

# THE SHIMMERING WORLD

## Reciprocity with the Star Beings

Our ancestors came from the stars. Indigenous peoples worldwide speak of star relatives and star beings.<sup>1</sup>

No different than all the elementals and other living energies we know from our shamanic practice, stars are living beings. It can be a challenge to alter our perceptions to perceive them in this way. Yet the star beings are waiting to be heard and to help us.

This is a story of relationship between us and the star beings. It is a story about shamanic community, feeding and being fed by ancestral memory, the wisdom that surrounds ancient indigenous ceremony, and maps of consciousness. It's a story of weaving the physical and the energetic, the mundane and the sacred. Finally, it's a story of inquiry and discovery in following a one-step-at-a-time, spirit-guided process for calling the spirits of the star beings, so that as Spirit said to me, we can "bring star energy down to earth to assist us in the difficult times that are coming."

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*Photos by Meg Beeler  
and Carol Crescetto*

### **The Call and the Unfolding**

The beginnings of my "call" came in early 2009. "The world is your container: no boundaries, no more boxing yourself in with small ideas," I was told. "Let your heart float free in the filaments of all beings, the unbounded love that surrounds us and the planet."

Metaphorically this symbolized to me a focus on communal, world healing rather than on personal healing. My journeys for a few months were filled with instructions about realigning myself with light, being starlight, and walking my path as pulsing, radiant light. I was frequently reminded to "learn the pathways to the stars" so I would know

"the way; the vibration; the silence; the color; my relationship with star beings." I asked in many journeys to be shown how to do all this.

One day the spirit of Chomolungma (also known as Mt. Everest in the Himalayas) showed me a forest, looking out at the peaks, where I was to make a star despacho (offering), to "reconnect mountain and star energy." Soon I was instructed to make two more such offerings in the Himalayas where I was about to visit: at Pele-La in Bhutan and at another place that "would be shown to me" as I traveled.

Despacho describes the Andean practice of making offerings to the mountains, Mother Earth, and other spirits of nature in reciprocity, reverence, and thanksgiving. There are at least 300 variations of despachos in the Quechua-speaking Andes (primarily Peru and Ecuador).<sup>2</sup> Each offering has a particular intent that dictates design and contents; in turn these are based on an-

cient cosmology and the wisdom tradition of the Q'ero people (see sidebar on page 31).

I knew that *ch'aska* despachos (star despachos) were made in times of great environmental and human upheaval. I had participated in despacho ceremonies for 15 years on trips to Peru and at sacred mountains in the Bay Area, in large groups and small. Yet I'd not seen a despacho made with this particular intent. I was nervous about carrying and feeding the energy of such big work.

Yet it was already clear that "the Great Turning" of the world as we know it had begun, along with the need to respond to multiple crises of ecological, economic, meteorological, and political origin. There was already dialogue in the shamanic community about how to strengthen our "world work" and what came to be called "shamanism without borders." Not being one to shy away from big tasks, I just kept going.

### The Ch'aska Despacho Vision

The guidance was beautiful, mysterious, and inspiring. I was being called to create maps of consciousness with these offerings. Such maps are created with vision, intention, and participation of the living energy of all things: the people, the sacred sites, the contents, the wisdom tradition itself. Connections, like ley lines (*ceke* lines in Quechua) would be drawn between the mountains in California, the Himalayas, and the Andes, and between these mountains and the stars.<sup>3</sup> Energetic filaments would connect these despachos and all the *ch'aska* despachos made throughout time. Traditional despacho contents, site-specific contents, and *ch'aska*-specific contents would be woven together. These despachos would affect the totality of energy in the universe.

All traditional despachos are perceived as such maps of consciousness.

