

The Influence of New Countryside Construction on Rural Landscape

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ABSTRACT

Although the large-scale new socialist countryside construction has brought a opportunity for the rural landscape construction, it also impacted seriously the style of rural landscape. On the base of analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of new countryside construction, the paper proposed how to construct rural landscape in the construction tide.

Key Words: New Countryside Construction, Rural Landscape, Human Habitation

I. The Concept of Rural Landscape

With original settlement evolving to country and city, the earth surface landscape, according to human living conditions, can be divided into 3 types: purely natural landscape, rural landscape and urban landscape. As one type of landscape with particular landscape behavior, appearance, content and process, rural landscape represents one of regional character that habitation comes from dispersive farmhouse to compact town providing service function of production and livelihood. At the same time, the rural landscape has follow characteristics: the extensive land use, low-density population and obvious rural characteristic.

Rural landscape has some similarities and differences with the other two types of purely natural landscape and urban landscape. On one side, rural landscape is a regional space outside of city with all kinds of mankind's activities. On another side, the rural landscape has its own characters compared with urban landscape. For example, rural landscape has obvious natural qualities with less interference by human, and at the same it also has some tracks of artificial which differ with the purely natural landscape. The key feature which distinguished from other two kinds of landscape is that rural landscape is a kind of agriculture production landscape with the

special countryside culture and life.

II. Composed Factors and Characters of Rural Landscape

The composed factors of rural landscape can be divided in different ways. From the functional view, it mainly includes the agriculture production landscape and country settlement landscape. The former is a natural equation that combined organically by farmland, orchard, woodland, water, weather, creature...etc. The latter includes all kinds of buildings, infrastructure, and folk culture(Showed with language, rite, appearance, raiment and festival celebration. etc. Related to society, economy, religion, politics etc).

From the ecological view, the main factors of rural landscape can be divided into the base-agriculture production land, the spot-country settlement and the gallery-road and river.

From the characteristic view, as a compound of culture landscape and natural landscape, the rural landscape is profound and comprehensive, and it includes agriculture-produce landscape and extensive land use landscape. What the different key point of rural landscape from others landscape is the special rural culture and pastoral life.

III. The Beneficial Influence of New Countryside Construction to Rural Landscape

1. The Village Reorganization Improved Infrastructure Conditions of Rural Landscape

'A clean and neat village appearance' is one of the basic contents of the new countryside construction. With the unified planning and construction, the main roads have been hardened and connected among the villages, all kinds of infrastructures such as water-supply facilities have been improved, the idle housing land base and disorderly houses have been tidied up, the condition of people and livestock living in same environment has been changed, the surface cesspit has vanished, the disaster prevention facilities and public fire control facilities have been established etc., all of these have in a certain degree changed the 'dirty, disorderly, bad' human habitation and created a pleasant country settlement landscape.

2. The Cultural Content of Rural Landscape Has Been Lasted Because Value Traditional People's Custom Culture

'Improving social conduct' need to respect and develop regional culture, traditional culture, folk culture and to construct a civil and harmonious environment in the new countryside construction. The agriculture culture, as an important part of traditional folk culture, is a cultural appearance established on the base of agriculture economical basis, it is sum of ideology included morals, customs, habits etc. which adapt to produce relation, society relation, cultural establishments system that have been based on traditional agriculture foundation. Now, the agriculture culture is more and more valued, and 'the agriculture cultural festival' has been held in some village. The contents of these festivals are abundant such as the agriculture cultural exhibition, farmer's dress show, the interesting sports games, agriculture skill competition...etc. These have not only enriched farmer's amusement activities but also carried the agriculture culture forward.

3. The Development of Country Tourism Has Enriched The Contents of Rural Landscape

The China National Tourism Administration correlated the travel topic with countryside at past 2 years.

The topic in 2006 is "China countryside tourism" and its slogan is "new village, new tourism, new experience, new vogue". The topic in 2007 is "China harmonious tourism between urban and countryside" and its slogan is "charming village, vitality city, harmonious China". More and more Chinese city residents, 70% of all tourists about 60 million each gold week, will travel to countryside in their three 7-day vacation. According to estimate, there are more than 300 million travelers go to countryside each year and the income of tourism gets to more than 40 billion Yuan RMB. The country tourism will develop with bright prospects.

