both the Chinese and Western traditions and even significant overlap between the two perspectives. Yet, to date, there has been little direct dialogue between these interlocutors, and little development of cross-cultural understandings of friendship and its importance for politics. The workshop contributed to the construction of a cross-cultural exploration of friendship and politics, moving ‘beyond the West’ through engagement with Chinese thought on the mainland and on Taiwan. Looking at models and practices of friendship in politics in both the Chinese and Western traditions, the workshop explored friendship in both its normative and analytical dimensions, and understood it have both theoretical and empirical manifestations. In so doing, the workshop formulated and discussed a number of questions about friendship and politics, including to raise questions about the possibilities and limitations of its own ‘cross-cultural’ approach. The workshop was also an important step in building global relations between scholars with a view to establishing a wider network in the longer term. Although considered an important first step, the workshop also pointed to the need to move the study of friendship and politics beyond the Chinese and Western traditions to consider the much wider cultural and global perspectives on this topic.

本工作坊成功地建立起一個對話平台，提供來自中華與西方傳統文化背景的研究者，就如何將政治學研究的焦點從著重分析敵對狀態轉移至探討友誼存在與發展的可能性，進行極具深度的觀點交流與辯論。事實上，在東西方政治思想傳統裡，皆對人類各個生活面向中的友誼多有關注，甚至兩種思想傳統在友誼的思辨方面有著極相近之處。但是直至今日，兩種思想背景的學界之間卻甚少就友誼與政治生活的關聯性進行跨文化與跨學科對話者。本工作坊之設計即在此基礎之上，建立起跨越不同文化與思想背景的平台，並超越西方政治理論與學科分際的框架，連結中國大陸與台灣的思想學界，為探討友誼在人類政治生活之中扮演的角色與影響作出貢獻。本工作坊的討論焦點不僅著重友誼作為一個概念在理論與規範層次的意義，也著重分析其在實務層面的作用與影響。而透過跨文化與學科的交流，在討論進行時，與會學者分別援引來自中國與西方傳統政治思想的內容，進行辯論與意見交換。而在此過程中，友誼與政治作為本工作坊的主題，來自不同文化背景的與會者就此主題，共同歸納並集中討論幾項議題（詳見報告內文），其中包含了

友誼作為政治生活的一個面向，在使用跨文化分析時的可能性與潛在限制。除此之外，參與本工作坊的學者，不論是文化背景或研究專長皆具相當程度的多元性；能夠透過本工作坊的舉行，將來自世界各角落的學者齊聚一堂，並合作建立起長程研究議程與聯繫網絡，此過程本身即已相當符合本工作坊的主旨（友誼與政治）。雖然本工作坊已成功建立起以友誼與政治為研究主旨的研究群和對話平台，但這僅是這個長程研究議程的第一步；本工作坊期待未來能更進一步超越中國與西方政治思想傳統的範疇，廣納其他文明與文化思想傳統，邀請其加入我們已建立起的研究群和長程研究議程，讓友誼與政治的研究更具深度、廣度和多元性。

**Keywords** Friendship; Chinese traditions; Western traditions; politics; cross-cultural

**關鍵詞**：友誼，中華傳統，西方傳統，政治，跨文化

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**Presenters included:** Graham M. Smith, University of Leeds; Philip Hsiaopong Liu, National Chengchi University, Taiwan; Astrid H.M. Nordin, Lancaster University China Centre, UK; John von Heyking, University of Lethbridge, Canada; Shih Chih-yu, National Taiwan University; Huang Chiung-Chiu, National Chengchi University, Taiwan. **Participants included:** Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster; Felix Berenskoetter, School of African and Oriental Studies; Heather Devere, University of Otago, New Zealand; Paige Digeser, University of California Santa Barbara, USA; Kingsley Edney, University of Leeds; Chiho Maruoka, University of Leeds; Caroline Rose, University of Leeds; Evgeny Roshchin, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

