

Kinship Terms of the Kurmali: An Anthro-Linguistic Study

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ABSTRACT: The Kurmali speaking community in West Bengal is a part of a continuum of the Kurmali belt which exists in northern part of India. The continuum occurs through Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal. In this paper the kinship terms of Kurmali have been studied from both linguistic and anthropological point of views. Kurmali is an Indo-Aryan language which been comparatively less studied. This paper explores the standard kinship relations and the associated set of kinship terms in Kurmali of West Bengal. The formations of such terms are also elaborated with grammatical analysis. Moreover the present paper has compared the Kurmali kinship terms with Bengali kinship terms as Bengali remains the major language of the area. The comparison is used to explore the contact situation as well as the historical development of Kurmali. The comparison has also been expressed through simple statistical constants. The study is based mainly on primary data collected from Kurmi community of Purulia district of West Bengal, India. This study shows that there are eight terms for core consanguineal relations in Kurmali. There are no sex and age neutral terms in Kurmali which are found in English like parents, brother, sister, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Kurmali is an Indo-Aryan language spoken mainly in south Jharkhand and parts of West Bengal (Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, etc.), Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. The total population speaking Kurmali according to the National Census of 2011 (Government of India) is 3,11,175. However, the language has been kept under the cover term Hindi as one of its varieties by the Government of India. Kurmali is mainly spoken by the Kurmi community. In West Bengal, the Bengali script is used while in Jharkhand, the Devanagari script is used to write Kurmali. It is also reported that in Odisha, Odia script is used to write the same. As the language is spoken

over the vast area, it has different varieties. There are also differences in spellings of the name of the community. Some writes *Kudmali* while others prefer *Kurmali*. As the language census of Government of India (2001) used the spelling *Kurmali*, the present authors also followed the same tradition, in this paper.

There are various debates about the classification of Kurmali. Grierson (1903) classified Kurmali as the western variety of Bengali. Verma ('99) mentioned Kurmali as a sub-dialect of Magahi, Lahiri and Saha (2017) argued Kurmali to be a mixed language. In Ethnologue, Eberhard *et al.* (2017) claimed that Kurmali showed a lexical similarity of 58%–72% with Magahi and 41%–55% with Bengali. All of these discussions however points towards a common notion that Kurmali has proximal relationship with Bengali. This proximal

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relationship of Kurmali with Bengali is also reflected in Kurmali kinship and address terms.

There are some books written about Kurmali by their own community. Some of the books described the struggle of Kurmali community while others narrated the myths related to their origin and migration like *Sindhu Theke Subarnarekha* (From Sindhu to Subarnarekha) by Jyoti Lal Mahato (2014). Sindhu was none other but the river Indus (located in the north western part of India) and the river Subarnarekha (the river which flows through the states of Jharkhand and West Bengal). It has been argued that the Kurmi community migrated from Indus River (west) to Subarnarekha (east). In *Kurmâli bhâskhika itihâsa, rupa, cisa* (History of the Kurmali language), Mâhâto ('82) tried to establish historical link between Kurmali and Santhali languages. Majumder (2018) tried to describe the Kurmali kinship terms in his paper, but he did not compare those with Kurmali's neighbouring language Bengali which the authors have tried to do in this paper.

Kinship as a subject matter has been vastly studied by anthropologists (Sousa, 2003; Shapiro, 2008; Jones, 2010). Morgan ('71) held that kinship terminologies were aspects of language. He also remarked that they were more resistant to change and more conservative in the both of vocabulary and grammar of their language. Kinship terms regularly feature in the list of words that make up the core vocabulary of a language hence it is also studied by the linguists. The parallels between kinship rules and language rules were the subject of study in structural linguistics and structuralism during the 1960s and 1970s. It was observed that kinship terms demonstrated not only social facts but also helped to describe linguistic principles. Jones (2010) gives a brief of the assortment of formal methods devised to analyze systematic variation and universals in kin terminology. In this context, the studies of Wallace and Atkins ('60), Lounsbury ('64a; '64b), Romney and D'Andrade ('64), Goodenough ('65) and Buchler and Selby ('68), are mentionable. .

