

Negation in Kenyang and two related Bantoid languages of Cameroon

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The issue of under-described and the reconstruction of Bantu grammatical systems is a call for concern. This is an aspect of linguistic and cultural endangerment that is resulting from the increasing lack of intergenerational transmission. The aim of this research is to provide a comparative study of negation particles in three related Bantoid languages of Cameroon: Kenyang, Kendem and Denya (KKD). The expression of negation varies widely among languages (Trask, 1963: 179). Bantoid, just like Bantu languages, make use of a variety of particles to signal negation, even language-internally. In Denya for instance, three distinct particles are used to signal negation: /fɔ̃, lù and H- tone/, Kenyang uses two: /pú and béké/, and Kendem makes use of three: /pé, fɔ̃, and fwɔ̃/. Documenting this phenomenon therefore constitutes an effective means of ensuring the said transmission and revitalization of this aspect of KKD languages and cultures. So, the paper examines the structural patterns, the syntactic distributions as well as the various functions of negation particles across KKD languages from a comparative perspective. The use of ELAN indicates the languages make use of a minimum of two and a maximum of three negative particles to signal negation. In the unmarked case, the negative marker appears in preverbal and post-verbal positions. Also, the negative particles generally exhibit aspectual and modal characteristics. Though tense is usually an inherent characteristic of the negative marker as is the case with other Bantu languages: Lombe (Atindogbé, 2008: 159-211), Oroko (Tanda and Neba, 2005: 201-221), it is not the case in KKD. Thus, tense in KKD is marked by stating the specific time in which a particular action is performed. The cultural contact and the influence of more powerful languages such as English and French, natives KKD, especially the youths seldom make use of traditional negative particles.

Keywords: negation, bantoid, reconstruction, cultural endangerment, preverbal, revitalisation, intergenerational transmission, traditional negative particles

1 Introduction

This paper sets out to provide a description of how negation is done in three Bantoid languages of Cameroon: Kenyang, Kendem and Denya (KKD) also known as Nyang language family. The observation made is that very little or nothing is known about negation particles in these languages given that these particles are used on a daily basis in these communities. Besides that, the three languages under consideration are spoken in the same Region (South-West) as well as the same division (Manyu), and are closely related to each other to the point that some of the older speakers admit some degree of understanding of each other's language. The intelligibility and closeness between speakers of these languages is intensified by their ideology as they all consider themselves to be Bayangi people. It would therefore be interesting to see how closely related or far apart these languages are to each other by comparing and examining their negation strategies. With the background knowledge on structural linguistics, we therefore pay much attention to the structure of: the negation particles, the negative constructions and the position of the negative marker across these languages from a comparative perspective. The work proceeds with a presentation of the linguistic situation of the languages under consideration, some relevant literature, a brief description of the method of data collection, analysis and presentation and finally a general discussion of negation strategies in the afore mentioned languages from a comparative perspective.

2 Linguistic situation of Kenyang, Kendem and Denya

As seen in Simons & Fennig (2018), the following Nyang languages; Kenyang, Kendem and Denya are all Bantoid languages spoken in the South West Region of Cameroon particularly in Manyu division. Based on the same source, the languages share some degree of lexical similarities, indicating that they are mutually intelligible, at least to a certain degree. Amongst the three languages, Kendem is highly under-described, reason why it is given the code 6b based on its vitality on the language cloud, indicating that it is threatened. Kenyang and Denya are coded 5 (developing). The individual languages have a minimum speaker population of about 1,500 speakers for Kendem, 65,000 for Kenyang and 11,200 for Denya. Though the speakers share some degree of mutual intelligibility of each other's language, the languages are spoken in different villages as shown below.

To begin with, Kendem is spoken in three villages: Kendem, Kekpoti, and Bokwa. The Kendem Villages are located along the Bamenda-Mamfe road in the South West Region of Cameroon. It is surrounded by three different language groups, two of which are the other two Nyang languages: Kenyang to the South and Denya to the North West (Ojong, 2005: 7).

Based on the findings of Mbuagbaw (2008: 1), Kenyang is spoken in 53 villages in Mamfe Central Sub-Division and the Upper Banyang Sub-Division. He notes that there are

