

SESSION 2. WOMEN. EVOLUTIONS.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN.

A fundamental, yet secondary role. “The woman never has, and never will be affiliated, but she has always had a fundamental role” (Suraci 9, Graziosi, Pieroni, Giannini 16).

Women are first and foremost goods that can be exchanged during marriage as to create new alliances or strengthen old ones. They represent the just compromise to end a faida, a war between clans (Suraci 12). Once arranged into a marriage the woman has the passive role of guaranteeing the husband's reputation so that he can get honor, respect and a formal affiliation to the mafia (Pieroni, Suraci 13, Iadeluca 18-19, Giannini 11). To do so, the woman must be a virgin before the wedding and must keep her loyalty to her husband who will protect her from other men (Pieroni, Suraci 13). She will hide within strict religious practices (Suraci 13). While the husband is supposed to reciprocate and keep his loyalty to his wife, most often he will surround himself with lovers or prostitutes (Suraci 11-12).

Once in marriage, the woman having formed her new family will receive the *mesata*, the monthly salary that the clan gives to the family of the affiliated individual (Saviano 151). To increase the *mesata* and fulfill her role as the women of a mafioso she must birth children, preferably male, as to maintain the bloodline and the *cosca*. She will educate her children transmitting them the values mafiosi; respect for the parents and their roles, honoring and being proud of the father for his masculinity (Suraci 10, Graziosi, Genick, Pieroni, Giannini 16). She will incentivize the males to always seek vengeance when necessary as it is the just act for their suffering and a way to save their honor (Suraci 11, Pieroni). The females, on the other hand, will be taught that they have to be submissive to the males, to their father, but most importantly, their future husband, and that they carry the important biological role of guaranteeing a continuation of the *cosca* (Suraci 10-11).

Let's talk. Because the children get indoctrinated from a young age with what is just and what is wrong under the principles and values mafiosi, alienated from the civil society that surrounds them, to what extent are they responsible for their actions? When is it that these young individuals realize (if ever) that what they are doing is inhumane?

Are these women always conscious of the role they are playing and are they aware of their options and ability to denounce or change life? What could be the main obstacles inhibiting the women and children from denouncing and changing life?

What role can and should the State have in informing mafiosi on their options and guarantee them protection if they decide to denounce and collaborate with the law?

An evolving role. While it is true that a woman will never be accepted as being an affiliate of the mafia, with years, women have become ever so important within the *cosca*, and have taken on more active roles, to the point that they have become the brains of the husbands' and sons' actions (Suraci 8, 18, Pieroni, Saviano 158, 163). In parallel to this there is also the trespassing of the traditional rule of honor in which women cannot be assassinated. In this sense there seems to be no more “code of honor” or “difference between men and women” (Saviano 160).

Role adapted to the associations mafioso. While women's roles within the *cosca* have evolved over time, the evolution has not been homogenous among different associations mafiosi. Women of *cosa nostra* have taken an active role within the family affairs, becoming

madrine in trafficking and dealing drugs. They have become substitutes if their husbands got arrested or became *latitanti*, wanted. They have become collaborators in criminal activities, taking properties, quotas and industries under their names. They have maintained, however a strong religious identity (Suraci 13, Genick, Pieroni). Women of the camorra, in Campania, have become the most brutal and violent women mafiose, doing everything they have to save the family's reputation and affairs. This because, unlike the hierarchical structure of *cosa nostra*, the camorra has a much more fluid structure that does not impede women with a strong character to enter it (Suraci 14-5). The women of 'ndrangheta can also be brutal and violent, especially in times of war where they can cover the highest role of *santista*, person in charge of planning and carrying out the vengeance. At other times, they will step in in case the husband gets arrested or becomes *latitante* taking over the affairs and keeping the communication between the husband and the outside (Suraci 15-6, Genick, Pieroni, Veltri, Giannini 33).

Angela Russo. An important component of *cosa nostra*, she got renamed "Nonna eroina", heroine grandmother, as she played an important role in the narcotrafficking between Sicily, Puglia, northern Italy and occasionally the US. She is a great example demonstrating how women have the fundamental role of educating and transmitting the values mafiosi. She was arrested in February 1982 and when her son Salvatore got arrested, he became a *pentito* and collaborated with the law. In response, Angela Russo, threatened her own son telling him "Salvino sta attento, perché io ti fici e io t'ammazzo", meaning Salvatore be careful, because I made you and I will kill you (Suraci 19).



