

The Historical Context in WHGC

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Before Common Era (BCE)

2.5 m: Genus *Homo* originates in Africa, cradle of humanity

100,000: *Homo sapiens* (humans) with 20th-century man's brain size live in East Africa. Populations separate. Migrations proceed to Asia via the Isthmus of Suez.

75,000: Last ice age begins. Human population is 1.7 million.

35,000: Migrations of separated Asian populations settle Europe.

30,000: American Indians spread throughout the Americas.

10,000: Last ice age ends; earliest signs of agriculture.

7000: Early Vedic period begins.

6000: Early sites on the Sarasvati River, then India's largest river, as described in the Rig Veda. The culture, based upon barley (yava), copper (ayas) and cattle, also reflects that of the Rig Veda.

5000 First towns are settled in Sumer and China

3300-1700 Harappa in the Indus River Valley is the largest civilization of its time.

3100: Aryan people inhabit Iran, Iraq and Western Indus-Sarasvati Valley frontier.

King Menes unites Upper and Lower Egypt into one kingdom.

3000: People of Tehuacan, Mexico, are cultivating corn.

Stone villages appear throughout Europe.

2700 Time of Gilgamesh.

2600: Indus-Sarasvati civilization reaches a height it sustains until 1700 BCE.

2330-2275 King Sargon founds Mesopotamian kingdom of Akkad (world's first empire), trades with Indus-Sarasvati Valley cities.

ca -2040: Prince Rama is born at Ayodhya

1900: Drying up of Sarasvati River, end of Indus-Sarasvati culture. After this, the center of civilization in ancient India relocates from the Sarasvati to the Ganga, along with possible migration of Vedic peoples out of India to the Near East

1700-500 Aryans becomes dominant in Indus River Valley and expands east into the Ganges River Valley. They speak Sanskrit, compose The Vedas.

1500: Egyptians bury their royalty in the Valley of the Kings. Polynesians migrate throughout Pacific islands.
Setting of Ramayana

1450: Early Upanishads are composed during the next few hundred years, also Vedangas and Sutra literature.

1400-1000 Zoroastrianism founded

1250: Moses leads 600,000 Jews out of Egypt.

1200: Probable time of legendary Greek Trojan War in Homer's epic poems, Iliad and Odyssey (ca 750 BCE).

1124: Elamite Dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar (1124-1103 BCE) moves capital to Babylon, world's largest city, covering 10,000 hectares, slightly larger than present-day San Francisco.

950: Gradual breakdown of Sanskrit as a spoken language occurs over the next 200 years.

925: Jewish King David forms an empire in what is present-day Israel and Lebanon, establishes Jerusalem as capital.

ca -800: Later Upanishads are recorded. (c. 800-500 BCE Composition of Hindu Upanishads)

800 First Greek city-states appear.

776: First Olympic Games are held in Greece.

750: Assyrian empire reaches its height (controlling Babylon, Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Israel); first library (cuneiform); Priestly Sanskrit is gradually refined over next 500 years, taking on its classical form.

700: Life of Zoroaster of Persia, founder of Zoroastrianism. His holy book, Zend Avesta, contains many verses from the Rig and Atharva Veda. His strong distinctions between good and evil set the dualistic tone of God and devil which distinguishes all later Western religions.

669-633 King Ashurbanipal rules in Assyria. Royal Library of Ashurbanipal is a collection of thousands of clay tablets and fragments containing texts of all kinds from the 7th C BCE, including the Epic of Gilgamesh.

623-543: Life of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. See also 563 BCE. (According to some recent research, revised dates are: 490-410 BCE).

ca -600: Lifetime of Lao-tzu, founder of Taoism in China, author of Tao Te Ching. Its esoteric teachings of simplicity and selflessness shape Chinese life for 2,000 years and permeate the religions of Vietnam, Japan and Korea.

600-500 The Torah is written, Genesis flood story in final form.

599-527: Lifetime of Mahavira Vardhamana, revered renaissance Jain master. His teachings stress strict codes of vegetarianism, asceticism and nonviolence. (Some date his life 40 years later.)

