

The Life of

# John Paton

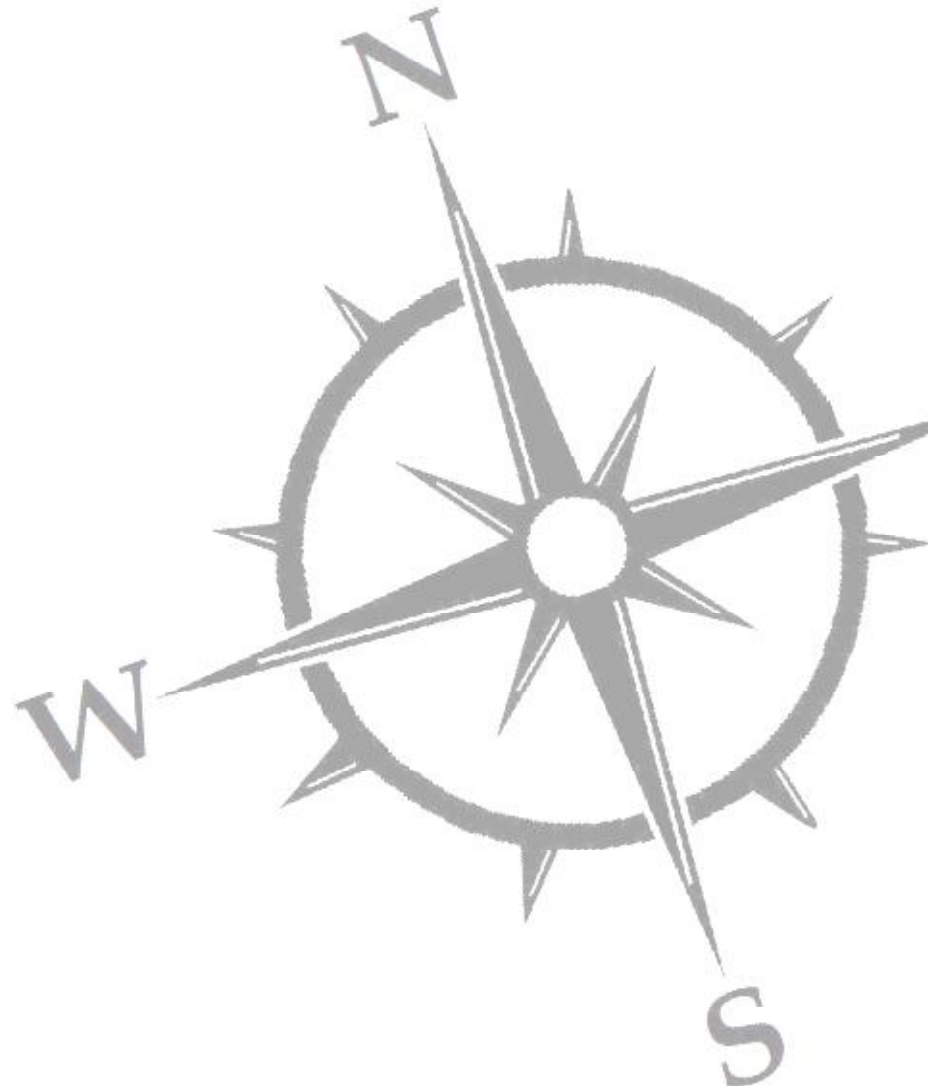
(1824-1907)

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## Lesson: 3.8 – Protection Missionary Spotlight Series

This story reminds us that the Lord is ever present to protect and care for His children. When God is on our side, regardless of the opposition, we are never outnumbered. John Paton faced a lot of scary things, but he knew that the Lord was going to protect him and keep him safe.

*“The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” - Psalm 18:2*







### **Who remembers where we left off last week?**

(Read the last paragraph from last week's lesson to begin this lesson as a review).

