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Poetic recipes from Nidā'ī, an important sixteenth-century physician, in Durr-i Manzūm

Ayşe Balat¹, Ahmet Acıduman²



Figure 1. The copy found in Istanbul Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Nuruosmaniye Collection, Nr. 3556. The beginning pages related to the urinary system.

Abstract

It has been known that some of the medical works in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages were composed in verse to create concise information, be easily memorised, and be beneficial for students and the public. This practice has also been observed in Turkish medicine throughout history. The present study aims to introduce Physician Nidā'ī from Ankara, an important sixteenth-century physician, and his renowned poetic work, Durr-i Manzūm, focusing on the sections related to urinary system problems. In this study, we evaluated Durr-i Manzūm, which has many copies in Turkish and European libraries and has been found in Istanbul Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Nuruosmaniye Collection, Nr. 3556. Nidā'ī has poetic compositions regarding six common nephrological problems: Urinary incontinence, bedwetting in children, haematuria, urinary retention, urination difficulty, and bladder stones. Every subject consisted of a different number of couplets; the difficulty of the disease was briefly mentioned in some couplets, and then appropriate compositions were written in detail in a poetic style. Nidā'ī used poetic recipes excellently and wanted to show that medicine is

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not an incomprehensible and complicated science by recommending concise and straightforward treatments for certain diseases. The fact that it was copied until the beginning of the nineteenth century, with numerous copies available in both national and international libraries, demonstrates that his work is readily comprehensible to both the public and medical professionals, thereby earning it considerable respect.

Key Words: *Nidā'ī, Durr-i Manzūm, poetic recipes*

Introduction

Although medical works in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages were often written in prose, it is also known that there were works written in verse.¹ The *urjūza* type, which is used in works on several subjects such as the Quran, Arabic grammar, history, maritime, astronomy, and even mathematics, as well as medicine,² involves singing poetry in the *rajaz* meter. This particular form was used especially in didactic works. With this, a summary of information was created, aiming for easy memorisation and benefiting students.³ One notable example of this is *Urjūza fī al-Ṭibb* by Ibn Sīnā (980-1037), a famous physician and philosopher of the period known as the “Golden Age of Islamic Science and Medicine”.^{2,4} In addition to his work *Urjūza fī al-Ṭibb*, which is a summary of *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*, and was used as a widespread tool in the process of transmitting medical knowledge from teacher to student, initially in the East and later in the Western world with its translations, Ibn Sīnā also wrote the following works in the *urjūza* form; *Urjūza fī Tadbīr al-Ṣiḥḥa fī Fuṣūl al-Senet al-Arba‘a*, *Urjūza fī Vasāya al-Ṭibbiyye*, *Urjūza fī Mujarrabāt fī al-Ṭibb*, *Urjūza fī Ma‘rifet al-Tanaffus wa al-Nabḍa*, *Urcūze fī al-Tashrīḥ*.^{2,5} The *urjūza* form paved the way for the emergence of new verse forms, with *mathnawī* being one of them.³

Similarly, translating a medical work into verse to facilitate learning has been one of the practices seen in Turkish medicine throughout history, and *mathnawī* has also been used for this purpose. Aḥmadī’s *Tarwīḥ al-Arwāḥ*,^{1,6,7} as well as Darwīsh Siyāhī’s (from Laren) *Macmū‘at al-Tibb* are among the important medical works composed in verse during the Classical Period of Ottoman Medicine.⁸ Furthermore, Muḥyy al-dīn Mahī, a student of Sharaf al-dīn Şabunjuoghlu, adapted Ḥāji Pasha’s work *Tashīl* into verse.^{9,10} It is worth mentioning that Physician Nidā’ī also transformed his work *Manāfi‘ al-Nās* into verse under the name *Durr-i Manzūm*.^{11,12}

The present study aims to introduce Physician Nidā’ī and his renowned poetic work, *Durr-i Manzūm*, and to present the sections related to urinary system

problems by translating them into English and incorporating them into the academic literature.

