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# RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

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EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF ASPECT RATIO

AND MACH NUMBER ON THE FLUTTER OF CANTILEVER WINGS

By E. Widmayer, Jr., W. T. Lauten, Jr., and S. A. Clevenson

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## NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR AERONAUTICS

WASHINGTON

June 1, 1950



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#### RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF ASPECT RATIO

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#### SUMMARY

The results of some wind-tunnel experiments to investigate the effects of aspect ratio and Mach number on the flutter of uniform, unswept, cantilever wings are reported. Models having aspect ratios ranging from 2 to 13 were tested at Mach numbers up to 0.92. No general attempt is made to correlate the data with three-dimensional-flow theory, but an examination of the data is made on the basis of reference theoretical values obtained from the two-dimensional incompressible-flow theory. On this basis a reduction in aspect ratio, in general, increased the ratio of the experimental flutter speed to the calculated flutter speed. The analysis also indicated that for a given aspect ratio, this ratio decreased slightly as the Mach number is increased.

#### INTRODUCTION

In the problem of flutter, accurate evaluation of the effects of finiteness of span and of compressibility has been difficult. The application of a two-dimensional incompressible-flow analysis to the flutter problem of wings of large aspect ratio, in the neighborhood of 6 and above, has been sufficient, in most cases of low-speed aircraft, to yield an engineering solution. For aircraft designed for high subsonic speeds, the application of a two-dimensional incompressible-flow analysis needs some modification. Moreover, the application also required modification for low-aspect-ratio wings where the flow pattern deviates to a considerable extent from the assumption of two-dimensional flow.

The subject of aspect-ratio effects on flutter has been dealt with theoretically by the application of theoretical air forces for threedimensional flow on an oscillating wing. Despite the many theoretical investigations of these air forces (references 1 to 10), the theory is still incomplete, even for the incompressible case. This incompleteness is due partly to the difficulty of mathematically representing the physical phenomena and partly to the approximations necessary to obtain a solution. Certain of these approximations are in doubt, particularly those associated with tip effects. A recent paper (reference 11) proposes a method to account better for the physical phenomena in the region of the tip. These various methods are difficult and laborious to apply numerically and consequently their practical application to flutter has been limited.

With regard to experimental work, insufficient data are available on the effects of aspect ratio and of compressibility on the flutter of wings. This lack of data is due in part to difficulties in experimental technique and in part to difficulties in isolating the various effects. In order to supply additional data on these effects, a series of tests has been conducted to furnish information on the subject, and the results are reported herein. Cantilever wings having aerodynamic aspect ratios varying from 2 to 13, and models with end plates to simulate infinite aspect ratios were employed. The experiments included a range of Mach numbers up to 0.92. No attempt is made to correlate the data with the various three-dimensional theories. However, it is convenient and useful to employ two-dimensional incompressible-flow theory (reference 12) to establish reference values to serve as a basis for comparison and discussion of the results.

#### SYMBOLS

b wing semichord, feet

- c wing chord, measured perpendicular to leading edge, inches
- *l* wing length, measured along leading edge, inches
- m mass of wing, slugs per foot
- $A_g$  geometric aspect ratio (l/c)
- A aerodynamic aspect ratio  $(2A_g)$
- M<sub>cr</sub> theoretical Mach number at which sonic velocity is first attained over wing section at zero lift

 $x_0$ distance of elastic axis from leading edge, percent chord $x_1$ distance of center of gravity from leading edge, percent chordanondimensional elastic axis position  $\left(\frac{2x_0}{100} - 1\right)$ 

a + x <sub>α</sub>	nondimensional center-of-gravity position $\left(\frac{2x_1}{100} - 1\right)$
$r_{\alpha}$	nondimensional radius of gyration of wing about elastic axis
ga	structural damping coefficient in torsion
ghl	structural damping coefficient in first bending
GJ	torsional stiffness, pound inches <sup>2</sup>
EI	bending stiffness, pound inches <sup>2</sup>
f <sub>hl</sub>	first bending natural frequency, cycles per second
fh2	second bending natural frequency, cycles per second
ft	first torsion natural frequency, cycles per second
$f_{\alpha}$	first torsion natural frequency relative to elastic axis, cycles per second
f <sub>e</sub> .	experimental flutter frequency, cycles per second
f <sub>R</sub>	reference flutter frequency, cycles per second
ρ	density of testing medium at time of flutter, slugs per cubic foot
<b>d</b>	dynamic pressure at flutter, pounds per square foot
Ve	experimental flutter speed, miles per hour
VR	reference flutter speed, miles per hour
М	Mach number at flutter
κ	wing mass-density ratio at flutter $(\pi\rho b^2/m)$