Symbols of everything important in the Andean cosmology are placed in the offerings as threads or filaments to the earth (*Pachamama*), the mountains (*apus*), and the cosmos. Meanings are deep: the

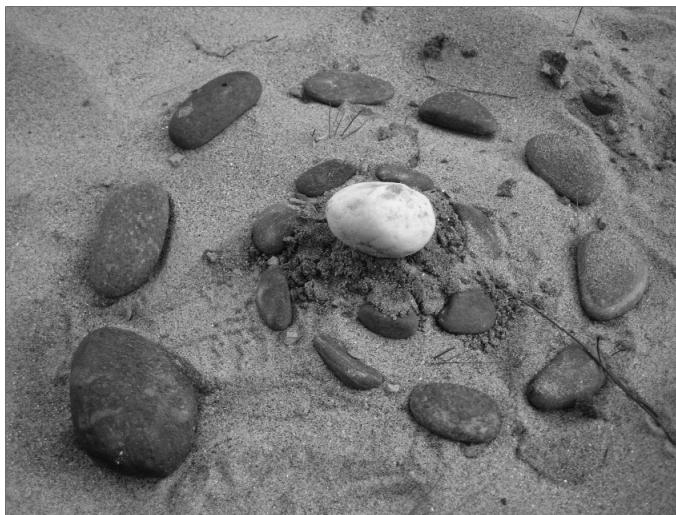


Photo 1 above: Spiral anchor with stones from local Bhutanese river and Mt. Diablo in the Bay area.

Photo 2 below: Sacred geometry in *ch'aska* despachos: rainbow spiral, cross of incense, and *k'intus*.



five-legged star represents our "unfolding into the fifth world." The star also symbolizes our fruition and our luminous bodies as we "meet ourselves again" in the *Taripay Pacha*, this time of great change.<sup>4</sup> Representations of rainbows symbolize the Rainbow Lagoon (a

sacred place on the Holy Mountain Aungate), the earth garden, and pure water. *K'intus*, sets of three leaves brought together in intent for offerings, represent sacred geometry: the three worlds, three laws, and three aspects of the human—wisdom, heart, and physical body. Every ingredient carries memory and meaning into the offering.

I scrambled to learn how to create these *ch'aska* despachos. Some instructions came in meditation and some in journeys. Over the course of four months I was instructed to make, in addition to the three Himalayan *ch'aska* despachos, two more on my own Sonoma Mountain, and to set up multiple spiral stone offerings to "anchor" the energies. I was to invite support and anchoring of this work by other practitioners at their local places of power.

A number of colleagues, friends, and readers of my monthly blog responded to my invitation to help anchor this work with small spirals at their own altars and sacred places (photo 1).

With all these shamanic helpers I communicated what I had been told about cosmic energies, including the importance of Inca "hitching posts of the sun" at Machu Picchu, Pisac, and other sacred sites. The importance of this collaboration was enormous: while I walked in a tradition thousands of years old, I also needed and relied on the filaments of support, prayer, and interest from my peers. In turn, my collaborators spoke strongly of the connections that emerged for them.

For the site-specific contents, I journeyed to the spirits of each mountain and asked what would please them in their offerings.<sup>5</sup> Each mountain spirit had slightly different requirements. I also journeyed for the *ch'aska*-specific contents, where certain patterns emerged. Spiraling rainbows, going

counterclockwise (in the direction in which we “unmake our patterns” and open our circles) should be drawn for the special “base” of each offering. Unique contents to “attract” the stars were shown to me: gold and multi-colored glitter, shiny ribbons, sparkling gold “cups” to hold some of the offerings, and other shimmery things.<sup>6</sup> Both the spiral pattern and a four-directional cross pattern were to be used for laying out the contents (photo 2).

### Sacred Geometry in the Himalayas

Finding the space and place to create my offerings while traveling with a small group required clarity, strong intent, and spontaneity. At Pele-La pass in Bhutan (11,218 feet) I literally ran up above the road to a small meadow looking across to the higher Himalayas, finding small leaves to take the place of coco leaf *k'intus*, and discovering that this despacho wanted to be left in a dead tree trunk so it could “see” the peaks and “be seen” by the stars (and not be buried or burned in the usual practice).

To find the second *ch'aska* despacho location I listened carefully every day, understanding finally that it needed to be by a river: the flow out from mountains and glaciers, the mirror of the Milky Way, the elemental source of life, and the meandering of the project itself. On a hike down to the Jakar Cho in the Bumthang Valley, the spirits of place emerged to feed the process with an amazing rainbow. Again the despacho wanted to be left above the ground—this time in a boulder wall above the river—so it could “see” and “be seen” by the stars. This vertical alignment is a classic aspect of Andean cosmology in which columns of light (*saiwas*) are created for connection between heaven and earth, mountains and stars, earth and cosmos.<sup>7</sup>

The “Everest View” despacho re-

quired a trek up to 12,470 feet from which we could see nearly 360 degrees. Chomolungma (Tibetan for the Mother goddess of the universe) rose 17,000 feet above us (on the left, photo 3). I found



Photo 3 above: Chomolungma (29,035') and Ama Dablam (22,493') from Everest View (Syangboche).

