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The English *GO*-(PRT)-*AND*-*VERB* construction*

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0. Introduction

This paper deals with expressions of the form [*go*-(PRT)-*and*-V], as instantiated by the following examples:

- (1) a. I *went and bought* a weight bench, and don't ever hardly use it.
b. They don't ever have to *go out and get* a real job.
c. Why don't you *go ahead and say* what you feel, and then I'll respond.

I will analyze the semantics of such expressions on the basis of data from a corpus of spoken American English (*Switchboard-1*¹). I will also discuss to what extent the patterns underlying examples such as those in (1) should be regarded as instantiating a single construction (in the sense of Fillmore and Kay, e.g. Kay and Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995), and to what extent they are better thought of as each instantiating a separate construction. Finally, I will show that these patterns have taken on grammatical meanings to varying degrees, and I will argue that these grammatical meanings emerge from embodied image schemas and culturally grounded discourse contexts.

1. The coordinated-verb construction

The syntactic pattern manifested in the examples in (1) is an instance of what I refer to as the *coordinated-verb construction*, which in its most abstract form can be structurally defined as follows:

- (2) [V1_{intr} (PRT) *and* V2]

The V1 in expressions instantiating this construction is typically a motion or position verb, as in *We sat and talked all night*, *Don't just stand there and grin*, or *Come up and see me sometime*. In the patterns discussed in this paper, the PRT is a particle of the kind traditionally referred to as a 'spatial adverb', but note that a PP that tightly collocates with V1 may also occur in this slot (as in Lakoff's (1986) example *What did Harry go to the store and buy?*).

* I am grateful to Michel Achard, Hilary Young, and Suzanne Kemmer for commenting on various aspects of this work throughout its inception. Needless to say, they are not responsible for any faults or inconsistencies in my analysis.

¹ All numbered examples in this paper are from this corpus. The examples have been edited for greater readability: pauses, false starts, and repetitions have been removed.

There are several syntactic properties of this pattern that are not predictable from its components or from other constructions in the grammar of English; thus, it qualifies as a construction (Kay and Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995). For example, V1 and V2 share the same subject and V2 must have the same tense and aspect as V1. This is not a restriction that follows from canonical coordination. In addition, complements of V2 may be displaced with respect to canonical word order, or more specifically, they may be left isolated (or 'extracted'), as first noted by Ross (1967 [1986:104f.]). The following examples show this:

- (3) a. I just have a problem paying twenty five dollars for a movie that I can *go down and rent* for a dollar.
- b. There used to be wild blackberries that we'd *go out and pick*, my brother and I.

This property is unexpected, given the coordinate-structure constraint generally found with conjoined elements.

The semantic contribution that this construction makes to expressions containing it is that V1 and V2 together are construed as expressing a single event (cf. Lakoff 1986 for a more detailed discussion of a similar proposal, cf. also Josefsson 1991). Evidence for this single-event construal is that any modifiers preceding V1, such as negators and adverbs, will necessarily be interpreted as modifying the whole construction. Moreover, *and* cannot be replaced with *and then* or *and at the same time* in this construction without a substantial change in meaning.

As I will show, the V1 in many cases takes on an auxiliary-like function; the event evoked by V2 is construed in accordance with the image-schematic properties (in the sense of Johnson 1987) of V1. For now, note that the single-event interpretation is not predictable, given that typically verb coordination will result in an expression evoking two events as happening simultaneously or sequentially, often suggesting a causal connection (cf. e.g. Lakoff 1971).

2. The semantics of *Go-(PRT)-and-V*

I will now turn to the most frequently occurring instances of [*go-(PRT)-and-V*], explicating their semantics on the basis of typical examples from the *Switchboard* corpus. In each case I will attempt to capture the most abstract semantic characterization. In doing so, I will necessarily ignore some of the finer distinctions among different uses of each instance, and I will also treat the relations among these different usage types in less detail than they deserve (obviously, a fine-grained radial category analysis of the kind introduced in Lakoff (1987) is possible for every single case).