Physician Nidā’ī and *Durr-i Manzūm*

Information about Physician Nidā’ī from Ankara, a prominent figure of 16th-century medicine, can be compiled from the insights he provided in his various works. According to Uzluḳ’s article,¹³ Hekim Nidā’ī’s father, whose real name is Sha‘bān, emigrated from the city of Jerusalem and came to Engürü (Ankara), where he got married and had five children. Considering that he stated that he was 35 years old in 950 H. [1543/1544], during the composition of his work *Asrār-i Ganj-i Ma‘nā*, it is inferred that he was born in 915, perhaps in the month of Shaban [November/December 1509]. Uzluḳ’s belief that Nidā’ī was born in the month of Sha‘bān may come from Nidā’ī statement within the verse information, where he mentions being given the name Sha‘bān. In Diriöz’s article¹⁴ about Sha‘bān Nidā’ī, this verse text, which Uzluḳ also benefited from, was translated into prose with greater detail, and similar explanations were made.

Nidā’ī gives some information about his life in the 60th Chapter (last chapter) of *Manāfi‘ al-Nās*, titled “Sabab-i ta’līf-i kitāb”. In this section, Nidā’ī states that he is from Ankara, the youngest of five siblings, and explains how he was blessed with medicine. During his travels, he developed a close relationship with the Crimean Khan, Sahib Giray Khan, by becoming his teacher, causing jealousy among the Khan’s relatives. After the Khan sent him to Sultan Suleiman as an ambassador, they continued to denigrate him, and the Khan believed these accusations. Subsequently, he notes that upon his return, he was thrown into the dungeon by the Khan, enduring seven years of imprisonment. During this time, he faced numerous attempts to end his life in the political arena, and yet in that world of loneliness, he wrote 22 books on the science of Sufism. Later, he reveals that after being saved from this dangerous place with the help of God, a blessed older man from the lineage of the Prophet, who was over a hundred years old, taught him the science of medicine.¹⁵

Following her research, Diriöz¹⁴ makes the following evaluation regarding Nidā'ī's arrival in Crimea and its aftermath:

“... Considering that he wrote his book *Manāfi 'al-Nās* in 1566, we can say that he studied medicine between 1551 and 1566, and after these studies, Nidā'ī introduced himself as a physician.”¹⁴

In *Osmanlı Müellifleri* (Ottoman Authors),¹⁶ one of the few sources that provide information about Nidā'ī, it is documented that he returned from Crimea, and arrived in Konya, where he stayed with the governor, Prince Selim II, and joined the Mavlawi sect. Additionally, the same source mentions that upon Sultan Selim II's ascent to the throne in Istanbul, Nidā'ī also relocated there, where he lived until he eventually passed away.

In her study and works on Nidā'ī, Diriöz¹⁴ stated that Nidā'ī was a master poet who was well-versed in all the subtleties of Dīwān poetry and Islamic Turkish Literature. She notes that he adeptly incorporated Arabic and Persian words and phrases as required by the century he lived in, and that despite using compounds, he displays a firm grasp of the Turkish language. Kurdoğlu¹⁷ describes Nidā'ī as a mystical person, while Diriöz¹⁴ makes a similar evaluation, stating that all of Nidā'ī works are with the inspiration of God.

Özçelik¹⁸ reports that the number of works associated with Nidā'ī in various sources ranges between seven and nineteen. However, some of these works are merely chapter titles in the author's larger works, and some are mistakenly attributed to him. While Uzluk¹ treats *Tarjama-i Nazm-i Loḡmān Ḥakīm* and *Vasiyyat-nāma* as separate works in his review, resulting in a count of seven. In his review, Yılmaz¹⁹ divides the five works he takes as belonging to Nidā'ī into two parts: literary and medical. His literary works are *Ganj-i Asrār-i Ma'nā* and *Tanbīh-nāma*. His medical works are *Rabi' al-Salāma*, *Manāfi 'al-Nās*, *Vasiyyat-nāma*, *Tarjama-i Nazm-i Loḡmān Ḥakīm* and *al-Durr al-Manzūm fī al-Ṭibb*.

