African dinosaurs emerge from the shadows

Little is written about African dinosaurs in popular culture, which makes Prof Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan’s new book an important contribution to our heritage. It’s also a first for the continent.

**HELEN THÉRON**

Successful machine that it is, the American media may have given T Rex its celebrity status as the most fearsome meat-eating dinosaur to have stomped the planet, but did you know that the title actually belongs to Africa? North Africa’s *Carcharodontosaurus* (put your teeth in for that one)?

This six-tonner makes *Tyranosaurus*, which roamed North America, look like a wimp on the prehistoric beastie scale.

Dubbed the shark-toothed lizard of the Sahara, *Carcharodontosaurus* is the biggest known predator of all time. A product of the Late Cretaceous era (97-90 million years ago) this whopper grew up to 13m long. Its skull alone measures 1.6m, and its jaws are lined with 15cm-long teeth. Remains have been found in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Niger.

Something else you probably didn’t know: Africa is also home to the first stegosaur ever discovered, *Paranthodon*, which once lived just across the border in the Eastern Cape.

And more recently, Africa got its first dinosaur name with an isiXhosa click, *Nqwebasaurus thwaz**, which roamed the continent’s most famous dinosaur region, the Kirkwood Formation (Nqweba is the isiXhosa name for the Kirkwood region) in the Algoa Basin in 1995.

Information like this seldom reaches the public and for a palaeontologist like Professor Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, that’s not good for science.


Not that she’s interested in one-upmanship. She wants to introduce African children to their own heritage. Though African dinosaurs are important to palaeontology, they’re often omitted from books.

“I believe that dinosaurs can be a kind of stepping stone into the world of science.”

A global expert on the microscopic structure of fossil bones, Chinsamy-Turan recently (2005) published an academic contribution to the field, *The Microstructure of Dinosaur Bone*, which has received glowing reviews in several ISI-rated journals – including *Nature*.

Her children’s book is a first for Africa, completed during her six months’ sabbatical in Turkey, where she also penned five scientific papers, and a chapter for a book.

South Africa’s first dinosaur bones were unearthed in the mid-19th century, but because the country was a British colony they were shipped back to the UK to be studied. These bones were misidentified, and it was much later that they were recognised as belonging to *Paranthodon* - the stegosaur mentioned above.

“In 1854 another South African discovery, *Massospondylus*, became the first African dinosaur, and one of the first few in the world, to be identified and named,” Chinsamy-Turan writes in her introduction.

“Among the most remarkable 20th century palaeontological expeditions undertaken in Africa were those to the Tendaguru region, and they tell a tale of the incredible diversity of dinosaurs that once lived in the region about 150 million years ago.”

Subsequent finds in various parts of Africa have allowed palaeontologists to piece together the history of dinosaurs on the continent – and their relationship with dinosaurs on other continents.

The book is aimed at young readers, but has broad appeal for anyone interested in Africa’s dinosaur heritage. For Chinsamy-Turan, getting the book on the shelves for under R100 was important. It’s all about access to knowledge and to science. MP
**One hundred and fifty not out**

The publication of the 150th edition of the high school magazine Mathematical Digest was celebrated in the Department of Mathematics last month. Founded by Emeritus Professor John Webb in 1971, the magazine has appeared quarterly without a break ever since.

Way back then, Webb noticed that there was little on mathematics for children to read at school other than textbooks.

“It is strange because in other ar-

as of schoolwork, you watch movies on history, you read poetry and novels, you learn your language at home, you experience music and drama and art outside the school curriculum – but the learning of mathematics is entirely concentrated within the school curriculum,” he says.

Filling this gap, well over 3,000 articles have appeared in the 150 editions of Mathematical Digest since 1971. They include readable articles on topics just outside the school curriculum, anecdotes of famous mathematicians from Pythagoras to Stephen Hawking, news of mathematical Olympiads, puzzles and problems, with Sharp calculators offered as prizes.

Today, one copy of every edition of Mathematical Digest is sent free to 2,000 high schools across the country and internationally; for those who cannot get a copy from the Old Mutual Foundation.

With further support from the Western Cape Department of Education, all Dinaledi schools in the Western Cape receive ten copies of every edition.