586 Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and send Hebrews into exile, who divide into two kingdoms (Judah in the south, Israel in the north).

563-483: Siddhartha Gautama, The Buddha, is born in Lumbini into a leading royal family in the republic of the Shakyas, which is now part of Nepal.

560: In Greece, Pythagoras teaches math, music, vegetarianism and yoga-drawing from India's wisdom ways.

- 551-478: Lifetime of Confucius, founder of Confucianist faith. His teachings on social ethics are the basis of Chinese education, ruling-class ideology and religion.
- 550: Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great; Hebrews return to Canaan.
- 534: Prince Siddhartha goes outside the palace for the first time and sees The Four Sights: an old man, an ill man, a dead man, and a holy man. He is shocked by the first three—he did not know what age, disease, and death were—but is inspired by the holy man to give up his wealth. He leaves his house and lives with ascetics. However, he wants more than to starve himself, so he develops the Middle Way and becomes a religious teacher.
- 528: Siddhartha attains Enlightenment in Buddha Gaya (modern-day Bodhgaya), then travels to a deer park in Sarnath (near Varanasi), India, and begins expounding the Dharma.
- 518: Darius I of Persia (present Iran) invades Indus Valley. This Zoroastrian king shows tolerance for local religions.
- 485-221 Warring States Period in China
- 480 – 406 Euripides, Greek playwright; author of Iphigenia.
- 470-399 Socrates, Greek philosopher
- 459-405 Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta; End the Golden Age of Athens.
- 450: Athenian philosopher Socrates flourishes (ca 470-400 BCE).
- 428-348: Lifetime of Plato, Athenian disciple of Socrates. Founds Athens Academy in 387 BCE.
- 384-322 Aristotle, Greek philosopher and scientist; tutors Alexander the Great
- 379-289 Mencius, Chinese philosopher
- 359 Philip II of Macedonia conquers Greece
- 336 Philip II assassinated; his son, Alexander the Great begins world conquest.
- 336-31 Hellenistic Period
- 332 Alexandria founded in Egypt by Alexander the Great.
- 327-325 Alexander the Great invades but fails to conquer Northern India; leaves India the same year. Greeks who remain in India intermarry with Indians. Interchanges of philosophy influence both civilizations. Greek sculpture impacts Hindu styles. Bactria kingdoms later enhance Greek influence.
- 323 Alexander the Great dies in Babylon; empire split among his generals.
- 300: Chandragupta Maurya, founder of first pan-Indian empire (324-184 BCE), defeats Greek garrisons of Seleucus (former Greek general), founder of Seleucid Empire in Persia and Syria. At its height under Emperor Ashoka (The Royal Patron of Buddhism reigns 273-232 BCE), the Mauryan Empire includes all India except the far South.
- ca 302: Kautilya (Chanakya), minister to Chandragupta Maurya, writes *Arthashastra*, a compendium of laws, administrative procedures and political advice for running a kingdom.
- ca 300: Chinese discover cast iron, known in Europe by 1300 CE.
- 287 Height of Roman Republic democracy.
- 287-212 Lifetime of Archimedes
- 273: Ashoka (273-232 BCE reign), greatest Mauryan Emperor, grandson of Chandragupta, is coronated. Repudiated conquest through violence after his brutal invasion of Kalinga, 260 BCE, converts to Buddhism. Excels at public works and sends diplomatic peace missions to Persia, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Crete, and Buddhist missions to Sri Lanka, China and other Southeast Asian countries. Under his influence, Buddhism becomes a world power. His work and teachings are preserved in Rock and Pillar Edicts (e.g., lion capital of the pillar at Sarnath, present-day India's national emblem).
- ca 221: China united for the first time under the Qin Dynasty; Great Wall of China is begun, ultimately 2,600 miles long.
- c. 300 Buddhism arrives in SE Asia.
- 250 Third Buddhist Council, resulting in Great Schism and Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.
- 218-202 Rome at war with Hannibal, who crosses the Alps on elephants but is defeated at Carthage.
- 100 Silk Road established.
- 49 Caesar makes himself Roman dictator; created modern calendar
- 44 Caesar assassinated on the Ides of March in Rome; precipitates the end of the Roman Republic.
- 30 Cleopatra, queen of Egypt and lover of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, takes her life following the defeat of her and Mark Antony's forces against Octavian, the future first emperor of Rome.
- 27 Octavian becomes first Roman emperor under the name Caesar Augustus; Roman Republic becomes Roman Empire; Pax Romana for 200 years.