2.1. *Go-and-V*

Some typical examples of *go-and-V* are given in (4):

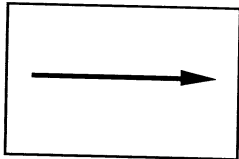
- (4) a. I was a student for many years, and then [I] graduated and *went and worked* in France for a while.
- b. We *went and saw* 'Les Misérables', the music in that was fantastic.
- c. Most of our vacations are to *go and see* Grandma and Grandpa.
- d. I just *went and bought* a Honda, I didn't even look around or anything.
- e. I'm not interested in keeping big military over there and having to *go and call* the shots like you say.

The English GO-(PRT)-AND-V construction

Example (4a) is the simplest case: *go* contributes only the expected meaning of 'movement through space' to the utterance. Examples (4b-c) are slightly more complex: here, *go-and-V* is used to construe typically stative events as dynamic: *go and see* means something like 'watch' in (4b) and 'visit' in (4c). In example (4d) there is an additional sense of decisiveness, and in (4e) this decisiveness seems to be the only (or at least the principal) contribution of *go-and-V* to the utterance.

It seems that *go* in these examples essentially contributes its basic image-schematic property of 'motion along a path', as shown in (5):

- (5) Go (The motion schema)



This image-schematic property is blended with the semantics of V2 and renders the latter dynamic either by contributing a component of spatial motion, or by adding or highlighting a dynamic component in the semantics of V2 via the general metaphor ACTION AS MOTION.

The resulting structure *go-and-V* is a true semantic blend (in Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's sense, cf. e.g. Turner 1996, Fauconnier 1997); it has some semantic properties that follow neither from the meaning of *go*, nor from that of the respective V2, nor from the coordinated-verb construction, namely that the subject must be animate, and more specifically, acting intentionally: compare the acceptability of *Bert/the car went over the cliff* and *Bert/the car fell over the cliff* with the difference in acceptability of *Bert/*the car went and fell over the cliff* and the unacceptability of **Bert accidentally went and fell over the cliff*.

There is a range of non-literal uses of *go-and-V* which has been observed by traditional grammarians and which can be found in many dictionaries that is based precisely on this constraint. Consider the following examples:

- (6)
- a. (ABOUT STITCHING) Yeah, and I've *gone and put* the needle through my thumb a few times.
 - b. People that are angry or have concerns or want to seek vengeance have easy access to guns, and in the heat of the moment they can *go and do* some damage that can hurt themselves and other people.
 - c. After they've *gone and done* horrible things, molested children and killed them, society has to pay thirty thousand dollars a year to incarcerate them.
 - d. (ABOUT CONTRACEPTIVES) I'm not going to want to *go and have* sex with everybody I see. But it's something you got to think about these days.

In these examples, *go-and-V* portrays the action described by V2 as "foolish, unreasonable, or unlucky" (Poutsma 1928:562), or as a "surprise or shock, often showing disapproval" (*Newbury House*, s.v. *go and*).

This sense of foolishness or disapproval can be explained by the fact that the event evoked by V2 is typically something that happens inadvertently (as in the first two examples), or that is outrageous in a given cultural frame (as in the last two

examples). Essentially, *go-and-V* construes the subject of these expressions as intentional, and it is this intentionality that gives rise to the connotations of foolishness: somebody who intentionally does something that is usually a mishap is foolish and unreasonable. It also accounts for the connotations of shock and disapproval in (6c-d): somebody who intentionally breaks cultural norms is shocking and deserving of disapproval.

In sum, the examples in (6) may at first glance appear to contradict the sense of intentionality postulated for *go-and-V*, but on closer inspection it turns out that they provide additional evidence for it. Thus, although *go-and-V* inherits the properties of the coordinated-verb construction, it has additional properties that are not strictly predictable, and should thus be considered a construction in its own right.

2.2. Go-around-and-V

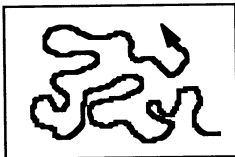
Some typical examples of *go-around-and-V* are given in (7):

- (7) a. Around where I live the homeless people all have shopping carts and stuff and they *go around and collect* cans and aluminum and stuff.
 b. I guess these people that *go around and kill* children and women and everything else without any remorse, I don't think they deserve to live and be supported by us the rest of their lives.

Like *go and*, *go around* may simply contribute a spatial motion component to an utterance (cf. 7a), although often there is a habitual reading involved (cf. 7b). The latter example also shows that *go-around-and-V* inherits the intentionality from the *go-and-V* construction, since it allows the same 'disapproval' construal.

