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Clan MacDonald
MacDonald of the Isles

BADGE: Fraoch gorm (erica vulgaris) common heath.
 SLOGAN: Fraoch Eilean.
 PIBROCH: Dhonuill Dhui' (1503); and Donald Balloch's March to Inverlochry (1431).

A UNIQUE and important place in Scottish history, and particularly in the history of the Hebrides and the southwestern Highlands, is occupied by the great figure of Somerled of the Isles. "Somerledi," or summer sailors, is said to have been the term applied to the Norwegian adventurers, whose raids upon the coasts of this country were usually made during the pleasanter months of the year; but so far as history is concerned the name is that of the great island lord who reigned as an independent prince of the West and the Isles throughout the middle of the twelfth century. It is generally asserted in the Highland genealogies of to-day that Somerled was a Celtic chief by whose efforts the Norsemen had been driven from the mainland of Scotland, and who had wrested the islands of the west from the Norwegian Olaf, King of Man, before setting himself up as King of the Isles and Lord of Argyll; but the facts of history make it appear more likely that he was himself a Norseman, and we know his wife was Effrica daughter of Olaf of Man. When the High Steward, settled at Renfrew for the purpose by David I. of Scotland, began to drive back the Norse invaders who were then thrusting their settlements into the higher reaches of the Firth of Clyde, his chief opponent was this Somerled of the Isles. The climax of the struggle between them was reached in 1164, when Somerled landed a great force on the shores of Renfrewshire, and fought a pitched battle with the forces of the High Steward near the headquarters of the latter at Renfrew itself. In that battle Somerled



MAC DONALD OF THE ISLES

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fell, along with Gillecolane, his son by his first marriage, and it seems possible that the Barochan Cross, with its interesting and appropriate sculptures, still standing near the scene of the battle, forms a memorial of the event.

Somerled is said to have left a grandson, Somerled, son of Gillecolane, who inherited Argyll but was defeated and slain by Alexander II. in 1221, also three sons by his second marriage, Dugald to whom he left Lorne and his more northern possessions and who became ancestor of the MacDougalls of Lorne, Reginald who obtained Kintyre, Cowal, Isla, Arran, and Bute, and a third son Angus, who obtained the great Lordship of Garmoran, the actual bounds of which are not now certain. It is from the younger son Reginald, that the MacDonalds of the Isles and all the branches of the name the descended. Reginald had two sons who between them, in the year 1210, slew their uncle Angus, and possessed themselves of his patrimony of Garmoran. The elder of the two, Donald, succeeded his father in possession of Kintyre and the outer Isles, and carried on the main line of the race. The younger brother, Roderick, got Bute, Arran, and Garmoran. It is probably he who figures in the legend of Rothesay Castle enshrined in the ballad of "The Bluidy Stair." We know at any rate that the struggle for the possession of Bute and its stronghold went on between the Stewarts and the descendants of Somerled with varying fortunes till about the time of the battle of Largs in 1263. The last of the line of Roderick or Ruari, was Amy, the first wife of John, Chief of Clan Donald and Lord of the Isles, of whom more presently.

Donald's son was known as Angus Mor, and his son again as Angus Og. The latter took Bruce's side in the War of Succession, and it is he who figures as the hero, accordingly, in Sir Walter Scott's last great poem, *The Lord of the Isles*. As a matter of history, recorded by Archdeacon Barbour in his *Bruce*, Angus Og received and sheltered Bruce in his stronghold of Dunaverty at the south end of Kintyre, when the king was on his way southward in 1306, to shelter in the Island of Rachryn. From the chronicler's method of telling the tale it does not appear as if Bruce felt himself perfectly safe while enjoying that hospitality. In the following Spring, however, it was with the help of Christina of the Isles that Bruce organised his expedition for the return to Scotland. The historian Tytler, quoting the chronicler Fordoun, describes how a chief named Donald of the Isles raised the men of Galloway against Bruce in 1308, and was defeated and taken prisoner on the banks of the Dee on 29th June by the king's brother. But Fordoun seems to have confounded the Islesman with some lieutenant of MacDougal of Lorne. As a result of his support of Bruce, Angus Og received, as additions to his territories, Morvern, Ardnamurchan, and Lochaber, which had previously belonged to the MacDougals, but had been forfeited because of that family's siding with the Comyns against the King.