Common Era (CE)

- 1st C Indian Buddhists settle in Southeast Asia.
- 1 Jesus of Nazareth is born in Judea
- 70 Composition of Gospel of Mark
- 150-250 Nagarjuna, founder of Madhyamaka Buddhist school; Promotes experiencing emptiness through meditation; perfected the Wisdom Sutras
- 180 End Pax Romana due to corrupt emperors and invading barbarians.
- 286 Roman emperor Diocletian divides empire in two: East with Greece, Turkey, Palestine and the West with Italy, Gaul (France), Britain, and Germany (ruled by Maximilian of Gaul).

- 330- 1453 Fall of Roman Empire to Barbarians (Goths, Franks, Vandals); Constantine moves the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, called Constantinople (today's Istanbul).
- 313 Constantine recognizes Christianity.
- 306 Constantine reunites Rome; favors eastern empire.
- 350-650 Gupta dynasty in India; Buddhist philosophy and art flourish.
- 399-414: Fa Xian travels from China to India, then returns to translate Buddhist works into Chinese.
- 372 CE Chinese monks bring Buddhism to Korea.
- 476 Last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, is deposed. Usher in European Dark Ages with Barbarian rule.
- c. 420 Schools of Tiantai, Huayan, Chan, and Jingtu appear in China.
- 520 Bodhidharma arrives in China.
- 527 Korea accepts Buddhism.
- 529 Plato's Academy is closed.
- 6th C Burma adopts Theravada Buddhism.
- 552 Buddhism enters Japan from Korea.
- 570-632 Life of Muhammad, founder of Islam; Has first vision in 610 CE.
- 572-621 Prince Shotoku sponsors Buddhism in Japan.
- c. 600 First diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet.
- 618-50 Life of Songtsen Gampo; establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.
- 618-907 Chinese T'ang Dynasty; golden age of Buddhism in China.
- 630 Muhammad conquers Mecca and forms a Muslim state.
- 7th C Mahayana Buddhism adopted in Indonesia.
- ca 700 Over the next hundred years the Indonesian island of Bali receives Hinduism from its neighbor, Java.
- 712 Muslims conquer Sind region (Pakistan), setting up base for pillaging expeditions that drain N India's wealth.
- 732 Franks prevent Muslim conquest of Europe, stopping Arabs at Poitiers, France, NW limit of Arab penetration.
- 8th C Buddhism becomes state religion of Japan.
- 741 Japanese emperor orders a temple be built in every province.
- 750-842 Construction of Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world and one of the seven wonders of the world, at Yogyakarta, Java (Indonesia)
- c. 792-94 The Great Samye Debate decides on Indian Mahayana Buddhism as the form for Tibet.
- 800 Charlemagne is crowned the first Holy Roman Emperor, begins unification of Europe.
- 836-842 King Langdharma persecutes Tibetan Buddhists.
- 845 Chinese emperor suppresses Buddhism.
- 875 Muslim conquests extend from Spain to Indus Valley.
- early 10th C Korea institutes a Buddhist constitution
- 11th C King of Burma restores Theravadin monasticism. Mahayana Buddhism declines.
- ca 1000 Vikings reach North America, landing in Nova Scotia.
- ca 1000 Polynesians arrive in New Zealand, in the last stage in the greatest migration and navigational feat in history, making them the most widely spread race on the planet.
- ca 1040 Chinese invent the compass and moveable type and perfect the use of gunpowder, first invented and used in India as an explosive mixture of saltpetre, sulfur and charcoal to power guns, cannons and artillery.
- ca 1150 Khmer ruler Suryavarman II completes the largest Hindu temple in the world, Angkor Wat (in present-day Cambodia), where his body is later entombed and worshiped as an embodiment of Vishnu. In the late 13th century, Angkor Wat gradually moved from Hindu to Theravada Buddhist use, which continues to the present day.
- 1175 Toltec Empire of Mexico crumbles.
- 1185-1333 During the Kamakura period in Japan, Buddhist schools of Rinzai, Soto Zen, Jodo Shu (Pure Land), Jodo Shinshu (True Pure Land), and Nichiren develop.
- 1231-59 Mongols invade Korea, destroy Buddhist scriptures.
- 1200 All of North India is now under Muslim domination.
- 1215 King John is forced to grant the Magna Carta, giving greater rights to the people of England.
- 1227 Mongol Emperor Genghis Khan, conqueror of a vast area from North China to Iran and Central Asia, the largest empire the world has yet seen, dies.
- mid-13th C Buddhism is virtually extinct in India.
- 1253 Mongolian leader Kublai Khan accepts Tibetan Buddhism.
- 1280 Mongol (Yuan) dynasty (1280-1368) installed in China, under which the bulk of translation of works from Sanskrit into Chinese is completed.
- 1345 Aztecs establish advanced civilization in Mexico.
- 1347 Plague called the Black Death spreads rapidly, killing 75 million worldwide before receding in 1351.
- 1360 Theravada Buddhism becomes state religion of Thailand.
- 14th C Theravada Buddhism introduced in Laos.
- Time of Renaissance and Scientific Revolution

