






Evaluation of high plateau tourism in Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey

Türkiye'nin Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde yayla turizminin değerlendirilmesi

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Abstract

High plateau areas come forth with their important tourism potential with the natural and cultural landscape values they possess in Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey. Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey have become more popularized in the recent years as areas of ecology-based tourism. Going up to high plateau areas is a traditional habit of rural population as well as it includes an aspect of recreation and relaxation. With this aspect high plateau areas offer a tourism and recreation activity for urban people. The main approach on this subject is the question that "how can it be possible for the region or high plateau areas to develop through tourism without destroying the natural, cultural and social structure of the region?" In this direction, the first tourism potential of the areas of the areas have been determined by taking into consideration the areas declared as tourism center in the region. The tourism potential of the high plateau areas in the region was presented by SWOT analysis. Then, tourism problems in the high plateau areas and the legal dimensions of these areas were determined.

Özet

Yaylalar sahip oldukları doğal ve kültürel peyzaj değerleri ile önemli turizm potansiyelleri olarak Türkiye'nin Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde öne çıkmaktadır. Son yıllarda Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi ekolojik temelli turizm alanları ile daha popüler hale gelmiştir. Yaylalara çıkmak kırsal nüfusun geleneksel bir davranışı iken bunun yanısıra rekreasyon ve rahatlama yönü de bulunmaktadır. Bu yönü ile yaylalar kentliler için turizm ve rekreasyon etkinliği sunmaktadır. Bu konudaki temel yaklaşım, "Bölgenin doğal, kültürel ve sosyal yapısını tahrip etmeden, bölge veya yayla alanlarının turizm yoluyla gelişmesi nasıl mümkün olabilir?" sorusu olacaktır. Bu doğrultuda, bölgedeki turizm merkezi ilan edilen bölgeler dikkate alınarak bölgelerin turizm potansiyeli belirlenmiştir. Bu alanların turizm potansiyeli SWOT analizi ile değerlendirilmiştir. Daha sonra, yayla alanlarında turizm sorunları ve bu alanların yasal boyutları belirlenmiştir.

INTRODUCTION

High plateau in untouched mountainous areas and national parks of the Black Sea Region of Turkey are facing with high demand for tourism day by day and as a result, in recent decades, aggressive tourism pressure can be observed in these areas (Kurdoğlu 2015). Mountainous areas occupying large areas in Turkey and the frequent activities in high plateau regions are important values in terms of high plateau tourism opportunities. The part of the mountainous areas that is appropriate for high plateau tourism is the Eastern Black Sea Mountains (Doğaner 2001). One of the policies for developing tourism in the Eastern Black Sea region is the acceptance of tourism as an impulsive economic force and the

detailed definition of all precautions for the development of this sector (Anonymous 1999). The second important policy is that the local people regard rural tourism as an activity which increases their income (Anonymous 2004a).

High plateau areas and high plateau residences of the Eastern Black Sea Region, which have become more popularized in the recent years as areas of alternative tourism, come forth with their important tourism potential with the natural and cultural values they possess (Demirel 2005). Having developed as a traditional habit of the rural population, going up to the high plateau areas has become a tourism and recreation activity for urban people as well since it includes an aspect of

recreation and relaxation. Modern secondary homes built at plateau areas show that there is also a development in regards to tourism (Pirselimoğlu 2007). Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism has adopted the principle of “Diversifying Tourism” since 1990 and has started projects towards this purpose in the Eastern Black Sea Region, one of which is “High Plateau Tourism” (Canalıoğlu 2000).

Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism defined Culture and Tourism Protection and Development Regions (CTPDR), Tourism Centers (TC) and Culture and Tourism Protection and Development Sub Regions for healthy and progressive tourism developments in tourism planning. Tourism centers denote “the areas or sections that are foreseen to develop principally in or out of the Culture and Tourism Protection and Development Regions, of which the location, region and borders are determined and announced by the Council of Ministers with the suggestion of the Ministry and that are of capital importance in terms of tourism movements and activities” (URL-1).

