

## A TESTIMONY OF OENOPIDES IN PLINY

Neither the collections of the fragments of Presocratic philosophers by Diels,<sup>1</sup> nor the ones by Diels–Kranz,<sup>2</sup> and not even the most recent collection of testimonies, edited by me, contain a testimony about Oenopides in Pliny's *Natural History*. Neither Diels, nor Diels–Kranz had the objective of providing complete coverage of all the ancient testimonies about the Presocratics included in successive editions of their *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. This is, however, not true of the collection edited by me,<sup>3</sup> hence I am glad that I can remedy this error by omission on this festive occasion.

The testimony is minuscule. Book I of the *Natural History* is a Table of Contents of the other books, with a list of authorities, under two headings: Roman authorities, and foreign authorities. The section Book XVIII – a book about cereals and leguminous plants, their cultivation – mentions Oenopides in the concluding part of foreign authorities. The testimony was first included in a collection of testimonies about Oenopides by Dmitri Panchenko, in his entry about Oenopides in *Brill's New Jacoby*, as JCV 2115 T 4.<sup>4</sup> Panchenko, understandably, included only a very small part of this list of authorities:

Ex autoribus ... Thalete, Eudoxo, Philippo, Calippo, Disitheo, Parmenisco, Metone, Critone, Oenopide, Conone, Euctemone, Harpalo...

In order to assess the import of this minuscule testimony, however, we should start out from the whole list of foreign authorities.

Externis: Hesiodo. Theophrasto. Aristotele. Democrito. Hierone rege. Philometore rege. Attalo rege. Archelao rege. Archyta. Xenophonte.

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<sup>1</sup> Starting with Diels 1903.

<sup>2</sup> The last of which is Diels – Kranz 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Bodnár 2007/2008.

<sup>4</sup> Panchenko 2013.

Amphilochos Athenaeos. Anaxipolis Thasios. Apollodoros Lemnios. Aristophanes Milesios. Antigonos Cymaeos. Agathocles Chios. Apollonios Pergamensis. Aristandros Athenaeos. Bacchios Milesios. Bion Solensis. Chaerea Atheniensis. Cherestus item. Diodoros Prieneos. Dinon Kolophonios. Epigenes Rhodios. Euagoras Thasios. Euphronios Athenaeos. Androtion qui de agricultura scripsit. Aeschrius qui item. Lysimachos qui item. Dionysios qui Magonem transtulit. Diophanes qui ex Dionysio epitoma fecit. Thales. Eudoxos. Philopon. Calippus. Dositheos. Parmeniscos. Meton. Criton. Oenopides. Conon. Euctemon. Harpalos. Hecataeos. Anaximandros. Sosigenes. Hipparchos. Aratos. Zoroaster. Archibios.

It is clear at first sight that the whole list – starting from Hesiod, then continuing with Theophrastus, Aristotle and Democritus, in this order, is not chronological. Indeed, this list is conspicuously similar to the lists of foreign authorities of Book XIV (Fruit trees and vines, wine), Book XV (Fruit bearing trees, olive tree, olive oil, different fruits) and Book XVII (Cultivated trees, cultivation of trees).<sup>5</sup> Up until Diophanes, the epitomizer of Dionysius. The lists of foreign authorities for Books XIV and XV append some doctors and wine-specialists, plus Onesicritus and King Juba, whereas the list of Book XVII places Aristander after this part of the list.<sup>6</sup>

Book XVIII, on the other hand, appends another list of 19 names to this more or less common part. This list is not chronological either. Starting from Thales, it continues with Eudoxus, Philopon and Callippus, only to return to Meton, Criton and Oenopides, and then even to Hecataeus and Anaximander. The list then ends with Zoroaster and Archibios.

There are quite a few among these additional foreign authorities who appear only on this list. Thales,<sup>7</sup> however, Anaximander,<sup>8</sup> Eudoxus<sup>9</sup> and Hipparchus<sup>10</sup> feature on other occasions elsewhere. Harpalus is mentioned in Book XVI.<sup>11</sup> Hecataeus, as one would expect, is a recurring authority, and Zoroaster is mentioned on several occasions in different contexts.