Go around in these examples contributes the basic image-schematic property of 'motion along an *extended non-directional path*', as represented in (8):

- (8) Go around



The habitual interpretation in (7b) results from the portrayal of the activity denoted by V2 as such an extended path. Example (7b) also conveys a sense of aimless activity, contributed by the non-directionality of the schema in (8).

There is a similar construction for which this aimlessness is absent: *go-along-and-V*, in examples like *Mark Fuhrman becomes even more relevant in this case as we go along and discuss it* (from the O.J. Simpson trial transcripts). Here, *go along* highlights the extendedness of the path, but it also highlights the fact that the course of events is predetermined, i.e. that the path of action is *directional* to some degree.

In sum, the most abstract characterization we can give to *go-around-and-V* is that it construes an activity as habitual, as well as intentional but aimless. It should be noted, however, that all examples in the corpus allow for a literal motion interpretation in addition to these more abstract meanings.

2.3. Go-in-and-V

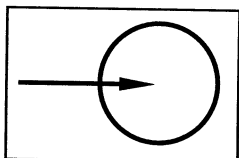
Some typical examples of *go-in-and-V* are given in (9):

- (9)
- (ABOUT A RESTAURANT) It would probably take my whole paycheck just to *go in and have* one meal.
 - We *went in and did* in seven days what Iran couldn't do in seven years.
 - A (ABOUT B'S BROKEN LEG): Did they have to cast it?— B: Yeah, they had to *go in and do* surgery. They put a pin in it.
 - I suspect we should probably have an independent auditing agency *go in and look* at how the government spends money.
 - I don't see any problem with outsiders *going in and getting* a little bit involved.

The first two examples are literal uses, which for this pattern constitute the majority of examples in the corpus. Among these literal uses, the most frequent discourse context is that of war or other military operations, which typically leads to a sense of active involvement and commitment. This sense is also present to some degree in (9c-d), which are less literal but can still be interpreted as involving some kind of motion through space. Finally, in (9e) the sense of involvement is all that is left.

The image-schematic properties of *go in* would lead us to expect this reading: the superimposition of a motion schema onto a container schema, shown in (10) yields the meaning 'motion along a path directed at the center of some bounded space':

- (10) Go in



This may be an actual space (as in 9a-c) or a sphere of interest (cf. 9d) or an already ongoing activity (cf. 9e).

The most general semantic characterization for *go-in-and-V* is that it construes an action as involvement in some preexisting activity, where, due to the container schema, this preexisting activity is construed as outside the subject's expected sphere of responsibility. Although literal motion interpretations are possible for the majority of examples in the corpus, almost a third of the examples are like (9e), with *go-in-and-V* exclusively signaling involvement.

2.4. Go-out-and-V

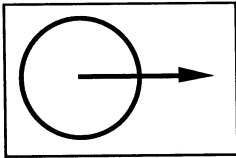
The following are some typical examples of *go-out-and-V*:

- (11)
- Now, I understand kids *go out and play* and they get dirty.
 - [I'll] have to *go out and buy* a CD player and then start collecting CDs.
 - I used to *go out and dance* a lot but I don't do that anymore either.
 - They always *went out and tried* to draft the best athletes.
 - Any crime[s] where someone *goes out and premeditatively takes* another life would be the ones where capital punishment would be necessary.

- g. (ABOUT WORKING WOMEN) Not to say that women shouldn't *go out and do* what they want to do but society's really going to have to get used to it.

Again, there are literal uses, such as that in (11a), where *out* simply means *outside*, but these are the minority in the corpus. More frequent are examples like (11b) where *go out* can be considered a fixed expression meaning 'participate in social activities', or like (11c-d) where it adds the meaning 'actively engage in the activity denoted by V2'. The last two examples retain only this meaning, with no actual movement necessarily implied. The image-schematic contribution of *go out* is schematically shown in (12):

- (12) Go out



The motion schema is superimposed on a container schema, but with a directionality opposite to that of *go in*. The meaning contributed by this schema to the utterances in (11) is that it construes some activity in relation to a previous non-activity. In the literal examples this involves going somewhere after staying in one place for a certain period of time, in the non-literal examples it involves realizing a potential not previously realized.