Physician Nidā'ī concisely wrote *Manāfi 'al-Nās* and then compiled *Durr-i Manzūm*. He explains at the beginning of the work that the title, recorded in various library records under the names of *Manzūma fī al-Ṭibb*, *Manzūma-i Nidā'ī*, *Manzūma-i Ṭibb*, *Ṭibb al-Manzūm* and *Risāla-i Ḥikmat*, is *Durr-i Manzūm* and that it was written in 975/1567. He also states his pen name as Nidāyī in the *Dībāja-i Kitāb* (Prologue of the Book) section.¹¹

Ay,¹¹ who conducted a thesis on the work, asserts that the work was written in *mathnawī* verse form from beginning to end. He states that the work, spanning

721 couplets, incorporates relevant quotations from verses and hadīths related to the subject. According to Ay¹¹ *Durr-i Manzūm* is a popular everyday guide on medicine-related subjects. He argues that it was written in very simple Turkish so that readers could immediately solve the problems they encounter, benefit from it without needing anyone else's help, and read and understand it easily. Therefore, he emphasises that it should not be surprising that the purpose of art is secondary in the work.

Ay's analysis¹¹ has shown that the first three couplets of the work express the existence and unity of Allah; in the subsequent Prayer section, the poet metaphorically likens himself to a diver in search for pearls in the sea of Wisdom, offering praises to the Sultan of that period, Selim II, starting from the 13th couplet. Following this, in the *Dībāca* section consisting of 23 couplets, the poet declares that he will write a beneficial work for people and initiate it with a hadīth of Prophet Muhammad.

In the first chapter of the work, which consists of four parts, he reminds us that human beings were created as the noblest of creatures. He discusses *anāşir-i arba'a* (four elements: fire, air, water, and earth) and *akhlāt-i arba'a* (four humours: yellow bile, blood, phlegm, and black bile), and says that if one of the four secretions increases or decreases, the balance is disrupted and disease occurs. On the other hand, when the four of them are in harmony with each other, the body is healthy.¹¹

In the second chapter, the poet and physician Nidā'ī, focusing on diseases, starts by addressing common ailments such as colds, eye diseases, mouth and dental diseases, throat conditions, and chest disorders. Then, he covers general diseases that afflict the body, namely fissures, syphilis, skin diseases, sweating, palpitations, tremors, jaundice, ascites, and fever. The chapter ends by explaining lower back disorders, types of haemorrhoids and their treatment, fungal infections, warts, myofascial pain, and urinary tract diseases.¹¹

In the third chapter of the work, details about fruits and flowers, the preparation of sherbets, the diseases for which they are used, their benefits, etc., are explained. The fourth chapter is devoted to tiryāq (thiac, antidote), and its preparation, use, and benefits. The work ends with the *Khātimat al-Kitāb* (Epilogue of the Book) section, where the poet argues that if the treatments are used, they will be successful. After praying to Sultan Selim II, he wishes that those who find a cure from this remember him in their prayers. This study will present examples written in a poetic style related to nephrology.¹¹

Material and Methods

In this study, the focus is on *Durr-i Manzūm*, which has many copies in Turkish and European libraries. The specific copy examined is from the Istanbul Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Nuruosmaniye Collection, Nr. 3556 as illustrated (Figures 1 and 2).²⁰⁻²² Additionally, a comparison is made with the copies in the library as mentioned above, including the Atıf Efendi Collection, Nr. 1971 and Esad Efendi Nr. 2468.

The studied sections were transcribed into the modern Turkish alphabet and then translated into English.

Results

Nidā'ī has poetic compositions for six common nephrological problems: Urinary incontinence, bed-wetting in children, haematuria, urinary retention, urination difficulty, and bladder stones. They are shown in Tables 1 to 6, respectively.



Figure 2. The copy found in Istanbul Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Nuruosmaniye Collection, Nr. 3556. The last page related to the urinary system.

There are five couplets addressing urinary incontinence (Table 1). The first couplet states how the condition occurs (continuous or drop by drop) and how difficult the situation is. The second couplet poetically emphasises that the paste should be prepared thoroughly. In the third couplet, he discusses the combination of plants to be used (fruit of *Castanea vulgaris*, the buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica*, *Cyperus bulbosus*, frankincense, *Lavandula stæcas* and Myrrh, the resin of *Commiphora myrrha*). In the fourth couplet, he recommends consuming three dirhams a day by mixing them with sugar, and in the fifth couplet, he suggests, if preferred, combining them with honey and consuming them in the form of a paste, likely to facilitate its use. Additionally, he emphasizes making it a daily habit until recovery.