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<sup>5</sup> The foreign authorities of Book XVI (Forest trees, water plants etc.) are only the sextet Alexander Polyhistor, Hesiod, Theophrastus, Democritus, Homer, Timaeus the mathematician; even Aristotle is omitted from the list.

<sup>6</sup> Aristander features on the lists of foreign authorities of Books XIV and XVIII, between Apollonius of Pergamon and Bacchius of Miletus.

<sup>7</sup> See 2. 53 (Thales' prediction of the solar eclipse); 36. 82 (measurement of the height of the pyramids).

<sup>8</sup> See 2. 30 f (Anaximander's foundational discovery of the obliquity of the ecliptic).

<sup>9</sup> See 2. 130 (the recurrence of wind- and storm-phenomena in a four-year cycle).

<sup>10</sup> See note 17 below.

<sup>11</sup> 16. 144 (futile attempt to cultivate ivy in Asia Minor).

This leaves us with eleven foreign authorities featuring only in this book, Oenopides one among them: Philippus, Callippus, Dositheus, Parmeniscus, Meton, Criton, Oenopides, Conon and Euctemon, and Aratus and Archibius.

Again, the position where these authorities feature is relevant. Archibius' placement at the very end of the list is matched by a reference to him in the book, when after a reference to Varro, Pliny adds:

Archibius in his letter to Antiochus, king of Syria, says that if a toad is buried in a new earthenware jar in the middle of a corn-field, the crop will not be damaged by storms.<sup>12</sup>

This fits in well with the programme of the book, which includes a survey of all kinds of expertise relevant to the production of cereals. But nevertheless this is markedly different from what the preceding authorities on this list contribute to the book. To give just one example:

Then there is general agreement, which is a rare occurrence, between Philip, Callippus, Dositheus, Parmeniscus, Conon, Criton, Democritus and Eudoxus that the She-Goat rises in the morning of September 28 and the Kids on September 29.<sup>13</sup>

This suggests that the list of foreign authorities does contain rather different sources. Unlike Archibius' storm-defence lore, these authorities provide the dates of risings and settings of individual stars and constellations. Between these people, mentioned in paragraph 312, and Archibius we have Euctemon, Harpalus, Hecataeus, Anaximander, Sosigenes, Hipparchus, Aratus and Zoroaster on the list. Some of these authorities do not appear by name in Book XVIII. But apparently all of them should be included in the list of authorities on account of some astronomical piece of information, or some piece of astronomical lore. If we go backwards, Zoroaster is mentioned in the book:

To this Attius in his *Praxidikē* added the advice to sow when the moon is in the constellation of the Ram, the Twins, the Lion, the Scales, and Aquarius, but Zoroaster advised sowing when the sun has crossed 12 degrees of the Scorpion and the moon is in the Bull.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Archibius ad Antiochum Syriaeregē scripsit, si fictili novo obruatur rubeta rana in media segete, non esse noxias tempestates* (18. 294 – translations from Pliny are from H. Rackham's Loeb volumes).

<sup>13</sup> *dein consentiunt, quod est rarum, Philippus, Callippus, Dositheus, Parmeniscus, Conon, Criton, Democritus, Eudoxus IV kal. Oct. capellam matutino exoriri et III kal. haedos* (18. 312).

<sup>14</sup> *adiicit his Attius in Praxidic<a>, ut sereretur, cum luna esset in ariete, geminis, leone, libra, aquario, Zoroastr<e>s sole scorpionis duodecim partes transgresso, cum luna esset in tauro* (18. 200).