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The Inland people and the Harbor people had met at the dancing grounds and were ready to go to war. One of the inland chiefs, Enan, had told me that he would destroy the Harbor people if I said to do so. I took a deep breath, my next words would be very important. "My friends... I love you all the same. I am here to teach you how to turn away from wickedness, worship the one true God, and live in peace. I do not want anyone to die today." All was quiet for several minutes and then Enan spoke again, "Then you will be murdered and your message destroyed." I raised my hand and spoke again, "You may shoot or murder me, but I will go to Heaven, I have only been kind to all of you, I am your best friend." At this, Miaki stood up and said, "the mission man's words are good, let us all follow it, let us

all follow it, let us worship together."

Enan was disappointed, he wanted a war, but because of my words, there was peace... or at least for a couple of days. A few days later, I received a message that Enan was very sick. "The witchdoctors have put a curse on him," the people said, but I knew it was probably that Miaki had poisoned some of the food gifts that he had sent to Enan and his people. Enan had sent a message for me to come and help him. When I reached the village, it seemed strangely empty. When I went inside the chief's hut, I could tell that he was dying. All the villagers snuck away leaving me and Enan alone. "Come close to me and talk to me," Enan said in a whisper. Suddenly, as I sat next to him, Enan pulled out a huge knife from under him and pressed it to my chest. No wonder everyone had left. The people knew that Enan was going to try to kill me and then because no one had seen him do it, no one could be punished. I silently prayed as my heart was beating fast. There were a few moments of silence, and then Enan, said, "Go, go quickly." I jumped to my feet and ran the four miles back to my house.

Enan soon died and as the year 1862 began, a great war started between the tribes. The terrible yell of the Tannese war-cry rang through the bush. Early one morning, warriors surrounded my house. I heard them break into the storehouse and begin to steal things. I was watching them through an open window when suddenly a tomahawk whizzed right past my head barely missing me. Chief Nookamara and his men bravely defended me. At one point, a spear stabbed through

Chief Nookamara's knee. His enemies surrounded him, planning to carry him off for dinner, but suddenly his men bravely jumped in and saved him at the last minute.

That night, no one got much sleep. Abraham and I slept in our clothes on the floor. The sun had just barely begun to come up when one of my native friends burst into my hut. He stopped only a second to catch his breath. "I have heard their plans, they plan to kill you. They are coming here right now," he continued. "You must leave now!" My friends and I all scattered. Even my dog Clutha disappeared. In a flash, I was running through the wild bush and trees that surrounded my hut. The hot sun caused beads of sweat to run down my face and into my eyes, but I could not stop. I had to find somewhere safe. I decided to head to a Chief Nookamara's village. Everyone in the village seemed in a panic. The whole island seemed alive with warriors looking to kill. Chief Nookamara, still limping from the spear to his knee sat resting on a canoe. "Sit down and pray to our God for if He does not help us, we are all dead men." I began to pray. I knew that God was able to save us. A large group of warriors was approaching the village. Suddenly, Chief Nookamara began to laugh. I looked over at him with a puzzled look on my face. "Our God is listening. They are standing still." It was true. A large group of warriors stood like statues near the edge of the village. A messenger ran to different warriors in the group and then out of nowhere, the group turned and left. Chief Nookamara allowed me to stay in his village, but the next morning he called me to his hut.





leg when suddenly I heard voices down below. “The fire god will punish us unless we find the mission man,” the leader said. I peered through the leaves of my hiding spot and spotted the leader with red, white and black paint on his face. There were several warriors with him. Each one held a sharp spear that flashed in the sunlight. They looked all around. Then one of them looked up right at me. I sat very still hoping that he would not spot me hiding behind the leaves. Finally, after what seemed like forever, the warriors ran off. I let out a sigh.

I stayed up in that tree all day. About midnight, I heard a whisper below. “Come down Missi, come down!” It was Chief Nookamara’s son. He led me to the beach. I was overjoyed to see Abraham and my other friends waiting for me. Even Clutha, my dog, had managed to find the others and was there waiting as well. “Here is a canoe,” Chief Nookamara said, “but I am told that warriors are waiting to shoot you when you pass the black rock.”