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**Ndebele to be honoured by Michigan**

The University of Michigan (U-M) in the US earlier this month announced that they will award an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Professor Njabulo S Ndebele, UCT vice-chancellor and principal.

Ndebele will receive the award at a graduation ceremony at U-M in April.

The US university stated that the award acknowledges Ndebele’s achievements as a writer, his contributions as a leader in higher education in South Africa and Africa, as well as his role as UCT vice-chancellor.

The institution also noted that the award recognizes Ndebele’s particular contribution to creating a diverse, multiracial institution; for expanding the institution to support from encouraging new partnerships within the country and internationally; for increasing the number of research doctoral students at UCT, and for positioning the challenge of HIV/AIDS centrally at UCT – in terms of both services to affected students and efforts to address the growing pandemic.

“I feel honoured,” said Ndebele. “The University of Michigan has a rich history of academic excellence and leadership in tertiary education. It will be a privilege to join their list of honorary graduates.”

Ndebele also holds honorary doctorates from the University of Denver (US), Wesleyan University (US), Soka University (Japan), Vrije Universiteit (the Netherlands), Chicago State University (US), University of Natal (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal), University College London (UK) and Cambridge University (UK).

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**South Africa as a laboratory for understanding global health challenges**

In his valedictory lecture at UCT’s medical school on 13 February, Professor Solomon Benatar of the Department of Medicine in the Faculty of Health Sciences stated that the health of whole populations – in South Africa and globally – is the major crisis and challenge for humanity in the 21st century.

In his lecture, titled South Africa as a Laboratory for Understanding Challenges to Global Health, Benatar cited exponential population growth and consumption of the Earth’s resources, among other factors, as affecting population health in coming decades.

“Understanding the need to shift away from the 20th century notion of continuous economic growth and consumption towards solidarity within a fairer and more sustainable conception of development is the first step towards reversing this now almost inevitable global process,” he said.

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**LETTER**

In his letter to the Monday Paper (18 February) Aggrieved Goose claims that “there is no incentive for individuals at UCT” for writing high-level publications.

In her reply the Dean of Science argues that “The value placed by the university on these outputs is evident in our ad hominem promotion process, including excellence level payments.” This statement is relevant to the complaint by Aggrieved Goose and the ensuing debate, but otherwise may be quite misleading.

Ad hominem promotions and academic excellence are judged by a considerable number of criteria at UCT. These include teaching, learning, leadership, management, administration, social responsiveness and research. Research is therefore only a small component of the total number of criteria. Even if Aggrieved Goose does outstanding research, but does not reach the same level of excellence in the category, say, of social responsiveness, the rigid numeric formula being used may well block any access to an ad hominem promotion or academic excellence notch to which he or she might aspire.

In theory, then, an academic at UCT who wins the Nobel Prize for their research, but does not reach a high numeric score in the category of management and administration, would not be judged as being meritorious by UCT. Personally I fail to see how this policy fits the claim that we are a “research-driven” university.

Prof. Johann Latjiechars Department of Oceanography

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**Students shaved and sprayed**

Students at Kopano Residence held a Shavathon to raise money for cancer research. Scott Havemann and Murray Beaumont admired the close crop they gave Kath Fennemore.

All gone: Kopano Residence held a Shavathon to raise money for cancer research. Scott Havemann and Murray Beaumont admire the close crop they gave Kath Fennemore.
NRF grant for modified gravity research

HELEN THERON

Professor Peter Dunsby and several members of UCT’s Cosmology and Gravity Group (Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics) recently received two grants amounting to R1m from the National Research Foundation for the second three-year phase of a project to solve the dark energy conundrum.

The project results from a bilateral agreement between South Africa and Italy. Dunsby has been collaborating with professors Salvatore Capozziello and Claudio Rubano of Naples University, and a number of postdoctoral researchers (Sante Carloni, Kishore Ananda, Naureen Goheer, Rituparno Dunsby has been collaborating on the dark energy conundrum.

Ananda, Naureen Goheer, Rituparno researchers (Sante Carloni, Kishore Ananda, Naureen Goheer, Sante Carloni, Mohamed Elshahi Sirelakhtam Nobel Abdelwahab. (Absent: Rituparno Goheer.)