## Workshop agenda

The academic study of politics has understood itself to have been traditionally focused on enmity, power and war. However, this focus has been increasingly challenged by an emerging body of research that takes friendship as its key object of study. Scholars such as Hutter (1978), Gandhi (2006), King and Devere (2000), King (2007), Heyking and Avramenko (2008), Devere and Smith (2010), May (2012), and Digeser (2016), have all undertaken work to excavate and develop this connection. In this respect John von Heyking has argued that friendship is the *lingua franca* of statesmen and that friendship is the form of politics (Heyking 2016). Graham M. Smith has suggested that friendship can provide a solution to the problems of imagining co-constitutive relations between self and other, tracing it in European thought from Plato and Aristotle to Nietzsche and Schmitt (Smith 2011). More recently, Smith and Astrid Nordin have also suggested that thinking about friendship can form the basis of a re-imagining of international relations as a discipline (Nordin and Smith 2018b). Despite efforts to explore questions of multiculturalism and intersectionality in these literatures and the debates which surround them, contributions have emerged from, and have remained focused on, the Global West.

In the same time period, scholars from the Global East have been increasingly vocal in proposing a 'Chinese school' of politics spanning International Relations and political theory, pointing to the theorisation of friendship as a key contribution made by Chinese traditions of thought. Drawing on Ancient traditions, it can be noted that friendship was the fifth relationship identified as fundamental to society in Confucian thought. Interestingly this relationship was the one which appears non-hierarchical, and has caused some wariness and suspicion partly for that reason (see for example Kutcher, 2000, see *Analects*, 1940:1.8, 9.25). Nevertheless, the right kinds of good friends could be morally edifying and support one's role in the family and state, and Chinese scholars have called for statesmen and theorists of world politics to learn from Chinese traditions to peacefully transform enemies into friends (Zhao, 2006:33, 34; for a discussion, see Nordin, 2016a; 2016b). Other researchers discuss 'China's self-perceived role of a friend versus the (often Western) exploiter' (Shih and Yin, 2013:81). The theorisation of *guanxi*-networks of friends and acquaintances has also been key to the development of processual constructivism 'with Chinese characteristics' by scholars such as Qin Yaqing (Qin 2016); 2018. In Taiwan, Huang Chiung-chiu and Shih Chih-yu have drawn on the Chinese tradition to think about international friendship as a 'balance of relationship' rather than the traditional realist 'balance of power.' (Huang and Shi, Shih 2016).

There are, then, resources in both the Western and Chinese traditions for both examining and developing the connection between friendship and politics, resources drawn from both Ancient and contemporary times, and focusing from the personal to the public, the local to the international, and the theoretical to the empirical. These two strands of thought appear to share key interests and aims, yet dialogue between the two has been sparse to date. The first line of debate, drawing on the Western tradition after Aristotle, rarely acknowledges or

takes serious stock of contributions from China or other traditions beyond the West (some notable exceptions are: Nordin and Smith, 2018b; Berenskoetter, 2007; He 2007; Callahan, 2004: 213ff.; Hall and Ames, 1998). The second line of debate, drawing on Chinese concepts and in particular Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist thought, rarely acknowledges that Western traditions (or other traditions beyond the West) also have an intellectual history which sometimes seeks to foreground friendship (Qin's work, 2016, 2018, is a partial exception to this, as is Yan, 2010).

This workshop was a first step in bringing these two clusters of discussion into conversation. This was fruitful in two ways. First, the understanding of 'friendship' in politics was developed and enriched by such an exercise. A more rounded and complex picture of the interrelation between friendship and politics has begun to develop as scholars become aware of, and appreciate, cultural perspectives different to their own starting-points. In questioning assumptions about friendship scholars have also questioned assumptions about politics. Moreover, politics is increasingly being understood as erasing boundaries, and focusing not on static entities but on co-constitutional relational encounters (e.g. Nordin and Smith, 2018). Friendship speaks directly to this agenda. Second, the very act of bringing scholars together from these traditions also provided the opportunity to build academic friendships which will sustain and develop discussion and work between these two clusters. The aim was to nourish future thinking about friendship in politics from a cross-cultural perspective, that is more aware and inclusive with regards to relations between diverging (or converging) global epistemologies and ontologies. This work is clearly still in its infancy.

