

SCULPTURE

Sculpture is the art of making three-dimensional figures and shapes. It may be classified according to the process and material used, and the themes or approaches employed. The two general kinds of sculpture are: free-standing and relief. Free-standing or in-the-round sculpture has a form which can stand independently in space. True sculpture-in-the-round maintains interest from all points of view and the various elements—lines, textures, and motifs—flow smoothly and dynamically all around the figure. Sculpture may also be in low or bas-relief or in high relief. In low relief, the figures are slightly upraised on a flat background. In high relief, the figures project more prominently from the background.

In general, sculpture employs subtraction or addition of material or both as a basic technique. Carving is a process of subtraction; while molding, casting, and welding are processes of addition. Assemblage, a putting together of three-dimensional elements and found objects, is generally a process of addition.

The Ethnic Tradition. Ethnic sculpture has been done in the traditional media of wood and stone, by carving; in clay, by molding; and in metal, by casting. Carving involves removing material from wood or stone by using a metal implement, usually a chisel. Carving is found throughout the country and is used for ornamenting daily objects like boats, ladles, furniture, and beams.

Wood carving in the Philippines is part of the ancient tradition of Malay wood carving in Southeast Asia. The art has retained its vitality through the centuries, from precolonial times to the present.

The native wood carving traditions are first of all found in the productions of the cultural communities. The *bulul* are freestanding in-the-round images of granary gods or anito, ancestor, and nature deities. They may either be in a standing or a sitting position. If sitting, their rear ends do not touch the ground but are raised above it, their hands touching their knees or their arms resting across their knees, as in the traditional way of sitting in the outdoors when performing a ritual or simply banding together to talk by an open fire in the cold mountain air. Figures are frontal in presentation and planimetric, following the planes of the original wooden block. Facial features are simplified and lightly incised, with a geometricizing tendency. There is no intention to represent a particular individual, as in a portrait, but the generalized features are deemed more appropriate in representing anthropomorphic deities of an archetypal cast. The articulation of the joints when the figure is in a standing position. Sometimes, stalks of rice representing hair, rise from a small hollow in the head. As to its proportion, the bulul has short limbs with a big head.

An important characteristic is that the bulul are generally found in pairs, male and female. This pairing, which symbolizes the sexual principle, also signifies the

value that society places on fertility: the whole of nature—including all living things of the earth, water, and sky—multiplies and flourishes from the union of the archetypal man and woman. As granary gods, the bulul are found inside granaries. They do not only guard the harvest from insects and animals, but also guarantee its continued increase.

An exception, however, is found among the Kiangang Ifugao. Among them, the bulul do not come in pairs but are single figures. This is because their function is centered on healing rituals. According to Peralta (1977), a ritual figure representing the sick person is carved, then called *tat-tagu*—no different in appearance and style from the usual bulul. This is consecrated and used in the healing ritual. If the person recovers, then its potency is recognized and is properly called bulul.

The same may also occur with the carved figures of animals, such as the pig, which is a common sacrificial animal. The carving of a pig is originally called *binabbuy*; it is later also called bulul after it participates in a successful healing ritual. Thus according to Peralta, the term bulul “suggests a generic term for types of consecrated images whether of similar configuration but differing in function or totally of different configuration and function” (Peralta 1977).

Among Cordillera houses, those of the Ifugao are the most sculptural. Wooden posts are carved with circular rat guards that prevent rodents from entering the house. Its walls and doors are of wood, usually carved with chevron patterns. Beneath the Ifugao house is the *hagabi*, a prestige bench owned by the affluent and carved from a single piece of hardwood. Its center is usually higher than the sides, thus forming a low arch or a squat chevron shape. The ends of the bench are carved with stylized animal heads, like the pig or boar. For the carving of the bench, the affluent throw a feast, called *cañao*, during which the bench is brought from the forest, where it has been carved, to the house of its owner. Other motifs carved in relief in the Cordilleras are human figures, lizards, snakes, and crocodiles.