Constituting kinship terminologies as objects of comparative study is also an old tradition. Campbell (1816) established that Telugu and other languages of South India were related to one another, and not to Sanskrit, in spite of the many Sanskrit loan-words in

these languages. This is because the core vocabulary is similar among the South Indian languages but different from that of Sanskrit. Kinship vocabulary is explicitly a part of the proof.

There are basically two types of kinship relations within a family. They are *affinal kinship* and *consanguineous kinship*. Affinal kinship is based on marriage. Primary affinal relationship is the one between a husband and a wife which in its extended form includes spouse's parents and spouse's siblings of both sides. Consanguineal kinship based on descent is called consanguineal kinship, commonly known as blood relation. The relation between a child and his/her parents, relation between children of the same set of parents, between uncles and nephews/nieces are examples of consanguineous kinship. Both types of kinships have various kinship terms. A kinship term is employed to a designated category of kinsmen; a kinsman is an individual to whom one (*ego*) is related by genealogical connections. They are culturally-positated relations among individuals which are presumed to be established by processes of conception and birth and which are held to be inalienable and congenital (Scheffler, '82).

Kinship terms of many Indian languages have been also studied (Karve '65, Vatuk '69, Trautmann '81). However the present authors could not find any studies on Kurmali kinship terms. In this paper the present authors have tried to explore the Kurmali kinship terms from both linguistics and anthropological point of view. This paper attempts to document and describe the kinship terms of Kurmali. In the process of description, Kurmali terms were also compared with Bengali kinship terms.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the direct intensive observation and interviews taken from more than twenty informants from the members of Kurmi community of Shyampur village of Purulia district of West Bengal. These informants were from different age groups and sexes. Questionnaire method was used to collect data following the method of Saha et.al (2018). All the sessions were digitally recorded by Sony audio recorder. The recorded data was manually transcribed in International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to understand the actual pronunciation of the terms. In the paper also

the authors have presented data in IPA. Apart from the above mentioned methods employed in the field, the earlier published and unpublished materials of Kurmali have also been referred for this study. Beside these they have also used genealogical diagrams to understand the kin terms.

relations through both consanguinity and affinity. They have followed the common ethnological abbreviations which are: P= parents, M= mother, F= father, B= brother; Z= sister; S= son; D= daughter; H=husband; W= wife; E= spouse; G= siblings; C= child; e= elder; y= younger.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

There are eight terms for core consanguineal relations in Kurmali as can be seen in the following table (Table 1). There are no sex and age neutral terms in Kurmali in consanguineal relations which are found in English like parents, brother, sister, etc. In Kurmali, the terms, viz. /d*ad*a/ (eB), /b^oai/ (yB) make the age distinction and the terms, viz. /d*ad*a/ (eB), /d*id*i/ (eZ) make the sex distinction.

Consanguineal relations

Consanguineal relation refers to the blood relation. It is the relation among the same stock or common ancestors. The consanguineal relations can be classified into two types of relations, namely core and peripheral relations.

Representing kinship terms of core consanguineal relations: The relations made by the ego directly are the core consanguineal relations. The core consanguineal relation, as its name suggests, consists of ego's parents, siblings and offsprings. For these relations, there are the following kinship terms Table 1):.

Kurmali kinship terms

The present authors have described the Kurmali

Table 1. Representing kinship terms of core consanguineal relations

Kin types	Kinship terms			Generation from ego
	Kurmali	Bengali	English	
F	/bap/	/bapa/	Father	G+1
M	/mai/	/ma/	Mother	G+1
yB	/b ^h ai/	/b ^h ai/	Brother	G=0
eB	/dada/	/dada/	Brother	G=0
yZ	/b ^o hin/	/bon/	Sister	G=0
eZ	/didi/	/didi/	Sister	G-1
S	/bɛta/	/ɔ ^h ɛle/	Son	G-1
D	/bɛti/	/mɛje/	Daughter	G-1

The core consanguineal relations are father, mother, elder/younger brother, elder/younger sister, son and daughter. So there are eight terms for core consanguineal relations.