John, Lord of the Isles, son of Angus Og, further raised the power of his family by marrying his cousin, Arnie MacRuarie, heiress of the line of Roderick, Reginald's younger son. By her he got Garmoran and had two sons, Ranald and Godfrey. From the former of these are descended the houses of Glengarry and Clanranald, which to the present day put forward against the MacDonalds of the Isles claims to the supreme chiefship of the great MacDonald Clan. John, Lord of the Isles, however, appears to have repudiated or divorced his first wife, Amie MacRuarie, and to have married, under a dispensation dated 1350, Margaret, daughter of the seventh High Steward, afterwards King Robert II. By her he had three sons, Donald, John, and Alexander, and by reason, it is believed, that they were the king's grandsons, the eldest of the three was preferred to the succession to the Lordship of the Isles. At the same time, by way of compensation, their mother's inheritance, comprising the ancient lordship of Garmoran, was secured to the sons of the first wife. Of the three sons by the second wife, John became ancestor to the Earl of Antrim, and Alexander to the MacDonalds of Keppoch.

Meanwhile the old Chief, John of the Isles, had again and again shown his haughty spirit. In 1368 he refused to attend the Scottish Parliament and submit to the laws of the realm, and though he was forced to submit afterwards in person to King David II. himself at Inverness, this spirit was carried further by his successor. Almost immediately the arbitrary setting aside of the sons of the first marriage of John, Lord of the Isles, was to produce results the horror of which Scotland has not yet forgotten.

Donald, the eldest son of the second marriage, who at his father's death in 1380 became Lord of the Isles, married Margaret, daughter of Euphemia, Countess of Ross, in her own right. Margaret's brother, Alexander, Earl of Ross, married a daughter of the Regent Duke of Albany and died about the year 1406. As the only child of this marriage, another Countess Euphemia, was a nun, the Lord of the Isles proceeded to claim the Earldom of Ross in right of his wife. The Duke of Albany, however, secured from the nun-countess a resignation of the earldom in favour of his second son, John, Earl of Buchan, and rejected the claim of his nephew of the Isles. As a result, in 1411 Donald allied himself with England, raised an army of ten thousand men, took possession of the disputed earldom, and, marching southward with great rapidity, destroying the country as he went, penetrated as far as Inverury, less than twenty miles from Aberdeen. There he was met by his cousin, Alexander, Earl of Mar, son of the Wolf of Badenoch and nephew of Albany, at the head of an army of Lowland gentlemen. Mar's army was much smaller than that of the Island Lord, but it was infinitely better armed and disciplined. The battle, fought on St. James's Eve, 24th July, and remembered as Red Harlaw, proved disastrous to

both sides, but the Highland advance was checked, Donald retired to his island fastnesses, and, being followed up by Albany, was compelled at Loch Gilp to relinquish the earldom and give up all claim to independent sovereignty in the Isles.



BAROCHAN CROSS
ERECTED ON THE SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF RENFREW
WHERE SOMERLED FELL IN 1164

Donald of the Isles died in 1420, but his son Alexander, Lord of the Isles, by reason of the injustice which had been done to his family, appears to have remained a danger to the State. King James I., after the return from his long captivity in England in 1424, called a meeting of the Highland chiefs at Inverness, and arrested the most dangerous and powerful of them. While some of them were executed on the spot, others, including Alexander of the Isles and his mother the Countess of Ross, were thrown into prison. After a short confinement the Island Lord, who was the King's cousin once removed, was set free, but no sooner did he find himself once more in his native territory than his fury at the insult he had received burst forth, and, gathering the whole strength of Ross and the Isles, he burst upon the country, grievously wasting the Crown lands, and burning to the ground the royal burgh of Inverness. The King, however, instantly raised an army, marched into the Highlands, and encountered the Lord of the Isles in Lochaber. As the battle began Clan Chattan and Clan Cameron passed over to the side of the king, and the island lord saw his army put to utter rout. In the style of an independent prince he sent an ambassador to sue for peace; but this presumption merely incensed the monarch, who vigorously prosecuted the campaign against him; and presently, driven to