Photo 4 below: *Ch'aska* despacho, Chomolungma.



the Juniper forest of my original vision and settled on a lovely boulder under a clear and deep blue sky to make my final Himalayan offering. Full of delicate mountain bluebells, intense prayer, and soaring joy, the despacho called strongly to the highest peak in the world and the firmament above (photo 4). Again the spirits of place entered into our totality

of energy by maintaining clear views of the mountains just until the offering was complete.

While I was the sole human creating this offering—despachos are traditionally made with large groups—many living beings and spirits joined me. I felt the energetic connections between the three Himalayan *ch'aska* despachos, the elements, the living beings and spirits of those parts, the mountains and stars, the Old Ones who watched over our work; I felt the *teximuyo*, the unity of all things, fall into place as I found the resting place for the offering. My heart was absolutely singing.

### More Filaments in the Bay Area

On my return from the Himalayas our local mountain spirits called for their own star despachos. We had a long and deep relationship with these mountain spirits, so it was not surprising that they appeared in journeys, asking to be included. It was an example of reciprocity (*ayni* in Quechua) on many levels: groups of us had been hiking on, journeying to, and making offerings on these mountains for many years.<sup>8</sup> Many of us strengthened our connections with the mountains through visualizations and meditations.<sup>9</sup> Before us, local indigenous peoples had maintained their own sacred relationships.

Ancestral memory, our own maps of consciousness, and community participation amplified the power and alignment of Bay Area *ch'aska* despachos.

This was supremely evident on Mt. Diablo, when 15 of us gathered below the peak known to native peoples as “Spirit Mountain” and “Place of Creation.” Cleansing each other with Bay Laurel branches, we passed through the *apacheta* (energetic opening) to our work together. Hiking down a long grassland ridge from which ocean, bay, and delta are visible, we breathed in the elements





Photo 5. Mt. Diablo *ch'aska despacho*

and beings of that place. Gathering in circle we connected our hearts and blew intentions for the despacho into our *k'intus*. We connected through our *qosq'os* (essentially the same place as the *hara* and *dantien*) with each Bay mountain, visualizing the scenes, experiences, and shapes of each mountain. A field of Bay consciousness began to envelop us; we seemed to step outside time (photo 5).

Human connections during a despacho are made with heart, visualization, and intention as each ingredient is added. When the despacho is complete, it's wrapped in sacred weavings, and each participant is both cleansed and blessed with the bundle (photo 6).

In the next few years, I invited groups of people to create additional star despachos with me and encouraged others to make their own. As the process evolved, energetic triangles of connection emerged between places. Three mountains and their despachos created horizontal energy spreads where the star beings seemed to roll down the hillsides and out to the communities (Mt. Diablo,

Ring Mountain, and San Bruno). Three others held strong vertical (*saiwa*) energy, down into the core of the earth and out to the stars (Mt. Tamalpais, Mt. Hamilton, and Mt. St. Helena). My helpers advised, "You can all feed the connections by visualizing the locations of the despachos. You can make invisible worlds of substance with light, with subtle energies, and with your own heart connections to the stars."

Activation of the offerings was another piece of the evolution. Always the *ch'aska* despachos felt strong and amazing to those who helped make them (participants ranged from very experienced to not at all experienced with despachos). Yet the despachos at Mt. Tamalpais became fully activated only after a seemingly unrelated despacho was made. What happened was this: my apprentice Carol Crescetto and I had decided to do ceremony in conjunction with a summer solstice forgiveness offering taking place in the Andes. Carol was shown in journey specific organization and contents for our offering. Our

intent was to release the heaviness and to ask forgiveness for the trauma that comes from the ills that humans visit on the world—war, famine, rape, greed, disconnection, and so on. We created the forgiveness despacho (photo 7) in a sacred area where many despachos have been made before. Yet we decided to bury it in the same area as the *ch'aska* despacho, at the very top of the mountain just below the fire lookout where it could "see" five other Bay mountains. Literally as soon as the offering was buried, we felt a huge vertical energy shoot up; that energy continues to build.