Farewell to Naicker

Former executive director of Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS) Prags Naicker was given a fond farewell at a function on 26 February. During his 16 years at UCT, Naiker has been involved in several major projects, the first overhauling of UCT’s administrative computing systems, the PRISM project team that implemented SAPR/3 and later took the reins as the IT stream leader on the university’s Audit and Integration of Management Systems, aka AIMS, project. He also spearheaded the supaTel project, which aims to drive renewal of information and communication technology in the university. Naicker started as CEO of the National Student Financial Aid System on 1 March.

eblockwatch blocking criminals

By just pressing a button, UCT students in trouble can get quick assistance - free of charge.

This year will see Student Buddy, powered by a company called eblockwatch in conjunction with the Campus Protection Society of South Africa, being tried and tested at UCT. Student Buddy allows students who find themselves in any trouble anywhere in the country, to simply press an emergency button on their cellphones. That triggers a rattle effect within seconds as emergency calls out to UCT’s Campus Protection Service, family, friends and, if need be, to the closest eblockwatch members.

The student button is connected to eblockwatch, which connects their cellphone to a national grid of community security networks. There are 56 000 South Africans registered to eblockwatch “and collectively we look after each other,” says Andre Snyman, founder of eblockwatch.

“This means that collectively we can call on fellow South Africans to assist UCT students just about anywhere in the country at the touch of a button.”

Constant or exotic scalar fields.

“It’s just possible that some of our most cherished ideas simply break down on these scales,” says Dunsby.

“There’s a long way to go,” he concudes.

There is a lot of money being poured into observational facilities such as the South African Large Telescope, and South Africa stands a chance to win the Square Kilometre Array. Both these facilities will contribute to determining the cosmological parameters to very high accuracy. The challenge is to find a theoretical explanation that fits all the data.

While many theoretical physics research groups in the UK and US have suffered funding cuts, South Africa is ploughing resources into astronomy, excellent news for local research. Dunsby believes.

The South Africa/Italy collaboration has also been instrumental in training up young theoretical physicists. Two students, Jamie Leach (PhD) and Mohamed Elshahi Sirelakhtam Nobel Abdelwahab (MSc), will be submitting their theses in this area in the next couple of weeks.

It’s not a bird, it’s a frog

HELEN THERON

The Avian Demography Unit (ADU) has morphed into the Animal Demography Unit and has moved from the Department of Statistical Sciences to the Department of Zoology. The physical move to the John Day Building will take place later this year.

“Avian Demography Unit has long been a misnomer,” said ADU director Professor Les Underhill.

The unit started out in 1992, and ever since they initiated the frog atlas project in 1997, questions have been asked about their name.

In addition, they have several postgraduate students doing animal studies. Dr Silvia Mecocci completed a PhD on seals in 2005, Steve Kirkman, Newi Makado and Mhu Seakamela are registered with the ADU doing PhDs exclusively on seals while Mariette Wheeler’s PhD has both seal and seabird components. Darren Hoineet recently completed an MSc on dwarf chameleons.

All students will now register in zoology and not statistical science, all except one “genuine statistician”.

“Although the academic world thrives on these kinds of delightful anomalies, there is no need to perpetuate them forever,” Underhill said.

This did not mean a reduction of bird research.

“It simply recognises the fact that, as the ADU has developed, it has grown beyond birds.”

Underhill will continue to lecture in the statistical sciences department.

Conference Centre

Sitting in the heart of Newlands, the home of rugby and cricket.

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Signs of the zowers: - eblockwatch - Student Buddy - Campus Protection Service

Sports Science Institute of South Africa
**Institutional culture bedevilled by fissures, says report**

**UCT remains a divided community, seen in several intersecting fault lines: by race and gender, by academic rank and pay class, and between academic and professional and administrative (PASS) staff**

**T**his is one of the findings of the 2007 Institutional Climate Survey, presented at a colloquium led by vice-chancellor and principal, Professor Njabulo S Ndebele, on 22 February. This report is a follow-up to the 2003 Institutional Climate Survey.