desperate straits, the chief was forced to throw himself upon the royal mercy. Clad only in shirt and drawers, he appeared suddenly before the king at the thigh altar in Holyrood chapel. There, holding a naked sword by the point, he fell upon his knees, and, delivering it to the king, implored forgiveness. He was instantly committed to Tantallon Castle, while his mother was imprisoned in the monastery of Inch Colme in the Firth of Forth. Meanwhile his kinsman, Donald Balloch, enraged at his chief's submission, gathered a fleet and army, descended upon Lochaber, and at Inverlochy cut to pieces a royal army under Alexander, Earl of Mar, and Alan Stewart, Earl of Caithness, and carried off immense plunder. He fled to Ireland, but was betrayed by a petty chief, who cut off his head and sent it to King James.

After a year's imprisonment the Lord of the Isles and his mother were restored to their liberty and possessions. At that time Alexander of the Isles seems to have established his character of loyalty to the Government, for after the murder of James I. in 1437, he became Justiciary of the Kingdom north of the Firth of Forth. His title as Earl of Ross appears to have been fully recognised after the death of his mother, and he thus held vast power on the mainland of Scotland, as well as in the Isles. This power was increased by his marriage with Elizabeth Seton, sister of Alexander, first Earl of Huntly. The old desire for independent sovereignty seems, however, to have lingered in his mind, for in 1445 he joined in a secret league with the Earls of Douglas and Crawford against King James II. The rebellion which these three Earls meditated could hardly have failed, owing to their immense power in the north and south of Scotland, in overthrowing the royal house, had it not been for the singular shrewdness, energy, and determination of the young James II. himself, backed by the ability of the Chancellor Crichton.

Alexander of the Isles died in May, 1449, at which time his son John, destined to be last of the Lords of the Isles, was no more than fifteen years of age. He, however, inherited and carried on the treasonous league with the Earls of Douglas and Crawford, and his disloyalty was probably increased by the fact that he married a daughter of Lord Livingstone, head of the house that so long kept the boy King James II. prisoner and was finally so suddenly and completely overwhelmed and destroyed by him. The King, however, in 1451, felt himself strong enough to do battle with his enemies, and the first results of the treasonous league were the slaughter of William, Earl of Douglas, by James's own hand in Stirling Castle, and the overthrow of the Tiger Earl of Crawford by the Earl of Huntly in a bloody battle near Brechin. Amid the general upheaval the young Lord of the Isles and Earl of Ross rushed to arms, and seized the royal castles of Inverness, Urquhart, and Ruthven in Badenoch; but his success was short-lived, being checkmated by the Earl of Huntly, whom the King made Lieutenant-General of the kingdom in place of the Earl of Douglas. James II. then sought to turn his enemies into friends. On the Tiger Earl of Crawford appearing bare-headed and bare-footed before him, and imploring pardon, he freely forgave him. On James, brother and successor of the late Earl of Douglas, he bestowed the hand of that Earl's child widow, the Fair Maid of Galloway, greatest Scottish heiress of her time. And he also took into favour the young Lord of the Isles, who was his own distant kinsman. The Douglasses, nevertheless, were soon again in rebellion. Finally, on Carron Water, forty thousand strong, they stood face to face with the royal army, and it looked as if the pending battle should decide whether James Stewart or James Douglas should wear the crown. The Earl, however, showed a fatal hesitation to attack. In consequence during the night his great army melted away, not a hundred men remaining to him in the morning, and Douglas himself became a fugitive in England. Twenty years later, in a small incursion on the Border, he surrendered to Kirkpatrick of Closeburn, and he ended his days as a monk in the Fifeshire Abbey of Lindores in 1488.