The evaluation of the high plateau areas of the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey with regard to the diversification of Turkish tourism reveals the fact that these areas have an important high plateau tourism potential with their natural and cultural resource values.

Within the scope of the study, the Tourism Centers which were declared as having a high plateau theme were examined. This research aims to determine the potentials of these tourism centers and present their problems in accordance with high plateau tourism. High plateau tourism and activities were studied specific to tourism centers, and they have the potential to contribute to the development of the region without harming the natural, cultural and social structure of the region.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study area. In this research, the high plateau areas in the Black Sea Region of Turkey were investigated in terms of rural development, tourism rural planning and rural tourism. These high plateau areas in the Eastern Black Sea Region (the cities of Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, Gümüşhane) (Figure 1) have been declared as “tourism centers” with high plateau theme by the Council of Ministers in Turkey (Table 1). The Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey has important tourism values with its vegetation including all the tones of green, history and historical artifacts, culture, high plateau areas, streams, lakes and hot springs. There are a lot of cities in the region which have high plateau areas with different facilities in each other and which have important tourism potential; these areas have been chosen as the areas of study in this research.



Figure 1. Study area

Table 1. Tourism Centers with a High Plateau Theme in the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey

Cities	High Plateau Tourism Centers
Ordu	Akkuş Arğın High Plateau Tourism Center, Aybastı Perşembe High Plateau TC, Aybastı Toygar Kabaktepe TC, Çambaşı Plateau TC, Mesudiye Keyfalan Plateau TC, Mesudiye Yeşilce-Topçam Plateau TC,
Giresun	Bulancak Bektaş Plateau TC, Kümbet Plateau TC, Yavuzkema Plateau TC
Trabzon	Akçaabat Karadağ TC, Araklı Pazarcık Plateau TC, Araklı Yeşilyurt Yılantaş Plateau TC, Trabzon-Giresun Sis Dağı TC, Maçka Şolma TC, Trabzon Tonya Armutlu Gümüşhane Kürtün Erikbeli TC
Rize	Anzer CTPDR, Anzer TC, Çamlıhemşin Ayder CTPDR, Çamlıhemşin Ayder Thermal Springs Tourism Center
Gümüşhane	Trabzon Tonya Armutlu Gümüşhane Kürtün Erikbeli TC

High plateau areas, high plateau tourism, high plateau tourism centers, the legal and administrative dimensions of high plateau areas and the planning of rural areas were researched and examined within the scope of the study. In this direction, firstly the tourism potential of high plateau areas in the Eastern Black Sea Region was determined with SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis and existing tourism centers have been evaluated as a whole. Current tourism potential is analysis. Tourism resource (natural and cultural values), recreational and touristic activities, laws, user needs (tourist and local people) evaluated with SWOT analysis. Afterwards, legal planning and implementation base problems of high plateau tourism in Turkey and the Eastern Black Sea Region were researched.

RESULTS

High Plateau and High Plateau Tourism

High plateau is described as geographical areas which are deeply split by streams, but which have wide plains on higher altitudes (Atmış 1994) (Figure 2).

In daily use, high plateau refers to cool places at a high altitude with wide plains which are suitable for cattle breeding where rural people who deal with agriculture and cattle breeding spend the hottest period of summer. High plateau is also a place where daily products are produced with traditional methods. During winters, high plateau areas are left vacant due to harsh weather conditions.



Figure 2. A sample of High Plateau (Ayder-Rize)

Plateaus are areas above the forest limit or in the forest with a clean environment and natural beauty which have been used from past to present, for recreational purposes such as rest and vacation (Kose 2001). Plateaus are non-permanent housing sites appropriate for temporary and seasonal housing but inaccessible in the winter. They have a unique structure and serve as natural mountain pastures (Balıkçı 2002). High plateaus are classified in terms of altitude (Leidenfrost and Parcher 1969):

Low altitude high plateaus

High plateaus at an altitude of 900-1200m from sea level neighboring permanent residences and agricultural areas.

Mid altitude high plateaus

High plateaus at an altitude of 1200-1600m from sea level neighboring permanent residences and agricultural areas.