There are two couplets addressing children bed-wetting (Table 2). In the first couplet, Nidai suggests preparing a mixture by pounding various plants (*Coriandrum sativum*, *Marrubium vulgare*, and *Allium porrum*). In the second couplet, it is recommended to add the mixture to plain oil and to take three dirhams each at bedtime.

For the two couplets discussing haematuria (Table 3), it has been stated that the carrot seed should be pounded properly and consumed for days and that with the permission of God (Allah), the bleeding will improve.

There are three couplets concerning urinary retention (Table 4). Sparrow, falcon droppings, or magpie brain are suggested remedies for sudden urinary retention.

The section addressing difficulty in urination (Table 5) comprises of three couplets. In the first couplet, an expression implies that difficulty urinating makes life difficult (impairs the quality of life). In the second couplet, he recommends cooking radish with milk and drinking it on an empty stomach until the pain subsides. He states that even a grain of musk is good when crushed with water and ingested (the grain here is a unit of weight used in those periods).

There are five couplets on individuals with bladder stones (Table 6). The first couplet states that people who do what has been suggested will be healed. In the second couplet, he describes a mixture of some plants (a piece of the liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* root), bayberry, pepper, celery (*Apium graveolens* L.), and the winter cherry (*Physalis alkekengi* L.). The third couplet introduces pigeon droppings and three parts of filtered honey. In the fourth couplet, he emphasizes that strong individuals should eat two miskals of this mixture, while others should adjust

Table 1. Medication for urinary incontinence.

Devā' -i selesi'l-bevl	Medication for urinary incontinence
Şa'b zahmetdür selesi'l-bevl Tamlā tamlā iner bu aşıl bevl	An ailment troublesome, incontinence of urine Drip by drip, descends hard to endure in
Yiye bir nice gün bu ma'cūnı Kāmil eyle bu vezn-ile bunı	Savor this paste, for many a day Perfect it thus, with care each way
Şāh bellūt ve topalağ kundür Ustuḥūdüs ve mürr berāberdür	Chestnut and buckthorn olibanum, the season's prime, Lavender and myrrh, in harmony they chime
Saḥḥ ola bu kadar şeker birle Günde üç dirhem in alubda bile	Filled with sweetness, sugar's gentle power, Three dirhams daily, for health to flower.
Dileseñ bal-ıla idüb ma'cūn Ḳurtulunca yi' ādet it her gün	Should you desire, with honey, a paste to prepare, Partake daily until freedom's air you share

Table 2. The remedy for bedwetting in children.

Devā' -i döşege işeyene	The remedy for bedwetting in children
Döşege işer-ise bir oğlan Kişniç ve kendene' i döge hemān	If a lad wets the bed, take heed, Pound the coriander and horehound each.
Sāde yağa katub üçer dirhem Yatacak vaktde yiye ol dem	Three dirhams into purest butter delight, Ere he rests, bid him take it at night.

Table 3. Bleeding from the urinary tract.

Bevl yolundan kan gelse	Bleeding from the urinary tract
Kan gelürse sidik yolundan eger Haviciñ toḥmını uñat döğeler	If from the urinary passage blood appears, Pound the seeds of carrots without fears.
Yiye bir nice gün birer mişkāl Emr-i Ḥaḳḳ-ile tā ola ḥöş-ḥāl	For many days, savor a miskal right, Until with God's decree, all turns bright.

Table 4. The remedy for urinary retention.

Devā' -i ḥabsi'l-bevl	The remedy for urinary retention
Ḥabs-i bevl olsa nāgehān ādem Serçe boḳm ezüb içür her dem	When held by sudden halt of urine's flow, Drink pounded sparrow stool, ease this woe.
Buñā şāhīn boḳı emdür Ezüb içür şifā hemīn emdür	For falcon stool, a potent cure, Crushed and consumed, a remedy to bear.
Saḳşığan beynisi birer miḳdār Kaḅısı bulma devā it var	The magpie's brain, in measured part, Whichever found, go treat with healing art

Table 5. The remedy for urination difficulty.