3

#### MODELS

In order to obtain a desired range of flutter speeds, different types of construction were used for the models; some models were made of solid spruce, some were made of balsa wood with various aluminum-alloy inserts, and some were made of rib-and-fabric construction. The model cross sections and dimensions are shown in figures 1 to 6. In determining the aerodynamic aspect ratio, hereafter referred to as aspect ratio, the tunnel wall is considered to act as a reflecting surface and the aspect ratio is assumed to be twice the geometric aspect ratio. Models incorporating a range of aspect ratios (13, 12, 9, 7, 6, 4, and 2) were investigated and their pertinent geometric structural properties are given in table I.

Models 111, 112, 121, 122, 141, and 142 were of balsa and aluminumalloy plate construction. Models 111 and 112 (A = 12) were later cut down to aspect ratio 9 to make models 121 and 122, respectively. Further cutting to A = 6 produced models 141 and 142. The cross sections of these models are shown in figure 1.

Sketches of the large aspect-ratio models (113-118) showing their airfoil sections and construction are given in figures 2 and 3. All but one of these models had 8-inch chords and 48-inch lengths (aspect ratio of 12) and the same general structural design as models 111 and 112. The exception was model 118, which had a chord of 4 inches and a length of 26 inches (aspect ratio of 13) and an unconventional section.

The aspect-ratio-7 design (models 131 to 136) shown in figure 4, consisted of spanwise balsa laminations glued to a duralumin box made from 0.016-inch sheet. The aspect-ratio-4 models (151 and 152) shown in figure 5 were of solid spruce construction. To reduce the torsional stiffness of these models, chordwise slots were cut from the trailing edge forward, perpendicular to the plane of the wing, and were spaced at intervals of 1 inch.

Figure 6 shows the 160 series models of aspect ratio 2. In order to obtain flutter at this low aspect ratio, thin sections and rib-and-fabric construction were employed. Model 166 was a  $15^{\circ}$  sheared swept wing of similar construction.

#### EQUIPMENT

The tests were conducted in the Langley 4.5-foot flutter research tunnel which is of the closed-throat, single-return type employing either air, Freon 12, or a mixture of air and Freon 12 as a testing medium at absolute pressures varying from 4 inches to 30 inches of mercury. In Freon 12 at standard pressure and temperature the speed of sound is 324 miles per hour and the density is 0.0106 slug per cubic foot. The maximum choking Mach number for these tests was approximately 0.92. The Reynolds number range was from  $0.434 \times 10^6$  to  $5 \times 10^6$ .

It may be appropriate to mention that the variation of  $\gamma$ , the ratio of specific heats at constant pressure and at constant volume,

resulting from the use of air, Freon 12, and a mixture of air and Freon 12 is thought to have relatively minor effect on flutter as compared with the effects associated with Mach number. Theoretical considerations for a stationary airfoil in steady flow which permit the inclusion of  $\gamma$ , (see, for example, reference 13) tend to substantiate this, at least for the range of Mach numbers concerned. A recent paper, reference 14, presents a comparison of flutter data taken in air with flutter data taken in Freon 12, which indicates no appreciable effects of the index  $\gamma$  of the test medium.

The models were mounted from the top of the tunnel as cantilever beams with rigid bases. Two sets of strain gages were fastened near the root of each model, one set for recording principally bending deformations and the other set for recording principally torsional deformations.

Models with end plates were used in the tunnel to simulate infinite aspect ratio. The end plates were made of  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch steel plate with beveled edges, had 15-inch chords, and spanned the tunnel. The gap between wing tip and end plate was of the order of 0.01 to 0.02 inch. A strut was added from the midspan of the plate to the floor of the tunnel in order to minimize the deflection of the plate.

#### TEST PROCEDURE

During each test the tunnel speed was slowly increased until the model fluttered. At this instant, the tunnel conditions were noted and an oscillograph record of the strain gage output was taken. The tunnel speed was then immediately reduced in an effort to prevent destruction of the model. The experimental flutter speed  $V_e$ , the density of testing medium  $\rho$ , and the Mach number M were determined from the tunnel data and the experimental flutter frequencies were determined from the oscillograms. The natural frequencies of the models in bending and torsion at zero airspeed were recorded before each test. The wing damping coefficients (reference 15) in bending and torsion and  $g_{\alpha}$ ) (g<sub>h)</sub> were obtained from the decay records of the natural frequencies.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the investigation are listed in detail in table II. While the data presented do not allow a quantitative critical appraisal of the various existing three-dimensional-flow theories, sufficient information pertaining to test conditions is supplied to permit an

engineering evaluation of these theories with respect to their application to a flutter analysis.

