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SIX SITUATIONS PROVERBIAL METAPHOR THEORY

Abstract: Peter Seitel formulated the three situations theory. On doing it, he misconceived proverbial metametaphor by proverbial metaphor, therefore misconceiving where to locate proverbial metaphor, locating it after the proverb situation, while it has got to be located before the proverb situation. Furthermore, the theory contains a gap on missing to draw basis on the proverb's precedent as said Alan Dundes or the proverb's philosophy as said Aristotle. Fixing these gaps, we propose a new theory, we label as the Six Situations Proverbial Metaphor Theory.

Keywords: Metametaphor, metaproverbs, proverbial metaphor, semimetaphor, six situations.

1. Introduction

The elders say *e ndongo zakupholo zatuka kudima* (tomorrow's advice comes from the past). As we introduce our "Six Situations Proverbial Metaphor Theory," let us have a look at the past. In particular, let us look at Stephen Winick's article "Insight From the Middle of Nowhere: Proverbial Language and Intertextuality in Gary Larson's *The Far Side*," which inspired us to write this theory. At one point Winick writes: *One of the most complete theories of metaphor that has been elaborated in the context of proverbial studies is Seitel's formulation, whose distilled essence is that "metaphor in the most general sense is the relationship which obtains between entities of separated domain by virtue of the relationship each has within entities in its own domain.¹</sup>*

Within this quotation, we believe that, on the one hand, the assertion of metaphors working in the dimension of relationship is right. But on the other hand, the theory's completeness is challenged because it misses what we call the precedent situation as well as the situation between the precedent and the proverb. For that reason, we propose a six situations theory to replace Seitel's three situations.

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Winick elaborates Seitel's three situations: Seitel argues that proverb utterances manifest a complex semiotic structure and entail the co-presence of three different "situations." The "proverb situation" is the situation verbally described in the proverb – someone counting chickens before they are hatched or looking before leaping. The "context situation" is the situation to which the proverb refers, i.e., James hiring a contractor before his home improvement loan comes through or Martha deciding on a business venture without first examining her finances. The "interaction situation" is the concrete situation of human interaction in which the proverb is used, i.e. Stan warning James about the potential danger of his actions, or Mike telling Alan about Martha's foolishness.²

Here we have got a picture of Seitel's theory with the three situations: "proverb situation," context situation" and "interaction situation." The point is that we haven't got the notion of the proverb's precedent. Based on the three situations, the theory does not refer to the "precedent situation" or if talks about it, then, it does not state it at the theory level where it should be. In a sense, Alan Dundes challenges this theory in the following words: one of the functions of proverbs is to establish a secular precedent for present action.³ Here we have got three stages on the same level: "precedent," "proverb" and "present action." In other words, we have got, past, proverb and present. The proverb stage is a bridge between the past and the present. If we start analyzing from the proverb situation, then, we leave behind the precedent situation. In a sense, Seitel's theory fails to enlighten the function of proverbs being a link between the secular precedent we are calling "precedent situation" and the present action or what Seitel call as "context situation."

Furthermore, Alan Dundes says that proverbs come from stories.⁴ If proverbs come from stories, then analyzing a proverb theoretically without taking into account the story that gave birth to the proverb leaves a gap in our understanding.

Aristotle says that a proverb is a remnant of an ancient philosophy.⁵ If we deal with proverbs and do not highlight the philosophy where the proverb is from, then we open a gap on the proverb's clear understanding. It is sufficient to sustain that the fact of not having a proper reference to the "precedent situation" turns Seitel's theory to be incomplete.

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Finally, Winick states that "the way proverbs work, in Seitel's theory, is by drawing an analogy between the proverb situation and the context situation; this is the proverb's metaphor."⁶ Here we see that the proverb's metaphor is to be located between the proverb situation and the context situation. We believe there is a contradiction here. But, let us start on the nature of proverbs and then deal with the contradiction.

1.1. All proverbs are metaphorical.

Winick states that *Seitel believes that all proverbs are meta-phorical.*⁷ But many authorities disagree with Seitel on this point; Mieder's example, "Honesty is the best policy," is but one proverb that argues to the contrary.