An almost similar fate befell the Lord of the Isles. In the cause of the Earl of Douglas, who had fled to him after the battle of Arkinholme, he got together a hundred galleys and five thousand men, which, under his kinsman, a second Donald Balloch, Lord of Isla, ravaged Inverkip, Bute, Cowal, and Arran, and carried off 600 horse, 10,000 cattle and 1,000 sheep. Shortly afterwards, however, Douglas was driven into exile, and his ally, the Earl of Crawford, died. The Lord of the Isles then became alarmed at the fate which might overtake himself, and made a humble submission to the king. After some hesitation, James relented so far as to allow the humbled chief a period of probation in which he might show the reality of his repentance by some notable exploit. To this end the island lord brought a powerful body of his vassals to assist the king at the siege of Roxburgh in 1460. But at the opening of the siege the king was killed by the bursting of a cannon, and, taking advantage of the weakness of the Government, the Lord of the Isles was soon in open rebellion again. In October, 1461, at his castle of Artornish on the sound of Mull he, along with Donald Balloch and his son John de Isla, entered into a treaty with Edward IV. of England by which, in consideration of an annual pension, he agreed to become a vassal to the crown of England, and to help the English King and James, Earl of Douglas, then in banishment, to subdue the realm of Scotland. Following this treaty the Lord of the Isles declared himself King of the Hebrides and assembled an army which, under the command of his natural son Angus and of Donald Balloch, seized Inverness Castle, marched with fire and sword through Atholl, stormed the Castle of Blair, and carried off the Earl and Countess of Atholl to imprisonment in Islay. But a fearful storm which sunk most of the war galleys was taken by the leader, Angus, as an evidence of the wrath of heaven for his violation of the chapel of St. Bridget in which he had seized the Earl and Countess, and he presently set free his prisoners, returned his plunder, and with his principal leaders did bare-foot penance at the desecrated shrine. Not long afterwards, at a meeting of the clansmen north of Inverness to settle some quarrel regarding the boundaries of his land, Angus was murdered by his own harper, MacCaibhre, who cut his throat with a long knife.

For his part in these transactions the Lord of the Isles was attainted in 1475. In the following year he surrendered and, being restored to his forfeited estates, resigned them to the King. The Earldom of Ross was then annexed to the Crown, James III. making one of his sons Duke of Ross, while Kintyre and Knapdale were forfeited and afterwards passed into possession of the Earl of Argyll. The rest of MacDonald's estates were regranted to the island lord, and he was made a lord of Parliament, with remainder, failing lawful heirs, to his natural sons, Angus Og and John, and their male issue. In 1493, however, when King James IV. paid his great visit to the Western Isles, it was to punish the great MacDonald Chief, who had seen fit to defy the royal authority, or at least to countenance his nephew Alexander of Lochalsh in doing so, Lochalsh's idea being to recover the Earldom of Ross for his family. After ravaging the Black Isle, belonging to Urquhart, King James' sheriff of Cromarty, Lochalsh was overthrown by the Mackenzie Chief at the battle of Blar na Pairc in Strathconan. Immediately, with characteristic energy, James summoned John of the Isles to stand his trial for treason. In a Parliament in Edinburgh he was stripped of all power, as a favour he was allowed to retire to the abbey of Paisley, and according to the Treasurer's Accounts, he died at Dundee in 1502-3.

This chief was in reality the last of the Celtic Lords of the Isles; but his house was not to be crushed without a struggle. His son Angus Og had married a daughter of the first Earl of Argyll, head of the

house which for over a hundred years had been little by little ousted and supplanting the ancient race of Somerled. In order to further his plan, Argyll kept the wife of Angus Og within his power at his castle of Inchconnel in Loch Awe, and when her son Donald Dhu was born he was kept a close prisoner in that stronghold. During the long imprisonment of this unfortunate chief the MacDonalDs wasted their strength in fierce feuds among themselves, Maclan of Ardnamurchan slaying the whole race of John Mor of the Isles and Kintyre except one Alexander, son of John Cattanach, who in the end married his daughter.

Donald had been a prisoner for thirty years when the encroachments of the Earl of Argyll became intolerable to the Islesmen. Having obtained a commission as Lieutenant, Argyll proceeded to expel the ancient proprietors and their vassals, to annul the charters even of recent years, and to grant the hereditary property of the Islesman to his own followers. In their time of trouble the thoughts of the Islesmen turned to Donald Dhu. A small force, led by the Maclans of Glencoe, broke into the dungeon on Inchconnel, freed the captive, and carried him safely to the castle of Torquil MacLeod in the Lews. The Islesmen then rose, burst into Badenoch with fire and sword, burned Inverness, and threatened the whole power of the Crown in the north. The entire military force of the Kingdom was called out, while a naval squadron under Sir Andrew Wood and Robert Barton was sent to reduce the castles of the Island Chiefs; but the rebellion was only put down when in 1506 James himself led an army into the North. The Earl of Huntly burned Torquil MacLeod's castle of Stornoway, and Donald Dhu, who had so recently been freed from his lifelong imprisonment, only escaped to Ireland to die soon afterwards.