consanguineal relations are not the direct relation of the ego but the ego's relations through the core consanguineal relations are called the peripheral consanguineal relations. It is also called the relation through another relation. The peripheral consanguineal relations can be interpreted by a number of relations which are as follows:

Representing kinship terms of peripheral consanguineal relations: The peripheral

Through parents' up-generation (Table 2):

Table 2. Representing kinship terms through parents' up generation

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
FFF, FMF, MFF, MMF	dada	propitamho	G+3
FFM, FMM, MFM, MMM	didi	propitamhi	G+3
FF, MF	dudubap	t ^h akurda	G+2
FM, MM	dudumai	t ^h akurma	G+2

The peripheral consanguineal relations made by parents' up-generation are father's/mother's father's father, father's/mother's mother's father, father's/

mother's father's mother, father's/mother's mother's mother, father's/mother's father, father's/ mother's mother.

Through father (Table 3):

Table 3. Representing kinship terms through father

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
FeB	bɔ̃ɔ̃obap	ʔakurda	G+1
FeBW	bɔ̃ɔ̃omai	ʔhakurma	G+1
FyB	Kaka	Kaka	G+1
FyBW	Koki	Kaki	G+1
FeZ/ FyZ	p ^h up ^h u	Pisi	G+1

The peripheral consanguineal relations through father are father's elder/younger brother, father's elder/younger sister. These

terms make a clear age distinction which is dissimilar to English terms like uncle for FB and aunt for FZ.

Through mother (Table 4):

Table 4. Representing kinship terms through mother

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
MeB	mama/ bɔ̃ɔ̃omama	mama/ bɔ̃ɔ̃omama	G+1
MyB	mama/ c ^h otomama	mama/ c ^h otomama	G+1
MeBW/ MyBW	Mami	Mami	G+1
MeZ	bɔ̃ɔ̃o mafi	bɔ̃ɔ̃o mafi	G+1
MyZ	mafi	mafi	G+1
MeZH/ MyZH	mɔ̃ɔ̃fa	mefo	G+1

In Kurmali, there are similar terms mama and mami for mother's elder/younger brother (MeB, MyB) as

well as mother's elder/younger sister (MeZ, MyZ) which are age-neutral terms.

Through father's/mother's siblings (Table 5):

Table 5. Representing kinship terms through father's/mother's siblings

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
FBeS, FZeS, MBeS, MZeS	dada	dada	G=0
FByS, FZyS, MByS, MZyS	b ^h ai	b ^h ai	G=0
FBeD, FZeD, MBeD, MZeD	didi	didi	G=0
FByD, FZyD, MByD, MZyD	bɔ̃ɔ̃hin	Bon	G=0

The peripheral consanguineal relations through father's siblings are father's brother's/sister's elder/younger son and father's brother's/sister's elder/younger daughter. The relations made by father's

siblings are upholding both age and sex distinction. Elder and younger are distinctly noticed by the terms like 'dada' and 'bhai' which is unlike English terms like cousin which is used for both the sexes.

Through male ego (Table 6):

Table 6. Representing kinship terms through male ego

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
BS	b ^h aipo	b ^h aipo	G-1
BD	b ^h ai.ji	b ^h ai.ji	G-1
ZS	b ^h egna	b ^h agna	G-1
ZD	b ^h egni	b ^h agni	G-1

Through female ego (Table 7):

Table 7. Representing kinship terms through female ego

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
BS	b ^h egna	b ^h agna	G-1
BD	b ^h egni	b ^h agni	G-1
ZS	b ^h egna	b ^h agna	G-1
ZD	b ^h egni	b ^h agni	G-1

The peripheral consanguineal relations made by female ego are the same to the relation made by the male ego. But the terms are different. The relations,

namely brother's/sister's son and brother's/sister's daughter by male ego and female ego are termed differently because of the sex distinction.