## **Paper abstracts**

### **Friendship and politics: beyond community**

**Graham M. Smith and Astrid H.M. Nordin**

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<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23269995.2018.1505348>]

What role can friendship play in contemporary politics? This article answers this question by showing how friendship supplements one of the central tropes of Modern European Thought: community. It is argued here that the politics of community focuses on identity and difference, inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately it seeks a form of immanence which is impossible to achieve. In contrast, friendship offers a new way of thinking about politics as it focuses on open-ended relations between persons based not on sameness, but otherness and difference. The article identifies five key features of this understanding of friendship: (1) that it is a relationship; (2) between self and other; (3) which exists *between* the friends; which is (4)

extendable into a network but not a unity; and (5) it eschews all programmes or projects. In this way, friendship suggests not a project or a programme, but an *ethos*. Friendship is the open-ended and ongoing encounter with the other, and its politics is holding of a shared space open for the potentialities that that encounter brings.

### **Same Chinese, Different Friendship: Reviewing Taiwanese Perspectives on Africans and African-Americans, 1949-1979**

***Philip Hsiaopong Liu***

Friendship is more than relationship, as it defines who you are, who your friends are, and who your enemies are. In an international setting, friendship is the manifestation and reinforcement of national identity, which is the product of unique historical, cultural and political contexts.

During the Cold War, Beijing called for international solidarity of colored people, and developed the concept of “black brotherhood.” Scholars have focused on studying Chinese brotherhood with Africans and African Americans, which waned after Beijing began ideological reforms and developed friendship with Washington.

How the other China has conceptualized black friendship is usually ignored. Since the Kuomintang fled from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan, it had to manage international affairs based on its new territorial size, old ideologies, and changing US policies toward China. This paper studies how Taiwan's government, reinforcing its Chinese identity under these circumstances, pursued its amity and enmity by associating Africans and African Americans.

The author argues that, by giving aid to Africa, Taiwan considered its “backward” African allies friendly, used them to consolidate China seat in the UN, and therefore strengthened its identity and pride of being the legitimate China. On the other hand, the image of African Americans was shaped by Taiwan’s relationship with the United States. Taiwan considered them hostile due to their pro-Beijing attitude. However, once Washington severed formal diplomatic relations with Taipei in 1979, Taipei began to seek friendship with African Americans.

### **Towards postcolonial friendship studies: From Eurocentric definitions to learning through Chinese traditions**

***Dr Astrid H.M. Nordin***

This article asks what it means to decolonise friendship. Friendship is in need of decolonisation, as it tends to be constituted as the marginalised and deprived other of enmity. Decolonising means not only to critique the Eurocentric ideas and historiographies that have informed the basic categories of social and political thought, but also to challenge

the mechanisms that have created the dominant imaginings of friendship. These dominant imaginings in modern IR understand friendship through Eurocentric assumptions, which stipulate that: 1) friendship is the less important, residual and feminised other of enmity; 2) friends need to be significantly similar to the Self; and 3) friends are valuable because they affirm a stable sense of Self. This article draws on Chinese thought to argue that we can establish a postcolonial friendship studies by building instead on the premise that: 1) friendship is a central category for theorising the relations of international relations, and is not best understood in binary relation to enmity; 2) friends need to be significantly Other to the Self; and 3) we can have positive friendships with an unstable, flexible and fluid sense of Self. Doing so provides intellectual resources for building towards a genuinely global IR, by drawing on theories and experiences from China and beyond. Accordingly, this article proposes a new interdisciplinary research agenda for a postcolonial friendship studies, centred on the entwinement of the histories, anthropologies and philosophies of friendship with those of East-West relations.

### **Confucius in Tiananmen Square, Aristotle in the Washington Mall: Friendship in Chinese and Western Modernities**

*John von Heyking*

Friendship is the lingua franca of politics. Even when drawing upon ontologies and epistemologies hostile to friendship such as those that characterize much of Western modernity, political actors willy-nilly find themselves drawn to the rhetoric and practice of friendship.

Plato, in the *Laws*, dramatizes this conflict between theory and practice in the conversation he portrays between the Athenian Stranger and the Cretan, Kleinias, and shows how, in their ascent to the cave of Zeus, the interlocutors discover how friendship becomes the form of politics (Heyking 2016, 141-145).