The difference between *go-and-V* and *go-out-and-V* is that the former does not highlight the potentiality. This becomes clear when we compare *He went and killed someone* with *He went out and killed someone*. Only the second sentence suggests that the subject has planned (or thought about) the act for some time.

It seems that both *go-in-and-V* and *go-out-and-V* are more specific instances of *go-and-V* as far as the literal interpretations are concerned, but that in their abstract uses they are developing additional meanings that make them look more like independent constructions.

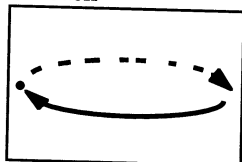
2.5. Go-back-and-V

Go-back-and-V clearly differs from the preceding cases in that literal uses are clearly in the minority in the corpus. Two examples of such literal uses are shown in (13):

- (13) a. A: And, is your mother still living? — B: Yes. — A: Oh, so you *go back and visit* with her anyway. Would you not?
b. I've always wanted to *go back and read* some of my literature texts from college, because I enjoyed some of those stories so much.

The basic image-schematic contribution that *go back* makes is that of motion to some point (in space or time) at which the subject has already been at some earlier time:

(14) Go back



Example (13a) is a literal case, (13b) is an extension to the purely temporal domain on the basis of the metaphor SPACE IS TIME. However, note that a sense of going back in time is also present in (13a), since presumably the addressee lived with her mother at an earlier point in time.

Obviously, it is not possible to actually travel back in time; examples like (13b) express a subjectified return to some earlier point in time. Example (13b) is the simplest case of this, where the subject repeats some earlier action. Typically, however, the meaning of *go-back-and-V* is more complex than this. Consider the examples in (15):

- (15) a. (ABOUT DRUG SCREENING) And if it does come out positive the first time, they need to *go back and find out* what medications did that person take.
 b. (ABOUT TEAM SKILLS) A lot of adults are having to *go back and learn* those basics when our children are already learning that.
 c. A: How do you feel about the Vietnam war? — B: I guess it's pretty deep feelings, I just *went back and rented* the movie 'Good Morning Vietnam' and got some insight there to help me put together the feelings.

Here, the subjectified motion backwards through time corresponds to repeating an action in more detail based on the outcome of the first pass (cf. (15a)); making up for some earlier non-activity (cf. (15b)); or simply relating a present activity to a past event (cf. (15c), where the speaker has never seen the movie in question before).

The most abstract semantic characterization of *go-back-and-V* is that it construes an action as relevant to some past action or experience. Thus, although the non-literal uses shown above are motivated by the metaphor TIME IS SPACE, their meanings are more specific than anything that would be predictable from the way this metaphor generally functions in English.

Thus, *go-back-and-V* must be considered a separate construction. Contrast this with *go-around-and-V* and *go-along-and-V*, which are plausibly regarded as more specific instantiations of the general *go-and-V* construction, and *go-in-and-V* and *go-out-and-V*, which seem to be halfway between being instances of *go-and-V* and being constructions in their own right. Further evidence for the independent status of *go-back-and-V* is the fact that the intentionality constraint on the subject is absent: note that there are no examples expressing foolishness or disapproval, and note also the acceptability of the (constructed) utterance *I videotaped the Super Bowl, but then I accidentally went back and erased it*.

2.6. Go-ahead-and-V

The last case discussed here is *go-ahead-and-V*. This case differs from all others in that the corpus does not contain a single example expressing literal motion, and that it is almost impossible to construct such examples. Instead, this construction has

three main meanings: (i) permission or enablement, (ii) choosing one path of action among several possible paths, and (iii) pursuing a path of action in spite of possible obstacles.

First, consider the following examples:

- (16) a. A: Okay. You want to *go ahead and start*? — B: Uh, I was hoping that you would but, oh... — A: Oh.
b. (ABOUT S. HUSSEIN) Well, do you think that we should ignore it and just allow him to *go ahead and, you know, move* on into Kuwait?

In example (16a) the speakers are negotiating the start of a discussion: speaker A is giving speaker B permission to take the first turn. Example (16b) is similar in that the issue here is whether the US should permit Hussein to move into Kuwait.