When developing country tourism, the following should be noticed: ① Developing the original ecosystem tourism. That is to display the original scenery and folk custom as far as possible. The operator only can be permitted to develop tourism industry on condition that not to destruct those resources. As urban environment becomes worse, people look forward to become intimate with nature and get the level of 'nature and man as one'. And they can just meet their desire in the rural landscape environment. Therefore, more and more travelers will go to countryside for tourism. ② To meet people's nostalgic feeling. With the rapid urbanization, a part of urban population is come from the rural and still keep the memories of childhoods. If tourists have the opportunity to participate some experience item such as growing vegetable, cooking, fishing and to touch something around of them when as children such as tube car, water jar etc., they will recollect deeply their happiness of childhood.

With the country tourism vigorous development, the contents and forms of rural landscape have been enriched, such as high-tech agriculture parks, farmer household tourism, country tourism club, folklore park, country holiday base, recreational farm etc. A tourism plan concept of 'the 5 gold flower', 'farmers of flower's hometown', 'moonlight of lotus pond', 'a chrysanthemum garden with hedge', 'a happy plum wood', 'a kitchen garden of Jiang's' has been put forward in San-sheng township, Jinjiang district, Chengdu city. According to the different development, site conditions and respective feature of farmer household tourism inside the district, five secondary areas have been set of total area 10,000 acres in the plan. In



Figure 1. View of 'the 5 gold flower'



Figure 2. View of 'the 5 gold flower'

the 5 secondary areas, resource of country tourism has been neaten organically and vivid character has been formed. The successful management of 'the 5 gold flowers', has not only promoted economic prosperity and culture blend but also enriched the content of rural landscape(Figure 1, 2).

IV. The Disadvantageous Influence of New Countryside Construction to Rural landscape

1. Nibbling Countryside Base in Urbanization

An important content of the new country construction is to raise urbanization rate. At present, with the high speed urbanization in China, the urbanization rate turns from 29.04% in 1995 to raise 43.9% in the end of 2006 and the built-up area in China get to 32521 square kilometers in 2005. According to the investigation on the alternative land use in the annual report of 2006 announced by the Ministry of Land and

Resources, account up to the 31st October, 2006, arable land was 1.827 billion mu among 9.858 billion mu agriculture land in the whole country land investigation result. The arable land has been nibbled for 4602 thousand mu last year.

Some high buildings and factory workshops have been built on the land being nibbled and the base, the most important part of the rural landscape, is facing biggest test of all.

'The part property house' or 'the country property house' being exposed again and again recently were built illegally on the country collectivity construction land or agriculture land. The construction of these illegal buildings have nibbled so much base land with the concept of 'the new countryside construction' or 'the farmer new village'. Because the procedure of these buildings is not legitimate, the buyer's benefits can not get a guarantee not only, and more complicated problems will appear to the country collectivity construction land. At the same time, it makes more difficult to guarantee at least 1.8 billion mu arable land by the end of 2010 in China.

2. Destruction of Modern Agriculture to Ecosystem System

One of industry adjustment strategies in new countryside construction is from traditional agriculture to modern agriculture. In this process, a great amount of chemical fertilizer, pesticide, herbicide, agricultural plastic films and agricultural machinery will be used, and these will pollute agricultural environment and even break the balance of the whole country ecosystem. According to the statistics, 46,370,000 tons of chemical fertilizer(namely 40 tons per square kilometer) is used in China every year, that is far above the safe upper limit-22.5 tons per square kilometer of developed country. The excessive use of chemical fertilizer and pesticide not only lead to land pollution but also lead to organic pollution of water and the eutrophication in water through farmland runoff. One of key reason lead to a large-scale break out of blue green algae this year May in Wuxi city, Jiangsu Province was more than 170 rivers belong to Taihu Lake Basin took much pollutant to Taihu Lake. These rivers had been polluted by chemical fertilizer, pesticide and industrial pollutant.

An integrated and considerable rural landscape should be established on the base of good ecosystem environment. If the ecosystem system has been broken, a person is faced with danger, he will impossible create and enjoy a nice rural landscape.