A recent historical example that illustrates this same conflict between thought and action regarding friendship can be found in Henry Kissinger's *On China*. Kissinger allows for little room for friendship in his Realpolitik understanding of foreign policy and diplomacy that separates politics from morality. His vision seems to identify it with the "five baits" used historically by the Chinese court to entrap "barbarians" (Kissinger 2012, 21). For instance, he is one of one of four Americans considered a "Friend of the Chinese People (Strong)", a designation the Chinese government bestows onto individuals (or propagandists) who portray it to the American government in a positive light.

Even so, Kissinger's description of his own diplomacy with Chinese leaders suggests a kind of vicarious friendship political actors at the highest levels practice. In doing so, their primary concern, beyond strictly political considerations, is gaining insight into the moral characters

of other political actors in a manner akin to what Aristotle calls “sunaisthesis” or mutual-beholding of the good (Heyking and von 2013, 93-95, Heyking 2016, 35-56). For example, Kissinger had special affinity for other scholar-politicians including Mao and Mitterand. At one point Kissinger wistfully reflects upon his relationship with Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Premier under Mao, in Zhou’s final years: “Our dialogue never reached an exchange of personal comments. Some of Zhou’s successors tend to refer to him as, ‘your friend, Zhou.’ To the extent that they mean this literally – and even if it has a sardonic undertone – I consider it an honor” (Kissinger 2012, 302). Like all creative politicians and as mediator between China and the United States, Kissinger strove to leaven power politics with friendship, both as tool and as end of politics. He recognizes the principle that “friendship constitutes an ordering pole for politics, and the desire for existence (the “existential question”) constitutes the other pole. One frequently must act in an unfriendly way to secure one’s existence, but, paradoxically, that existence is, in the end, not worthwhile or even possible without friendship” (Heyking and von 2013, 104)

The question of leavening friendship with power politics is also the question of where friendship fits within modern life. In 2011, the Chinese government installed a statue of Confucius in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square within sight of Mao’s mausoleum. Kissinger calls this a “dramatic symbolic move” (Kissinger 2012, 491) in part because it represents how the Chinese government seeks to “normalize” Chinese society after the upheavals of the second half of the twentieth century that did much to cut it off from its history. The Chinese recovery of the classical amidst the modern – represented most dramatically by Mao’s Machiavellianism and subsequently by Deng Xiaoping’s embrace of technology as civilizational destiny - resembles similar efforts in the West to leaven the modern with exemplars of the past, including those of classical Greece, Rome, and Christianity.

Friendship is the fifth relationship mentioned by Confucius and, like classical exemplars including Plato and Aristotle, it is significant for political life. The cultivation of friends with good character is a central political concern (as is governing with good moral character), and Confucius regards ritual as central to governing, much as Plato and Aristotle regarded festivity as the form of political friendship (beyond even like-mindedness and deliberation).

This essay draws comparisons between Confucius and Plato and Aristotle in effort to engage all three figures with the question of how friendship (personal and political) fits with the main contours of technological modernity that both China and the West face.

## **Friends Without Friendship: The Chinese IR that Escapes Otherness**

***Shih Chih-yu***

National actors often enlist “friends” to describe an amicable relationship. Chinese diplomatic narratives are of no exception. In the Confucian ethics, however, friends make a hard relationship because it has no blood kinship to guarantee spontaneous reciprocity nor an