Hipparchus and Aratus must also feature on the list for some such information (neither of them is explicitly named in Book XVIII). Thales, Anaximander, Euctemon and Eudoxus are mentioned in a report about similar issues – this time as an example that these authorities could be very much at variance with one another:

but as for those who have differed in their views in the same region, we will give one case of disagreement as an example: the morning setting of the Pleiads is given by Hesiod – for there is extant also an astronomical work that bears his name – as taking place at the close of the autumnal equinox, whereas Thales puts it on the 25<sup>th</sup> day after the equinox, Anaximander on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Euctemon on the 44<sup>th</sup>, and Eudoxus on the 48<sup>th</sup>.<sup>15</sup>

This suggests that Archibius must have been tacked onto a list of authorities about celestial matters, about how these celestial matters should be taken into account in agriculture. Needless to say, even with the removal of Archibius this group may turn out to contain quite disparate authorities. Even if we are interested in what we should expect Pliny to suggest by listing those people as authorities who are not mentioned by name in the book itself, we should definitely not expect to have the same, or even very similar answers about Oenopides, Harpalus, Hecataeus, Hipparchus and Aratus. They need not be any more similar than Hesiod, Thales, Anaximander, Democritus and Eudoxus are.

Until now I have not mentioned Sosigenes, perhaps the most important authority on this list. Unlike other authorities, who are mentioned with some particular piece of information in the course of the book, Sosigenes is presented as someone who had contributed to Julius Caesar's calendar reform – so whenever Pliny assigns some date to a celestial phenomenon on Caesar's authority, this will also have a connection to Sosigenes. Moreover, as Pliny stresses:

Both Sosigenes himself in his three treatises – though more careful in research than the other writers he nevertheless did not hesitate to introduce an element of doubt by correcting his own statements – and

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<sup>15</sup> *eorum, qui in eadem regione dissedere, unam discordiam ponemus exempli gratia: occasum matutinum vergiliarum Hesiodus – nam huius quoque nomine exstat astrologia – tradidit fieri, cum aequinoctium autumnii conficeretur, Thales XXV die ab aequinoctio, Anaximander XXX, Euctemon <XLIII, Eudoxus> XLVIII* (18, 213 – in this instance I changed Rackham's "country" to "region". Note that Pliny's claim that these authorities come from the same region is at variance with his list of regions in paragraph 215: at Hesiod and Euctemon should be assigned a different region from the authorities from Asia Minor).

also other authors whose names we prefixed to this volume have published these theories, although it is seldom the case that the opinions of any two of them agree.<sup>16</sup>

First, these lines emphasise that Sosigenes is leagues apart from the rest of these authorities. But the distinction cannot be literally correct if one was prepared to include in the “rest” also Hipparchus. Not only is it the case that he was one of the greatest astronomers of antiquity. At least as important is the fact that Pliny is fully well aware of Hipparchus’ excellence. Book II sets out Hipparchus’ achievements in terms of the highest praise possible.<sup>17</sup>

Two considerations suggest themselves. First, that even though Pliny takes Hipparchus to be the master astronomer, he need not take him as contributing to this particular topic in the same depth. Moreover, the fact that Hipparchus and Aratus (and Zoroaster) come immediately after Sosigenes on the list may again indicate that there is some further articulation involved. The first part of this list is the one starting with Thales, and closing with Sosigenes. Then Hipparchus (and Aratus, the object of Hipparchus’ critical scrutiny in his *Commentary on Aratus’ and Eudoxus’ Phaenomena*), and Zoroaster are added to this first part. Indeed, the two passages I have quoted above mentioned every authority on this first part of the list – apart from Meton, Oenopides, Harpalus and Sosigenes himself, who nevertheless is present through and through in the book, under Caesar’s name.

Before trying to give an assessment what all this could mean about Oenopides we should turn to some earlier sections of Book XVIII, where Pliny himself gives an account of how he proceeds in this book. A hortatory beginning – the theme of agriculture is worthy of the attention of kings and generals, indeed some authorities were kings and generals themselves – is followed by a quick mention of the story of the translation of the 28 books of the Carthagian general Mago. At this point Pliny turns to his list of authorities and says

But we have given at the beginning a list of the authorities of philosophy and eminent poets and other distinguished authors whom we shall follow in this volume, although special mention must be made of Marcus Varro,

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<sup>16</sup> *et Sosigenes ipse trinis commentationibus – quamquam diligentior ceteris, non cessavit tamen addubitare ipse semet corrigendo – <et> auctores prodidere ea, quos praetexuimus volumini huic, raro ullius sententia cum alio congruente* (18. 212).