- 15th C Theravada Buddhism dominant in Cambodia.
- 1414 Hindu prince Paramesvara of Malaysia converts to Islam.
- 1469 - 1538 Lifetime of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism, originally a reformist Hindu sect stressing devotion, faith in the guru, repetition of God's name and rejection of renunciation and caste.
- 1478 Spanish Inquisition begins. Over the next 20 years, Christians burn several thousand persons at the stake.
- 1492 Looking for India, Christopher Columbus lands on San Salvador in the Caribbean, thus "discovering" the Americas and proving the Earth is round, not flat.
- 1498 Portugal's Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope to Calcutta, first European to find sea route to India. Portuguese Catholics soon capture Goa (1510) and other places, beginning conquest and exploitation of India by Europeans.
- 1503-1566 Nostradamus, French physician and astrologer who wrote Centuries (1555), a book of prophecies.
- 1517 Martin Luther begins Protestant Reformation in Europe by nailing his Ninety-five Theses to a church door.
- 1526-1858 Mughal Empire rules in India.
- 1565 Polish astronomer Copernicus' (1473 - 1543) heliocentric system, in which Earth orbits the sun, gains popularity in Europe among astronomers and mathematicians.
- 1578 Sonam Gyatso is titled the Dalai Lama by the Mongolian leader Altan Khan.
- 1583 English establish first colony in the Americas – Newfoundland.
- 1592-98 Japanese invade Korea.
- 1600 Royal Charter forms the East India Company, setting in motion a process that ultimately results in the subjugation of India under British rule.
- 1610 Galileo of Italy (1564-1642) perfects the telescope and with it confirms the Copernican theory. Catholic Inquisition condemns him a heretic for his assertions.
- 1617-82 Life of the fifth Dalai Lama and beginning of rule of Tibet by Dalai Lamas.
- 1617-82 Life of Basho; Buddhist influence on haiku and the arts in Japan
- 1619 First black slaves from Africa are sold in Virginia.
- 1620 English pilgrims land and settle at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts.
- 1632 Taj Mahal, regarded by many as the finest example of Mughal architecture is built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.
- 1644-1911 Manchus establish the Qing dynasty in China (the last dynasty)
- 1675 Aurangzeb executes Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, beginning the Sikh-Muslim feud that continues to this day.
- 1682 - 1722 Peter the Great rules in Russia.
- 1701 Jethro Tull invents a horse-drawn seed drill.
- 17-18th C Korean Buddhism revives after regaining independence.
- 1760 Israel ben Eliezer (Besht), liberal founder of Hasidic Judaism, dies.
- 1781 George Washington routs British at Yorktown, Virginia.
- 1786 Sir William Jones uses the Rig Veda term Aryan ("noble") to name the parent language of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Germanic tongues. Nostratic is a more recent term for this hypothetical parent language of Indo-European and certain other languages previously deemed totally unrelated.
- 1787 British Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade is formed, marking the beginning of the end of slavery.
- 1789 French Revolution begins with storming of the Bastille.
- 1793 Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin in the US, vastly increasing cotton production, proliferating slavery required to process it.
- 1803-1882 Ralph Waldo Emerson, American poet who helps popularize Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads in U.S.
- 1807 Importation of slaves is banned in the U.S. through an act of Congress motioned by Thomas Jefferson.
- 1812 Napoleon's Grand Army retreats from Moscow. Out of a 500,000-strong invasion force only 20,000 survive.
- 1814 First practical steam locomotive is built.
- 1833 Slavery is abolished in British Commonwealth countries, giving impetus to abolitionists in United States.
- 1840 Joseph de Gobineau (1816-1882), French sociologist, writes The Inequality of Human Races. Proclaims the "Aryan race" superior to other great strains and lays down the aristocratic class-doctrine of Aryanism that later provides the basis for Adolf Hitler's Aryan racism.
- 1851 Sir M. Monier-Williams (1819-1899) publishes English-Sanskrit Dictionary. His completed Sanskrit-English Dictionary is released after three decades of work in 1899, weeks after his death.
- 1858-1947 British rule in India.
- 1859 Charles Darwin publishes controversial book, *The Origin of Species*, propounding his "natural selection" theory of evolution and laying the foundations of modern biology.
- 1861 American Civil War begins in Charleston, South Carolina.
- 1868 Shinto reinstated as national religion of Japan.
- 1869 - 1948 Lifetime of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Indian nationalist and Hindu political activist who develops the strategy of nonviolent disobedience that forces Christian Great Britain to grant independence to India (1947).
- 1870 Doctrine of papal infallibility is asserted by the Vatican.
- 1876 Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.