Let us also have a look at what the Bible says: 1 Samuel 10: 12 And one of the same place answered and said, But who [is] their father? Therefore it became a proverb, [Is] Saul also among the prophets? If we look at the expression "Is Saul also among the prophets?" it seems to be a literal expression. Yet the Bible explicitly states that it is a proverb. Although it is not explicitly stated in the Bible WHY this expression is a proverb, it seems likely that the Bible means it became a proverb not because it changed from literal to metaphorical, but because people started using the expression. So, currency and not metaphor seems to be the core issue in turning this expression into a proverb. If a literal expression, due to its currency, becomes a proverb, then we must allow that there are literal proverbs. In the very same way as metaphors are proverbs but not all metaphors are proverbs, there are also literal proverbs, although not all literal expressions are proverbs.

As social scientists we don't create proverbs. More precisely, as paremiologists, we don't create proverbs, but seek to understand the nature of proverbs. But if we work as paremiographers, then we do create proverbs, in the sense that we decide which expressions should be considered proverbs through a combination of observing what items are traditionally called "proverbs," and abstracting from that the principles or features that we think make an expression a proverb. Observing that the Bible calls "*Is Saul among the prophets?*" a proverb, we have shown that it is a literal proverb. If we apply it, it might attain a metaphorical status. From its origin, if in verse 11 it is a literal proverb, in verse 12 it attains metaphor status. As people started using the expression, applying it in new contexts, it became a metaphorical expression.

Let us look at an example. For instance Tadi enters a classroom and finds a strange individual, Londe, among the students and he asks: *Is Saul among the prophets?* In this context, this proverb is uttered in a metaphorical sense. Instead of Tadi asking it plainly: *Is Londe among the students?*, he says it proverbially: *Is Saul among the prophets?*, whereby "Saul" is a metaphor for "Londe" and "prophets" is a metaphor for "students."

Elsewhere, we have formulated rules which we have called the laws of proverbial sense.⁸ The second law states: All proverbs created in literal sense and they do attain metaphorical status as they are used, they do represent the Second Law of the Proverbial Sense.⁹ Let us highlight from this law two facts: one, there are proverbs whose meaning is to be understood literally. Second, some of these literal proverbs attain metaphorical status. This proverb Is Saul among the prophets? is a good example of proverbs created literally, which then attain a metaphorical sense as they are used.

Metaproverbs. Let us now introduce the concept of the metaproverb. We take a metaproverb as a proverb about proverbs, a proverb of proverbs. It is a proverb produced with proverbial content. In my book *Provérbios Panzianos*¹⁰ we have got a couple of metaproverbs. Let us have a look at some of these metaproverbs as they deal with the issues of literal and metaphorical proverbs. Let us start with proverb number 1023: *Da realidade concreta à realidade abstracta o provérbio é metáforra*. It means, from concrete reality to abstract reality, the proverb is a metaphor. Above all here we have got that "proverb is a metaphor."

If on the one hand, we have got metaphorical proverbs, on the other hand, let us now take proverb number 20: *O provérbio* é máxima, o provérbio é literal. It says: the proverb is a maxim, the proverb is literal. Here we have got that "the proverb is literal." In proverb 1023 we have got that the proverb is a metaphor and in proverb 20 we have got that the proverb is literal. On the one hand we have got "literal proverbs" and on the other hand we have got "metaphorical proverbs." These are the two proverbial limits, proverbial borders.

Proverb number 18 talks about the literal proverbial limit: A máxima é a dimensão literal do provérbio. The maxim is the literal dimension of a proverb. It says that maxims are literal sense proverbs. If, on the one hand, we have got literal sense proverbs, on the other hand, proverb 17 talks about the meta-phorical dimension: O adágio é a dimensão metafórica do provérbio. The adage is the metaphorical dimension of proverbs. If maxims are literal sense proverbs, adages are metaphorical sense proverbs.

Finally, proverb 33 states: *Para além do adágio e a máxima, do provérbio é apenas elaboração*. Beyond adages and maxims, proverbs are elaborations. In other words, although a proverb may be either a maxim or a metaphor, these borders of proverbs, maxim and metaphor, might be elaborated. In this way, adages and maxims, as proverbs, might be elaborated from aphorisms, apothegms, sayings and so forth. Above all, proverbs are literal, proverbs are metaphors.