Anna Mazza. She was an important component of the camorra. When her husband Gennaro Moccia dies she takes over his clan and gets renamed "vedova nera", black widow. She tries to fund the first matriarchy of the camorra, protected by a *scorta*, body guards, of females. In 1987 she gets arrested and becomes the first woman do be accused of association with the mafia (Suraci 20, Saviano 154-158).

Figure 3. Di Caterino, Marco. "Anna Mazza, la "vedova nera" più temuta dai clan". *Il Mattino*, 2017.

Maria Serraino. She belonged to a traditional family mafiosa of the 'ndrangheta, in Calabria. In 1963 she migrated with her husband and twelve children to Milan where she will take over the drug market of the city and become rebaptised as "Mamma eroina", mother heroine, or "La signora", the madame. She does not stop at the drugs or at Milan and soon enters the arms market and the international arena. Some of her children die on the way either by heart attacks, or due to the drugs she cuts herself or, such as Rita and Emilio, because they become *pentiti*. Once arrested she is sent to the regime of the 41-bis, in which she will be one of the few women (Saruci 21, Genick).

Women that have challenged the mafia. Not all women have become submissive towards the men, the tradition and the values mafiosi. Some have challenged their role and their predetermined destiny and the ones of their children by becoming *testimone di giustizia*, a witness of justice, in some cases sacrificing their own lives, or deciding to have their children be taken away from them to be raised by the State, away from the family

mafiosa (Graziosi, Suraci 40). In Reggio Calabria, a group of mothers, made up of wives, daughters, sisters, nieces of mafiosi or even by mafiose themselves, that went to the president of the Tribunale for minors, Roberto Di Bella, as to guarantee a future for their children away from the mafia (Suraci 40-41).



Letizia Battaglia. Born in 1935, in Palermo, she soon decides to dedicate her life to photojournalism through which she denounces the mafia. She starts to photograph *cosa nostra* in 1974, receiving death threats. She would go to “every major crime scene in the city” and report for Palermo’s left-wing daily newspaper *L’Ora*, until the 1990s (Hulme).

Figure 4. “Letizia Battaglia dirige il nuovo centro dedicato allo studio e alla promozione della fotografia”. *Palermoviva*, 2018.

Recommendation. Here is the link to the trailer of her documentary “Shooting the Mafia”.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYoMqyOdR1g&ab_channel=MovieclipsIndie

EVOLUTIONS.

Various associations mafiose. While it may seem like all the *organizzazioni mafiose*, or associations mafiosi, are all the same, within Italy there are actually many different associations mafiosi that even though seek the same ends - power and profit -, they have function and have developed in different ways.

Camorra. Like *cosa nostra*, the camorra, develops in the 1800s in an socioeconomic condition of vulnerability. It develops in Campania, but unlike in Sicily, it is born within the urban sphere (Giannini 10, Del Priore 8, Migliaccio, “Che cos’è”, Veltri). At the time, the Campania was under the Spanish Bourbons and there were very high levels of illiteracy, poverty, delinquency and general misery. According to the academic Marc Monnier, the camorra is thought to have developed in the 1830s, in the prisons and then rapidly expanded to the city (Del Priore 8, Migliaccio, “Che cos’è”, Veltri). It started with a want for profit, but also religious and superstitious beliefs. Once a person entered the prison they had to give all their goods to the incarcerated that controlled the prison; an estorsione or pizzo, extortion, an act that is still today symbolic of their means of profit and power (Migliaccio 2008, Migliaccio, Giannini 12). This so they could buy the oil to light a candle for the Virgin Mary. From there, the camorra soon spread to the city and its twelve neighborhoods (Migliaccio, “Che cos’è”). In fact, in the local language, rather than using the word *camorra*, individuals affiliated with it are said to belong to il sistema of a specific borough, such as *il sistema di Secondigliano* (Saviano 44, Veltri, Migliaccio). This rapid expansion and enormous power and profit the camorra has gained over the years is thought to have been facilitated by its fluid and horizontal structure, unlike *cosa nostra*’s rigid hierarchical structure, that allows more infiltrations and profit production (Migliaccio 2008, Maugeri). It also allows, however, much more violence, seen in the many *faide*, violent conflicts, between clans. This structure however, unlike *cosa nostra*, allows the camorra lives within the “State of Naples” rather than as an alter State (Palermo 2).