At the San Bruno Mountain *ch'aska* despacho, we had to change its placement, spontaneously, to an out-of-the-way area down the mountainside. For four months I worried that it was in the "wrong" place and not able to "see" the other mountains; then one day my helpers informed me out of the blue that its placement was "perfect" and related to issues I didn't know about.

The Old Ones told me, "The map of consciousness that is emerging as you

make these offerings is what *ceke* lines are for. This map is what all peoples have tried to create—the Shipibo with their designs, the Inca with their filaments, and archaic peoples with cave paintings. This map of consciousness between mountains and stars, fed by the *ch'aska despachos*, is held with the sacred geometry of triangles, columns, circles, spirals, the cross, and the whole.”

Such maps, and the relationships with living beings, spirits of place, and ancestral memory that they represent, can continue to be fed with visualization, meditation, journey, ceremony, and dreaming. As Sandra Ingerman explains, “As we remember places in nature where we have felt connected, at home, or at ease in a spiritual sense, we are actually connecting with the dreaming of that place—and this dreaming is a fluid and ongoing process associated with that place that emanates power.”<sup>10</sup>

Subtle energy links between our own meridians, earth’s *ceke* lines, mountains, waters, and the star beings strengthen and shine as we continue to make these offerings (photo 8). Thirteen *ch'aska despachos* have been offered to date. About 50 people (that I know of) support and engage with this ongoing process.

### Reciprocity with the Star Beings

Documenting the transpersonal effects or results of ceremony is a conundrum. The “totality of energy in the universe” is complex beyond understanding; energy is generally felt rather than seen; and we try to avoid the ego in our work. Still, sharing perceptions helps us find the unity consciousness toward which star beings (and others) are encouraging us.

The most powerful single example I want to share came in the two days after the January, 2010 7.0 earthquake that devastated Haiti, when the star beings came to call souls back.

On January 13, 2010 I journeyed to visualize, empower, and connect all six *ch'aska despachos* that had been created up to then. I traced the connections between them, saw the energy within the

two triangles, and visualized the two triangles. As the earthquake had just been reported, I carried all this energy with me to Haiti to nourish the many suffering people.



Photo 6 above: Blessing with *ch'aska despacho*, Mt. Diablo

Photo 7 below: Forgiveness *despacho* in process, surrounded by crystals and serpentine, Mt. Tamalpais



The next day my Medicine for the Earth group met. We generally do some “world work” to transmute toxins of various kinds, so we decided to go to Haiti, inviting all our helping spirits and power animals to help out, and asking the animals and spirits of place for directions for our healing work. This is my journey:

*I greet my circle of helpers and transfigure. All of us fly on the wings of Condor to Haiti.*

*I watch as Bear goes up a mountain, raising fallen buildings and walls. Hummingbird meets other hummingbirds and they all fly off with our filaments of connection. The rest of my Power Animals walk among people, touching them with the breath of spirit, which is welcome and felt in this country where spirit is still so alive. The Star beings come down low in the sky. I see dead souls getting on a big rug (a magic carpet?), but then the star beings just draw up all the dead souls back where they belong, up to the stars. It is very beautiful. I wonder about people trapped under rubble, then see the star beings comforting and drawing them forth. I keep watching all these beautiful acts until it's time to return. I am told to keep coming back and holding the light.*

Experiences like these call for significant trust in our interdimensional connections and in the shifts we perceive on non-material planes. This journey and the ones that followed, combined with the many personal instructions I have been receiving from the star beings during these years, show that the power of our connections is deeper than we know or believe!

When I have asked in journey how others can access star-being energy, they advise all of us:

*“Open your energy fields to us. Think about us. Journey to us, asking your questions, asking to learn, asking for help... If you call on us, we can teach you to shine through everything. To draw on our energy to fuel and transform your work and your lives. To access our ancient wisdom held in glacier water, crystals on the mountains, and cenotes in the Yucatan”<sup>11</sup>*

*...What you humans really need to do is learn to shine all the time and weave your webs of connection with all beings on a regular basis. We love it when the earth is lit with your inner lights.”*

The star beings reiterate over and over that as we make relationship with them and call on them, “more will be revealed.”<sup>12</sup> Developing such a relationship is just like making a relationship with a Power Animal, Teacher, or moun-



tain: we can connect through our hearts; align and merge with these beings who are waiting to help us; and dream what we want to see, hear, feel, taste, and call into being.