High altitude high plateaus

High plateaus at an altitude of more than 1600m from sea level above forest zone.

From a human health point of view, the areas at an altitude of 800-2000 m are the most appropriate areas for high plateau tourism considering the temperature and pressure conditions. While the Mid Altitude High Plateaus enable recreational activities with accommodation facilities, a human health perspective reveals the fact that the high plateau areas above 2000 m enable only one-day recreational activities (Doğaner 2001). High plateaus are important potential areas for tourism with their rich flora and fauna, meadows, forests, continuous flow surface waters, original landscape, micro-climate, clean air, traditional architectural texture, high plateau culture and

high plateau festivals. At the same time, high plateau tourism strengthens the relationships between the environment, local people and tourists (Pirselimoğlu 2007). A summary of the characteristics of high plateau tourism is below (Sümerkan 1997; Pirselimoğlu 2007; Demirel 1997; Demirel and Ejder 1995; Pirselimoğlu and Demirel 2012; Doğaner 2001);

-High plateaus are of capital importance as social and cultural phenomena in addition to their economic and natural qualities.

-Tourism activities are carried out at high-altitude areas by adventure lovers with either short-term or long-term accommodation.

-The purpose of high plateau tourism is the consideration of the balance of the use and protection of natural and cultural values.

-High Plateau tourism in Turkey is highly suitable for recreational activities and nature sports such as mountain climbing and trekking, horse riding, paragliding, flora/fauna examination, and jeep safari with its climate and landscape values.

Tourism Center Concept in Turkey

According to the Turkish Tourism Incentive Law (no:2634), areas or parts of areas, of which the location and borders are determined with the suggestion of Turkish Ministry of Tourism and determined and declared with the decision of Ministerial Cabinet, and which are important for tourism, are named as "Tourism Centers".

According to this law, 25 high plateau areas (tourism centers) in Turkey and 19 high plateau areas in the Eastern Black Sea region have been declared as tourism centers for two main reasons: to discipline the planning of these areas for alternative tourism and to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Turkish Tourism Incentive Law (no: 2634) in order to guide and support the projects towards tourism planning in these areas (Anonymous 1982; Anonymous 2003; URL 2). While the Culture and Tourism Protection and Development Regions and Tourism Centers are determined, especially the natural, historical, socio-cultural resource values are

considered; the other factors considered are winter sports, hunting, water sports, health tourism and other types of tourism (URL 1). General criteria for selection of the high plateau tourism centers (URL 2):

- Richness of the potential for natural values.
- Existence of regional civilian architecture.
- Easy access to city center.
- Existence of support for tourism from the local people.
- Possibility to sustain activities economically.
- Possibility to integrate with other types of tourism.

High Plateaus' Legal Dimension and Possession

In terms of ownership, high plateaus are regarded as public properties that are made available to villagers. Even though they do not have documents of title, high plateaus have been utilized for centuries and that is why the borders of the building land, garden and pasture of every house are known by the users and village people, and these borders are secured (Sümerkan 1997).

High plateaus have gained value as places for those living in the vicinity, utilizing them and undertaking economic activities (stockbreeding, agriculture-based production, production for products of tradition/culture). However, this utilization has become valid in traditions / legal rules, and collective benefit is aimed. High plateaus are treasury lands from legal point of view. These areas are allocated to the juristic personality of villages (mukhtar and village council), and they are presented to the use of villagers with an allocation document formed by the initiative of mukhtar. According to the law of pasture, "the right of usage of pastures, summer pastures and winter quarters belongs to village or municipality – either one or more than one, and these places are under the control and disposition of the government". Pastures, summer pastures and winter quarters cannot be passed to private possession, cannot be used except for its aim, lapse of time cannot be applied and their borders cannot be narrowed". However, it is indicated that "the right of usage can be rented and it is specified by the regulations of the usage principles". In the zoning legislation numbered 3194, no arrangements are met for high

plateaus. However, it is specified that the high plateaus in the master plan will lose their legal attributes through the approval of master plan of high plateaus, and they will be the subject of the intended purpose brought with the approved master plan.