The Tagbanua of Palawan carve ritual animals from soft wood. Dyed black, these are incised with geometric designs which show the natural light color of the wood. Among the Mindanao groups, the Maranao and the Tausug have a lively carving tradition. Called *okir* by the Maranao and *ukkil* by the Tausug, traditional carving shares a number of designs, although with distinct regional variations. One common motif is called *sarimanok* by the Maranao and *manuk-manuk* by the Tausug. The motif portrays a bird with a fish caught in its beak, among the Maranao, and without a fish, among the Tausug. Other Maranao motifs are the *naga* (snake), *pako rabong* (fern), the floral, as well as the star-and-bud motif. These motifs apply to objects in everyday life. Among the Maranao, okir designs appear in the *panolong* or the flaring beams of the Maranao longhouse; in the *giyaina-panagan* (prow) of the Maranao boat, in *kulintang* (gong) stands; and in tools and utensils, like the reed flattener for making mats, ladles, and coconut graters. Even the *kubing* (Jew’s harp), made from bamboo, is decorated with okir.

Okir designs embellish the *sunduk*, the boat-shaped grave marker of the Tausug.

A traditional casting process is *cire perdue* or “lost wax,” a Malay technology of brass casting which began before the 15th century in Sulu and is used to the present by a number of Philippine groups, such as the Maranao of Lanao and the Tboli of Cotabato.

The Spanish Colonial Tradition. The Spaniards introduced the tradition of carving in the hispanic manner. Sculpture found its widest and most popular expression in the carving of santos. These were figures of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints usually three-dimensional, made of wood or ivory for religious devotions, and often placed in niches. As such they could also be planimetric, i.e., made up of flat two-dimensional planes of different shapes and arranged at angles to each other. Santos were also made in *relieve* (relief) which could be *basso relieve* (low relief), *medio relieve* (demi-relief), or *alto relieve* (high relief). Aside from santos found in church, there were santos for domestic devotions. Santos in churches were part of the retablo, the elaborate hispanic altar piece. In the houses of the rich, small santos were kept in *urnas* or miniature freestanding altar pieces; others were protected under *virinas* or cylindrical glass globes. During fiestas, especially in Lent, the santos were brought out of churches and homes and paraded on elaborate *carrozas* (floats) or *andas* (platforms).

The first santo came to the Philippines with the introduction of Christianity, the first recorded being that of the Santo Niño of Cebu which was a gift of Magellan to King Humabon’s wife in 1521 and was found by Legaspi’s soldiers after their attack on the village in 1565. With the intensive activity of church building that occurred in the first centuries of Spanish colonization, more santos were needed for the retablos of the churches. During the centuries of the galleon trade, each galleon brought with it its patron image to guide and protect it during the long voyage. The most famous of these santos was ***Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje*** (Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage or Our Lady of Antipolo), an image of the Inmaculada Concepcion which accompanied the galleon on several successful voyages on the Manila-Acapulco trade, and was brought from Mexico by Governor General Niño de Tabora in 1626. In Naga, ***Nuestra Señora de la Peñafrancia*** (Our Lady of Peñafrancia) also draws large crowds to her shrine. Of the figures of Christ, among the most popular is the Quiapo ***Nazareno*** (Nazarene), an image brought from Mexico in the 1620s.

While some santos came from Spain through Spanish friars and officials, an undetermined number from Mexico, and some ivory images from Portuguese Malaca, in time most of the santos were made in the country by Filipino and Chinese *santeros* (carvers). Fernando Zobel de Ayala suggests that the introduction of foreign prototypes occurred within a short period of time so that by the 17th century there were enough carvers in Manila and elsewhere to meet the demand for santos. All the Christianized regions including the Ilocos, the central Luzon provinces, and Visayan Provinces such as Cebu, Bohol, Samar, and

Leyte also had their santeros. Active centers were Paete, Laguna and Betis, Pampanga which have kept up the tradition to the present.

Santos carved for churches before the 19th century tended to be squat, with an accent on the face and hands, but almost always iconographically accurate. By the 19th century, the making of santos had reached a high point of artistic achievement. In Manila, particularly in the districts of Quiapo and Santa Cruz, there were excellent artisans who established shops or ateliers. Before the 19th century, santos were made by anonymous wood carvers; but in the mid-19th century, with the rise of the native merchant class from the opening of the country to international trade, higher artistic standards were demanded and a number of sculptors achieved considerable fame, such as Leoncio Asuncion, Romualdo de Jesus, Crispulo Jocson, and Isabelo Tampinco. The second half of the 19th century saw the rise of secular themes in sculpture and the expansion of *ilustrado* art patronage. Known sculptors of the time were Bonifacio Arevalo, Graciano Nepomuceno, and Anselmo Espiritu who began a trend in genre sculpture and introduced nationalist themes, sometimes anticlerical.