1.2. Contradiction

First of all Winick says that Seitel believes that all proverbs are metaphorical. If this is the case, then when we utter a proverb, we are uttering a metaphor. When we are dealing with a proverb, we are already dealing with a metaphor. If we start from the premise that a proverb is a metaphor, this very same view is contradicted because Winick says: The way proverbs work, in Seitel's theory, is by drawing an analogy between the proverb situation and the context situation; this is the proverb's metaphor. If proverb is a metaphor already, how are we going to locate the proverb's metaphor in the context situation-the moment of use? The contradiction is that on the one hand, it is already a metaphor, but on the other hand, that it becomes a metaphor when applied in the context situation. Here we have got a gap that Seitel's theory seems not to address. In particular, it fails to address vital metaphorical elements as metametaphors and semimetaphors.

Based on these explanations, this paper argues that Seitel's theory is not a complete theory. It fails to address the "precedent situation," it fails to locate proverbial metaphor before the prov-

erb, it fails to draw the line between a metaphor and a metametaphor, as well as the line between a metaphor and a semimetaphor. For this reason, we propose the Six Situations Proverbial Metaphor Theory.

2. The Six Situations Proverbial Metaphor Theory

This theory proposes that proverbial metaphor, from its creation up to its utility, it goes through six stages or six situations. We need to understand that proverbs are ready-made sentences. As they are ready-made, beyond their situation, they have got the birth situation or precedent situation as well as the precedent – proverb interaction situation. When we meet a proverb, it has already got three situations:

(1) the precedent situation,

(2) the precedent – proverb interaction situation, and

(3) the proverb situation.

When we apply a proverb in the context situation, we add to these three situations, three more situations:

(4) the context situation

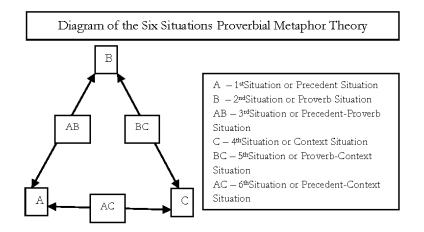
(5) the proverb – context interaction situation and

(6) the precedent – context interaction situation.

The full perspective of a proverb's metaphor has got six and not three situations.

Proverbial sense. In a general perspective, there are four kinds of proverbs: 1 - Proverbs created in a literal sense which remain literal as they are used, 2 - Proverbs created in a literal sense which attain metaphorical status as they are used, 3 - Proverbs created in a metaphorical sense which remain metaphorical as they are used, and 4 - Proverbs created in a metaphorical sense, as they are used.

As the theory is about proverbial metaphor, then, the first kind of proverbs, created in a literal sense and remaining literal as they are used, are not included in the theory. The scope of the theory covers the other three forms of proverbs.



2.1. First situation: Precedent Situation.

The first situation is labeled "A" in the diagram. It is the proverb's creation situation. Proverbs are created by individuals. The creation of a particular proverb has got its own situation. Alan Dundes recognizes, as we have already seen, that proverbs often come from stories. In that case, the story is the precedent situation of the proverb. Indeed, a proverb not only has got its story, but a proverb has got its own history. It is possible to understand how a particular proverb has been used by different authors of different times. From its creation, across the time, we may understand how different generations used a particular proverb, as proverbs go from generation to generation. Correctly understanding the story, as a source of a proverb, gives us a better understanding of the proverb as a whole. A better way to start analyzing a proverb is by getting in touch with its past, its roots.

Proverbs' transformations. Like everything, proverbs go through transformations; some transformations erode the proverbs. In other words, some proverbs, through changes in the course of time, lose their past or their precedent. There are some proverbs that we use now, for which we can't recover the circumstances of their birth, because we have lost their precedents.¹¹ The Greek Philosopher Synesius (c.370-c.413 CE) recalled a description of proverbs from Aristotle, perhaps from a

lost work, or perhaps an elaboration from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "proverbs have been saved, owing to their conciseness and clearness, as remnants by which to recall the old philosophy that perished in the great destructive revolutions of humanity." (http://www.livius.org/sources/content/synesius/synesius-eulogy-of-baldness/ synesius-eulogy-of-baldness-22/)

This description includes the notion of proverbs losing parts of their constituency. They are *remnants by which to recall the old philosophy*, and specifically philosophy that is lost or perished. A proverb is what remains of a lost philosophy; it is the ashes of an ancient philosophy. The point is that many proverbs, due to human ruin (*destructive revolutions of humanity*), have lost their etymologies, and have remained only in their text form.