- 1879 Incandescent lamp is invented by Thomas Edison (1847-1931). He patents more than a thousand inventions, among them the microphone (1877) and the phonograph (1878). In New York, Edison installs the world's first central electric power plant (1881-1882).
- 1885 First automobile powered by an internal combustion engine is produced by Karl Benz in Mannheim, Germany. Henry Ford makes his first car in 1893 in the U.S. and later invents assembly line production.
- 1888 Max Muller, revising his stance, writes, "Aryan, in scientific language, is utterly inapplicable to race. If I say Aryans, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair nor skull; I mean simply those who spoke the Aryan language."
- 1894 Gandhi drafts first petition protesting the indentured servant system. Less than six months later, the British announce the halt of indentured emigration from India.
- 1896 American humorist Mark Twain writes *Following the Equator*, describing his three-month stay in India, during a voyage to Hawaii, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, South Africa and England. According to him, and his critics, it is one of his finest works.
- 1914 U.S. government excludes Indian citizens from immigration. Restriction stands until 1965.
- 1914 Austria's Archduke Francis Ferdinand is assassinated by Serb nationalists, leading to World War I.
- 1917 Following the Bolshevik Revolution, Communists under Lenin seize power in Russia, one sixth of Earth's land mass. Chinese nationalist government founded.
- 1918 World War I ends. Death toll estimated at ten million.
- 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic kills 12.5 million in India, 21.6 million worldwide.
- 1920 Gandhi formulates satyagraha, "truth power," strategy of noncooperation and nonviolence against India's Christian British rulers. Later resolves to wear only simple dhoti to preserve India's homespun cotton industry.
- 1921 Chinese Communist party founded
- 1929 U.S. stock market crashes; Great Depression begins.
- 1939 Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"), manifesto of Nazism, published in 1925, sells 5 million copies in 11 languages. It reveals his racist Aryan, anti-Semitic ideology, strategy of revenge and National-Socialist (Nazi) rise to power.
- 1939 World War II begins September 1 as Germany invades Poland.
- 1939 Maria Montessori (1870-1952), renowned Italian physician and "discoverer of the child," spends nine years in India teaching her kindergarten method and studying Hinduism.
- 1945 Religious freedom introduced in Japan, with no official national religion. Germany surrenders to Allied forces. Ghastly concentration camps are discovered. U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, ending World War II. Total dead is 60 million. The United Nations is founded by the four Allied nations and China to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Nationalist-Communist Civil War; est. Peoples' Republic of China (mainland) and Nationalist Taiwan.
- 1947 India gains independence from Britain. Leaders partition India and Pakistan despite Gandhi's opposition.
- 1948 Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated January 30th in Poona by Nathuram Godse, 35, editor-publisher of *Mahasabha*, a Hindu weekly, in retaliation for Gandhi's concessions to Muslim demands and agreeing to partition 27 percent of India to create the new Islamic nation of Pakistan.