Some significant trends are illustrated in figures 7 and 8. For the convenience of the reader, Mach number data above M = 0.6 in figure 7 are shown by full points, and in figure 8 the aspect-ratio data above A = 6 are similarly shown by full points. As a basis for presenting and comparing results, ratios of experimental flutter velocities Ve toreference flutter velocities  $V_{R}$  are determined so that the data may indicate more clearly the effects of aspect ratio and Mach number. The reference flutter velocity  $V_R$  is calculated by the method of reference 12, which assumes an idealized, uniform, infinite, rigid wing mounted on springs in an incompressible medium and uses uncoupled first bending and uncoupled first torsion frequencies. In the present work where the theory is applied to cantilever wings, the first bending (natural) coupled frequency and the uncoupled first torsion frequency were used. The density used was that of the testing medium measured at the time of flutter. The calculations also yield a corresponding reference flutter frequency  $f_R$  which is useful in comparing frequency data.

It may be remarked that the test procedure employed in this work was adapted to obtaining over-all results conveniently and to obtaining reference theoretical values easily. This work, then, establishes orders of magnitude of integrated effects especially useful for engineering purposes. This procedure has the disadvantage that a more quantitative separation of the effects of aspect ratio, mode shape, and Mach number is necessary to allow refined comparisons with available theories.

The effect of the use of first bending and first torsion modal shapes in the calculation of a theoretical flutter speed was investigated by calculating flutter speeds from the theory of reference 16 for some of the wings reported. The calculated speeds were identical to those determined by reference 15. The flutter speeds obtained from these calculations involving mode shape are not presented, but were found to exceed  $V_{\rm R}$  by approximately 3 percent.

The effect of higher modes on a theoretical flutter speed for twodimensional flow could also be determined. However, the effect of aspect ratio is a function of modal shape in addition to plan form, so that a comparison of experimental values involving higher modes with those experimental values involving only first bending and first torsion modes would be misleading. For this reason, in those cases where a definite departure from the first bending and first torsion modes was indicated by observation or by recorded flutter, the data, while presented, were

not considered for plots or in the analysis of the aspect ratio and compressibility effects. The higher-mode flutter is indicated in the remarks column of table II. Also indicated in the remarks are those cases where apparent flutter was noted visually but subsequent inspection of the oscillograms indicated that the wing did not flutter. The  $V_e$  in these cases is the speed at which the data were taken and does not indicate an experimental flutter speed as defined in the section entitled "Symbols." For the cases in which higher-mode flutter was observed, some comparison might be worth while in which the reference flutter speed is taken as the theoretical value which is determined when higher modes are included.

In figure 7, graphical representation of the data is made showing the effect of aspect ratio on  $V_e/V_R$ . The data for A = 7 are somewhat in doubt because of the absence of precise measurements of the model parameters. The presence of the tunnel-wall boundary layer acts to reduce the effective aspect ratio on all models, the wings of lower aspect ratio being most sensitive to this factor. Since the structural requirements to obtain flutter necessitated the use of wings having various thickness ratios, the results also may be somewhat influenced by the thickness ratio. However, there is a discernible trend for the ratio  $V_e/V_R$  to increase from an asymptotic value as A is decreased. It may also be seen that for the higher values of A the reference velocity is, in most instances, close to, but less than, the experimental value of the flutter velocity. In figure 8,  $V_e/V_R$  is plotted against Mach number. It may be noted that for a specific aspect ratio there exists a trend for the ratio  $V_e/V_R$  to decrease as the Mach number increases.

In an attempt to study flutter at simulated infinite aspect ratio, an end plate was placed near the tip of an aspect-ratio-4 wing. While it is not possible to ascertain the precise effect of the gap between the wing tip and plate, it may be seen in figure 8 that the end plate decreases the value of the ratio  $V_e/V_R$  as compared with the values obtained without an end plate, as well as decreasing the value below that obtained for the aspect-ratio-12 models. A comparison of values of  $V_e/V_R$  for the aspect-ratio-4 model without an end plate to the aspect-ratio-4 model without an end plate to the first of approximately 12 percent which may be attributed to the effect of aspect ratio.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some flutter data have been presented for cantilever wing models that illustrate some effects of aspect ratio and Mach number on flutter.

The aspect ratio varied from 2 to 13 and the range of Mach number extended from 0.2 to 0.92.