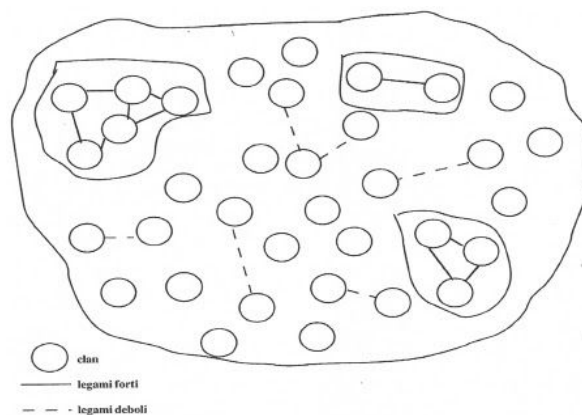


Figure 5. Catino, Maurizio. “La mafia come fenomeno organizzativo”. *Quaderni di Sociologia*, 14, 1997.

‘Ndrangheta. Similarly to cosa nostra, la ‘ndrangheta has agrarian origins. It develops in Calabria during the years of the unification of Italy, in the 1860s, as a consolidation of the already existing small delinquent groups and poor living conditions (Cilione, Rossetti 22, Iadeluca 2,4, Giannini 10, Sulli). It develops in response to the rising discontent with the central state, which imposed new taxes (Rossetti 15). It was a form of protection for the peasant and poorer communities, who did not necessarily think of seeking power or profit (Iadeluca 4, Catanzaro 185). As the ‘ndrangheta evolved, it became ever so strong, based on its organization and rigid social codes and rituals (Veltri, Rossetti 75, 115, Giannini 11, Gribaudo 184). In fact, the first written code that was found listing 18 articles denoting duties, *formule di giuramento* and the *parola d’ordine* to be recognized, is the 1888 Codice di Nicastro. Similarly, in 2015, the most recent codified language, *Codice San Luca*, belonging to the ‘ndrangheta and denoting their updated duties and rituals was found (Rossetti 115, Cilione). The ‘ndrangheta, unlike cosa nostra or the camorra, is solely organized based on parental affiliation, hence the very few *pentiti* that have collaborated with the law and the continued “invisibility” of the ‘ndrangheta, as shown from the graph in figure 6 (Iadeluca 6, Rossetti 66, Catino, Suraci, “Analisi criminologica”, Maugeri). It has two levels; one that is horizontal and the other vertical. It is horizontal as all the *cosche* or *‘ndrine* have the same power, but it is also vertical as within a *‘ndrina* there is a subdivision between *Società Maggiore*, major society, e *Società Minore*, minor society (Rossetti 66, 86, Iadeluca 15-17, “Analisi criminologica”). The scheme in figure 5 outlines the various roles.

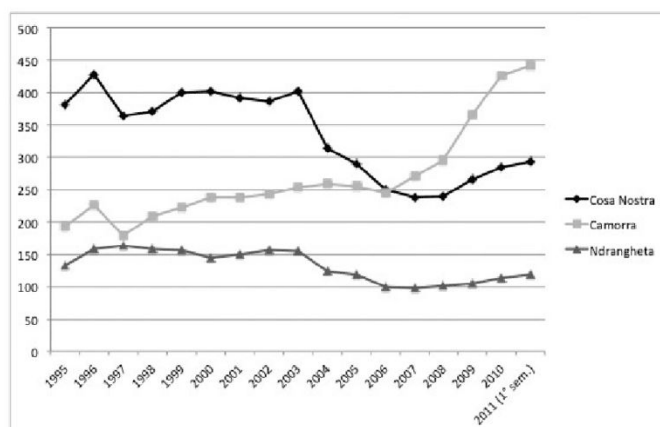
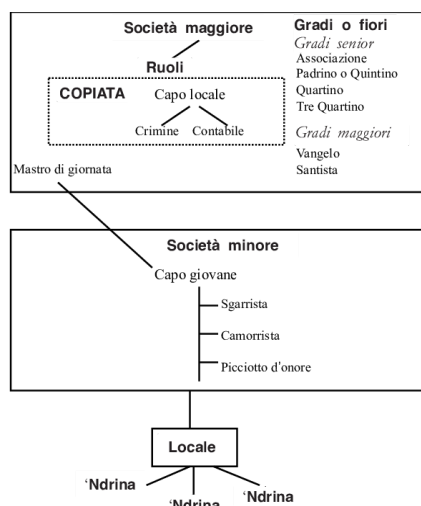


Figure 6 and 7. Catino, Maurizio. “L’organizzazione del segreto nelle associazioni mafiose”. *Researchgate*, january 2014.