We can draw on ancestral wisdom and memory as well. Don Benito Qoriwayman, the revered teacher of my teacher Américo Yabar, was often found near Cusco gazing at the sky and communing with the stars through a black plate he used for divining. According to Juan Nuñez del Prado, our guiding star “will tell us how to leave planet earth, and how to discover a path to a different way of existence.”<sup>13</sup> As many of our ancestors say, we resonate with stars because we are made of star dust.

### Conclusion

This work of creating *ch'aska* despachos is part of a larger whole, both over time and outside space and time. Many peoples and traditions are working with star being energies (for example, the Star Family Gathering in 2010).<sup>14</sup> It is a mystery: we come from stars, and now we call on our star ancestors and descendants to come into this dimension, seed our earth medicine work, and teach us.

By engaging with a ceremonial offering tradition thousands of years old, we enter a field of energy, a field of consciousness: reciprocity with the living energy of the universe, connection with the sacred offerings left by us and other humans on the mountains, reverence for all life, and connection with the deep wisdom carried through generations.

When we make and maintain reciprocal relationship, the great powers and sacred places—mountains, lagoons, stars—communicate back. When we draw on wisdom traditions (Q'ero in my case), our relationships and our “tending” as Carol Proudfoot-Edgar calls it, are amplified. Our own alignment, perceptions, and power grow. Our connections to all living beings, the *kawsay* or living energy of the universe, expand and feed us in turn. Reciprocity with the shimmering world becomes a gift for all.

### References

1. “To tell you the truth, these stars that

we see in the sky...In the beginning there was nothing. The stars were there. The universe was there and there were the stars. God came, and the material of those stars, the stars rained dust down onto the earth, which was a flower. It was a flower! This is where humanity came



Photo 8. Filaments of connection, completed *ch'aska* despacho, San Bruno Mountain

from. The dust of the stars connected with the flower of the earth. We are the people now who are the descendents of the people who are no longer here, who evolved from the stars.” Grandmother Anna Swarts, 104 year-old Kalahari San Bushman in Africa, quoted in film “In Search of the Future.” See [www.in-search-of-the-future-movie.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=53](http://www.in-search-of-the-future-movie.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=53).

2. From Beeler, Meg and Gregory Miller, “The Despacho Ceremony in 21st Century Shamanism: Embracing Ancient Power and New Diversity,” the *First Society for Shamanic Practitioners Annual Conference Proceedings*, Asilomar, June 2005. For an expanded version of the article: [www.earthcaretakers.net/id39.html](http://www.earthcaretakers.net/id39.html).

3. Ceke lines represent relationships, affinities, and the invisible worlds of

substance that connect us to everything. As explained in the “Glossary of Terminology of the Shamanic and Ceremonial Traditions of the Inca Medicine Lineae”, [www.incaglossary.org](http://www.incaglossary.org), *ceke* (also *ceque*, *seque*) is a “Line of living energy running through the earth, or between two ritual sites. Sacred energy lines that connect places, people and things. Also called ley lines or axiotonal lines...The *cekes* were an Inca concept interwoven with myth, astronomical observation, architectural alignment and the social and geographical divisions of the empire...Even the movements of Mayu (the Milky Way) were linked to the *ceke* system and Tawantinsuyu, “the four corners of the world.”

4. From remarks on creating Hatun despachos, June 2004, by Jose Luis Hererra.

5. Site-specific contents at Chomolungma, for example, included a llama fetus to help bring forth what is unborn, and an Andean condor feather and a local crow feather to help the prayers fly. At Mt. Diablo, site-specific contents included a treasured Rufous Hummingbird I had had for years on my altar. Hummingbird, “she who flies straight to God” in Andean myth and story, was to help us connect directly with the stars.

6. This was very interesting because mountains do not like lots of color in their offerings according to Americo Yabar, November 1996.