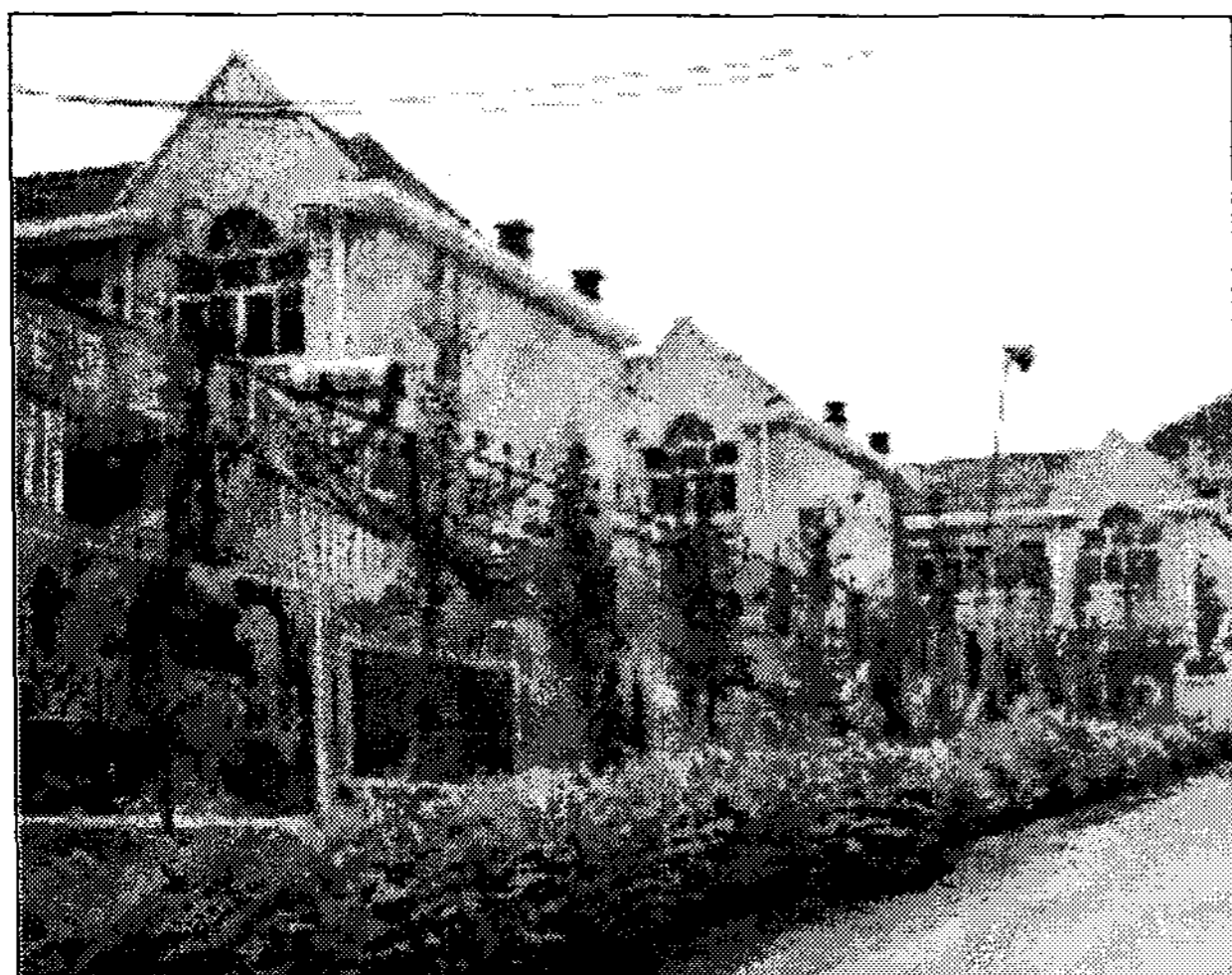


Figure 3. A village in Mentougou District, Beijing

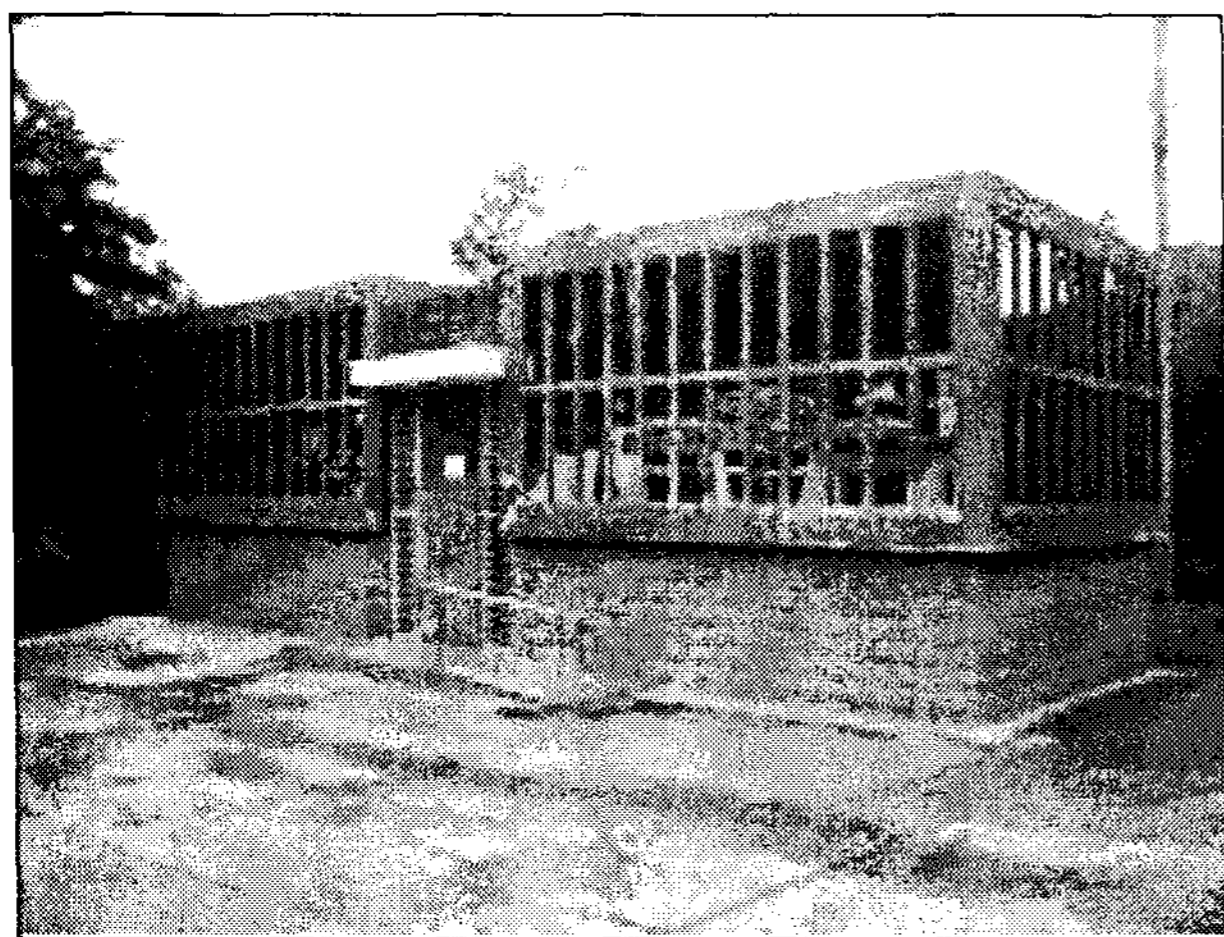


Figure 4. A toilet in Mentougou District, Beijing

3. The Impact of Reformation in the Socialism Village to the Organic Vernacular Settlement

1) The Impact to Overall Layout of Vernacular Settlement

Combined skillfully with natural environment, the traditional vernacular settlement presents abundant village outline and space, and people feel very harmonious between architectures and nature. From the plans of village that have been done, the rural landscape has been ignored and the function of village has been emphasized excessively. The layout of village, just as habitation or casern in city, presents a scene of corteges and has completely lost its organic structure of the traditional villages and towns. The terrible result of this layout is the same visage of different villages and the character of rural settlement has been destroyed completely and the regional culture does not exist any more.