extended metaphor of kinship to encourage loyalty as requested of a subject toward the prince. Being a friend requires conscious role-making, according to Confucius, that is composed of the demonstrated virtue of truthfulness. To enact a role of friend, liking is not only insufficient, but sometimes harmful if it obscures the virtue of truthfulness. In fact, alluding to a kind of relationship that can never incorporate the entirety of its constituting parties, Confucius advised that intimacy between friends is a good harbinger for its coming collapse. With a culturally memory heavily embedded in Confucianism, Chinese diplomatic practices of friendship offer a peculiar case of how friendly international relations are possible and manageable in the Chinese worldview. My paper will argue, normatively as well as cognitively, that the Chinese calling of friend in international relations carries no emotional friendship. Rather, it brings forth a self-imposed duty of showing the virtue of truthfulness. Nevertheless, it may incur over-investment in showing benevolence as well as a self-involving emotion in the enactment of the friend-role. Such emotion is a required ritual to balance liking or disliking that already exists toward the other party, hence often in the form of unilateral self-sacrifice. In short, friends are a diplomatic role for a Chinese narrator that demands they act straightforwardly, considerately, and informatively to each other. It by no means implies conversion or intervention that characterizes global governance, regime building, and R2P. Rather, it ironically accepts the assumption of an extent of absolute otherness of the friend. The friend-role can presumably camouflage the embarrassment caused by the mutual estrangement embedded in the presentation of otherness and protects one from interference in the name of friendship.

### **Brothers Can't Be Friends: Vietnam's Balance of Relationship with China** **Huang Chiung-Chiu**

Both Vietnam's foreign policy and domestic development have been deeply shaped by its giant neighbor, China. The shared culture, political system, and communist ideology are supposed to make the two countries intimate with each other; however, the reality has proved an opposite way of development. This article provides an analysis of this phenomenon through an approach based on the theory of balance of relationship; furthermore, it argues that Vietnam and China could hardly become 'friends' due to the historical fact of Sino-centered tribute system, the nature of relationships between/among socialist states, and Vietnam's inferiority complex when facing China. The approach of balance of relationship in this article explains why Vietnam develops the abovementioned mentality, and how the Vietnamese could accept the roles as comrades or even brothers with China, but not friends.



## Discussion points

There was wide-ranging and productive discussion of these papers over the two days of the workshop. Several themes and questions emerged from these discussions which are summarized below. These themes and questions are likely to prove useful as starting points for other scholars who are interested in the connection between Chinese and Western thinking on friendship and politics, or who wish to take research into comparisons and conversations beyond these two perspectives. Below these themes are presented as a series of questions.

### ***Is a ‘cross-cultural’ approach possible? If so, what are its advantages and limitations?***

The aim of the workshop was to bring two sets of traditions into conversation with each other (here Chinese and Western traditions). However, participants at the workshop were very aware of intellectual difficulties and limitations of such an endeavor. In particular, does talk of distinct cultural traditions even make sense? There is an extensive literature and wide-ranging debate about this issue. If it is possible and desirable to make cross-cultural comparisons, then what other comparisons can be usefully made. Here a connection between Chinese traditions and the West was made – but are there other traditions and cultures that can also provide useful perspectives on the connection between friendship and politics?

***How is friendship to be understood?*** In the discussion during the workshop there were two (related) aspects to this question. The first was to try to say what friendship is (and what it is not). Here cultural inflection shows that the relationship can be understood in different ways. The second way of approaching this question was to think about the work that friendship is doing in our thought and discourse (Smith 2018, Digeser 2013, Digeser 2016, Roshchin 2017). Here friendship can range from an ideal or normative concept (tightly defined, or only accepted insofar as it has positive ethical implications and is ‘done’ in the right way), to a descriptive and rhetorical concept (to be understood not by definition but by how people actually identify and use friendship – regardless of whether we think this is ethically edifying or not).

***What is the connection between friendship and equality?*** One of the interesting things that emerged from the discussion and some of the examples was that friendship is not necessarily a relationship grounded in equality. This has been a common assumption in the West, and it is the ‘equality’ of friendship that makes it suspect in the Confucian tradition (Kutcher, 2000). In fact, a re-examination of both Chinese and Western traditions throws up examples and models where hierarchy is important to friendship. This is not simply ‘descriptive’ (i.e. that some friendships are unequal), but in some cases this also has normative importance (i.e. it is good that there is inequality between the friends). In some accounts the inequality within friendship is seen as desirable as it helps one (or both) parties to display

virtues or to develop in some way. Unequal friendship is therefore supportive of the social and political fabric as it leads to morally desirable outcomes, and reinforces authority. This questioning of equality is also a questioning of one of the central values of contemporary politics; indeed, it might even be a questioning of the very grounds of politics itself. An alternative view of friendship would suggest that it is the only response to the (assumed) equality of persons – and that its outcomes are democratic and subversive of all hierarchy and authority. It is this aspect of friendship which brings it into conflict with existing political orders.