7. *Saiwas*, columns of light created by both humans and spirits of places, are one of the organizing principles of Andean cosmology. They unite the lower, middle, and upper worlds, as well as the three bands of energy in the body (belly, heart, third eye).

8. The sacred mountains we work with regularly include Mt. Diablo, Mt. Hamilton, Mt. Umhunum, San Bruno Mountain, Mt. Tamalpais, Ring Mountain, and Sonoma Mountain. For more on these connections, and for wonderful ideas for connecting with your own sacred places, see *Circling San Francisco Bay: A Pilgrim-*

# Traditional Despachos in the Andes

A despacho is an act of love and a reminder of the connections we share with all beings, elements, spirits, and sacred places. At the deepest level it is an opportunity to enter into the essential unity of all things, the living energy of the universe.

The particular healing intention—such as bringing harmony and balance to the earth, honoring new beginnings, or getting rid of an illness—determines the design of the offering, some of the contents, and the way that offerings are added.

The offering is created on Andean weavings that represent the masculine and feminine in balance. White paper, for clarity, is the base. A bed of incense is laid to carry the prayers of the offering into the cosmos. Red flower petals for Pachamama and white for mountains are laid in a pattern, commonly in a circle, four directions, cross, or flower pattern, depending on the intent. Sets of coco leaves, called *k'intus*, are prepared with intent by each participant, then placed in a pattern on the offering, again reflecting the particular intent. The sacred geometrical patterns create maps of consciousness and luminous threads of connection.

A despacho contains symbols of everything: elements, weather, clouds around mountains, rainbows, the four di-

rections, lakes, rivers, fruits of our labors, earth, stars. Every item represents a part of the Andean cosmology—the organizing principles of the universe—imbued with intent for connection to the mountains and the cosmos. A despacho ceremony affects the totality of energy in the universe.

As Q'ero Elder Don Manuel Q'espí explains, "The various elements that comprise the despacho energetically interact to permit access to portals or bridges from the ordinary and non-ordinary worlds. When working in ceremony with the despacho, one is accessing the non-ordinary energetic dimensions, the source of things. Though the contents may have symbolic significance, the despacho, when performed with the correct intent, transcends literal and symbolic domains and directly accesses the archetypal and energetic realms." (Translated by Jose Luis Herrera at Canyon de Chelly, May 1997.)

*From Beeler, Meg and Gregory Miller, "The Despacho Ceremony," in 21st Century Shamanism: Embracing Ancient Power and New Diversity, the First Society for Shamanic Practitioners Annual Conference Proceedings, Asilomar, June 2005. For an expanded version of the article, see [www.earthcaretakers.net/id39.html](http://www.earthcaretakers.net/id39.html)*

*age to Wild and Sacred Places*, by Ginny Anderson, IUniverse, 2006.

9. The tool of journeying helps us see and ask questions; awareness of ceke lines seems to allow information to come directly in meditation. I believe that ancestral maps of consciousness, whether Aboriginal song lines or the story and "myth," enabled humans to visualize the whole, remember the route, and create energetic fields of connection. As Hank Wesselman puts it, "...consciousness becomes 'geographied' when journeying—it becomes the spirit world in which the shaman will travel." In Sandra Ingerman, and Hank Wesselman's, *Awakening to the Spirit World: The Shamanic Path of Direct Revelation*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2010, 119.

10. *Ibid.*, 116.

11. *Cenotes* are water storage areas that connect to the subterranean aquifer in

the Yucatan. Created in conjunction with the Chicxulub crater impacting the Yucatan Peninsula 65 million years ago, and resultant dinosaur extinction, they are sacred to the Maya as sources of clean water and as access to what we term the "lower world."

12. For example, as I was completing this article I began to see *ch'aska* despachos in "the four corners of the world," what the Inca called *Tiwantisuyo*. Clearly, the star beings are inviting others around the globe to create reciprocal relationships with them. Like the World Drum project that began similarly in a vision and has continued to circle the globe since 2006 (see <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=35901743683>), may our offerings to the star beings continue to create a shimmering world!

13. During a teaching on the black light of the cosmos in May 2010, by Juan Nuñez del Prado.

14. The Star Family Gathering took place in July, 2010 in the Four Corners Region of the US. Healers from many North American traditions were present. Personal correspondence from Judith Kaleahani Lynne.

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