

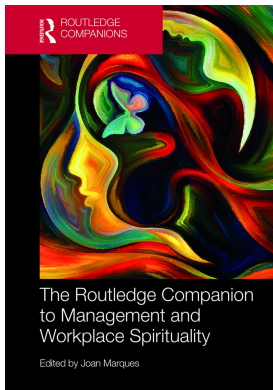
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 22 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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The Routledge Companion to Management and Workplace Spirituality

Joan Marques

Mana and the Existence of Leadership

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351015110-19>

Chellie Spiller, Matthew Mudford, Rachel Wolfgramm

Published online on: 11 Mar 2019

How to cite :- Chellie Spiller, Matthew Mudford, Rachel Wolfgramm. 11 Mar 2019, *Mana and the Existence of Leadership from: The Routledge Companion to Management and Workplace Spirituality* Routledge

Accessed on: 22 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351015110-19>

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MANA AND THE EXISTENCE OF LEADERSHIP

*Chellie Spiller, Matthew Mudford,
and Rachel Wolfgramm*

Mana and the Existence of Leadership

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow. I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

(Tagore, 2002)

Tagore's poem illuminates a wisdom of the ages, an eternal now-ness, where we are a movement through time, and inseparable from the world around us; a refraction of existence where the universe expresses itself through us. Cajete's (2015, p. 259) description of Indigenous spirituality resonates with Tagore's as Cajete explains that

spirituality comes from the process of exploring and coming to know the nature of the living energy that moves in each of us, through us, and around us. Coming to know this knowledge is considered completeness in its most profound form.

Māori recognize many forms of *mana* in the world, which flow through us; we are born with divinely endowed *mana* that comes, for example, from our kinship relationships, our ancestral lines, and our sacred lands and bodies of water (Porter, 2009). Tagore's rendering of pride as a "life throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment" captures the essence of what we are exploring in this chapter: *mana*. Pride as dignity, as *mana* drawn from the wellspring of our ancestors, sacred places, and communities, as our spiritual agency to take up respectful, right, and loving action. Contemporary explanations of *mana* reverberate with ancient meaning. *Mana* flows to us and from us. The following words from Māori leader, Tame Iti, point to this sense of connection: "Mana, everyone has it. It's about knowing who you are, where you come from, and connects you to your land. Mana grounds you. In the past, present and future" (Iti, 2015).

In early Hawaiian and Tahitian cultures *mana* referred to a spiritual energy and healing power that was possessed by people, places, and objects. Early anthropological accounts of Samoan culture defined *mana* as supernatural power (Pratt, 1862). Various anthropological accounts of religion and spirituality throughout the Pacific in the 1800s, including Melanesia and Polynesia, struggled to accurately define *mana* and explain the nuances between each group of peoples (Tomlinson & Kāwika Tenga, 2016). Some anthropologists also drew parallels between *mana* and a range of elementary principles contained within cultures of the diaspora of Indigenous peoples across the continent of Australia. In a Māori worldview, according to Marsden (2003), *mana* is spiritual authority and power derived from the gods and accompanied by the endowment of spiritual power to act in accordance with divine will. *Mana* can also refer to the enduring, indestructible power of the gods that is a sacred fire without beginning or end. Tāne (the first human) ascended by the sacred vine in order that he might retrieve *mana*, or the sacred power of the gods, which was known to ancestors as the *ahi komau* (Barlow, 1991). *Mana* has several sources, including that which rests on the prestige of ancestors and is ascribed by birth (*mana tūpuna*) and came to the ancestors from pre-human deities, from whom authority and power flowed (*mana atua*). *Mana atua* is acknowledged as sacred power that comes from spiritual forces. Humankind as part of a larger creative order can be agent, channel, and conduit, but not the *source* of *mana*. *Mana* has a part to play in almost every ceremony, ritual, and daily activity and is central for the group and the individual to maintain their integrity (Marsden, 2003, p. 288).