Ground of Rural Planning

Planning can be described as a management tool that provides the coordination among the tools of social, environmental and economic development and the efficient use of the available resources (Anonymous 2000). Rural areas are determined as the built-up areas of the village and also the areas around the village where economic life, landscape, natural conditions and traditional values are based on agriculture and stockbreeding. Rural area plans should be prepared for the purpose of developing the economic, sheltering, recreation and entertainment activities of people who live in rural areas. Within this scope, they are plans that are prepared on the purpose of protecting and developing agriculture, stockbreeding and the economic, social, cultural and natural values in a sustainable way and creating healthy settlements that are resistant to disasters, and also, they are plans of which the social and technical infrastructure needs are determined according to the rural life style (Anonymous 2004).

The basis of rural planning can be summarized as below;

- It does not have any legal grounds

- The important laws including the arrangements in the rural areas at present
- Village law numbered 442 and dated March 18, 2004
- “Zoning regulations for unplanned areas”; issued based on the zoning law, numbered 3194
- Provincial special administration law [numbered of 5302 (2005)]
- The orientation of physical development in Turkey
- After 1970s, the outsourced financed domestic projects and “*Rural Development*” projects
- The Turkish National Rural Development Strategy (2004)
- Within the scope of this draft (Draft of the 6th development plan), amendment in the zoning law, supplementing “The Rural Settlement Plan (it has not become a law yet)”

High Tourism Potential in Eastern Black Sea Region

Tourism potentials of the high plateau tourism centers in the Eastern Black Sea Region were evaluated by performing a SWOT analysis with the data obtained according to high plateau and high plateau tourism values, tourism center concept, high plateaus’ legal dimension and possession and ground of rural planning headings (Table 2). With the SWOT analysis, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of tourism centers were presented. SWOT analysis enables considering the possible internal and external factors in the fields, making the most of the strengths and opportunities and developing planning approaches and suggestions within which the threats and weaknesses are minimized.

Table 2. High Plateau Tourism Potential in the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having rich natural values; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other geological formations (cave, cavity, peaks, etc.), Wide plains, Natural mountain pastures, Landscape values, Climate, Hydrology (streams, rivers, lakes, hot water sources, hot springs, etc.), Flora, Fauna, -Having rich socio-cultural values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture, Grass area, hamlets, Cattle breeding, Seasonal housing, Traditional home architecture, Traditional festivals, Folkloric values -Having historical values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic remains -Having rich recreation and tourism facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trekking, Hiking, Climbing, Camping, Picnicking, Horse riding, Paragliding, Flora/Fauna examination, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decreasing agricultural products -Inadequacy of infrastructure services -Lack of days with sunlight -Difficulty of access -The current laws are insufficient to prevent illegal setting -The problem of ownership cannot be solved in high plateau areas -Inadequate advertising activities -Lack of communication among the cities in the region -Local planning approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Feasibility of different recreational and touristic activities – excepted and current activities -Development of local people with new work opportunities -Traditional handcraft -Traditional food -The planning done in tourism centers will set an example for the tourism activities which will be performed in other high plateaus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unplanned settlement -Lack of area analysis to do planning -Lack of ecological planning approach which is the lead of natural, cultural and historical values of the area -Disappearance of high plateau culture -Unnecessary and unplanned road networks -Disappearance of the high plateau culture -A weak relationship between mukhtar’s office, village people and public enterprises -Recreative and touristic activities have been initiated without doing planning

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Tourism is regarded as a basic factor in the regional planning policies (Pirselimoğlu and Demirel 2012). Tourism should be transferred to the next generations. In the sustainable development of tourism, the participation of all the shareholders like local people, NGOs and governments will reveal successful results (Sutawa 2012). However, large scale social and environmental alterations change the ecosystems in which tourism activities take place (Buckley 2012). High plateau tourism, which is supported also by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism, has started attracting attention throughout the country in recent years. In addition, the “high plateau tourism centers” project, which was initiated by the Turkish Ministry of Tourism, has been affecting the other high plateaus in the region and has started a movement towards tourism and recreation (Pirselimoğlu 2007). However, it is also possible to confront some problems. The problems about high plateau tourism areas are:

-“One sector institute perspective, short termed considerations”

-Intersectoral/interinstitutional cooperation and reconciliation are not observed.