<sup>17</sup> 2. 53 (Hipparchus’ account of the motions of the Sun and Moon); 2. 57 (Hipparchus’ insights about the eclipses of the Sun and the Moon).

who felt moved to publish a treatise on this subject in the eighty-first year of his life.<sup>18</sup>

This could already be taken as a designation for the whole list of authorities, both the Roman part, and the foreign ones. Pliny, however, goes on to elaborate, and submits that he intends to provide a theory of how to tend the fields – i.e. of the agriculture of cereals and leguminous plants – “as we have done hitherto, by making an exhaustive research into both ancient practices and subsequent discoveries, and at the same time delving into causes and principles”.

Immediately following this general statement of purpose and procedure he adds:

We shall also treat of astronomy, and shall give the indubitable signs which the stars themselves afford as regards the earth, seeing that the authors who have hitherto handled these subjects with some degree of thoroughness may be thought to have been writing for any class of people rather than farmers.<sup>19</sup>

This means that although – as I have suggested above – the previous description, talking about authorities of philosophy (or wisdom), eminent poets, and other distinguished authors could just as well have applied to the authorities on celestial matters, Pliny explicitly states that he adds to these previous authorities the authorities about astronomy, and congratulates himself by stressing that he is doing a distinct service by making the incomprehensibly technical material of these authors accessible to farmers.

As a consequence of this, especially in view of our previous considerations about the list of celestial authorities, that most of the authorities on its first chunk, from Thales to Sosigenes do appear in two lists of conflicting and conforming opinions of risings and settings of a uniform format we should expect that the other missing three authorities, Meton undoubtedly, and also Oenopides and Harpalus were taken by Pliny to be in some way engaged in this same enterprise.

Another significant feature of the use of authorities is that the testimonies I have quoted above attest extensive homogenisation. Already

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<sup>18</sup> *sapientiae vero auctores et carminibus excellentes quique alii illustres viri composuissent, quos sequeremur, praetexuimus hoc in volumine, non in grege nominando M. Varrone, qui LXXXI vitae annum agens de ea re prodendum putavit* (18. 212).

<sup>19</sup> *dicemus et sidera siderumque ipsorum terrestria signa dabimus indubitata, quandoquidem qui adhuc diligentius ea tractavere, quibusvis potius quam agricolis scripsisse possunt videri* (18. 24).

the claim that the authorities differed about the date of the morning setting of the Pleiads smacks of being a constructed, or at least a somewhat recalibrated “fact”. Already the testimony about Hesiod is problematic – as Pliny is the first to admit. Moreover it is very unlikely that an oral tradition originating from Thales, or some testimony going back to Anaximander would have fixed the morning setting of the Pleiads in terms of giving the exact number of days from the autumnal equinox. These dates – even if they have evidential value – are data reconstituted by a later authority, from some evidence which is no longer available to us.

Similarly, when Pliny reports about the rare general agreement of his authorities, mentioning that Philippus, Callippus, Dositheus, Parmeniscus, Conon, Criton, Democritus and Eudoxus put the morning rising of the She-Goat on September 28 and the morning rising of the Kids on September 29, we have every reason to suppose that this was the construct of some later authority who reconfigured the testimonies of these different authorities in the same system of time keeping.

This need not have been a common calendar system though. Integrating all these reports about the various authorities into some kind of a *parapēgma* scheme is fully adequate. For such a scheme one may turn to the *Ars Eudoxi*, where columns XXI–XXIII Blass set out the intervals between the stars and constellations. This happens by giving the intervals, in days, between solstices, equinoxes, and the morning or evening risings and settings of some important stars and constellations. First the papyrus gives these intervals without attributing these to any particular authority. In this longer list the interval between the autumn equinox and the morning setting of the Pleiads also must have featured, but the papyrus is lacunose, so this value can only be inferred from the values for the other intervals. After the unnamed part, Eudoxus’ and Democritus’ date for the winter solstice is given, according to the Egyptian calendar. This is then followed by giving the length of the intervals between summer solstice and autumn equinox, between autumn equinox and winter solstice, and between winter solstice and vernal equinox according to Eudoxus, Democritus, Euctemon and Callippus.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For further comparison one could mention the text of the later Milesian *parapēgmata* (456 A), from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC, which mentions Callaneus the Indian, Euctemon and Eudoxus, or the Geminus *parapēgmata*, mentioning Callippus, Democritus, Dositheus, Euctemon, Eudoxus and Meton. An even more extensive list of authorities is collected in Ptolemy’s *Phaseis*, which, however, mainly indicates the weather predictions of these authorities. For a discussion of *parapēgmata* see Taub 2003, 15–70.