No general attempt is made to correlate the data with theory; however, a comparison is made with a theory that assumes a two-dimensional incompressible flow. On the basis of this comparison, analysis of the data indicated that a reduction in aspect ratio, in general, increased the ratio of the experimental flutter speed to calculated flutter speed. The comparison also indicated that for a given aspect ratio, this ratio decreases slightly as the Mach number is increased.

Langley Aeronautical Laboratory National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics Langley Air Force Base, Va.

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GJ	48,000 36,500 77,500 77,500 130,000 10,850 10,850 28,440 2,580 36,500 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,5000 50,50000 50,500000000
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g g	0.0153 0.0258 0.0258 0.0131 0.0231 0.0231 0.0285 0.0185 0.0189 0.0281 0.0189 0.0189 0.0189 0.0281 0.0281 0.0281 0.0281 0.0355 0.0355 0.0355
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b (ft)	0.333 .333 .333 .333 .333 .333 .333 .33
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Model	

TABLE I.- GEOMETRIC AND STRUCTURAL PROPERTIES OF MODELS

NACA RM L50C15a

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<sup>a</sup>See figure 3 for coordinates. <sup>b</sup>Not available. <sup>c</sup>15<sup>o</sup> sweepback.

	INVESTIGATION	
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	RESULTS	
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	TABLE 1	

Remarks	•		No flutter - second bending	Possible second bending mode Possible second bending mode Possible second bending mode	Possible second bending mode Possible second bending mode Possible second bending mode	Possible second bending mode		Possible second bending mode Possible second bending mode			Did not flutter	$\begin{cases} Model slotted 1\frac{1}{2} \text{ inches} \\ \frac{1}{2} \text{ inches} \end{cases}$	Flutter doubtful Flutter doubtful No flutter No flutter	NACA
-1×	50.3	156.5 85.6 42.1	19.5	19.4 71.7 169.3	103.7 63.2 36.1	133.3	273 250 209.5 185	101 101 101 101 101 101 101 101 101 101	51.9	165.1 83.0	115.4 11.08	43.2	10.08 10.08 10.08 10.09 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10	0.05
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ve R	1.075	1.146 1.146 1.166	1.006	.907 .843 .666	.656 .776 .962	766.	1.042 1.053 .971 1.033	. 835 .948 .948 .863 .654 .654 .989 .988 .988 .927	1.071	1.130 .983	.873 1.225	.925	1.025 .965 .982	206.
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Vе (шрh)	165	329 245 179	c148	146 262 289	261 248 261	267	455 456 456	121 163 203 203 203 264 264 264 264 201.9 201.9	226	459 289	282 123.9	°320	5355 5355 5355 5355 5355 5355 5355 535	602
б	67.0	70.8 71.3 78.1	193.0	197 167 87	84.3 128 148	65	81.8 90.0 88.4 96.6	142.2 120.4 115.2 115.2 61.4 96.4 97.5 97.5	123.3	130.4 108.5	74.8 152.1	229	283.5 283.5 259.5 248	22
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fR	15.0	14.6 15.5 16.9	24.1	20.3 23.6 19.2	24.4 26.2 28.2	13.1	15.9 16.1 16.4 16.7	133.59 135.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 155.59 15	20.8	21.1 22.5	20.3 25.8	80.4	888888 85571	0.10
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"Not obtained. <sup>D</sup>Data undiscernible. <sup>C</sup>Speed at which data were taken. <sup>d</sup>Data not available.

Concluded
I.
INVESTIGATION
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TABLE