Devā' -i 'usrī'-bevl	The remedy for urination difficulty
'Ustr-ile gelse bevlī kişinūñ Lezzetin bulmaya o bir işinūñ	When urine arrives with hardship's strain, No joy in tasks, all efforts in vain.
Turbı süd-ile bişür her dem Yiye ac ḳarnına gidince elem	Cook turnip with milk, a healing sight, Eat on empty stomach, till pains alight.
Bir çekirdek misk daḅı nāfi' dür Ezüb şu ile içe eyüdü	A grain of musk, a helpful aid, Crushed in water, a choice well-made.

Table 6. The remedy for a person with bladder stone.

Meşānede taş olana	The remedy for a person with bladder stone
Taş olursa meşānede cānā Bu yiter itme aña ğayrı deva	When stones besiege your bladder, O dear, This remedy alone, no need for further gear.
'Irķ-ı sūs defne yemişi fūlful Kerefūs kākunec birer cüz' i kıl	Liquorice root, bayberry, and pepper's spice, Celery and winter cherry, each in precise slice.
Hem kebüter necāsetinden al Üç eczaca kıl muşaffā bal	From pigeon's stool, the essence to take, Three parts strained honey, a measure to make.
İki miskāl yiye kavī ādem Ğayrıya hāline göre vir hem	Two miskals for the robust and sound, Tailored for each, in others' specific round.
Eridüb taşı kum idüb gidere Bu devā ile ol murāda ire	Turn stones to sands, let them softly disappear, This remedy shall work, its purpose clear

their intake according to their strength. It is noted that with this medicine, the stones will melt and turn into sand, and the will achieve their wish.

Discussion

Ay,¹¹ who conducted a linguistics thesis on Nidā'ī's *Durr-i Manzūm*, comments that this work was written in plain Turkish to enable the public to easily solve the medical problems they encounter in daily life without needing anyone else's help. In addition to Ay's comment, in her study on the importance of this work in Turkish Medical History, Çankaya,²³ states that Turkish medical terms are preferred, with the occasional inclusion of Arabic and Persian terms. For example, in the relevant section on the treatment of headaches, it is mentioned that the Arabic word "şudā'" is used in the title, while the Turkish equivalent "baş ağrısı" is used in the first line following this.

Indeed, similar examples were encountered in the sections examined. For example, under the title "Bevl yolından kan gelse (if blood comes from the way of urine)", an explanation in the first line reads "kan gelürse sidik yolından (if blood comes from the way of urine)", where the Turkish equivalent of "sidik (urine)" is used here instead of the Arabic "bawl". Additionally, it is observed that the names of the substances used as medicine are presented in Turkish and/or Arabic in the texts.

In her study, Çankaya²³ states that Nidā'ī wanted to demonstrate that medicine is not an incomprehensible and complicated science by recommending concise and straightforward treatment methods for some diseases. This approach rendered his work easily understandable by both the public and physicians and, thus, highly respected. Çankaya's observation is supported by the

fact that this work was copied until the beginning of the nineteenth century and that numerous copies are found in libraries.

In her review, Çankaya²³ notes that Nidā'ī's original medical findings and treatment methods were not found in *Durr-i Manzūm*. Instead, he applied general treatment methods compiled from the works of previous physicians and provided the drug compositions they recommended, occasionally suggesting and applying his own treatment methods. Çankaya²³ comments that he uses expressions such as "mücerrebdır (tested)", "tecrübe kılmışım (I have experienced)", "imtihan ettim (I have tested)" or "tecrübe ettim (I have experienced)" to indicate his methods.

After the general evaluations in the literature regarding Nidā'ī's work as a whole, more specific assessments can be made about the text studied.

In the couplets addressing urinary incontinence, the difficulty of the disease is defined, and suggestions are made regarding its treatment. As observed, one of the mentioned plants in the mixture in the third couplet is frankincense, also known as olibanum, which is an aromatic resin obtained from trees of the genus *Boswellia*. It is used to manage several health problems. Interestingly, in a study published this year, the effectiveness of a frankincense-based herbal product in urinary incontinence was investigated. It has been found that the mean frequency of urinary incontinence and amount of leakage significantly decreased in the frankincense-based herbal product group in the fourth week compared to the placebo, suggesting its potential use as a complementary treatment.²⁴

Enuresis is very common, especially during sleep in children. There are two couplets about bedwetting at night. He suggests preparing a mixture by pound-

ing various plants and describes the doses. However, no current research has been found regarding the effectiveness of these compounds, similar to the other suggested ones for haematuria, urinary retention, and difficulty in urination.