Mana tūpuna is a source of power and authority that comes from ancestors. It is held in our collective consciousness and valued as a source of ancestral efficacy (Henare, 2003; Marsden, 2003; Metge, 1976). *Mana tūpuna* is expressed through *whakapapa* (genealogical recital) and is considered one of the most prized forms of knowledge and an essential medium by which kinship, political, economic, and social ties are cemented and maintained. Therefore significant effort is associated with the retention and transmission of *whakapapa*, as evidenced in rituals such as *pōwhiri*, ritual greeting and welcome (Barlow, 1991; Metge, 1976; Royal, 2002; Salmond, 1991, 1998). Salmond noted in a Waitangi Tribunal Hearing (1998, p. 23, cited in Henare, 2003) that in 1840 in Northland, Māori were operating in a world governed by *whakapapa*. Ancestors intervened in everyday affairs, *mana* was understood as proceeding from the ancestor gods, and *tapu* (sanctity) was the sign of the gods' presence in the human world. Life was kept in balance by the principle of *utu* (reciprocal exchange), which operated in relationships between individuals, groups, and ancestors.

Connections to the natural world and the deities that comprised the polytheistic spiritual realm of Oceanic cultures were key in the expression of *mana* that tied into every aspect of daily life and brought about a close relationship with the natural world (Codrington & Murray, 1892). In the Māori world, *mana whenua* is a source of power associated with land and the environment. Metge (1995) and Tate (in Wolfgramm, 2007) note how, for Māori, *whenua* has more than one meaning: land in the sense of earth, as distinct from but associated with water; land in contrast to sea, in which case it includes the waters of the land (streams, rivers, lakes, springs, and the water table); and land meaning country or territory as a whole, comprising earth and oceans. This binding of humanity to the natural world is also shown in the word for a human placenta and for land being the same in Māori: *whenua*. In addition, *mana wahine* (*mana* of women) is often linked to *Papatūānuku* (earth mother) and is associated with the generative and nurturing forces demonstrated in a variety of areas related to women's leadership (Henry, 2015).

Whakapapa—Divine Genealogical Order

Every aspect of creation has a *whakapapa*, a divine genealogical order that takes us back through layers to a shared point of coalescence that is Io, creator of the cosmos (Marsden, 2003). In this world of relatedness, manifestations of life are unified through a common source in Io and are bound by life energies. Also, importantly, this is not a static account but rather a living unfolding, a process of transformation, as illuminated by Māori Marsden who says that to understand a rock one must look to the “crystal into which it is becoming” (2003, p. 45). In his view there is deep appreciation that all things are in a process of “becoming.”

When introducing themselves Māori will stand to share their genealogical connections, which trace relationships to land, waterways, and sacred places, to peoples and ancestors, to origins. These relationships evoke the manifold *mana* that flows to and from that person. In expressing *whakapapa*, a person is expressing oneness with the land and people. In this state of oneness, humans “become one with the *atua*, the spiritual powers” (Shirres, 1997, p. 57; see also Durie, 2003, p. 84). *Whakapapa* is not just a rote recital; it is a narration of belongingness, beingness, of respect and inseparable recognition of who we are. Through the evoking of *whakapapa* there is a deep appreciation and understanding that self-actualization involves spiritual unification with all creation (Shirres, 1997). Cycling back to Tagore’s poem that opened this chapter, the “life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment” is how *whakapapa* can feel, as we recognize we are part of a movement through time.

Te Rito (2007) observes that *whakapapa* represents an ongoing, continuing narrative stretching back hundreds of years, and notes the critical role this chronicled process plays in grounding individuals firmly in place and time, past and present, and in confirming one’s identity and overall sense of being. The notion of *whakapapa* is of integral importance to a Māori worldview upon which an identity narrative is constructed; an ordering of the universe which recognizes spiritual kinship with all creation. Wolfgramm (2007, p. 80) says: “Māori continue to see themselves as agents in an evolving cosmological community, and use *whakapapa* [genealogies] to actively interpret relationships in order to bring the sacred to the centre of being.”