***Is friendship a form of resistance or a form of power?*** One of the themes of the discussion was to what extent friendship is necessary to the order of the state and a tool of the state and politics, and to what extent it offers opportunities for resistance. On the one hand, forms of friendship have been used to further the ends of states and powerful actors. Friendship has been used as a tool of diplomacy and its rhetoric is powerful. On the other hand, friendship can be used to undermine or resist the operations of the state and power. Friendship provides an alternative way of connecting and an alternative order to the existing order within a state. It is here that some of the political potential of friendship is seen. This is also bound up with questions of power. The conceptualization of power, and the idea that power can be shared or that it ‘circulates’ in a Foucauldian way, comes to touch upon the importance that friendship has in both maintaining and resisting regimes and orders.

***What role does friendship play in understanding and negotiating the notions of self and other, identity and difference?***

One of the central questions that the discussion on friendship addressed was the notion of self and other. Whilst in the West it is often assumed that persons are discrete and bounded entities who come into contact with each other, some Chinese thinking suggests a different picture. Indeed, thinking about friendship in the context of this cross-cultural approach leads us to question the very notion of the self and person, and to challenge some of the binaries and juxtapositions of self and other, identity and difference. A complex picture begins to emerge of a intermeshing of self and other, identity and difference. For an existing discussion see Xinzhong Yao (1996).

***How is friendship related to, or contrasted with, other roles such as family and kin? And how is friendship related to, or contrasted with, other notions such as solidarity, comradeship, and love?***

Clearly whilst the idea of friendship travels across cultures it does not remain the same. One of the findings of the workshop was that whilst there is overlap in some notions of friendship in the Chinese and Western traditions, there were also some distinctive notions in play. This raises the question as to how friendship incorporates or is differentiated from other notions and practices. Especially important here is how friendship is differentiated from ‘partnership’,

'cooperation', and 'family and kin'. There has been a merging of these notions in both the Western and Chinese traditions, but at other times they have been kept distinct. The same is true of how friendship incorporates, is defined by, or is defined in contrast to, other notions such as solidarity, comradeship and especially love.

## Conclusion

Not only is there clear potential for a cross-cultural approach to friendship and politics, the topic demands it. Friendship and politics are not the preserve of any one culture or any one approach. Indeed, both Chinese and Western traditions would suggest that an understanding needs to be fostered which is sensitive not only to the local conditions of friendship and politics, but also how these local conditions map onto a larger and more complex picture. This workshop was a first step of the road to fostering such understanding. Whilst the questions that this workshop raised were generated by bringing together Chinese and Western traditions, it remains to be seen whether they transpose into other contexts. At the very least, the workshop has shown that there is a rich and as yet unexplored vein of thinking and practice that is waiting to be explored by scholars drawing on Chinese and Western traditions together.

### About the authors:

**Graham M Smith** is lecturer in political theory at the University of Leeds, UK. He has a long standing interest in friendship and is the author of numerous articles most recently (Smith 2018, Nordin and Smith 2018b, a). He is currently working on a monograph provisionally entitled *Friendship and Political Theory* for Edinburgh University Press.

**Huang Chiung-chiu** is associate professor in the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies at the National Chengchi University, Taiwan. She has a long standing interest in International Relations Theory, Chinese Foreign Policy, and Southeast Asian International Politics and is the author of numerous articles and the book *Harmonious Intervention: China's Quest for Relational Security*. She is currently working on the project of comparing Vietnam and Mongolia's China policies and the sinophobia in these two nations.

**Astrid HM Nordin** is Director of Lancaster University China Centre (LUCC) and senior lecturer in the Department of Politics, Philosophy, and Religion at Lancaster University, UK. She has long thought about politics and international relations through a combination of Chinese and Western traditions of thought, including in her monograph *China's international relations and harmonious world: time, space and multiplicity in world politics* (Nordin, 2016a). More recent work has focused on friendship and relationality in these traditions (Smith 2018, Nordin and Smith 2018b, a).

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