Alexander, Lord of the Isles and Earl of Ross, however, had left two natural sons. Of these the elder was Celestine of Lochalsh, and Celestine's grandson, Donald Gallda, was the father of that Alexander of Lochalsh whose rebellion in 1493 brought about the final downfall of his uncle, John of the Isles. The Earl of Huntly was then exercising great power in the western Highlands and Hebrides, and as part of a scheme for counteracting this, his rival, the Earl of Moray, instigated Donald Gallda to make a claim to the Lordship of the Isles. Huntly was in possession of the Lews, and Sir John Campbell of Cawdor, brother of the second Earl of Argyll, had obtained Islay, the chief ancient seat of the Lords of the Isles. Hoping they had found a leader against these invaders, MacLeod of the Lews and many of the gentry of the Isles joined Donald Gallda. The force was met at Ardnamurchan by Alexander, son of John Cattanach, above referred to, who at last saw a means of avenging the overthrow of his house upon his father-in-law, Maclan of Ardnamurchan. They came upon the latter at a place called the Silver Craig, and there Maclan and his three sons with a great number of his people were slain. Donald Gallda was thereupon declared MacDonald of the Isles, and, according to the extract of the family chronicle printed by Sir Walter Scott in the notes to his poem, all the men of the Isles yielded to him. Had he lived and had heirs he might have renewed the fortunes of his house, for in September of that year the battle of Flodden was fought, and the great nobles of Scotland had other things to do than attend to risings in the distant Isles of the West. But Donald Gallda lived only for seven or eight weeks after being declared Lord of the Isles, and died at Carnaborg in Mull without issue.

The continuation of the line now fell to Hugh the second natural son, or a son perhaps by a handfast marriage, of Alexander of the Isles. His mother was a daughter of the last lay abbot of Applecross, and it was through her that Alexander of the Isles had acquired Lochalsh and Loch Carron. In 1495 Hugh obtained from his half-brother, John of the Isles, a charter conveying to him, with other lands, the district of Sleat in Skye, which remains the patrimony of his descendants to the present day. He was succeeded in turn by his two sons, John and Donald Balloch, the latter of whom was killed in 1506 by an illegitimate brother, Archibald. Donald Balloch's grandson, Donald Gorm, laid claim to the lordship of the Isles, and in 1539, in support of his pretension, laid siege to Eilandonan, the seat of the MacKenzie chief, but was shot dead from the battlements. Donald Gorm's great-grandson, still another Donald MacDonald, was in 1625 created a baronet of Nova Scotia by Charles I. His patent contained a special clause of precedence, declaring him to be second only to Gordon of Gordonstown, in the order of Baronets. His son Sir James, the second baronet, joined the Marquess of Montrose in his fast and furious campaign in favour of Charles I. in 1644. At the same time it cannot be forgotten that it was Alastair MacDonald, of the Earl of Antrim's family, who enabled Montrose to begin his campaign, by bringing over 1,800 Irish troops. When Montrose was finally defeated at Philiphaugh, the Marquess of Argyll, then at the head of the Government, took the opportunity of dealing his old family enemies a knockout blow, and sent a Covenanting army to destroy the MacDonald stronghold of Dunaverty and massacre the garrison, numbering 300.

Sir James MacDonald, notwithstanding the losses he had suffered, sent a force to join the cause of Charles II. when that young monarch, six year later, marched into England to the battle of Worcester.

The third baronet married Lady Mary Douglas, second daughter (and only child to leave issue) of the tenth Earl of Morton, and the fourth baronet, joining the Earl of Mar's rebellion in 1715, was attainted. It was in the time of Sir Almond, the seventh Baronet, that the great rising of the Clans under Prince Charles Edward occurred. In this MacDonald of the Isles took no part, and at Culloden those of the name were commanded by MacDonald of Keppoch. On that occasion the MacDonalds considered

themselves affronted. According to tradition, for their valour at Bannockburn they had been granted the honour always to lead on the right of the Scottish army. At Culloden this was refused. As a result the clan did not join in the first charge, and its leader Keppoch fell, crying "Have the children of my tribe forsaken me?"