“We have nowhere else to go,” I said. Everyone climbed into the canoe and we set off. We hadn’t gone far when a huge storm began. Huge waves splashed over the sides of the canoe filling it up with water. “We are food for sharks! We will soon be in Heaven,” Abraham shouted over the storm. “Let’s try to go back,” I said, “Our God rules the sea and the land.” Together we paddled and bailed water out of the canoe for four hours and finally made it back to land. There we spotted Faimungo. Faimungo was Chief Nookamara’s son-in-law and he lived in a different part of the island. Faimungo did not

want people to think we were traveling with him, but he did allow us to follow a good distance behind him so that if we were spotted he could say he knew nothing about us being there.

We set off. Before long, we came to a stream. Everyone jumped across it, but when I tried to jump, I tripped and ended up sliding on my hands and knees. At the same time, I heard a loud crash right above my head and a killing stone bounced off the tree and dropped right in front of me. If I hadn’t tripped, that stone would have killed me for sure. We turned to look but could see no one in the trees and bushes. I prayed and thanked the Lord for His protection as we jumped to our feet and continued on our journey.

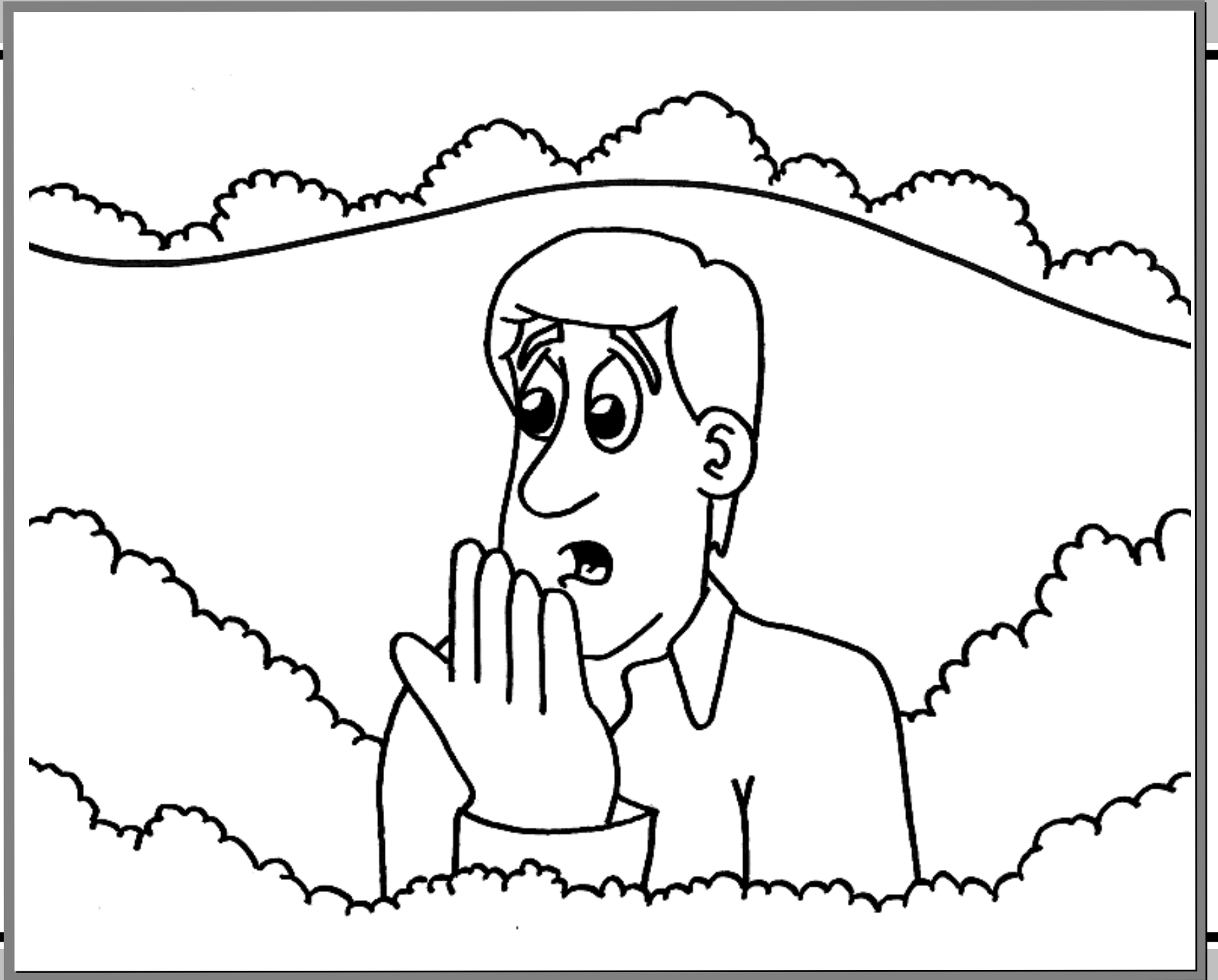
We kept a good lookout behind us to make sure we weren’t being followed. Finally, I recognized where we were and before long, we stood outside the Mathieson’s house. They welcomed us with good food and a safe place to stay. The next morning, I was also encouraged to see thirty Tannese people show up for the church service.