Accordingly Pliny could have had some similar compilation as a master source for many of his authorities. Oenopides' placement on the list of foreign authorities for Book XVIII, where he is in the middle of authorities who feature in lists analogous to what we find, e.g., in the *Ars Eudoxi* suggests that this master source of Pliny also contained some information about Oenopides.

We have practically no information about what this master document could have been. Nevertheless, Pliny's remark about Sosigenes' writings sets this source of information in stark relief. Pliny speaks about the three treatises (*commentationes*) of Sosigenes. These are contrasted to the other authorities, because Sosigenes conducted more careful research than the rest. Nevertheless, he also made corrections – presumably from one such treatise to the other, and this introduced an element of doubt into his work. This contrast between Sosigenes and the rest suggests that if Pliny used a compilation of the other conflicting authorities, this may not have included Sosigenes. Or even if it did, Pliny took the trouble to consult Sosigenes' works. Indeed, the most likely setup could have been that in some of his works Sosigenes also compiled information about the dates and intervals of celestial phenomena according to the most salient authorities of astronomy and of astronomical lore.

Be that as it may, we should now turn to assessing the import of the presence of Oenopides in such sources, or in such a master source. As should be clear from the discussion above, all the fact that his name features on this list of astronomical authorities indicates is that some compiler of such a list had access to, or at least thought to have access to some relevant testimony about Oenopides, if not some piece of text by him. The reason for inclusion may have been some detail about the rising or setting of some stars, or about the length of a season, or indeed some further astronomical insight, and this detail may have some relevance for our assessment of Oenopides as a technical writer. But as it stands, the mere mention on the list may not provide us with anything tangible.

As we have no indication about the details of why he was included in this list, one thing we can do is to try and assess whether Pliny's source could have included Oenopides on account of what is attested about him in the other testimonies we have about him. First, and most importantly, it is very unlikely that this source could have reported about Oenopides' insight about the obliquity of the ecliptic.<sup>21</sup> Not that this would not have been relevant in the context of the risings and settings of

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<sup>21</sup> Testimony 7 (collecting the testimonies of several authors; the testimony in Theo of Smyrna rests on the authority of Eudemus).



stars and constellations. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that Pliny, in Book II Chapters 30–31 attributes this insight to Anaximander, hence his source should have, if anything, some different piece of information attached to Oenopides' name. Also, the name Oenopides could not just feature in this source as a founding figure of astronomy: otherwise this source would have been in conflict with Pliny's statement to the effect that the crucial founding moment was Anaximander's discovery of the obliquity of the ecliptic, and the inclusion of Hesiod and Thales would also be problematic.

Neither would Oenopides' account about the Milky Way<sup>22</sup> fit easily into this context of astronomical research and astronomical lore relevant to agriculture. The third bit of information we have in the testimonies about Oenopides, about a great year of 59 years<sup>23</sup> is less unequivocal. Perhaps it would not be sufficient on its own for inclusion: Pliny does not report here about intercalation cycles and other similar issues. Nevertheless, this testimony indicates on Oenopides' part some interest in such calendar issues, which might as well have included some such details which a compiler of Pliny's source was interested in.

Accordingly, we can most probably rule out that Oenopides is mentioned in the list of foreign authorities of Book XVIII solely on account of some of his signature astronomical achievements attributed to him in the testimonies about him. This also means that the easiest supposition remains that he is mentioned on this list because some source, or sources took him – just as the other authorities on the list, from Thales to Sosigenes – to be engaged in the activity of recording the rising or setting of some stars, or the length of the seasons.