In the second couplet addressing bladder stones, a mixture of some plants has been described, and in the last couplet, he states that the stones will melt and turn into sand. The mentioned plants are rich in flavonoids, which are a large group of plant polyphenols with alleged beneficial effects on several common diseases.²⁵

Celery (*Apium graveolens* L.) was mentioned in the second couplet. It is rich in flavonoids and effective in breaking calcium crystals. In many plants, apigenin is a natural product belonging to the flavone class, the aglycone of several naturally occurring glycosides. In an experimental study, the anti-calculi effect of apigenin was compared with that of celery extract, and it was found that celery extract has a better ability to break down kidney stones than apigenin.²⁶

The litholytic activity of a mixture of some plants, including Kaknaj (*Physalis alkekengi* L.) together with Parshioshan (*Adiantum capillus-veneris* L.), Duqu (*Peucedanum grande* C.B. Clarke), and Kharekhasak (*Tribulus terrestris* L.) have been investigated in Sprague Dawley rats. The study results showed that this mixture reduced the number of calcium oxalate crystals in the urine and also reduced and prevented the growth of urinary stones. Moreover, the protective

effect was found to be more than its curative effect.²⁷ However, it is difficult to predict the effectiveness of the mixtures Nidā'ī suggested, which were said to be effective based on the experience of that period on urinary system stones.

Conclusions

Translating medical work into verse to facilitate learning has also been a practice in Turkish medicine throughout history. It is clear that poetic expressions facilitate memorability and remembering. Physician Nidā'ī from Ankara, an important physician of the sixteenth century, composed his work *Manāfi 'al-Nās* into verse under the name *Durr-i Manzūm*. His work suggests that he adeptly used poetic recipes.

In this study, his poetic compositions regarding six common nephrological problems - urinary incontinence, bedwetting, hematuria, urinary retention, urination difficulty, and bladder stones - have been examined.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Φαρμακευτικές ποιητικές συνταγές από τον Nidā'ī, έναν σημαντικό γιατρό του 16ου αιώνα, στο Durr-i Manzūm

Ayşe Balat, Ahmet Aciduman

Η παρούσα μελέτη αποσκοπεί να παρουσιάσει τον Nidā'ī από την Άγκυρα, έναν σημαντικό ιατρό του δεκάτου έκτου αιώνα, και το διάσημο ποιητικό έργο του, το Durr-i Manzūm, εστιάζοντας στις ενότητες που αναφέρονται στα προβλήματα του ουροποιητικού συστήματος. Ως υλικό μελετήσαμε το Durr-i Manzūm, βάσει του χειρογράφου Nuruosmaniye Collection, Nr. 3556 που βρίσκεται στη Κωνσταντινούπολη στην Βιβλιοθήκη Χειρογράφων του Süleymaniye (Figures 1 and 2).

Ο Nidā'ī χρησιμοποίησε άριστα τις συνταγές σε ποιητική μορφή. Στόχος του ήταν να δείξει ότι η ιατρική δεν είναι μια ακατανόητη και περίπλοκη επιστήμη, συνιστώντας περιεκτικές και σαφείς θεραπείες για ορισμένες ασθένειες. Το γεγονός ότι ανατυπωνόταν ως τις αρχές του δεκάτου ενάτου αιώνα, με πολυάριθμα αντίτυπα διαθέσιμα σε εθνικές και σε διεθνείς βιβλιοθήκες, αποδεικνύει ότι το έργο του είναι εύκολα κατανοητό τόσο από το κοινό όσο και από τους επαγγελματίες ιατρούς, κερδίζοντας έτσι ιδιαίτερα περιοπτη θέση στην ιστορία.

Λέξεις Κλειδιά: Nidā'ī, Durr-i Manzūm, ποιητικές φαρμακευτικές συνταγές

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