Through child (Table 8):

Table 8. Representing kinship terms through child

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
SS, DS	na _t i	na _t i	G-2
SD, DD	na _t ni	na _t ni	G-2

The peripheral consanguineal relationship terms are at times overlapping. Son's son and daughter's son both are referred by the same term 'nat*i'. Similarly, son's daughter and daughter's daughter both are referred as 'nat*ni'.

relations, the affinal relations too can be categorized as core and peripheral relations.

Representing kinship terms of core affinal relations: The concept of the core affinal relation is similar to the core consanguineal relations but they are considerably different to each other. The affinal relations (made by marriage) through the core consanguineal relations are called the core affinal relations. The core affinal relations are made by the ego's father, mother, siblings and offspring. They are termed in the following ways.

AFFINAL RELATIONS

The relations made by marriage but not by blood are called the affinal relations. There are two major ways to establish the relations. Like the consanguineal

Through father (Table 9):

The affinal relations are between father and father's elder/younger brother's wife and father's elder/younger sister's husband.

Table 9. Representing kinship terms through father

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
FeBW	bɔ _o mai	bɔ _o ma	G+1
FyBW	Koki	Kaki	G+1
FeZH	mɔ _f ai	mɔ _f ai	G+1

Through mother (Table 10):

The affinal relations are between mother and mother's elder/younger brother's wife and mother's elder/younger sister's husband.

Table 10. Representing kinship terms through mother

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
MeBW	Mami	Mami	G+1
MyBW	Mami	Mami	G+1
MeZH	mɔ _f a	mɔ _f ai	G+1
MyZH	mɔ _f a	mɔ _f ai	G+1

Through the ego's siblings (Table 11):

The affinal relations are between ego's siblings and siblings' elder/younger brother's wife and siblings' elder/younger sister's husband. For these relations, there are four different terms in Kurmali.

Table 11. Representing kinship terms through ego's siblings

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
GeBW	bohu _d i	bou _d i	G=0
GyBW	Bohu	b _a i bou	G=0
GeZH	<u>d</u> ada	jamaibabu/ b ^h ognipo _t i	G=0
GyZH	jamai	b ^h ognipo _t i	G=0

Through the ego's child (Table 12):

Table 12. Representing kinship terms through ego's child

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
SW, SSW, DSW	Bou	Bouma	G=0,-1,-2
DH	ḡamai	ḡamai	G=0,-1,-2
DDH, SDH	natḡamai	natḡamai	G=0,-1,-2

The terms *buhari* is common term for SW, SSW, and DSW.

Representing kinship terms of peripheral affinal relations

The affinal relations through peripheral consanguineal relations are known as the peripheral affinal relations. The peripheral affinal relations are also established through different relations which are treated as below.

Through parents' siblings (Table 13):

Table 13. Representing kinship terms through parents' siblings

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
PZeDH, PBeDH	ḡada	ḡada	G=0
PZyDH, PByDH	ḡamai	ḡamai	G=0
PZeSW, PBeSW	bohudi	boudi	G=0
PZySW, PBySW	Bohu	Bouma	G=0

The affinal relations between parent's sibling and parent's brother's/sister's elder daughter's husband, parent's brother's/sister's younger

daughter's husband, parent's brother's/sister's elder son's wife and parent's brother's/sister's younger son's wife.

Through parents-child relationship:

Table 14. Representing kinship terms through parents-child relationship

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
SWF, DHF	bḡhai	bḡi	G-1
SWM, DHM	bḡhanu	bḡan	G-1

The peripheral affinal relations between a parent of a child and the parents of the child's

spouse. These are cross relations and reciprocal terms.

Through ego's siblings:

Table 15. Representing kinship terms through ego's siblings

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
BSW	Bohu	Bouma	G+1
BDH	ḡamai	ḡamai	G+1
ZSW	Bohu	Bouma	G+1
ZDH	ḡamai	ḡamai	G+1

The peripheral affinal relations between ego's siblings and the spouse of the siblings.