Aristotle's description implies the recognition that proverbs come from or are a byproduct of an ancient philosophy. Along the way, many proverbs lose their birth situation, their precedent situation. The fact of some proverbs losing their precedent situation gives us two perspectives on proverbs: proverbs with a precedent situation and proverbs whose precedent situation has been lost. As a matter of theory, we should not start proverbial issues in the middle; we should not standardize the middle as the starting point of understanding proverbial issues. For this reason, if we want to better understand proverbial issues, we shouldn't take as our main example a proverb without its birth situation. Instead, we should take a proverb with its birth, or precedent, situation. A proverb with precedent situation would give us a better understanding, a wider picture, of the proverb dynamics from its root up to how we use it.

The existence of proverbs for which we have lost the precedent situation should not lead us to believe that all proverbs are without root or precedent. We should understand that proverbs have got a particular origin. Proverbs, like poems or songs, have a moment of creation.

Let us start with the proverb *E mbua ndombi e mkila ndombi* the dog is black and the dog's tail is black.

It once happened in the Kiaji Dembado, Kiaji Kingdom, that there was a dispute between the former Dembo, King, Makiaji kia Mususu and his son Tito Maria de Almeida about the lands on the other side of the river Lufua.

Before the stalemate, they called upon the King in charge, at the time, Dembo Mengoma, in order to solve out this problem. When Mengoma arrived, after realizing that it was a problem between a father and his son, he just said: *E mbua ndombi e mkila ndombi* the dog is black and the dog's tail is black. It means that the father and the son are the very same thing.

That is how this proverb *the dog is black and the dog's tail is black* was created. Here we have the precedent situation of this proverb.

2.2. Second Situation: Proverb situation.

The second situation is labeled "B" in the diagram. In the second situation, we move from the precedent situation to the proverb situation. Let us keep in mind the proverb *E mbua ndombi e mkila ndombi* the dog is black and the dog's tail is black. We have already seen its precedent. In its precedent situation, we have got a father and a son that are alike. As etymological elements, we have got a father "Makiaji kia Mususu," we have got the son "Tito" and we have got their "Likeness." These are the concrete etymological elements. The etymological elements of this reality are shifted into a metaphorical reality: The father ceases to be a father in order to be a dog; the son ceases to be a son in order to be a tail; and the likeness between the father and the son ceases to be the likeness in order to be the "black color." The father is the *dog*, the son is the *tail* and their likeness is the *black color*.

At this stage, we have moved from the concrete reality to the abstract reality. In other words, the concrete concepts have been shifted into the abstract dimension. If the concrete is to take a father as father, in the abstract, in this case, we take the father as a "dog." In the same way, if in the concrete reality, we take the son as a son, in the abstract dimension, we take the son as a "tail."

Now we have got a metaphorical proverb. But all proverbs are not metaphorical; as we have seen, some are literal. At this stage, we also locate the literal proverbs. **Semimetaphors**. There is a particular kind of transformation that we need to locate here. As we have seen from Aristotle's description, some proverbs lose their precedent, lose their philosophy. Human history sometimes destroys the precedents of some proverbs. Therefore, we encounter proverbs and can't figure out how they were created; these are proverbs without the precedent situation. As we haven't got their precedent situation, we also can't talk of the second situation, the relationship between the precedent situation and the proverb situation.

If proverbs lose their precedent situation, the symbolic elements in these proverbs can't have the same status as those proverbial elements that didn't lose their precedent situation. If a symbolic element in a proverb that retains its precedent situation is a metaphor, the symbolic element in a proverb that does not retain its precedent situation is not a metaphor, it is a semimetaphor. Therefore, figurative proverbs without their precedent situation are not metaphors, they are semimetaphors.

Let us have a proverb like *leave not the mark of the pot upon the ashes*. We don't know how this proverb was created. We have just received it, as part of human heritage, but we don't know how the proverb was created. We know how the proverb *the dog is black and the dog's tail is black* was created, but this one we don't know.