2) The Influence to Layout and Style of the Buildings

Traditional village buildings, having been built to fit the farmer's will and economy power, are harmonious with the factors such as mountain, water etc. around of them. These buildings show their respective character and at the same time they are harmonious and unified. The house form are limited of the new village plan, the materials of exterior decoration of these houses are almost produced by modern machine, with less kindness, but not traditional regional materials(Figure 3).

3) The Influence of Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Some leaders regard the new country construction as vanity projects just like 'broad streets, higher buildings'. So a lot of public buildings, not harmonious with their environment at all, are designed to be too expensive and flaring, this scene easily make people to think that the new countryside construction is a beautify movement under the consciousness of new-rich. If with the ruinous construction, the rural ecosystem and heritage landscape, having developed for 5000 years in China, will be destroyed for ever(Figure 4).

4) The Phenomenon of 'Inner Decaying Village'

"Be like a village in formal, not like a village in essential, nobody in the old house, miscellaneous grass full on the wasteland" that is a vivid description of the special state which we called 'inner decaying village'. The main reasons lead to exist 'inner decaying village' just as follow: ① these villages lie far away from town or city, have bad conditions of traffic and infrastructure. With weak power of economy, the local government has no ability to improve those conditions. So most of villagers move to some place where traffic is convenient and rebuild their houses. ② With the adjustment of agriculture industrial structure, the fast development of the market economy and village industry, the high speed of urbanization, the farmer go into the city for industry, business or service industry, therefore many houses are empty foe years. ③ With the traditional idea, inheriting from their ancestor, farmers can not dismantle the old house even if they are broken and should rebuild a new one in another place. ④ In the new countryside construction, those people who live in the core area of National Park or National Nature Reserve and in the area of geologic disaster should move out, then these villages will be empty.

The existence of 'inner decaying village', not only leads to



Figure 5. Inner decaying village in the old Zhaojietai Village

the huge waste of the land resources, but also leads to lose the energy of the settlement landscape. In writer's eyes, to renovate 'Inner decaying village' is also a complicated problem. If the house that locate in the core area of National Park or National Nature Reserve is a traditional one with it's own character, it should be keep down as a scene spot and get appropriate repair. For example, Zhaojietai Village, sited in Tanzhe-Jietai National Park, has been reconstructed outside of National Park. After all farmers have moved out completely, the traditional houses have been kept down in the old village. From these old buildings, visitors can appreciate local pretty houses and can also see a fragment of history belong to the village(Figure 5).

V. The Construction of the Rural Landscape under the Background of the New Countryside Construction

Although with some negative influence, the socialism new countryside construction has brought a good development opportunity for rural landscape. The follow terms should be noticed:

1. To Comprehend Exactly the Content of the New Countryside Construction

With very abundant contents, the new countryside construction includes 5 aspects—"the growth of production, the affluent living, the civil social conduct, the clean and neat village, the democratic management". From the major of

Landscape Architecture, the new countryside construction shouldn't be a 'politic achievement' of the leader and not be a movement of construction, dismantlement or land confiscation, but should to make a good plan for village construction, strengthen infrastructure construction, build characteristic rural landscape, improve rural human habitation.

2. To Remove the Tendency of Urbanization or Commercialization and Return to Rural Landscape Character

First of all, a large-scale of the base of rural landscape-agriculture production land should be preserved.

As farmer's fundamental factor, the agriculture production land is the most grand scene and shows the beauty of mother earth.

Secondly, the corridors of the rural landscape-roads and rivers should be preserved. As channels for substance, energy, information, capital, talented person and for animals' migrancy, these corridors should be kept expedite. The roads and rivers of countryside should keep their own character. The roads in country are different from that in city such as width and material, and for example, local material can be used in some minor roads. The bank and bottom of river also hate rigidification in order to make use of the ecosystem effect.

Thirdly, the character of the spot-rural settlement should be preserved. Among factors of rural landscape the settlement is the most dynamic one with it's own regional character. The site of the rural settlement should be fit for geographical conditions and environment. For architectural styles, the buildings of rural settlement should, combined with local building's characters, obey the principle of less is good, small dimension and decentralization; for building material, the style of natural, leisured and simply should be represented fully, and environment-friendly building materials should be extensively used. Because of pursuing the life style of modern city, farmers will replace traditional materials with modern materials when repairing their houses, and this destroys the simple rural landscape easily and appears the scene of urbanization and commercialization extremely.