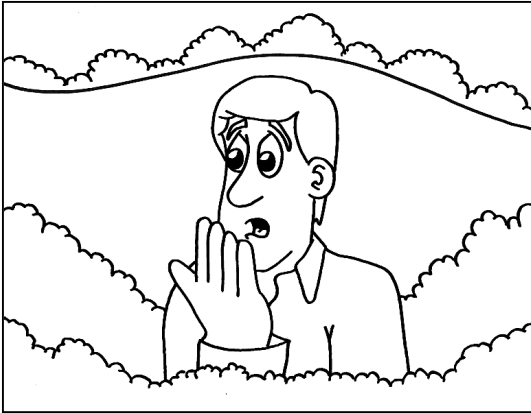
A few days later, a local chief came and told us that Miaki was traveling to different villages telling the people to kill us. We knew it would not be long before the Mathieson’s home would be under attack. The attack finally came at about ten o’clock at night on February 3rd. Clutha woke me up by pulling on my clothes and I could see men walking around with flaming torches. It wasn’t long before they set the church on fire and then the reed fence that connected the church to the house. It wouldn’t be long

Chief Nookamara had a worried look on his face. “The warriors who searched for you might kill my people trying to find you,” He said. “My son will take you to a safe place... there you must hide until the moon rises.” Before I could even ask a question, Chief Nookamara’s son was there and I soon found myself running quickly behind him. Finally, we stopped at the bottom of a very tall chestnut tree. This tree reminded me of the kind of trees that I used to climb back in Scotland. “Up there you will be safe,” the boy said as he turned to run back to his village.

I began to climb and soon was very high up in the tree. I made myself a hiding spot by cutting and pulling some branches together. Then I sat and waited. In the distance, I could hear the screams and cries that warriors on the island make when they are about to fight. It seemed like fighting was all these people ever did. “If only they would understand that Jesus can heal and change their sinful hearts,” I thought to myself.