If we don't know how they were created, symbolic proverbs, are not full metaphors, they are half metaphors. In order to establish a proverb's metaphor, we need to know the precedent situation, because it is in the relationship between the precedent and the proverb situation, where we can best locate the proverb's metaphor. If we ask what precedent elements are symbolized in "mark," "pot" and "ashes" in the proverb *leave not the mark of the pot upon the ashes*, no one can answer, because no one has got the data, the information, about the creation of this proverb. Because of this, the symbolic elements in this proverb are not metaphors, they are half metaphors, metaphors-to-be in a new context. That's why they are called semimetaphors.

In short, at this stage, the proverb situation, we have got literal and metaphorical proverbs. We know how some literal proverbs were created and don't know how others were created. Among figurative proverbs, those whose origin we know are metaphorical proverbs and those whose origin we don't know are semi-metaphorical proverbs.

2.3. Third situation: The precedent - proverb interaction situation.

The third situation is labeled "AB" in the diagram. In the third situation, we analyze the relationship between the first and the second situation. We have moved from the concrete reality to the abstract one. From the concrete reality, father, son and likeness, to the abstract reality "dog," "tail" and "black color." Thus, we have got the proverb: *E mbua ndombi e mkila ndombi* the dog is black and the dog's tail is black. At this level, the proverb is already a metaphor. The proverbial elements "dog," "tail" and "black" are already metaphors.

It is at this level that we should locate the metaphor of a metaphorical proverbial expression and not where Seitel locates it (between the proverb situation and the context situation). As long as we move from the concrete reality to the abstract reality, we attain proverbial metaphor. The proverb's metaphor is not between the proverb and the context situation. At the proverb level, proverb situation or the third stage, the proverb is already a metaphor. In our case, with the proverb, E mbua ndombi e mkila ndombi the dog is black and the dog's tail is black, we are already using metaphors: "dog" is already a metaphor, not a metaphor-to-be; "tail" is already a metaphor, not a metaphor-to-be, and "black color" is already a metaphor and not a metaphor-tobe. The dog is the metaphor for the father, Makiaji kia Mususu; the tail is the metaphor for the son, Tito Maria de Almeida, and the "black color" is the metaphor for the likeness between the father and the son.

2.4. Fourth situation: Context situation.

The fourth situation is labeled "C" in the diagram. The context situation is the application situation. It is the environment in which we apply the proverb. In a sense, it is a duplication of the first situation, the etymological situation, which we are calling the "precedent situation." The proverb is a kind of bridge between the precedent situation and the context situation. At this stage we apply proverbs in the context situation.

Let us take the case of the proverb *the dog is black and the dog's tail is black*. We have got a metaphorical proverb and we

are going to apply it metaphorically. For instance, an uncle and his nephew are drinking beer together. After a couple of moments, they start quarreling. Someone sees them quarreling and proverbially says: *the dog is black and the dog's tail is black*. Here we have got the proverb. It is already a metaphor and we are using it metaphorically. The product of two metaphors is a metametaphor. From the precedent situation to the proverb situation, we have got a metaphor; and from the proverb situation to the context situation, we have got another metaphor. As byproduct we have got a metametaphor.

Now, let us look at the case of semimetaphorical proverbs, figurative proverbs whose exact origin we do not know. Let us use as an example the proverb *leave not the mark of the pot upon the ashes*. It is a figurative proverb, but we don't know how it was created; therefore, it is a semimetaphorical proverb. As we apply a semimetaphorical proverb in a new context, we create metaphors.

For instance, Ndianda ate oranges on the table. To express the need to leave the table clean, the mother told him proverbially *leave not the mark of the pot upon the ashes*. In this context, the figurative elements "mark," "pot" and "ashes" that, in the third stage, the proverb situation, were semimetaphors, now turn into full metaphors. Instead of the mother saying plainly "do not leave the orange peels on the table," she said it proverbially *leave not the mark of the pot upon the ashes*. In this context, "marks" is a metaphor for peels, "pot" is a metaphor for orange and "ashes" is a metaphor for the table.

From a semimetaphorical proverb, we have got a metaphorical proverb. In short, if a metaphorical proverb, in the context situation, attains a metametaphorical status, a semimetaphorical proverb attains a metaphorical status.