Many Indigenous spiritualities are based on an appreciation that humans share kinship with all of life (Spiller & Wolfgramm, 2015) wherein “relatedness is a physical and metaphysical connection to everything temporal, spatial and material” (Deloria, Deloria, Foehner, & Scinta, 1999, in Gladstone, 2015, p. 23). Māori aspire to unify the spiritual and material worlds whereby the “cultural milieu is rooted both in the temporal and the transcendent world, this brings a person into intimate relationship with the gods and his universe” (Marsden, 2003, p. 23). In Royal (2011, p. 7) Marsden states:

We dwell within “the woven universe”, within the web of existence and no part of the whole is comprehensively autonomous. The purpose of life is to live within this intricate web of relationships and to become a conduit for the energies of life, to enable these energies to rise and fall within us.

Flourishing in Organizations

Royal (2006, p. 4) describes *mana* as a “special and non-ordinary presence or essence that can flow in the world.” He makes the point that *mana* lies at the heart of people’s health and well-being and involves feeling empowered, illuminated, and warm about ourselves and our life. He also notes the importance of restoring *mana* for those who have lost it and argues that community involvement, connection to *iwi* tribal background, and connection with their personal

history, identity, and background could be important pathways for the restoration of *mana*. The key tenet of this pursuit is essentially the empowerment of others. In organizations, people, especially those in leadership and management roles, are encouraged to reciprocally uplift the collective (Spiller & Stockdale, 2013).

Mana enables flourishing, a spiritual encounter with a complex of interwoven energies that bind humans together, in kinship with all of creation, and is itself a creative force (Henry, 2015; Spiller, Erakovic, Henare, & Pio (2011). Flourishing unfolds through the co-creative narratives of people in an organization in which people produce and aspire to make sense of the organization's highest ideals and possibilities (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008; Fredrickson & Dutton, 2008). When organizations are flourishing they have healthy relationships across many dimensions, including with ecologies, the *atua* (divine, gods), and the ancestors as well as human groupings—which, in organizational vernacular, includes employees, suppliers, and communities. Spiller and Stockdale (2013, p. 149) argue that “attending to the life-energy of an organization is an important, yet often overlooked aspect of management and leadership” and to ignore life energies leads to workplaces that do not flourish.

Spiritual life energies include (but are not limited to): *mauri* (life-force); *mana* (inherited and endowed authority); *wairua* (spirituality); and *hau* (reciprocity). *Mauri* is an immanent energy that weaves, binds, and unifies all things. It is a life-force that brings unity to the diversity in creation (Marsden, 2003). Even aspects of life such as our intentions, plans, relationships, words, and creations have a *mauri* (Kereopa, in Moon, 2003) and, thus, in the context of organizations, people are encouraged to support and strengthen *mauri*, as explained by Spiller and Stockdale (2013, p. 163):

Strong interconnected life-forces create and facilitate the conditions for thriving and realisation of individual and collective potential. The emergent whole is more than the sum of the parts—it is the coalescence of each person's *mauri*, along with other aspects such as processes, protocols, behaviors, attitudes, and intentions within an organisation, that give it an overall *mauri*...

Mauri can become contaminated. The vitality of an organisation can be greatly diminished, and can even become toxic, if the *mauri* of the organisation is allowed to become unhealthy.

Mana is transformed by *manaakitanga*, that is, through acts of generosity that enhance the wellbeing of all (Durie, 2001). Marsden (2003) claims that Māori social interactions require structures that enhance *mana Māori*, as *mana* involves the wholeness of social relationships, wellbeing, integrity, and continuity through time and space. In this sense, *mana* is derived from the support of one's people, requiring their active cooperation (*mana tangata*). Hence *mana tangata* acts to enhance the promotion of the common good and unity within plurality. The dynamic relationship between leaders and followers in Māori society involves an exchange of *mana* (Barlow, 1991; Durie, 1998; Henare, 2003; Henry & Pene, 2001; Marsden, 1975). Thus *mana* is associated with leadership and signifies social status, influence, and respect (Barlow, 1991; Durie, 1998; Henare, 2003; Marsden, 2003; Moko-Mead, 2003).

Spiller and Stockdale (2013, pp. 162–163) offer a contemporary model with seven key considerations for the expression of *mana* by managers as part of the wellbeing of an organization:

- Recognize that managers and leaders stand in the power of the authority of the ancestral, tribal and family connections of the people who work for the organisation.