-Considering the policies in urban and rural areas mostly individually and touching on the problems in the rural area mostly with a partial approach;

-Most studies carried out regarding the development of rural areas touch on the subjects such as agricultural production increase;

-There is the fact that the majority of private qualified areas are in the status of rural area and there are negative effects on the all-natural and cultural resources of tourism plans, and national park plan developments as well as specific environmental plans are carried out on this purpose.

Eastern Black Sea High Plateau Settlements have important tourism potential with the values they have. In this direction in the study, the current situation of tourism centers with tourism potential was evaluated with SWOT

analysis. In general, when the high plateau tourism centers are evaluated, it is seen that they have rich natural, socio-cultural and resource values as well as a wide range of recreation and tourism activities. However, the weaknesses are determined that transportation problems, lack of sunny days, decreasing agriculture products. Lack of advertising activities, lack of laws, lack of local planning approaches, and lack of communication between the provinces in the region is another weakness.

Opportunities in the field can be expressed as enable tourism and recreation activities of high plateau tourism activities, offer different jobs for local people and richness of local culture (handicrafts, food, etc.). Unplanned settlements on the site, planning without area analysis, non-ecological based planning approaches, unplanned and uninterrupted road networks, weak relations between local administrations, recreational activities started without planning and tourism activities have identified the presence of elements threatening the sustainability of the resource values of the areas.

While evaluating the current status of tourism areas and determining the tourism potential, studies were carried out aiming to make best uses of resources by making SWOT analysis. Kiper ve Arslan (2007), In the determination of trekking routes within the scope of nature tourism in Anatolia, they determined the appropriate points of nature of the study area by SWOT analysis and suitability analysis. Fons, Fierro, and Patiño (2011), in their study in Spain in Aragon investigating the development of the current state of sustainable domestic rural tourism. In this study, SWOT model was applied after interview analysis to determine the advantages and disadvantages of rural tourism in Aragon. In this way, the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and threats of the area were measured and detailed decision was made. In the study, it is emphasized that rural tourism is an important study in sustainable alternatives rather than just consuming and entertaining today. Zhang (2012), In this study, they used SWOT analysis method to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in Suzhou's rural development and to make a comprehensive evaluation. The study identified the positive and negative aspects of Suzhou's own rural

resources. Identify the opportunities and threats of the area and recommend appropriate measures for them. Scolozzi et al. (2014) used SWOT analysis for conservation strategies in protected areas. With the SWOT analysis, the authors identified management strategies for the conservation of the ecosystem and biodiversity of the area and identified conservation priorities.

Management of the target as a whole, collaboration, networking, emphasis on hotels and transportation in the short run, the role of local administrations and participation from every level of the organization are important factors in the success of the system (Welford and Ytterhus 2004). Tourism master plan is a specifically aimed development plan in Turkey. It is in the frame of the law on encouraging tourism dated 1982 and numbered 2634, and it is a development plan in which the frequent uses for tourism are determined by the Ministry of Tourism. The plan is arranged for "Regions", "Centers" and "Areas". Master Plans are approved by the Ministry of Public Works and Occupation, and the application of the development plan is performed by the Ministry of Tourism.

In the places declared as Tourism Region/Center/Area, the rules are foreseen in all laws, including development laws, about the development and constructivism becoming invalid. In the plans on environmental order, centers of high plateau tourism are divided into four parts. 1) High plateau occupational areas, 2) high plateau tourism utility areas, 3) the areas, of which the natural character will be protected, with ongoing land use, 4) forest areas. In this classification, daily uses in subscale (restaurant, sale units, etc), camping areas with tent, areas for official institutes (health, education, village mansion, PTT, sociocultural utility, gendarme, etc), green areas (parks, playfields, recreation sports, picnic areas, etc), looking terraces, landing places for helicopters, important traffic highways, subways and important pedestrian routes are also determined (Canalıoğlu 2000).