Through ego's wife:

Table 16. Representing kinship terms through ego's wife

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
W	Bohu	Bou	G=0
WeB	fala	bTro fala	G=0
WeBW	fḡḡi	bTro falar bou	G=0
WyB	fala	c ^o otofala	G=0
WyBW	fḡḡi	c ^o otofalar bou	G=0
WeZ	fali	bTro fali	G=0
WeZH	faru	b ^a acra b ^a ai	G=0
WyZ	fali	c ^o otofali	G=0
WyZH	faru	b ^a acra b ^a ai	G=0

These peripheral affinal relations, as mentioned in the table (16) refers to the ego as male and the relations are established through his wife. The relations through

wife are wife's elder brother and his wife, wife's younger brother and his wife, wife's elder sister and her husband, wife's younger sister and her husband.

Through ego's husband:

Table 17. Representing kinship terms through ego's husband

Kinship relation	Kurmali	Bengali	Generation from Ego
H	fami	fami	G=0
HeB	b ^a afur	b ^a afur	G=0
HeBW	gɔɪni	ja	G=0
HyB	ɔ̄ɛuɔɔ	ɔ̄æor	G=0
HyBW	gɔɪni	ja	G=0
HeZ	t ^h akurj ^h i	t ^h akurj ^h i	G=0
HeZH	nɔɪnodfu	nTɪndai	G=0
HyZ	nɔɪnod	nɔɪnod	G=0
HyZH	nɔɪnodfu	nTɪndai	G=0

The relations made by ego's husband are more similar to the relations made by ego's wife. But there are different terms for some relations like wife's younger brother (WyB) and husband's younger brother (HyB).

RESULTS

In Kurmali as mentioned earlier, there are no gender common terms like 'parents', 'spouse' and 'sibling' as can be found in English. Every Kinship term in Kurmali, marks sex. However, there are terms which are age neutral. For example terms like /mama/ refer to both mother's elder and younger brother. There are no avoidance kinship relations in Kurmali unlike Bengali. In Bengali, daughter in law and father in law traditionally follow avoidance relation. However, such restrictions were not found in Kurmali. Mostly every kinship relations are perceived equally.

Kurmali kinship terms follow the typical Indo-Aryan (IA) feature of kinship terms. Like most of the Indo-Aryan languages Kurmali does not mingle affinal and consanguineal kin, hence there are no terms generated from such mixture. This can be found in Dravidian kinship terms. For example, in Kannada and Tamil the term used for mother's brother (*mama*) can also be used for husband because a girl can marry mother's brother. However, this type of marriage is a taboo in Kurmali and Bengali communities like other Indo-Aryan speech communities.

Secondly, IA languages differentiate between cross and parallel kinship terms. For example, son/daughter of paternal uncle or aunt is differentiated

from son/daughter of maternal uncle or aunt by adding adjectives for the paternal or maternal uncle. Like in Bengali, *mamat*o b^oai* (maternal uncle's son) and *k^ourt*ut*o b^oai* (paternal uncle's son) are differentiated by the terms *mamat*o* (maternal uncle's) and *k^ourt*ut*o* (paternal uncle's).

Same thing can be found in Kurmali as well. However, in Kurmali we did not find any modifiers like *mamat*oor*, *k^ourt*ut*o* like Bengali. Such modifiers are formed in Kurmali by using genitive construction. There are several genitive markers in Kurmali; *-~/ -ko~/ -go~/ -ek*. The marker *-ek/* is used with the kinship terms. The vowel in the marking can be dropped when the host word ends in a vowel sound. To differentiate between the cross and parallel kinship terms, the relations of the parent with ego is stated followed by his/her offspring term (son or daughter) which is connected by the genitive marker with the parent, which is further followed by the relation with the ego, e.g. *mamek beta b^hai*, *mamik beta b^hai* etc.

In Kurmali kinship terms too, like a typical Indo-Aryan language /i/ suffix is used to mark feminine gender and /a/ is used to mark masculine gender, e.g. /b[^ha/ (son)- /b[^hi/ (daughter), /kaka/ (paternal uncle) - /koki/ (wife of paternal uncle), /mama/ (maternal uncle) - /mami/ (wife of maternal uncle) etc. In some of the words /i/ is added to make it feminine however /a/ is not required to make it masculine like, /ra}/ and /ra}i/. There are some exceptions where the masculine word ends on /i/ vowel like /nat*i/ in such cases /i/ vowel is not used to make the term feminine. The feminine parallel word of /nat*i/ is /nat*ni/.