The art of making santos has continued to the 20th century, particularly in Paete where wood carving practiced at present owes much to the traditions established by the elders and the previous generations of Paete woodcarvers. Prominent among them are Mariano Madriñan and Jose Caancan. The former received high distinction at the Amsterdam exposition in 1883 (a year before Juan Luna won honors for *Spoliarium*) when his *Mater dolorosa* (Sorrowful Mother) won a gold medal over European entries, thereby drawing the attention of King Alfonso XII of Spain. It was during Madriñan's time that the santero's art reached its peak—with the highly realistic and expressive santos, lifesize or larger.

Paete wood carvers introduced such refinements as movable, ball-and-socket joints at the shoulders, knees, elbows, and even fingers so as to make possible the portrayal of different gestures in a series of episodes, as in the passion of Christ. Delicate features and expressive, sad eyes are the hallmarks of Paete woodcarving art. Old secrets of the trade include lightbrown wavy hair made of *piña* fiber; eyelashes from monkey's hair; and eyes of glass that are blown, shaped, and tinted in the center.

In Paete, families specialize in particular aspects of the art of wood carving, from the making of tools to the final painting and varnishing. Several generations of wood carving families in Paete are the Madriñan, Caancan, Caguin, Cajipe, Edjawan, Madridejos, Fadul, Ac-Ac, Adao, Afunggol, Cagayat, Cagandahan, Baet, Bagabaldo, Baldemor, and Palatino.

The holy figures have their own prescribed iconography by which they are identified. San Roque points to a wound on his leg while a dog stands by his side, alluding to the ravaging plague and the dog which miraculously saved him. San Isidro Labrador stands with a shovel, at the same time that an angel works the field with a plow while the landlord gapes in amazement. Santa Lucia, who was

blinded by her persecutors, holds her eyes on a tray.

The making of the polychromed santo, whether in the round or in relief, entails a painstaking process from the initial carving of the wood to its ornamentation. This involves laying on a whitish coat of gesso on the wooden surface to make it nonporous to paint or gilt. Medieval artists in Europe produced it from a mixture of plaster (dehydrated calcium sulphate) and size or glue. Santeros in the Philippines, like those from Paete, used materials, such as local *kesong puti* or white cheese mixed with glue. After priming with gesso, flesh-colored paint was applied directly onto the surface. In the 16th century a non-glossy matte finish was preferred in the interest of realism. Local santeros have also used the “ivory finish” which simulated the milky pallor of ivory, considered an appropriate and precious material for the santo. The contrary is also known where ivory was painted with flesh tones similar to those of the wooden images.

It is the process of *encarnacion* which maintained the tradition of giving a fair complexion to holy figures, since it defined flesh color and tone in Caucasian terms. For colonized societies, this gave both the saints and the colonial rulers a common cast and became influential in local standards of beauty. The process was applied to formal santos, particularly of the classical and baroque style; but it was not strictly observed in informal or folk santos, the characteristics of which were closer to the common people.

Occupying an important place in the history of Philippine art is the carving of ivory using elephant’s tusks from Africa and India obtained in the Philippines through trade with China and mainland Southeast Asia. Ivory carving according to the Western tradition was introduced in the last quarter of the 16th century by the Spaniards, who first commissioned carvers from Southeastern China for images of the crucified Christ and of the Virgin Mary. By the first third of the 18th century, accounts extolled the artistic skills which Filipinos learned from the Chinese. Finely carved santos imbued with Oriental features (oval face, heavy lidded almond eyes, stiff postures) became popular gifts and souvenirs which were shipped to Spain and Mexico. It may be surmised that the trade in Philippine ivory images was far greater than those dealing with similar ivories from Goa (Portuguese India), Sri Lanka, China, and Mexico.