2.5. Fifth situation: Proverb – context interaction situation.

The fifth situation is labeled "BC" in the diagram. In the fifth situation we have got the interaction of the proverb and the context situations. We are analyzing the proverb *E mbua ndombi e mkila ndombi* the dog is black and the dog's tail is black. In the proverb, as metaphorical elements, we have got the "dog," the "tail" and the "black color." In the context situation, we have got an uncle, a nephew and their likeness. The proverbial element

dog, metaphor for the father, is now being applied as metaphor for the uncle. The proverbial element tail, metaphor for the son, it is now being applied to metaphorize the nephew, and finally the proverbial element "black color," metaphor for the likeness between the father and the son, is now being used as metaphor for the likeness between the uncle and the nephew. The product of two metaphors is a metametaphor.

In the proverb – context interaction situation we don't locate the proverb's metaphor, because we start from the premise that we are already dealing with a metaphorical proverb. When the proverb arrives at that stage, it is already a metaphor. Its metaphor takes place between the precedent situation and the proverb situation. In the fifth situation, we locate the formation of the metametaphors. The proverb is already a metaphor and as we apply it metaphorically, as byproduct of two metaphors, we have got a metametaphor.

Seitel was mistaken by locating the proverbial metaphor here. We need to understand that the proverb's metaphor does not always originate *between the proverb situation and the context situation*. If the proverb was in origin metaphorical, then this situation gives rise to its metametaphor.

However, if we don't know the exact origin of a proverb, so that we consider it to be semimetaphorical in origin, then its metaphor does arise in this situation. This is the case for the proverb *leave not the mark of the pot upon the ashes*. At the Proverb situation, the figurative elements "mark," "pot" and "ashes" are not metaphors, they are semimetaphors. As such they turn into metaphor in the context situation and it is at the relationship of proverb situation versus context situation that we locate their metaphors.

So, the metaphors of a semimetaphorical proverb originate at this level. But for a metaphorical proverb, it is its metametaphors which originate here.

2.6. Sixth situation: Precedent – context interaction situation.

Let us recall the following words by Alan Dundes: *one of the functions of proverbs is to establish a secular precedent for present action*. We have got the precedent, proverb, and present action. If on the one hand, from the precedent we get to the proverb, and on the other hand, from the proverb we get to the pre-

sent action, then it is theoretically possible to get from the precedent to the present action without going through the proverb. When we do this, we have got the sixth situation.

We need to understand that in a sense, the present action or the context situation is a shadow, it is an image, a duplication of the precedent situation. Because it is a duplication, then, we can establish the relation between the two situations. In doing so we are working in the sixth situation.

With the proverb *the dog is black and the dog's tail is black*, we know that at the precedent, we have got a father and a son. In the present action, we have got an uncle and his nephew. Out of this proposition, we can match the two events. The uncle in the context situation stands for the father in the precedent situation, while the nephew in the context situation stands for the son in the precedent situation. On understanding this proverb's dynamics, precedent versus context situation, we deal with the last situation, the sixth one.

We can only deal with the sixth situation, if we are dealing with proverbs whose precedent we know, those proverbs for which we know the exact origin. If we don't know how a proverb was created, we cannot work with it in the sixth situation.

3. Conclusion

In summary, Seitel's theory does not address the precedent situation, and therefore, misconstrues the location of the proverb's metaphor. It does not draw the line between a metaphor, a semimetaphor and a metametaphor. Therefore, we have conceived the Six Situations Proverbial Metaphor Theory to clarify that a figurative proverb from its creation to its utilization it goes through six situations: the precedent situation, the proverb situation, the precedent-proverb interaction situation, the context situation, the proverb-context interaction situation and the precedent-context interaction situation.

Figurative proverbs whose exact origin we know are metaphorical proverbs at the precedent-proverb interaction situation, and they turn into metametaphorical proverbs at the proverbcontext interaction situation. Figurative proverbs whose origin we don't know are semimetaphorical proverbs at the precedentproverb interaction situation, and turn into metaphorical proverbs at the proverb-context interaction situation. Some literal proverbs turn into metaphorical proverbs at the proverb-context interaction situation. Above all, metaphorical proverbs from their creation to their final context of use, go through six situations.

Notes

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