Compounding is a common feature of coining extended kinship terms where two kinship terms are compounded to form an endocentric compound word, e.g. /mama/ and /f,,!fur/ are two independent kinship terms in Kurmali language. /mama f,,!fur/ (spouse's maternal uncle) also another kinship term in Kurmali which is the combination of previous two

kinship terms mama(MB) and f,,!fur (EF).

It can be seen that most of the kinship terms of Kurmali are common with that of Bengali. 37 consanguineal terms of Kurmali were collected in which 21 terms are common with Bengali as can be seen the following table and bar diagram (Figure 1).

Table 18. Showing number of common terms in Bengali and Kurmali in Consanguineal Terms

Core Consanguineal		Total	Peripheral Consanguineal		Total
Common terms in Bengali & Kurmali (%)	Unique terms of Kurmali (%)		Common terms in Bengali & Kurmali (%)	Unique terms of Kurmali (%)	
5 (62.50)	3 (37.50)	8	16 (55.17)	13 (44.82)	29

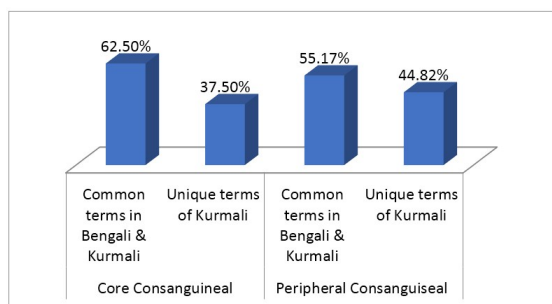


Figure 1. Bar diagram showing number of common terms in Bengali and Kurmali in consanguineal terms

It can be seen that in consanguineal kinship terms there are more unique terms in Kurmali related to affinal

Table 19. Showing number of common terms in Bengali and Kurmali in affinal terms

Core Affinal		Total	Peripheral Affinal		Total
Common terms in Bengali & Kurmali (%)	Unique terms of Kurmali (%)		Common terms in Bengali & Kurmali (%)	Unique terms of Kurmali (%)	
12 (80.00)	3 (20.00)	15	16 (66.67)	8 (33.33)	24

CONCLUSION

In this paper the authors have tried to describe kinship terms of Kurmali which has not been studied earlier. The kinship terms have been discussed based on consanguineal and affinal relations. It can be seen that Kurmali kinship terms fall in line with the pattern of most of the IA languages. The word formation processes to form kinship terms are also similar to that of IA patterns which have also been discussed in the preceding section. A comparison of Kurmali and Bengali terms has been done where it was seen that most of the words are similar to that of Bengali. The total number of kinship terms collected for Kurmali is 76 in which 49 are common with those of Bengali terms. A detailed description of the comparison has been

terms. The percent of common terms in Bengali and Kurmali can be seen in the following table and the bar diagram (Figure 2).

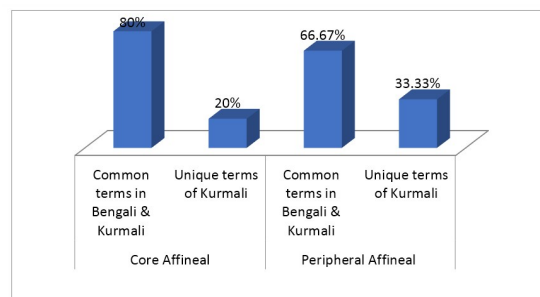


Figure 2. Bar Diagram showing number of common terms in Bengali and Kurmali in affinal terms

given in the prior section.

At this level it is hard to say why Kurmali has so many common terms with Bengali. It may be because both of them are sister languages. Other reason may be that Kurmali has been influenced by the major language of the area. It can be tested if similar terms of Kurmali from other regions are compared with Kurmali of West Bengal. Further studies can be done aiming at comparison of Kurmali of West Bengal and Jharkhand or Orissa.

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