The second type of context is shown in (17):

- (17) a. And we're going to *go ahead and try* to just live on what we earn instead of guessing ahead of what we probably will have next month.
b. Do you just brown the chicken to get it colored or do you *go ahead and let it cook* through?

Here, the activity encoded by V2 is contrasted with some alternative path of action.

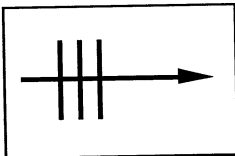
Finally, the third type of context is shown in (18):

- (18) a. I'm Catholic and we're not supposed to, but I feel that if it's beyond a doubt that you did it, you know, I would say *go ahead and execute* that person as well.
b. It's never been clear to me how Congressmen can just sort of *go ahead and vote* their own conscience as their own ideas when clearly their constituency doesn't back them up on anything.
c. I had ordered a sofa and had filled out the paperwork, but they weren't supposed to process it until they delivered it. And I changed my mind, but then they *went ahead and charged* it on my account.

Here, the activity encoded by V2 is portrayed as occurring in spite of some potential obstacle: the belief system of the speaker in (18a), the lack of support from the constituency in (18b), and the fact that the speaker had changed her mind in (18c).

These three uses of *go-ahead-and-V* can be unified by stipulating that its most abstract semantic function is to construe an action in relation to some potential obstacle, which may be a lack of permission, a motivation to act in a different way, or an alternative path of events. In any case, the existence of an obstacle makes the event encoded by V2 less expected than some alternative path of action. The basic image-schematic contribution of *go ahead* is shown in (19):

- (19) Go ahead



The motion schema encoded by *go* is superimposed on an obstacle, which is ignored by the path of motion (encoded by *ahead*). This obstacle, whatever its nature, is implied by *go-ahead-and-V* itself, i.e. it does not have to be explicitly encoded. Consider examples (20a-b):

- (20) a. A: Well, I need to *go ahead and wrap* it up. — B: Okay. — A: Um, it was really nice talking to you. — B: Well, I've enjoyed it, Stephanie.
b. (ABOUT THE MOVIE *FLATLINERS*) They would *go ahead and kill* themselves for three or four minutes to see what happens.

In both these examples, there are implicit obstacles. In (20a) speaker A assumes that bringing the conversation to a close at this particular point is unexpected from speaker B's perspective: since you cannot terminate a conversation unexpectedly (cf. e.g. Levinson 1983:316f.), this is a potential obstacle.

In (20b) the speaker is talking about a movie in which a group of interns kill and then at the last possible moment revive each other in order to find out what happens after death. Obviously, there are many good reasons (and hence potential obstacles) for not taking that risk.

There is a related construction which shares with *go-ahead-and-V* the sense of proceeding, but which does not focus on potential obstacles, and hence does not imply unexpectedness. This is *go-on-and-V*, exemplified in (21):

- (21) a. My husband and I went through college together and then he *went on and got* his Master's degree while I was working.
b. (ABOUT A POLITICIAN) He is saying, I am going to give you this ludicrous little tax cut so that you'll be happy come November, and you'll elect me again, and then I'm going to *go on and just forget* everything that I said.

The image-schematic structure evoked by the dynamic meaning of *on* contributes the forward-directedness also found with *ahead*, but it does not make reference to an (explicit or implicit) obstacle.

Although *go-ahead-and-V* is fully motivated by the *go-and-V* construction and the expression *go ahead* (as in *May I use your pencil?—Sure, go ahead*) it must be regarded as a separate construction, since there is a constraint that is not predictable from either of these: as mentioned, it can not be interpreted literally. Even where a literal reading is strongly encouraged by the context, it is dispreferred. A sentence like *The others stayed behind while we went ahead and made coffee* is almost impossible to interpret as spatial movement on the part of the speaker, but note that no such restriction exists with ...*while we went ahead TO make coffee*.

2.7. Some other *go-PRT* combinations

In addition to the *go-PRT* combinations discussed above, there are many other such combinations that occur only with a literal (i.e. spatial) meaning in the corpus, for example *go away and*, *go by and*, *go down and*, *go forward and*, *go through and*, and *go up and*. Note that these are nevertheless instances of the *go-and-V* construction, since they all allow extraction, they all express single events, and they all require an intentionally acting agent.