3. To Reserve the Spatial Structure of Traditional Rural Settlement

Evolving for a long time, under the influence of natural

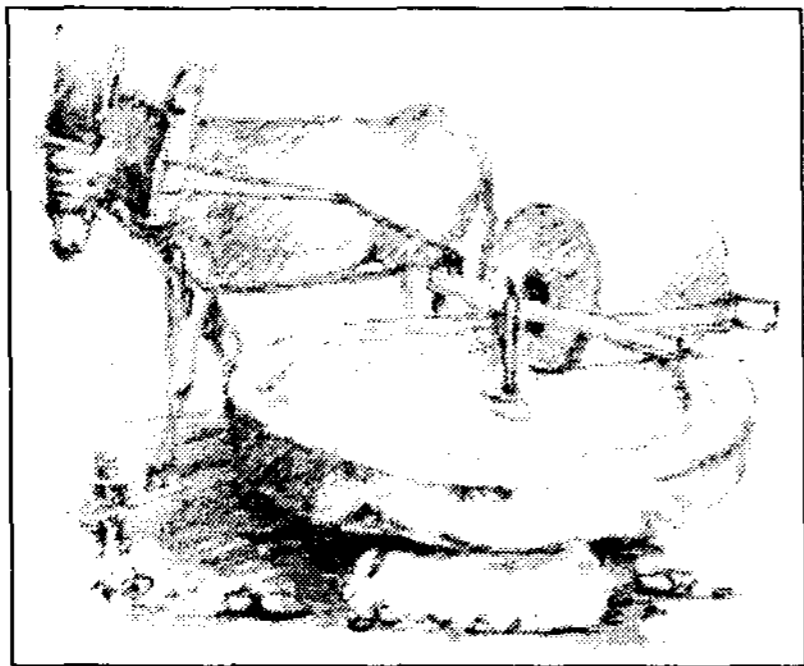


Figure 6. View of the ornament of rural landscape

factors and social factors(include the idea, religious belief, morality, blood relationship, living habit and political system etc.) the spatial structure of the our country traditional rural settlement has become a organism. Carrying much information such as nature, society, history etc., the spatial structure of the rural settlement is the most charming and beautiful part of rural landscape. In the new countryside construction, the buildings of the rural settlement should be remedied properly but not be dismantled wildly.

4. To Prize the Ornaments of Rural Landscape

The ornament of rural landscape is something closely relate to farmer's daily life such as water wheel, rolling stone, windmill, plough, sedan-chair, Er-Hu, tobacco pipe, old well, memorial arch, ancient tree etc. Though can't fit modern life anymore, these ornament carry some information of technology development level, living custom, morality, religion etc., therefore they shouldn't be abandoned but to be preserved as meat and drink for modern nostalgic people(Figure 6). For example, there is a restaurant beside 109 National Highway called 'Bai Hua Ren Jia' located in Mentougou District Zhaitang Town, the west of Peking. The environment, ornaments and food of the restaurant all have rural characters, so not only normal visitors but also many stars come here to enjoy local food and rural environment and the restaurant has been one of the most famous restaurants in that region(Figure 7, 8).

5. To Protect and Construct Traditional Culture

The cultural construction is the 'soul' of the new countryside construction and it is more important than material construction. China is a very big, most of the non-material cultural inheritance are existed in the countryside and many villages have their own traditional culture. With rapid speed of



the large-scale new countryside construction, the tendency of economics globalization and the cause of modernization, cultural inheritance and its environment especially in country are faced severe threat.

Only taking an attitude of supreme responsibility to the state, the history and culture safekeeping, the foundation of our traditional culture will not be reduced substantially. So, it is a very important to include the protection of the cultural heritage in the new countryside construction.

VI. Conclusion

As the socialist new countryside construction has been under way vigorously, we, as designers, should take the advantage of our professional sensitivity and ability, seizing this historical opportunity, to prevent large-scale construction ruin the rural landscape.

On condition that reserve the character of rural landscape, we should strengthen cultural content of countryside, improve the level of the rural landscape, and create a comfortable rural landscape environment for villagers.

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Brief Introduction of Authors

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