The legend mafiosa. The legend says that cosa nostra, the camorra and the 'ndrangheta were born in the 15th century. The story recounts that three spanish knights Osso, Mastrosso and Carcagnosso, members of the "Guarduña", escape to the islands of Favignana revenging the raping of their sister. They spend 29 years in the caves of these islands, elaborating codes that would form the basis of the new generations to come. Once the rules were finalised, legend has it that Osso goes to Sicily and creates the mafia, Mastrosso goes to Calabria where he founds the 'ndrangheta and Carcagnosso goes to Naples to establish the camorra (Iadeluca 2, Cilione). Still today, their names are used in the ritual of baptism in the 'ndrangheta when an individual has proven to be in merit of stepping up the ladder in the 'ndrina's positions (Rossetti 75).

- To what extent do you think this legend could have served the associations mafiosi as a source of legitimacy?
- As Giannini points out in his study, the mafia has a strategy of delegitimizing, in which the only possible identity is the one of the association mafiosa (Giannini 43). But by delegitimizing other narratives or identities, is there identity legitimized?



Figure 8. De Biase, Antonello. "Osso, Mastrosso e Carcagnosso. I tre fratelli che fondarono la malavita". Napoli più, 1 July 2017.

The XXth century; from WWII to the *anni di piombo*, years of lead. During the XXth century many changes arise in Italy and the rest of the world, changing the dynamics of the mafia. As previously mentioned, fascism from the 1920s to the end of the second world war carry out a repressive campaign against the mafia, at least in Sicily, which gets greatly weakened in Italian soil. Once Mussolini's regime falls, and with the first emigrations, in the 1940s, of italians that had migrated to the US and are now returning to Italy we see a strengthening of the mafia. Indeed, the period following the second world war, in Italy, from 1958 to 1963, there is an economic boom. The Italian economy becomes more open to the international market, less and less centralized and controlled by the state, we see a rise in consumption and production within Italy and a decrease in religiosity and power of the Catholic Church in Italy (Zanelli 11, 18). It might be precisely because of this unprecedented prosperity that a very bloody conflict emerges between 1962 and 1963 in which the *cosca* La Barbera and Greco enter into a war, la *prima guerra di mafia*, the first war of the mafia (Coco 39, Herold). The direct cause of the war was on an alleged theft on a dose of heroine that from Egypt was directed to New York, but did not arrive in the quantity established before hand. While the war allegedly ended in 1963 with the arrest of many mafiosi, the conflict is thought to have ended in 1969 with the massacre of viale Lazio where five people died, including Michele Cavataio, in figure 8, which facilitated the hold and the increase of power in the hands of the *cosca* of the corleonesi (Herold).



Figure 9. Herold, Fabio. “Prima guerra di mafia”. *Lo sbuffo*, 3 July 2018.

The economic prosperity, that might have caused the war, however, is not homogenous, and while the north gets immediately absorbed into the global market, the south moves at a slower pace. This leads to the internal displacement of unemployed that from the south move to the north where they are discriminated (Zanelli 14,16). The economic changes followed by the demographic one enacted various political responses, that weren't, however, always accepted by the population. In addition, many promises and reforms promised to the population, were not fulfilled and tensions rose between the various political parties and social classes (Zanelli 20, 35). The tensions led, from 1968 to 1973 to manifestations and protests, first started by university students and then by the worker, but eventually involved the whole society (Zanelli 22, Hjelde 4). While these manifestations and protests started peacefully, they soon escalated to violence (Zannelli 25, Hjelde 5).



Figure 10. “Il 1968 e Sociologia: moda, cambiamento, reazioni”. DNA Trentino.



Figure 11. Alfonso, Donatella. “Il '68 in ritardo delle femministe genovesi”. *la Repubblica*, 2018.