Sir James the eighth baronet was one of the greatest scholars and mathematicians of his time, and it was his brother, Sir Alexander MacDonald, who in 1776 was raised to the Irish peerage with the title of Baron MacDonald of Slate, County Antrim. The fact of the peerage being Irish was probably accounted for in part by the circumstance that for several centuries Lord MacDonald's ancestors had owned the Glinns in County Antrim, as well as their estates in the Hebrides. Lord MacDonald's wife was the eldest daughter of Godfrey Bosville of Gunthwaite in Yorkshire, and granddaughter maternally of Sir William Wentworth, Bart., of Bretton, from which fact the Lords MacDonald have since that time included Wentworth in their names.

Lord MacDonald's second son, Godfrey, a Major-General in the army, further assumed the name of Bosville, but dropped it when on his elder brother's death he succeeded to the title as third Lord MacDonald.

A curious thing now seems to have happened. Godfrey, third Lord MacDonald, who was also eleventh baronet, married on 5th December, 1803, Louisa Maria de la Coast, a natural daughter of H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, brother of George III., and had an eldest son, Alexander William Robert, born in the year 1800. This son assumed the name of Bosville by royal licence, pursuant to the will of his uncle, William Bosville of Thorpe and Gunthwaite, who made him his heir. On the assumption, however, it would appear, that there was a bar to his succeeding his father, the peerage was inherited by Lord MacDonald's second son, Godfrey William Wentworth MacDonald, whose grandson, Ronald Archibald MacDonald, is the present and sixth baron. It was not until 1910 that the grandson of Alexander William Robert brought an action in the Court of Session. By decree of that court on 14th June it was declared that Alexander William Robert MacDonald had been the eldest son of Sir Godfrey MacDonald, third baron and eleventh baronet, and accordingly the rightful heir to the family honours. His grandson is now therefore Sir Alexander Wentworth MacDonald Bosville MacDonald, fourteenth baronet. In bringing his action he declared that he made no claim to the family peerage. He, however, is acknowledged to be MacDonald of the Isles.

Such is the strange story of a great ancient race. On the Island of Finlagan in Islay are still to be seen the relics of barbaric state amid which the Lords of the Isles for centuries were installed with regal ceremonies, and ruled with regal power. That power has long since passed away, but the blood of Somerled still runs in the veins of these heirs of the great MacDonald name.

Septs of Clan MacDonald (Clan Donald, North and South): Beath, Beaton, Bethune, Colson, Connall, Connell, Darroch, Donald, Donaldson, Donillson, Donnellson, Drain, Galbraith, Gilbride, Gorrie, Gowan, Gowrie, Hawthorn, Hewison, Houstoun, Howison, Hughson, Hutcheon, Hutcheson, Hutchinson, Hutchison, Isles, Johnson, Kean, Kellie, Kelly, Keene, Kinnell, Mac A' Challies, MacBeth, MacBeath, MacBheath, MacBride, MacCaishe, MacCall, MacCash, MacCeallaich, MacCodrum, MacColl, MacConnell, MacCook, MacCooish, MacCrain, MacCuag, MacCuish, MacCuithein, MacCutcheon, MacDaniell, Macdrain, MacEachran, MacEachern, MacElfrish, MacEltheran, MacGorrie, MacGorry, MacGoun, MacGowan, MacGown, MacHugh, MacHutchen, MacHutcheon, MacIain, Macilreach, Maciltiach, Macilleriach, Macilrevie, Macilvrive, Macilwraith, MacKean, MacKellachie, MacKellaig, MacKelloch, MacKinnell, MacLairish, MacLardie, MacLardy, MacLarty, MacLaverty, MacLeverty, MacMurchie, MacMurdo, MacMurdoch, MacO'Shannaig, MacQuistan, MacQuisten, MacRaith, MacRorie, MacRory, MacRuer, MacRurie, MacRury, MacShannachan, MacSorley, MacSporran, MacSwan, MacWhannell, Martin, May, Murchie, Murchison, Murdoch, Murdoson, O'Drain, O'May, O'Shannachan, O'Shaig, O'Shannaig, Purcell, Revie, Reoch, Riach, Rorison, Shannon, Sorley, Sporran, Train, Whannell.

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