- In conflict situations consider the innate authority of the person, whilst honouring one's own, and search for win-win outcomes.
- Accept and respect that all people have their own innate authority—create the conditions so this can flourish in others, in a spirit of generosity.
- Encourage the release of a person's potential through training, supervision and personal growth.
- Always seek to enhance the collective.
- Be in integrity, about making and keeping promises.
- Seek the guidance and wisdom of a mentor or elder in the tribal/local community.

A *mana*-based approach suggests that *mana* is gained by growing it in others and thus represents a reciprocal relationship. Leaders who acknowledge a *mana*-based approach seek to build mutual relationships of respect and reciprocity (Roche, Haar, & Brougham, 2015; Spiller, 2010). Acts of kindness, humility, and respect offer opportunities for individuals to obtain *mana* through a style of leadership that is more distributed and shared than it is hierarchical.

Narrating Existence and Identity

Heil and Whittaker (2007) argue that narratives “are a powerful means to shaping peoples [*sic*] thinking and actions” (p. 369) and “have the capacity to alter the world we find ourselves in, in the most fundamental ways” (p. 382). Hammack (2008) and McAdams (2001) have described how the narratives can transform the ideals individuals live by and adhere to, which in turn transforms and sustains the culture itself. Stories serve as a particular form of narrative that have powerful sense-making potential yet are too often ignored in the deluge of organizational rationalistic, logical, and efficient noise that claims attention in organizations (Gabriel, 2004, p. 63). Yet, stories provide ample fertile ground for the reaffirmation and adaptation of one's identity within the cultural and organizational milieu.

Rukeyser (cited in McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007) holds up identity stories as crucial to a sense of self—stories support the individual to build an identity narrative over time, situating their unique experiences and personhood in an equivalently transformative cultural milieu. In this process, sustained through repeated interactions with others, the identity narrative is “processed, edited, reinterpreted, retold, and subjected to a range of social and discursive influences” (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 235) as the individual narrator gradually begins to broaden and integrate the various complementary threads of their personal narrative.

Many Māori narratives reflect a cultural attribution to, and emotional relationship with, not just people but a sacred place, *atua* (gods), and ancestors. The wider environment self-concept and a sense of communal belonging are fused. Every action is an imprint on our world; it creates our reality. Cajete (2015, p. 261) notes that “language used in a spiritual, evocative, or affective context is ‘sacred’ and has to be used responsibly.” This is consistent with the notion of *mana reo*, for Māori, *te reo*, the language, is the food of leadership “*te reo i te kai o te rangatira*.”

According to Rappaport (1995, p. 803), a community narrative is not only something a group of people have in common, shared narratives may be what creates a community. Narratives may represent historical or mythological accounts (or an amalgamation) through which members of the community come to understand themselves and the community. Community narratives create distinctness in a community, which shows its members as uniquely identifiable from the wider society in which they are embedded. Further, narratives create a rallying point for communities: a focus for belief, aspiration, and meaning, as well as a means for promoting