Whole statues were carved in the round from segments of tusks. In many instances only the heads, hands, and feet were made of ivory and attached to a carved wooden body or pyramidal conical *bastidor* (framework) which was meant to be covered with vestments of cloth or metal. In some impressive examples, a wooden structure was completely enclosed in several pieces of ivory to produce an even larger santo. Perhaps the oldest dated ivory work dating from 1587 is a crucified Christ in the church of the Magdalena in Sevilla; it is the prototype of many later crucifixes, with arched back and head pointed upwards. A possible early piece is the set of ivory head and hands of *Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario* (Our Lady of the Holy Rosary) or *La Naval*, commissioned in 1593 and

presently venerated in the Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City. Dated 17th-century pieces are the *San Sebastian* (St. Sebastian), *Ignacio de Antioquia* (Ignatius of Antioch), and the image of the crucified Christ and others in the church of Santa Maria in Medina de Rioseco, Valladolid, Spain, which are masterpieces of their genre yet are unusual for some of the atypical “open” poses of the saints; and the San Francisco and Santo Domingo in the monastery of San Esteban, Salamanca, Spain, which still manifest characteristics of the earlier, archaic style, such as elongation and the graceful curve of the body following that of the tusk from which it was carved. A still extant set of 12 ivory figures for a choir lectern, including a *Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion* (Our Lady of the Assumption) and various saints, reached Mexico circa 1770 and was a gift to the cathedral there from the Archbishop of Manila. Among the most talented of the ivory carvers were Juan de los Santos who carved the flawless crucifix in the San Agustin Church, and Leoncio Asuncion, who worked in the artistic enclave of Santa Cruz, Manila. Like his colleagues, he also carved in wood. Two of his religious works may be seen at the Ayala Museum in Makati. Graciano Nepomuceno was the last of the “old school” of ivory carvers whose works express sophistication of technique. Today, occasional ivory statues are done by a few artists, like Fred Baldemor and Esmeraldo Dans—both from Paete, Laguna.

In his study of religious art, Galo B. Ocampo classified santos into formal and informal types. Formal types were the santos found in churches, which thus showed a high level of artistry. Large in size and richly ornamented, these were done under the strict supervision of friars with respect to correct iconography or prescribed content and manner of representation in order that no “pagan” or heretical element was introduced. On the other hand, the informal santos, usually smaller in size, were used for private devotions and were freer in execution, thus showing folk qualities.

Fernando Zobel de Ayala (1963) classified the santos into classical, popular, and ornate. Classical santos either came from Europe or were done locally with a strong academic influence. Often carved in wood, these observed the classical proportions of 7 1/2 to 8 heads to the standing figure. The representation of drapery was in regular, symmetrical folds; the general appearance of the figure was one of formality, balance, and restraint. In a style different from the classical, the ornate santos also showed strong European influence from the school of the Spanish artists Pedro de Mena and Alonso Cano who emphasized emotionalism and realistic detail. Of wood or ivory, they were more richly embellished and more expressive than the classical. The third group, the popular santos, did not observe classical proportions; thus they often had big heads and squat or elongated bodies. Their features were more native than the classical and baroque types which were of a Caucasian cast with their deep-set eyes and aquiline noses. It is possible that the early folk santos continued the precolonial sculptural tradition in the carving of anitos marked by animistic vigor.

Jose (1991) has proposed that the santo be classified according to the scheme

found in church inventories, i.e., *de bulto* (from which is derived the Filipino term for the statue *rebulto*), for fully carved figures including drapery; *de gozne*, for figures that were dressed but had articulated hands; and *de bastidor*, for figures that were a mere head and hands on a frame.

Aside from the *santo*, more mundane types of carving were the result of the hispanic heritage. Carvers in Pakil, Laguna make the *pahiyas-tambag* (ornamental toothpick trees and fans). The Tree of Life centerpieces have detachable branches to embellish colorful rice dishes, tufted birds and airy butterflies with curling antennae which are arranged in tapering, graduated tiers above a circular base like a symmetrical spreading bouquet. The fans, in natural ecru like the trees, are carved from *palo sapis*, a single block of softwood, with thin and even blades spreading out in feathery grace. The fan sports a chain of two complete rings with a pendant bird at the end of the handle, all made from the same single bar of wood.