Starting from 12 december 1969, the first bomb exploded in the Bank of Agriculture, in Milan (Zannelli 41, Hjelde 6). It marked the beginning of long years marked by political terrorism, ages known in Italy as anni di piombo, years of lead, by, on one hand, the neo fascists and the servizi deviati - secret services that decided to part from the State -, most commonly referred to as brigate nere, and on the other hand, the communists, also called brigate rosse (Zanelli 41, Hjelde 7-8). In the midst of this political terror, from 1981 to 1982 we also see the seconda guerra di mafia, the second war of the mafia, started with the killing of Stefano Bontade. The war, however, rather than being an armed conflict, was the “systematic elimination of the adversary by part of the cosca of the corleonesi” (Coco 45-56). It is precisely this war that brought about, in 1982, the first legal milestone with law n. 646, or better known as the law Rognoni - La Torre, previously mentioned (“La legislazione”, Ortega

24-26). It is however only in 1988, a year before the fall of the Berlin wall, that the political terror, devastating the whole of Italy, ends, but in the meantime, from 1969 to 1988 there were 14,591 acts of violence that were politically motivated causing a total of 419 deaths and 1,181 wounded (Schaerf et. al. 15, Fasanella 21).



Figure 12. Leone, Roberto. “Trent’anni fa l’assassinio di Bontade, così iniziò la guerra di mafia”. *la Repubblica*, 2011.



Figure 13. Baudino, Stefano. “La seconda guerra di mafia - La mattanza”. *Antimafia Duemila*, 2020.



Figure 14. Vasta, Giorgio. “Tra memoria e finzione: gli anni di piombo nella letteratura”. *Minima & Moralia*, 2011.

During these years, while many clarifications are still needed, some imprints of the collaboration of the mafia in these various acts of violence have been found, specifically collaboration from the camorra and cosa nostra. This because it was a time in which the drug market was flourishing and so the mafia needed the State to not obstacolate this process (Schaerf et. al. 26-27). It is in fact, precisely in these years that we see the creation and evolvement of various small criminal groups into associations mafiosi. In the mid 1970s, Felice Maniero creates the association mafioso known as the *Mala del Brenta*, in Veneto (Zuddas). In the late 1970s we see the creation of an association mafioso in Rome, the *Banda della Magliana*, that carries out various kidnaps, robberies and other violent acts in close collaboration with the “traditional” association mafiosi (Martone 23). In the beginning of the 1980s, we see the creation of the sacra corona unita and the stidda (Massari 243, Adorno 105, Veltri, Caccamo, Nuccitelli).

- How can there be accountability if there is a lack of clarity on the events that took place and its actors? How can clarity be brought upon such events?

Sacra Corona Unita. Also known as the quarta mafia, fourth mafia, it is an association mafioso that originates in Puglia. While it officially dates back to 1983, from within prisons,

but starting from the 1970s there starts to be a strong presence of the camorra and cosa nostra in Puglia, collaborating with, but also suppressing the autotnocus criminal groups. This because immediately, the camorra and cosa nostra saw the strategic geographical location of the Puglia, receiving the heroine and tobacco from Albania, Turkey and other parts of the Middle East, and its closer proximity to the north of Italy (Giannini 10, 13, Massari 243, Adorno 105, Veltri). Hence, in 1983, the various local criminal groups get together and formed the *sacra corona unita*. Attracted by the ritualistic aspect of the 'ndrangheta, the sacra corona unita, similarly, created rigid codes and rituals in its establishment (Massari 243-245, Adorno 105-108, Veltri). It also structured itself similarly to the ndrangheta with both a horizontal and a vertical levels, made eight rigid hierarchical positions (Adorno 109, Massari 245-6). Because it didn't have an old socio-cultural tradition, as the other three associations, it used the ritualistic aspect of the organization to create its own tradition and make up an idealistic image of what they represented and tattooing symbols by which they can be identified (Adorno 111, Massari 247-252, Veltri).