Table 18.1 Exploring Some Core Dimensions of Mana

<i>Mana in Worldviews</i>	<i>Mana Dimensions</i>	<i>Mana in Leadership</i>
<i>Mana o te uu—I nga uia o mua</i> Multidimensional view of time and space—plurality	Honoring the <i>mana</i> and <i>tapu</i> of the past, present, and future	Leaders commit to 500+ years in strategic planning Long-term intergenerational succession planning in leadership and governance Panoramic view of trends in the wider environment and a well-considered understanding of followership
<i>Mana atua</i> The spiritual sources of <i>mana</i> linked to a pantheon of spiritual beings	Honoring the intelligence of nature through according it divine status, for example, in divine beings such as <i>Tangaroa</i> (guardian of oceans), <i>Papatūānuku</i> (earth mother)	Rituals and ceremonies including <i>karanga</i> , <i>pōwhiri</i> highlight an enduring relationship with a cosmological community Highly evident in <i>tangi</i> (funerals of leaders) and in succession rituals
<i>Mana whenua</i> Terrestrial relationships to lands, seas, oceans, rivers, springs, and so forth	We are of the land, with the land, and for the land—connecting and respecting the lands and environs	Identities are affirmed and lived through these relationships—in leadership, the focus is on growth and guardianship <i>Papatūānuku</i> (earth mother) gives generously—therefore how do we as leaders in our strategic focus emulate this generosity in our decisions
<i>Mana Rangī</i> <i>Ranginui</i> (sky father) holds the <i>mana</i> of the heavens—see proverb at the conclusion	The ancestral partner of <i>Papatūānuku</i> ; <i>mana</i> derives from heavenly sources held in care by <i>Ranginui</i>	Utilizing technologies—alternatives to land-based economies
<i>Mana motuhake</i> Self/collective determination	Māori aspiration for greater control over their own destinies and resources Ongoing search for sovereignty, autonomy, independence, self-governance, self-determination, <i>ino rangaitratanga</i> , and <i>mana motuhake</i> (Durie, 1998, p. 218)	Māori economic self-sufficiency, social equity, cultural affirmation, and political strength (Durie, 1998) <i>Ka whawhāia ionu mātou</i> : struggle without end and the long tail of colonization (Walker, 1990/2004)

continued

Table 18.1 Continued

<i>Mana in Worldviews</i>	<i>Mana Dimensions</i>	<i>Mana in Leadership</i>
<i>Mana ro</i> The language and the voice must empower lives in positive transformation	Expressing self/identity and collective through voice and language	Empowering to be able to fully express oneself in one's own language; important identity milestone now for many
<i>Mana tipuna</i> Living faces of those who came before us and those who will come after us	We are our ancestors and our ancestors are us	Moving beyond anthropocentric worldview to connectivity to lands, rivers, mountains, oceans: these are our ancestors
<i>Mana wai</i> Water is spiritual source of <i>mana</i> and <i>wai</i> is the essence of <i>uainatanga</i> , spirituality	<i>Te wai e whakaora ia tātou</i> : water heals and sustains us <i>Te wai i te ora</i> : water is life	Leadership with regard to our relationship with water Particular focus on what we are basing our decisions on with regard to water, <i>wai</i> , which has symbolic, spiritual, and physical meaning
<i>Whakapapa</i> (expressing mana through connecting) Genealogical recital explicitly making connections to lands, seas, ancestors, mountains	Layering of relationships across time and space	Practiced prolifically in Māori leadership As ritual heuristic practice, it is used to articulate relationships of self with others in terrestrial, ancestral, spiritual, and social spheres (tribes) In practice, layering of relationships (<i>whakapapa</i>) is a transformative process that shifts the focus of embodied leadership to enacted decision making (Henry & Wolfgramm, 2015) Highly evident in symbolism and ritual
<i>Tinangauwae</i> (a place to stand)	Belonging	Affirmations of identity to place; for example the significance of a <i>marae</i> complex, the sense of belonging in an <i>ivi</i> , <i>hapū</i> , and <i>whānau</i> context and beyond
<i>Hau</i>	Relational reciprocity	Expressing <i>manaakitanga</i> , generosity, remembering such things from the past; consideration of this into the future as legacies
<i>Tiakitanga</i>	Role as guardians	Long-term strategic planning and decision -making that aligns both growth and guardianship

Source: What Rawa research project, see Acknowledgements at end.

civic engagement and discourse in the community. Humphreys (2000) observes that community narratives affirm traditions and promote a sense of wonder and awe as regards the positive and generative qualities of the community.

Fishbane (2001) observes that people are in a constant, fluctuating state of connection and disconnection, oscillating between the intimacy of relationships and the disembodied nature of isolation, with the former facilitating healthy personal development and the latter creating personal distress, inauthenticity, and depression. Lefebvre (1991) states that socio-relational narratives embolden and fortify the opportunity one has for connection and subsequent self-development, specifically by way of providing the communicative means by which one can make sense of one's experience of relational complexity and belonging. In addition, Somers (1994) notes that relational narratives allow for a fruitful transformation of the prevailing self/other dichotomy into social patterns, practices, and institutions that exist, not as mere abstractions, but as the mechanisms by which personal agency can be realized in the context of the highly social sphere that humans inhabit. Conceptualizations of self are, by these lights, predicated on an intricate interweaving of narratives concerning historical and social knowledge, and of institutional and cultural practices. Somers (1994) argues that relational narratives provide a means by which the coupling of social identity and personal agency can be better realized. Echoing these sentiments, Tamboukou (2010) and Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003) concur that relational narratives are a means through which individual personhood is conceived and identity developed in mutually constitutive relationships with others.