Wood carving also plays an important role in furniture making, as seen in furniture made in Betis, Pampanga. Its high moments were in the mid-19th century with the advent of cash-crop agriculture, and in the 1960s when it benefited from the National Cottage Industry and Development Authority program promoted by the Philippine government to uphold the development of cottage industries. Wood-carving tools, so important to the art, are produced in Apalit, Pampanga. The woods used are narra, of the red and yellow varieties, and acacia. Carvers who begin in their teens, execute design patterns on cardboard cutouts. The shops produce *gallineras* (benches), *aparadores* (cabinets), console tables, coffee tables, and headboards. The *gallineras* of Betis show the furniture at its most refined development: the narra in two tones, polished and varnished to a high sheen; and the square panels featuring carved rosettes flanked by small, neatly turned balusters for the back rest and the enclosure below. More colonial aspects are the tables and the *armoires* with motifs derived from European period-furniture styles. Recognizably baroque are the motifs of the unfurling scrolls meeting at the center, the concave shells everting delicately around the edges, the medallions and cartouches, and the occasional broken pediments and salomonic columns. These motifs are found in conjunction with elements of local origin, such as rosettes and other organic curvilinear motifs, as well as the row of small balusters. Betis wood carving is distinguished by the motifs and figures carved in bold relief or intricate openwork as the hardwoods permit. It likewise exhibits a heavy, opulent character from baroque influence.

During the Spanish colonial period, sculpture in stone were often used to ornament facades. These were made into *escudos* or stone reliefs of coats of arms usually ornamenting the main portal of a building. A striking example of stone relief is the ***Rendicion de Tetuan*** (The Surrender of Tetuan) found in the San Joaquin Church in Iloilo and the relief of San Cristobal, amidst a tropical landscape, found in the facade of the Miag-ao Church in Iloilo.

Metal casting, although to a limited degree, was also practiced in colonial times.

An effigy of King Carlos IV, cast in the foundry of Manila, was installed in front of the Manila Cathedral where it still stands today. Silver was a material used for casting or chasing small figures like reliefs that decorated the *portapaz* (a small tablet, generally of silver, with a religious image in relief in front and a handle at the back). A rare example of silver sculpture is the image of San Pedro de Alcantara found in the Nagcarlan Church in Laguna. Folk works that use brass casting are the *anting-anting* (talisman). Rooted in the Spanish period's religious traditions, brass anting-anting take various forms, such as medals, triangles, crosses, the crucified Christ, and the Santo Niño. Often a script in corrupt Latin is found on the faces of the medal-type anting-anting. Cavite and Batangas are the two provinces where brass anting-anting are made.

The American colonial and contemporary traditions. With American colonization at the turn of the century, new influences in sculpture appeared, particularly that of art nouveau and art deco. Isabelo Tampinco pioneered in the local art nouveau idiom by introducing indigenous motifs like the pineapple and the anahaw leaf for his carvings. Art nouveau's curvilinear style and art deco's geometric lines, applied to furniture and to all kinds of functional objects, proved to be a lively creative stimulus to local carvers.

The American colonial period is dominated by the classical sculpture of Guillermo Tolentino. Other artists who carried on this tradition are Anastacio Caedo, Ambrosio Morales, Froilan Madriñan, and Jose Mendoza. Ting Ping Lay is among the modern figurative sculptors most active in the 1950s, while Fred Baldemor emerged with his classico-romantic portraits in wood and ivory in the 1970s. Danilo Dalena, Julie Lluch, Agnes Arellano, Dan Raralio, and Peter de Guzman are among the figurative-expressionist sculptors.

The introduction of modern sculpture is associated with the work of Napoleon V. Abueva who donated modern sculpture for several decades. Abueva used the so-called noble material—hardwood, metal, and stone—for sculpture, whether these be in relief or in the round. He lent sculpture the quality of living fluidity and the impression of movement and action.

Bronze casting, practiced extensively during the pre-World War II period by sculptors who made public sculptures for monuments, is hardly practiced by contemporary artists because of its prohibitive cost. Abdulmari Imao is known for his casted works depicting modern interpretations of traditional okir motifs, like the sarimanok.

The traditional methods of creating sculpture by carving or casting have been augmented by contemporary techniques or forms—like welding, assemblage, and the mobile—and by the use of non-traditional material, like glass, plastic, bamboo, and even vegetable matter and earth.