Remarks	l <u>2</u> inch miota No flutter	1 <mark>2</mark> -inch slots No flutter	End plate - $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch glots	l을 duch slots End plate - 1출 duch slots Flutter doubtful			End plate - $\frac{1}{44}$ -inch slots	$\mu_{4}^{2}$ -inch slots , $\mu_{4}^{2}$ -inch slots - end plate $\mu_{4}^{2}$ -inch slots - end plate	No flutter		l No flutter		15° sweep 15° sweep 15° sweep 15° sweep 15° sweep 15° sweep	NACA
-11¥	36.7 29.7 24.7 11.85 36.70	34.2 25.3 35.3	34.8	33.0	56.1	12.4	5.72	20.62 44.6 19.65	14.88 12.80	16.4 14.3	23.91 20.23 14.28 27.80	25.05 15.2	35.55 28.80 22.52 17.35 14.12	
м	0.804 746 689 198	.813 .734 .920	.355	.718	574.	.623	.258	.254 .596 .219	.823 .648	.731 167.	.882 .864 .753 .920	.863 .720	912 874 128 760 775 773 735	
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VR (maph)	295 267 239 173 293	278 239 277.5	254	292.0 280	329.2	188	93.8	177.0 243 173.5	219.7 162.9	198.0 191.5	212.7 198.0 172.0 229.0	238.8 191.6	273.5 249.5 224.5 199.0 182.0	
V <sub>e</sub> (шрh)	276.5 258.5 236.5 172.4	285.5 253.0 5321.0	278.7	292.7 <sup>c</sup> 252.7	350	217	90.3	199.6 222.9 170.6	<sup>c</sup> 281.5 218.0	271.2 253.0	292.9 282.9 257.4 321.0	304.7 261.9	315.5 296.8 278.8 277.8 243.5 243.5 243.3	
	215.0 227.0 226.0 254.0 271.5	236.0 256.0 284.0	184.9	199.3 133.6	298	372	£•69 .	91.9 50.8 70.3	552 389	470 168	389 421 397	378:2 462.6	320.5 343.5 396.2 433.0 465.0	
٩	0.00249 .00308 .00370 .4770 .00774	.00268 .00361 .00259	.00243	91200.	002100.	.00761	.00787	.00215 .00095 .00225	.00640 .00784	.00580 .00666	.00398 .00469 .00666 .00369	.00380 .00627	.00295 .00357 .00465 .00465 .00445 .00742	
f <sup>r</sup>	76.2 79.1 78.2 82.1 76.0	76.0 78.3 75.8	74.3	74.0	30.95	47.38	tr . 74	40.9 38.9 41.1	52.1 41.5	51.3	49.7 53.45 53.45	44.62 47.08	41.0 41.6 42.7 43.4 44.55 44.55	
fe	52.6 71.0 68.5 70.4	70.0 85.7 8	60.7	70.0 B	33.0	38.5	45.4	44.8 35.7 34.3	di rol	38.8 39.7	39.8 40.5 43.2	31.8 36.8	30.6 34.2 38.8 38.8 38.8	
μ	128.2 129.3 125.5 124.0	128.3 128.3 128.3	130	123.3	67.8	86.6	53.1	51.1 50.7 51.2	69.4 55.0	67.8 67.8	59.7 59.7 61.8 61.8	59.8 59.8	68.5 68.1 68.5 69.5 69.5	
ft	139.6 141.0 137.0 135.4	133 133 133	130	127.5 123.1	67.8	87.3	66.6	64.0 63.6 64.2	85.8 67.5	0.17 71.0	72.6 75.2 75.2	76.5 76.5	72.1 71.7 71.7 71.8 71.8 71.8 71.8 72.1	
fh2	ದ ಪ ಪ ಪ ಪ ಪ	ವ ವ ವ	8	ವರ	ವ	8	161	159 159 159	167 8	147 149	ಪ ಹ ಹ ಹ	155 155	ಪ ವ ಫ ಪ ಪ ಪ	e taken
fh1	36.9 36.9 34.4 36.4	37.5 37.5 37.5 37.5	30.9	32-5 29.4	0.11	20.7	27.8	28.8 28.6 28.5	32.1 25.3	29.5 29.5	33.0 33.0 33.0	24.2 24.2	23.2 23.1 23.2 23.2 23.2 23.2 23.2 23.2	ible. data wer able.
Test	4 A O D M	A HO	A	A	À	A	A	≰ ¤ υ	A R	¥ Β	4 A O O	₽ ₽	4 H U D N N N N N N N N N N N N N	tained. ndiscern at which ot availe
Model	132	133	134	135 136	141	24I	151	152	162	163	164	165	166	<sup>a</sup> Not ob bData u <sup>c</sup> Speed a dData n





coordinates

x	У
0	0
2.5	2.92
5	4.00
10	1.9
15	1.9
20	), 59
25	
27 5	2 0
51.5	2.7
50	2+22
62.5	3.0
75	2.4
87.5	1.59
92•5 ·	1.07
97.5	0.55
98.75	0.42
100.00	0



Figure 3.- Diagram of cross section and coordinates of wing model 118. A = 13. Wing length, 26 inches.







Figure 6.- Diagram of cross section and plan form of wing models 162 to 166 inclusive. A = 2.

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Figure 7.- Ratio of experimental flutter speed divided by reference flutter speed  $(V_e/V_R)$  against aspect ratio for various Mach numbers.

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V<sub>e</sub> V<sub>R</sub>





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lar.

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Figure 8.- Ratio of experimental flutter speed divided by reference flutter speed ( $V_e/V_R$ ) against Mach number for various aspect ratios.

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