After a little while, my legs began to have cramps. I was just about to move my





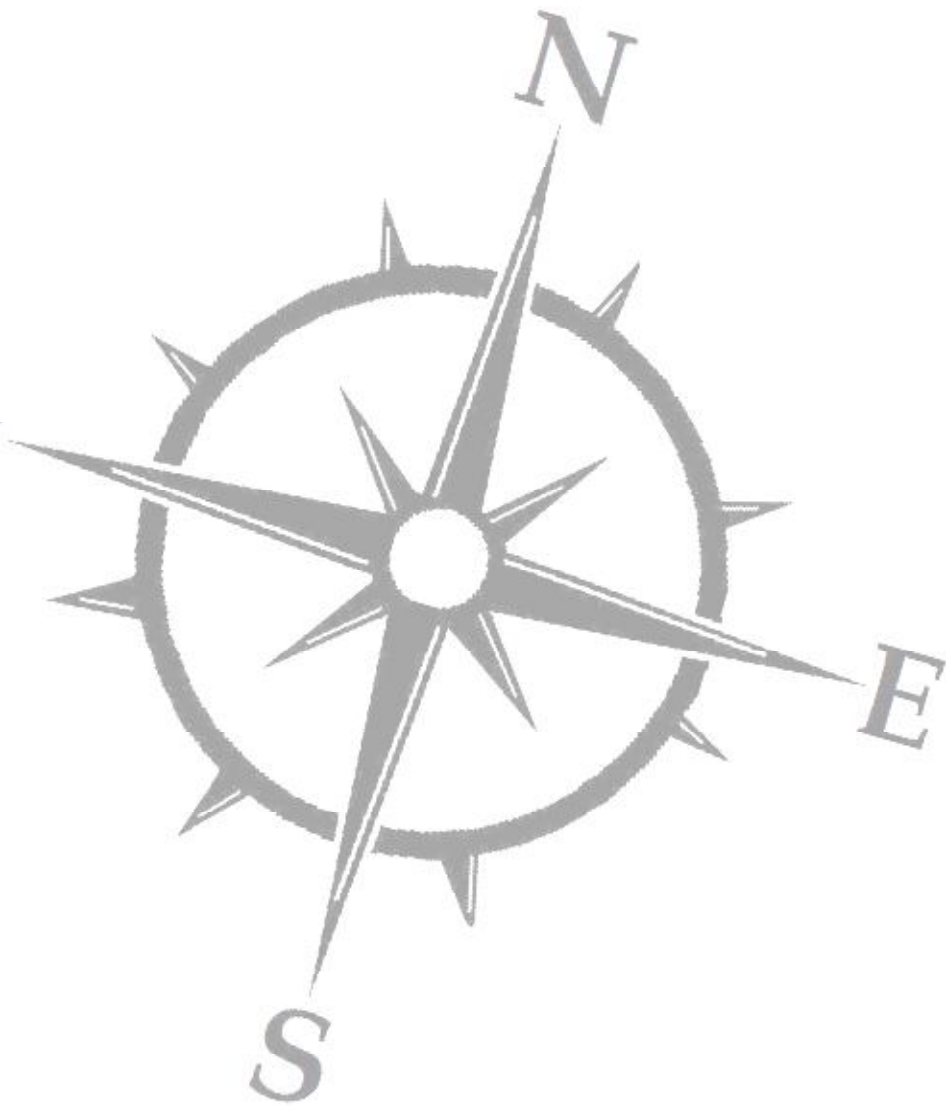
before our house was on fire too. I picked up an empty revolver and a tomahawk that I had saved. "Let me through the door and then lock it behind me," I whispered to Mr. Mathieson. "Don't go out there John," he begged, "you'll be killed!" I shook my head. "Let's leave that to God, shall we?" I said. Once outside, I ran to the burning fence and tore it down. Now at least the fire couldn't travel down the fence to the house. But tearing the fence down made some noise and soon I was surrounded by several Tannese warriors with clubs in the air. "Kill him! Kill him!" they all shouted. I held my empty revolver up in the air as if I was going to shoot it. "If you harm me, God will punish you. We have only been good to you, yet you want to kill us." The warriors continued to dance around and yell and began to move closer. They were nearly to me when a deafening boom crashed all around us. It was lightning. The wind started to blow the fire away from the house and torrents of rain began pouring down putting out the fires. "What is happening?" one of the warriors yelled. They all turned and ran off into the

bush. I stood there dripping wet with a smile on my face. God had protected us once again and brought a rainstorm right in the nick of time. "Open the door, it's me, John," I said. The door flew open and the Mathieson's welcomed me inside. For the rest of the night, I lay awake, with Clutha right beside me.

As the sun came up the next morning, the warriors seemed to have fresh courage and were once again making their war cries on a hill right above our house. Then, suddenly all became very quiet. I quietly crawled on my belly out of the house and up to a small ledge to take a look around. I peered through the reeds to try and figure out what was going on. In an instant, I knew why everyone had become so quiet.

**What do you think John saw? To find out, come back next time.**

*(For additional information, discussion questions and materials on this lesson please refer to **lesson 3.8** on **page 136** in your *Vanuatu Expedition - Leader's Guide*).*



# References

For further reading or to obtain more information on this portion of the life of this missionary, please consult the following sources from which we obtained our information:

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