If the most plausible reason for Oenopides' inclusion on the list of authorities is that he was thought to contribute some detail like the ones mentioned in the relevant part of Book XVIII, we might still want to try to link him to some such detail found there. As his name does not feature in the book, one way of trying to link him to such a detail might be to do so through the location to which such a detail is attested. Unfortunately, however, we do not have any such detail in the book for Chius, Oenopides' town. Perhaps one may be willing to tentatively take ascriptions to some larger region as pointing towards Oenopides. For such a larger region we may take Pliny's indication that

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<sup>22</sup> Testimony 10.

<sup>23</sup> Testimony 8 (on the putative length of the natural year, about which, however, see Bodnár 2007/2008, 11 f. n. 26) and Testimony 9.

[...] readers should remember that, for the sake of brevity, when Attica is mentioned they must understand the Cyclades Islands to be included; when Macedonia, Magnesia and Thrace; when Egypt, Phoenicia, Cyprus and Cilicia, [...], when Ionia, Asia and the islands belonging to it; [...].<sup>24</sup>

But notwithstanding this careful warning we would search for relevant pieces of information only in vain. There is no mention of Ionia in the book, and the only occurrence of Asia is in the entry:

On October 2 the Crown rises for Attica at dawn, and the Charioteer sets for Asia and for Caesar in the morning of October 3.<sup>25</sup>

There is every reason *not* to connect this piece of evidence to Oenopides. First, when Pliny indicated that he would lump under the name Ionia also the data for Asia and the islands along the coast of Asia, he did not suggest that he would refer to an island along the Ionian coastline with the term Asia, and not with the term Ionia. Hence it is easiest to take a reference to Asia at face value. We should be wary of attributing this piece of evidence for Oenopides when we have some authorities from mainland Asia on the list. But even if we were prepared to bite the bullet and take Asia here as meant to introduce a piece of evidence culled from one of the islands, Chius, and applied to mainland Asia and the islands, before this rather hazardous commitment we should first assess what we would gain by this rather tenuous and forced interpretation of the evidence.

Actually precious little. Although the ascription of this piece of evidence as reporting about Oenopides would purport to add some detail, but that detail would have to remain doubtful. After all Oenopides is not the only Ionian (or Asian) authority on the list, and there is no reason to think that Pliny (or his source) would have been more likely to omit Oenopides' name than that of Thales or Anaximander.

All in all, it is much preferable to admit lack of information, and conclude that even though we do not have any specific data, the most likely presupposition is that some source of Pliny – perhaps Sosigenes himself – reported about some specific detail about some rising and setting phenomena as mentioned by Oenopides. Although we have no way

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<sup>24</sup> *legentes tantum meminerint brevitatis gratia, cum Attica nominata fuerit, simul intellegere Cycladas insulas; cum Macedonia, Magnesiam, Thraciam; cum Aegyptus, Phoenicen, Cyprum, Ciliciam; [...] cum Ionia, Asiam et insulas Asiae; [...]* (18. 215).

<sup>25</sup> *VI non. Oct. Atticae corona exoritur mane, Asiae et Caesari V heniochus occidit matutino* (18. 312).

of finding out what this detail could have been, his stance as a technical writer and as someone interested in a great year scheme would not make the presumption of the presence of such a detail surprising at all.

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Oenopides of Chios features in the list of foreign authorities for Book XVIII of Pliny’s *Natural History*. The paper assesses what this could indicate on the part of Pliny, and his source or sources, and concludes that the most likely presupposition is that some source of Pliny ascribed some specific detail about some rising and setting phenomena to Oenopides.

Энопид Хиосский фигурирует в перечне “иностранных” источников к 18-й книге *Естественной истории* Плиния. Автор статьи задается вопросом, что стоит за этой формулировкой и о чем мог сообщать в связи с Энопидом источник (или источники) Плиния. Он приходит к заключению, что, по всей вероятности, в них приводились “данные” Энопида о восходе и заходе звезд и созвездий.

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