"Soft-green" tourism has been frequently discussed in Turkey in recent years; high plateau tourism has been developing under the leadership of the Ministry of Tourism, and neither has reached the desired level nor

has been adequately publicized internationally. These facts are due to reasons such as geographical circumstances like the inadequate development of tourism in the region, the location of the region being far from tourism centers, difficulty of transportation, rugged terrain, and also the unsuitability of climatic conditions like limited number of sunny days and a great number of rainy and snowy days in a year (Pirselimoğlu and Demirel 2012).

Tourism taking place in rural areas and natural areas grows and develops as an integrative part of the environment, protects the local identity in a sustainable way and gains strength by contributing to the economy (Fons et. al 2011; Ghaderi and Henderson 2012). The purpose of high plateau tourism is to provide economic benefits for the local people and thus prevent immigration. One of the most important requirements of developing and growing tourism successfully is gaining the host communities' positive attitudes towards tourism. When local communities see their role in the process of tourism development and management of high plateau areas, this will be possible (Dibra and Golemi 2014). However, unresolved legal problems of high plateau areas and local people acting before the government to create tourism facilities have caused unplanned urbanization. "Landscape plans, which are the reflection of ecological planning system as the most important thing in the protection and development from national scope to local dimensions, must be brought into the forms demanded by laws and must be obligatory to implement."

- The main danger is the destruction of tourism areas by tourism itself.

- For the last 25-30 years, the villages utilizing high plateaus have slowly begun to be away from remaining in the settlement of large tents (oba) and with the approach for the second house, people have begun to build houses of reinforced concrete on treasury lands. As a consequence of road possibilities, apartment blocks in the city have begun to be built on the high plateaus. As a result of the approach "to bring road to the front of each house", pastoral areas have largely been destroyed.

Houses with original architecture should be allowed to be built in high plateau areas. The current high plateau houses should be reconditioned for them to be stronger and look better, and the new houses to be built should not be allowed to have plans different from the plans in accord with traditional identity. In this process, the ownership problem should be solved as well. This will contribute to the development of tourism (Acuner 2006). The changes in laws and regulations reveal the effort to encourage the settlements in rural areas. Areas like pastures, high plateaus, etc. cannot be subject to personal property, they have been used for ages and they have been regarded as the common property of villages. Despite the fact that these areas are not misused, an effort to pave the way for the settlement of pastures is observed in recent years (Öğdül 2013).

At the same time, the current law is not only insufficient to prevent the illegal settling in high plateaus but also causes the confusion of authority. That is;

- Mukhtar needs to get along with villagers,
- District governors do not have any team and equipment to inspect the illegal applications,
- Any top unit is not formed to provide coordination between the institutes serving in governorships.

While the original natural and cultural values of the areas in high plateau tourism continue in a sustainable way, ecology-based tourism planning approaches should be adopted in order for these areas to develop with tourism. For the solution;

- An official status should be provided for the protection of these areas,
- The areas must be planned with ecological planning approach, and the principles of clean environment, the protection-utilization balance and sustainability should be adopted.
- Local values should be preserved,
- Unplanned urbanization must be prevented,
- Transportation network should be planned in a controlled manner, and roads should spread around the areas like a network so the naturalness of the areas is preserved.

-And most importantly; “landscape plans”, which reflect ecological planning principles, have to be made compulsory by law.

The disconnections between cities in the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey caused by the lack of communication and collaboration prevent the tourism-oriented development of the region. Instead of doing tourism planning on only one spot, integrative planning approaches will contribute to the development of the region. That is why forming policies that will provide collaboration between these cities will be the right approach. By doing so, it will be easier to reach the international market. Providing a status for the protection of these areas, ecological planning of these areas and preventing unplanned urbanization can be important solution struggles. And most importantly, “landscape plans, which are the reflection of ecological planning system as the most important thing in the protection and development from national scope to local dimensions, must be brought into the forms demanded by laws and must be obligatory to implement.

The highland tourism centers in the Eastern Black Sea region, which is the study area, should be evaluated within the framework of ecological-based and holistic planning approach in order to preserve the values they have.

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