- 1949 Buddhism suppressed by Chinese communist government.
- 1950 Tenzin Gyatso becomes the fourteenth Dalai Lama. China invades Tibet and suppresses Buddhism.
- 1955 Albert Einstein (1879-1955), brilliant German physicist, author of the Theory of Relativity theory, dies. He declared Lord Siva Nataraja the best metaphor for the workings of the universe.
- 1957 *Sputnik I* goes into orbit.
- 1958-1961 The Great Leap Forward – massive reorganization in China of agriculture; leads to massive famine.
- 1959 Dalai Lama flees Tibet and finds refuge in North India as China invades his Buddhist nation.
- 1959 The transistor makes computers smaller and faster than prototypes like the 51-foot-long, 8-foot high Mark I, containing 1-million parts and 500 miles of wire, invented for the US Navy in 1944 by IBM's Howard Aiken. From the 1960s onward, integrated circuitry and microprocessors will empower these descendants of the 5,000-year-old abacus to revolutionize technology.
- 1961 Berlin wall is built.
- 1963 U.S. President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
- 1965 U.S. begins sending troops to Vietnam.
- 1966-1976 Chinese Cultural Revolution; ends with death of Mao Zedong.
- 1968 U.S. civil rights leader Martin Luther King is assassinated.
- 1969 U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong sets foot on the moon.
- 1974 India detonates a "nuclear device."
- 1976 Upon the death of Mao, Buddhism begins to revive in China.
- 1979 U.S. establishes diplomatic relations with China.
- 1981 Deadly AIDS disease is conclusively identified.
- 1989 The Berlin Wall is taken down November 9. Germany is reunited October 3, 1990. Warsaw Pact dissolved.
- 1990 Under its new democratic constitution, Nepal remains the world's only country with Hinduism as the state religion.
- 1990 Vatican (Cardinal Ratzinger approved by Pope John Paul II) condemns Eastern mysticism as false doctrine to purge Catholic monasteries, convents and clergy of involvement with Eastern meditation, yoga and Zen.

- 1990 Communist leadership of USSR collapses, to be replaced by 12 independent democratic nations.
- 2000 Indian archeologists agree to help Vietnam restore the famous seventh-century Hindu Cham temples damaged and neglected during years of war. UNESCO declares them a World Heritage Site.
- 2000 Since 1900, 75% of Earth's crop plant varieties have been lost; thousands of species of birds, mammals, fish and invertebrates face extinction due to the ravaging of Earth by man. "Most biological systems, which have sustained life on the planet for millions of years, will collapse some time during the next century," warns the Union of Concerned Scientists.
- 2001 Destruction of standing Buddha statues at Bamiyan, Afghanistan by Taliban regime.
- 2001 September 11: Two jetliners, hijacked by Muslim terrorists, destroy the World Trade Center, killing nearly 3,000. A third plane cripples the Pentagon. The U.S. and allies pulverize the Taliban/Al Qaeda network in Afghanistan. Hindus and other East Asians in the U.S. are victimized in sporadic anti-Muslim backlash.
- 2012 World population is 7,053,183,074.

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