Welded sculptures involve making objects by bonding together sheets of metal by electric or acetylene torch. Eduardo Castrillo dominated the field of sculpture in

the 1960s and the 1970s by creating monumental and environmental sculptures, in the abstract and figurative idiom, and some with social and historic meanings, in the medium which has become his trade mark—welded metal. Ildefonso Marcelo did abstract works in concrete and stone in the 1960s. Solomon Saprid, J. Elizalde Navarro, and Virginia Ty-Navarro also use welded bronze. Arturo Luz created abstract pieces using painted metal pipes.

Assemblage or “putting together,” a term adopted by French artist Jean Dubuffet in 1953 for a series of lithographs which he made from paper collages, is a relief made of pieces of paper, wood scraps, sponges, found objects, and other debris. Spanish painter Pablo Picasso was one of its earliest practitioners, using found objects and discards. While assemblage may include collages and small constructions, in its more recent development it puts together larger elements and actual objects from stuffed animals to toothbrushes. An American phenomenon in the mid-1950s, it reflected the brashness of contemporary American society. American pop artist Robert Rauschenberg made assemblages of an aggressive character, one with a stuffed goat enclosed in a rubber tire and another in an actual mattress dripped over with paint. Assemblages often break down the distinction between two-dimensional and three-dimensional art or between painting and sculpture.

In the Philippines a number of artists have created assemblages from various objects and have embedded their creations with a distinctive character or narrative flavor. Lamberto Hechanova and Edgar Doctor have done three-dimensional works with machine parts to build torsolike constructions. Active practitioners in this medium are Gabriel Barredo and Moralde Arogante with their playful, highly imaginative works. Roberto Feleo has brought out new aspects in assemblage. His works, called *Sapin-Sapin*, show a conglomeration of pop, traditional and historical images, objects and icons, both made and found.

The mobile is a three-dimensional work of sculpture which, instead of standing on the ground or on a horizontal base, is suspended from the ceiling or from a projecting element. It usually consists of one or several balancing rods, principal and secondary, from which hung a number of elements, figurative or non-figurative, in varying lengths. American sculptor Alexander Calder was the first to create mobiles, inspired by simple organic shapes. He was followed by the constructivists who worked in chrome and plexiglass, with their transparent and reflecting qualities.

A mobile can be considered a simple form of kinetic sculpture or sculpture in motion because it moves with the wind or vibrates with the surrounding air. Furthermore, its suspended form casts moving shadows and light reflections on the environment. As such, an essential character of the mobile is that it creates a continuous interplay of the sculptural form with its surrounding space. This interaction of solid and space is part of the concept of mobile sculpture in which the work is viewed not only in terms of its solid mass but also in terms of what is

called its “virtual volume,” as space becomes a positive value.

Castrillo has done mobiles in chrome and plexiglass with modular elements. Ramon Orlina has also done mobiles in painted metal. Simpler and more familiar types are wind chimes which have the additional element of sound. Popular mobiles of Philippine folk art are the colorful *kiping* chandeliers of rice wafers decorating the Pahiyas festival in Lucban and Sariaya, Quezon.

Contemporary sculptors continue to experiment and develop new materials. Hechanova introduced in his works colored metal and plexiglass. Caedo, a classicist, experimented with “cold casting,” a process involving the use of marble dust and polymers. Orlina pioneered in glass sculpture, where glass blocks are shaped by abrasives and adhesives to form prismatic or anthropomorphic shapes. Francisco Verano has used bamboo for sculpture, while Impy Pilapil uses glass with serigraphed patterns, stone, iron rods, galvanized-iron sheets and screens for her sculptures, some of which are decorative as well as functional, like her furniture pieces. Kinetic sculpture, which adds movement to the art form traditionally presented as static, had its earliest expression in the performance artist David Medalla’s *Bubble Machine*. Earth art might be considered a new type of sculpture. Here the earth itself is modified by the positioning of material like poles, windbreaks, or walls, or is dug and rearranged. In the 1970s Raymundo Albano advocated this type of medium among artists of Mount Makiling. Junyee is also among the foremost practitioners of this art. The earth’s bounty of flora has been utilized by Junyee for his sculptural works. Roberto Villanueva’s maze, made of runo and other local reeds, is an example of this type of sculpture.

- A.G.Guillermo/S.A. Pilar/I. Cajipe-Endaya with section on ivory by R.T. Jose

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