In introducing the vice-chancellor said the survey provided important indicators of additional areas in which the protection of individual rights in the workplace requires attention.

Referring to the end of his second term at the end of June, when Dr Max Price takes over as vice-chancellor, he said: “We have a reflective space in front of us. We need to understand where we’ve been, where we are and where we might be going.”

Other survey findings indicate that a minority – 38% of all staff – believe that the university treats its staff fairly. Forty-four percent of black staff feel that workload is unfairly distributed and, asked whether an atmosphere of co-operation exists at UCT, 29% felt that it did while 37% felt that it did not. A majority does not believe that there is mutual respect between PASS staff and academic staff.

The overall indication is that about one-third of staff are broadly happy, and the other half are not. Thus 52% agreed, overall, they are satisfied with their jobs. Forty-seven percent agreed that they experienced a sense of value and respect as UCT employees and 56% felt that the work environment at UCT is welcoming to them as individuals. Forty-four percent agreed that they feel a strong sense of belonging at UCT.

Race and gender continue to dominate in individual experiences of university culture. Some 50% of white males and 52% of white females agreed that they have not been treated differently because of their race and gender. However, all categories of black staff had the inverse response. Similarly for gender, 43% of all respondents saw discrimination on the basis of gender as a problem, and 29% of all respondents saw sexual harassment as a problem.

One comment read: “I think this survey is merely a public relations exercise aimed at creating the impression that we are transforming, but nothing will be done with the findings of this survey, as was the case with the previous survey. This survey will not tell us anything new.”

“The charge that nothing was done to follow up on the 2003 survey can be countered by the Khumalo project, which was developed in response to indications of extensive concerns about racism,” said deputy vice-chancellor Professor Martin Hall.

“It is perhaps the largest intervention of its kind at a South African university and has enrolled more than 650 participants to date, with overwhelmingly positive responses.” Nevertheless, it is clearly important that there is a directed and focused action plan to take the outcomes of the 2007 survey forward. The survey indicated that a number of interventions are regarded as successful. For PASS staff, these included the work of transformation committees, employment equity initiatives, and staff development programmes. For academic staff, notable initiatives included the Emerging Researchers Programme. (Both the 2003 and 2007 results are available in full on the UCT transformation web page and at http://www.hall.uct.ac.za/links/) MP

**UCT talks to community about Rustenberg**

**MEGAN MORRIS**

Over recent weeks, deputy vice-chancellor Professor Martin Hall has hosted two public consultations on UCT’s proposed development near the Rustenberg burial site on middle campus.

The site is the final resting place of slaves who worked the farms along the Lievebroek River in the 17th and 18th centuries. The land UCT now occupies was once the burial ground of slaves who worked on the Rustenberg farm, and stretched from the present Main Road to the Summer House beneath the freeway.

Today the site lies immediately next to and partially underneath all Africa House, built in 1996, before the burial ground was identified as such. It’s thought that the human remains have long since been removed, but there are no records that can shed any light on when or where to.

As required by the South African Heritage Resources Act, UCT has over the past two weekends sought comments from interested individuals and groups on the two new buildings that it hopes to put up in the area near the burial site. This was also a part of wider consultation on the impact of the new buildings on the community.

In a university looking for proposals on how to memorialise the site, Hall emphasised: “The line of connection between UCT’s middle campus and modern descendants of those slaves is an independent registered trust. It holds an impressive 200-year-old plantation, the modern descendants of those slaves.

Professor Martin Hall’s resignation as DVC with effect from 31 August 2008, and Professor Martin West’s retirement from his appointment as a DVC on 30 June 2008.

**Load shedding**

“Keeping the core work of the university going in the context of load shedding was a concern at the meeting. Exco reviewed what is already in place (UPS system and generators) to support teaching and research, and gave in-principle approval to proposals for what is not yet covered.

**Council’s term**

The Council’s term of office ends in June 2008, and Council reviewed the steps undertaken to constitute the new Council. Nominations for the Convocation-elected six members close on 14 March 2008.