La stidda. Sometimes referred to as the quinta mafia, fifth mafia, the stidda is another association mafioso in Sicily. It was created soon after the sacra corona unita, in the 1980s, by a group of individuals expelled from cosa nostra who decided to rebel and form their own association. They are less commonly known, probably because they haven't quite reached the international arena and mainly control the south-eastern part of Sicily. They nonetheless have been able to penetrate other territories in the rest of Italy, including parts of the north, and use very violent tactics to achieve their wanted outcomes (Caccamo, Veltri). They have trained kids, under 15, to become pitiless killers (Nuccitelli). They can often be recognized for their tattoo on the big and pointer fingers indicating a star, from which the name stidda, meaning star in Sicilian dialect (Caccamo, Veltri, Nuccitelli).

The XXIst century; from the *anni di piombo* to the *trattativa Stato-mafia*.

Immediately after the end of the *seconda guerra di mafia*, while the political terror gets fiercer and fiercer between the *brigate nere* and *brigate rosse*, Rocco Chinnici decides to create a *pool antimafia*, a group of *magistrati*, magistrates, and judges that will work together to condemn the actors of the mafia. Rocco Chinnici gets killed before the *pool antimafia* is established, but Antonio Caponnetto will take over and carry it out (Giannini 10, Corsino). Already in 1983, Tommaso Buscetta, one of the boss of cosa nostra gets arrested in Brazil and repatriated to Italy in 1984. Being a loser of the *seconda guerra di mafia*, he becomes a *pentito* and starts to collaborate with the law. Thanks to his revelations, on the 29 of september 1984 the police carries out the blitz di San Michele in which 366 people get detained. The judge Caponnetto does not stop there and decides, in 1985, to establish the maxiprocesso of which the trial will start on 10 february 1986 and end on the 30 of january 1992. There will be 707 people investigated and that will, in the end, be condemned to the *ergastolo*. Precisely because this *maxiprocesso* is a hard hit for the mafia, cosa nostra in particular, respond using a *strategia straggista*, carrying out various acts of terror, of which a series of bombs and homicides (Corsino). It is precisely in those years, between 1992 and 1994 there is the alleged *trattativa Stato-mafia* in which the political institutions, transitioning from the first to the second republic, presumably made deals with the *cosche* granting them some benefits as to stop with this *strategia stagista* (Fasanella 16). According to Massimo Ciancimino, the son of Vito Ciancimino, allegedly in charge of being the intermediary between the State and the mafia, Giovanni Brusca and Salvatore Cancemi, the former boss of cosa nostra, Totò Riina, had written down on a piece of paper, *il papello*, the twelve pretese that would put an end to their acts of terror (Arcomano 42-43). Many politicians, such as Silvio Berlusconi, members of the *ROS dei carabinieri*, such as Mario Mori, and boss mafiosi, such as Totò Riina and the *pentito* Giovanni Brusca. While much

clarification is still needed to fully reconstruct what happened, an investigation and trial have started, in 2013 and are still taking place today, in Palermo (Colletta 4, “Trattativa Stato-mafia”).



Figure 15. Cannatà, Angelo. “La trattativa Stato-mafia: sentenza, fatti e interpretazioni”. *MicroMega*, 2018.

The XXIst century: from the *trattativa* to *Mafia Capitale*. In more recent years, while *la trattativa* highlights an alleged deal between the mafia and the State, new deals between the mafia and the State have emerged, of which the most recent one involving the initially alleged association mafiosa *mafia capitale* and various politicians and individuals from the soccer industry. Mafia capitale started to be under investigation in 2010 and brought about the accusations of being an association mafiosa in 2015, with the operation in 2014 “*mondo di mezzo*”, the world in between, as in fact it creates a bridge between the high world of politics and the lower world of criminality (Martone 21, 27, Zuffada 3). It evolved from the previously mentioned neofascists and the Banda della Magliana and is headed by Massimo Carminati and Salvatore Buzzi (Martone 27-28, Zuffada 2-3). They specifically gain profit from managing the migration centers in Rome (Martone 32-34). At the Tribunale of Rome, in 2017, the accusations of Mafia capitale being an association mafiosa were rejected even though the various crimes that were mentioned were in fact proven to have been committed (Zuffada 7) .

- This is particularly interesting as it brings us back to the question of how do we define the mafia?

Recommendation. Here is the link to a documovie that sheds some light on the *trattativa Stato-mafia*.

“La trattativa”, directed by Guzzanti, Sabina. Filmed in 2014.

<https://www.raiplay.it/programmi/latrattativa>

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