3. Summary and discussion

The preceding section has discussed a family of constructions instantiating the coordinated-verb construction. All these constructions have in common the fact that V1 is *go*, and can thus be captured by the abstract characterization in (22):

(22) [*go*-(PRT)-*and-V*]

The abstract uses that the different instantiations of (22) develop are very 'grammatical' in meaning, expressing notions encoded by various types of verbphrase operators in many different languages: they modify the internal temporal shape of the event encoded by V2, they ground it in space, they signal expectedness or speaker evaluation. The function of these constructions is thus comparable to notions like aspect, locational and directional marking, and mirativity.

Summarizing the analyses presented in the preceding section from this perspective, we can characterize the constructions as follows: *go-and-V* construes an event as dynamic, and it tends to express negative evaluation; *go-in-and-V* and *go-out-and-V* are clearly directional (as are all the constructions to some degree, except *go-ahead-and-V*), and they also express something like inceptive aspect; *go-around-and-V* construes the event encoded by V2 as habitual, and, like *go-and-V* it imparts negative evaluation; *go-along-and-V* expresses a progressive or continuative construal; *go-ahead-and-V* often signals unexpectedness as well as inceptiveness, and *go-on-and-V* signals only inceptiveness. The meaning of *go-back-and-V* is difficult to characterize in terms of traditional grammatical notions. Michel Achard (p.c.) has pointed out that in its more abstract uses it is, in essence, a 'redemption construction': it construes the event encoded by V2 as making up for a past failing of some sort. Thus, we might add to the list of traditionally recognized aspectual meanings, and say that *go-back-and-V* encodes 'redemptive aspect'.

In this paper I have argued that in its simplest form without a PRT, [*go*-(PRT)-*and-V*] is a construction, and that those cases where the PRT is *around*, *in*, or *out* are more specific instantiations of this construction, with the latter two moving toward becoming independent constructions. They all inherit from the coordinated-verb construction the construal of V1 and V2 as a single event, and they all inherit from the *go-and-V* construction the requirement that the subject be acting intentionally. I also argued that *go-ahead-and-V* and *go-back-and-V* are different from the other cases: they are constructions in their own right, since both have properties that go beyond anything strictly predictable. At least the latter does not require an intentionally acting subject, and both of them are typically interpreted non-literally (in fact, the former cannot be interpreted literally at all). Instead, their typical functions are to signal the abstract meanings mentioned above ('unexpectedness' and 'relevance to a past activity' respectively).

In closing, I will briefly discuss where the specific semantic properties of the constructions discussed here come from. Consider the table in (23), which shows the frequencies (in *Switchboard*) of the literal and non-literal uses of each of the patterns discussed in the preceding section (the uses with more abstract connotations in addition to their literal interpretation are categorized as *literal* here):

(23) Frequency of literal and abstract uses of [go-(PRT)-and-V]

	LITERAL	ABSTRACT
(bare)	100 (75%)	34 (25%)
around	12 (100%)	— (0%)
out	164 (94%)	11 (6%)
in	33 (69%)	15 (31%)
back	14 (33%)	28 (67%)
ahead	— (0%)	98 (100%)

The increasing number of purely abstract uses as we move down the table is clearly suggestive of an increasing degree of grammaticization. It is interesting to point out that the acquisition of specific grammatical meanings (which may then gradually replace the original meanings) occurs within a pattern that is already functioning as a construction (recall that even the fully literal uses have formal properties that single them out as such). Thus, the gradual bleaching of the original meaning and the development of more abstract functions occurs for a complex construction rather than for individual morphemes.

The emerging grammatical meanings or functions are not arbitrary; they are motivated in two ways. First, at a general level, they are motivated by the image-schematic structure of the *go*-PRT combination in question. The meanings are thus *embodied*, in the sense of this term postulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in many publications, e.g. Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987). Second, and just as importantly, the specific direction in which the additional meanings develop emerges from frequent discourse contexts instantiating the image-schematic structures (this is emergence in Paul Hopper's sense, cf. e.g. Hopper 1998). The content of these discourse contexts is clearly culture-specific (recall, for example, the military connotations of *go-in-and-V*). Thus, the emergent meanings are also culturally and socially grounded.

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