Mana in Leadership

As the essence of *mana* is actualized in relationships, *mana* underpins an integrative Māori leadership ontology (Henry & Wolfgramm, 2015). *Mana* in leadership is steeped in a “cosmological community of archetypal leaders” and, albeit there are tribal variations, this community includes Io (a multifaceted numinous Being), *Papatūānuku* (earth mother), and *Ranginui* (sky father). In the lived wisdom traditions of Indigenous peoples (Cajete, 2000; Spiller et al., 2011) perspectives of relational wellbeing inquire into how *mana* is expressed in contemporary leadership practice, highlighting an ethic of care approach based on reciprocity and respect, along with a multidimensional, integrative view of purpose that includes spiritual wellbeing (Spiller et al., 2011; Spiller & Wolfgramm, 2015).

Table 18.1 summarizes core dimensions of *mana* as developed throughout this chapter and shows how *mana* can be expressed and enacted in leadership.

Conclusion

We can learn much about the role *mana* plays in leadership, but it is merely part of a greater wisdom that views the world, not as a collection of disparate coincidences, but as connected by interlacing principles such as respect, reciprocity, care, family, and guardianship. *Mana* today is thus very important in a world of escalating environmental degradation and growing economic disparities. The role *mana* can play is a part of a greater wisdom about how the world is interconnected through people and nature.

In Te Ao Māori, a Māori worldview, there are a number of energies that were not explored in this chapter, such as *tapu* (sacredness, restriction) and *noa* (ordinariness, unrestricted) which are deeply connected to *mana*. It is important to set appropriate boundaries on knowledge, and we acknowledge that *mana* is not a stand-alone energy. However, given the constraints of space,

and awareness of the context, we have set a boundary around our work taking up Spiller, Kerr, and Panoho's (2015, p. 151) explanation:

In a Māori world, knowledge is living and full of energy. Words are not lifeless and static, but have power. For example, the use of *karakia* [prayer/invocation] to invoke intention is not a recital of words but a powerful calling for spiritual guidance and manifestation of reality. Not all knowledge is for immediate consumption. Some of it must be guarded, and as such, it is kept *tapu*—set apart and restricted. This is not so that cultural elites can use it to wield power over others: rather, it has a very practical purpose. In wayfinding, there is knowledge that needs to be guarded until such time as a person is ready. It is about safety, as some knowledge can have powerful, even harmful consequences.

The task of leaders and managers is to recognize the various elements of a situation, to pay attention to the unfolding dynamics, cultivate reciprocal relationships of respect, and ultimately to perceive flourishing as a complex of spiritual energies, a revealed state, and a process of being. Recognition narratives are reflections of a cosmological order that calls humans to self-actualize in relationship with each other and in kinship with all of creation. These narratives are deeply scripted imprints in dialectical individual and collective worldviews, formed within an understanding of an “eternal present” which, as it relates to the Māori worldview, acknowledges the ancestors, the *atua* (gods), and a divine genealogical order that reminds humans they are *kaitiaki*, custodians, and guardians of the planet, with responsibilities to ensure flourishing.

Mai i te rangi, ki te nuku o te whenua,
ka puta te ira tangata i te pō, i te whaiao, i te ao mārama.

From the sky and the land came people,
from the night, to the old world, to the world of light.

Acknowledgments

This chapter is part of a series of articles, chapters, and papers examining effective Māori leadership and integrated decision-making, and how these processes deliver pluralistic outcomes that advance transformative and prosperous Māori economies of wellbeing. Professor Spiller and Dr. Wolfgramm are principal investigators within Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga's Whai Rawa Māori economy group.

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