**UCT/Province partnership**

The challenges facing the university/province partnership in the operation of the Faculty of Health Sciences and the teaching hospitals have been a key concern of Council for the past two years. Exco has reviewed the province’s adjustment to the 2007/2008 health budget, and has noted the province’s commitment to confidential consultations on the 2008/09 budget.

**UCT policies**

UCT has sexual harassment and sexual offences policies that date from the 1980s. These have been reviewed during the past year by a reference group. The reference group’s proposals, which were submitted to Council in December 2007, have been reviewed by an ad hoc Council committee in consultation with the reference group, and were supported by Exco.

**UCT Foundation**

The University of Cape Town Foundation is an independent registered trust. It holds the university’s permanent endowment.

The trustees’ report was before the Exco for information, together with details of the income distributed for designated endowment. The value of the permanent endowment as at 30 September 2007 was R1.15 billion.

**Finances**

Financial questions enjoy priority attention by Exco, so Exco was pleased to note that the cash flow position at year-end was better than budgeted, and that less than 2% of tuition and residence fees for 2007 (R600 million) remained unpaid at year-end.

**Notes by Registrar Hugh Amosse**

**GOVERNANCE**

March 3 – 16, 2008 Volume 27#02

**Monday Paper**

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Obsessive-compulsive disorder growing among children

It’s Brain Awareness Week from 10-16 March, and in this article we highlight a growing problem among South African children.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common psychiatric problem. It affected Dr Samuel Johnson, David Beckham is rumoured to have OCD and there have been hints that Florence Nightingale was an obsessive about germs, producing compulsive behaviour. The symptoms of OCD are distressing, time-consuming and associated with functional impairment and reduced quality of life. Around 2-3% of people will develop OCD during their lifetime. It is equally common in men and women, and occurs at similar rates throughout the world, normally beginning in adolescence or young adulthood. It can sometimes be diagnosed during childhood, especially in boys. In children and teenagers OCD affects concentration in class, impairing schoolwork. Advances in neuro-imaging techniques have provided more sophisticated explanations of the genetics and functional neuroanatomy underpinning OCD. Numerous studies have implicated the specific genetics factors and orbitofrontal-limbic-basal ganglia-circuits in OCD.

In South Africa, Stellenbosch University’s Dr Christine Lochner and UCT’s Professor Dan Stein are CUBBI (Cross-University Brain Behaviour Initiative) researchers exploring these aspects in OCD. Their cutting-edge OCD genetics and brain-imaging study, which will yield novel insights into the brain functioning of those with OCD, has started screening in first participants. The study is another venture of CUBBI-Bl and the MRC Unit on Anxiety and Stress Disorders (Stellenbosch University). It uses novel techniques and facilities such as the new 3T MRI scanner at the Cape Universities Brain Imaging Centre (CUBIC) to extend previous research on OCD.

This study suggests that the onset of OCD is linked to certain activation patterns within specific brain structures, in addition to certain genetic components. Hoppe’s research provides a different angle, looking at the phenomenology of OCD and how the symptoms affect children and adolescents on a daily basis.

Hoppe says there is a paucity of literature in this area. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that impairment caused by OCD is significant in a number of domains, and that OCD-related functional impairment in childhood or adolescence may differ across cultures.

It is hoped that her study will inform the future diagnosis and treatment of South African children and adolescents with OCD. Thus far her findings indicate that parents believe their children’s OCD-related problems affect them mainly at school. But the children say their OCD “outfall” extends into both the school and social domains. The study also shows that parents and children differ when it comes to rating the most significant individual functional problems. The findings differ from those of North American and European studies, providing the rationale for further research into the effect of culture on childhood OCD-related functional impairment.

This work will have important implications for the diagnosis and treatment of children with OCD in South Africa. (If you would like to participate in the study or to find out more about it, please contact these researchers in the Department of Psychology: Dr. Kevin Thomas on tel 021-650-4608, or Lara Hoppe on 0845010385, or email larahoppe@gmail.com).
Ikhwezi Theatre Festival turns 10

The highly popular and award-winning Ikhwezi Theatre Festival celebrates 10 years of development theatre in the Western Cape this year, with a record number of 20 exciting new plays from 1 to 20 March in the Baxter Santam Theatre.

This year the festival will see plays from 12 young directors from the Western Cape, four from Gauteng and one each from the Eastern Cape, North West and Free State.

The overall aims of the festival include developing critical thinking among audiences and theatre practitioners of the arts; popularising social programmes such as health, environment, education and human rights; using the arts to stimulate community initiatives; developing new playwrights in the Western Cape; and exposing new and upcoming actors, writers and directors to mainstream theatre.

The festival runs daily, Mondays to Saturdays, at 10h00, 12h00, 13h30, 16h00 and 19h00. All Tuesday night performances start at 18h30. Ticket prices are R30 throughout, with discounts for block or school bookings of 10 or more available through Sandiswa on 021 680 3991. Book through Computicket at 083 915 8000.

The South African College of Music (SACM) is hosting a series of concerts in the next few weeks. On 4 March, international pianist Kotoro Fukushima performs the work of Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. Next, Jazz und Electronik premieres new work for acoustic and electronic instruments on 11 March, and Kathleen Tagg and Friends on 12 March feature the works of Haydn, Khats and Chopin. All concerts start at 20h15 at the Baxter Concert Hall.

SACM concert line up

Students make high school learning easy

High school learners in Cape Town are having their studies eased as UCT students perform Kanna, hy kô hystoe, a prescribed work for both Grade 11 and Grade 12 pupils.

Performed by second- and third-year drama students, the show forms part of the School of Drama’s ongoing quest to bring set literary works to learners across the Cape Peninsula.

Kanna, hy kô hystoe is a Breton Afrikaans play which brings together the past and present in a heart-wrenching manner. It takes one back to a time of true characters, dilemmas, hope and the survival of a community waiting one back to a time of true characters, dilemmas, hope and the survival of a community waiting for deliverance and salvation from their very own Kanna.

Written by the famed Adam Small, the show opened on March 1 in the Little Theatre and will run from Mondays to Fridays until 14 March.

Inquiries and bookings contact Susan Cole on 021 680 7129 or bookings@hiddingh.uct.ac.za.
Eight-try blitz for Ikeys in second Varsity Cup match

HELEN THÉRON

The Ikey Tigers blew away their opposition at UCT last Monday night, running in eight tries against a hapless-looking Tukkies (University of Pretoria) in their second FNB Varsity Cup league match.

The final score, 55-24, reflected a significant improvement on the first week’s nervous start, when varsity went down 17-23 to Pukke (North-West University).

The FNB Varsity Cup is the brainchild of Rugby World Cup ’95 icon Francois Pienaar. Targeting university players under 25, it bridges the gap between the amateur and professional arenas. Games are played on Monday nights, with some televised live by SuperSport.

Endorsed by SARU and SASSU, eight university clubs are participating. The concept was modelled on the successful college Monday Night Football league in the US.

“Monday nights, with some televised live by SuperSport...”

“If the rugby or the wafting aromas of cheerleaders introduced a new brand of rugby haute couture at the match...”

“This competition should keep university players under 25, it bridges the gap between the amateur and professional arenas.”

But that didn’t bother upbeat supporters. A good crowd turned up on a balmy late afternoon. Was it the rugby or the wafting aromas from the boerewors braai? A trio of cheerleaders introduced a new brand of rugby haute couture at the match.

With the game wrapped and sealed early in the second half, the Ikeys got a little sloppy towards the end, letting Tukkies in for a few easy last-gap tries.

Perhaps they just couldn’t keep their eyes off that scoreboard.

Touché: Astrophysics student Giselle Vicatos is off to Italy for the junior world fencing championships in April.

MYOLISI GOPHIE

Chess a family affair

When Rowan Ellappen learnt how to play chess from his sister Jenine, it was just for fun “because when you are young you want to play any sport”.

But the UCT first-year business science marketing student soon found himself so consumed by the game that he has been a regular player from a young age, winning critical tournaments at primary and high schools - and he is still going strong.

Two years ago he was part of a South African invitational side that played in Greece.

“My ambition is to get into the top 64. ‘I can do it,” she says, “but I’ll have to train a lot.” MP

Going places: Rowan Ellappen wants to get more people playing chess.

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