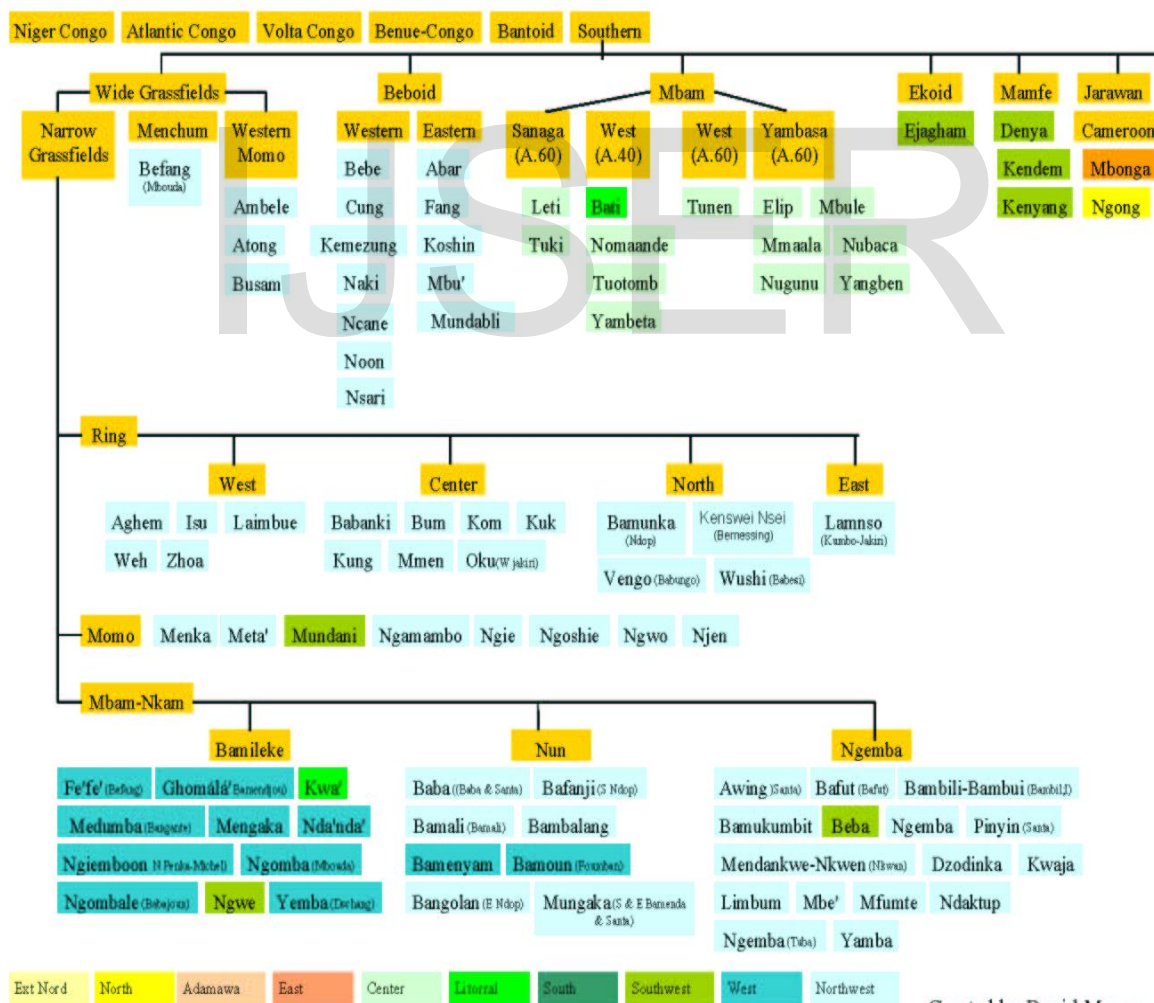
10 other Kenyang speaking villages in Meme division. The Kenyang language is the most widely spoken languages in the South West Region of Cameroon. The broadness of its scope is reflected in the fact that it is made up of 3 main dialects which are spoken in three different Sub-Divisions in the South West Region. The dialects include: Upper Kenyang (k'èh'āŋ mfáy), Lower Kenyang (k'èh'āŋ ntèn) and Kitwii. Upper Kenyang is spoken in the Upper Banyang Sub-Division, Lower Kenyang in Eyumojock and Mamfe Central Sub-Division while Kitwii is spoken in the Meme Division. Meanwhile there is a merging fourth variety under investigation spoken in the central-south of Upper Banyang because, first of all, it is linguistically close, secondly, it is part of Denya speaking region.

subdivision posit as Middle Kenyang 'k'èh'āŋ n'ènt'è' (Enoachuo, 2002).

With regard to Denya, Abangma (1981: 14) notes that the language is spoken North of the Manyu River in the Akwaya Sub-division. Anya, as the language is often referred to, is spoken in 47 villages. The language has three dialects; Bitieku, Takamanda, Basho or Bajwa. Most people agree that these are all part of the same language although they admit that comprehension is difficult between some of the groups. Numba has also been included

Figures 1a and 1b : The linguistic situation of Cameroon and the geographic locations of the three languages under study.

Cameroon Languages:



Created by David Mozer

Fig. 1a Linguistic grouping of language in Cameroon



Fig. 1b Mamfe language family map Source:(Glottolog,2015)

3 Review of relevant literature

Quite a number of works have been done on negation meanwhile, on the Kenyang, Kendem and Denya languages little or nothing has been done. In line with the quest to develop Cameroonian languages, all aspects of a

language attract researchers' attention to bring to the lime light. Though not directly related to the present topic, other language aspects researched on one or two of these languages give a good base. Thus, Abangma (1981) worked on the phonology of Denya, whereas, Tyhurt (1983) discussed the vowel and consonant phonemes and tone contrast in the three languages. He came out with a wordlist

and the various dialects of each of the Nyang languages. In addition, the same researcher (1983b) made a sociolinguistic survey of Kenyang and Denya, and in 1984, proposed orthography for Kenyang and Denya (tone orthography and alphabet). Meanwhile, Abangma (1987) did an analysis of Denya discourse, and in 1992, he worked on empty categories in Denya. In addition, Mbuagabaw (1992) worked on Denya segmental phonology, phonology, and the noun class system respectively. These went a long way to foster linguistic studies in this language family. Inspiration notwithstanding has been drawn from other Cameroonian languages on which the aspect of negation has been carried on. Akumbu (2016) investigated the Babanki negations, and found its unique pattern of using double negations as a discontinuous morpheme for standard negation in all aspects. This paper used as platform Atindogbe (2011) who extrapolated the level of negation in two Cameroonian languages, Lombe and Mopke in which his result shows that these languages manifest double serial personal pronoun subject as negation. In other words, a high tone is assigned for emphasis as well as doubling the morpheme which is usually bound to reiterate the negation particle. This paper had a push to this research on this due to the investigation of Tanda and Neba (2005) on three Bantu languages (Mopke, Nfaw, and Oroko) that postulated that these related Bantu languages make use of two negation markers as against one in English ('not'). Reviewing through this field of sociolinguistics, there is a niche on negation in KKD languages that is addressed in this present paper.

4 Methodology

Data for this work were collected by means of elicitation through the use of a checklist consisting of both open ended and close ended questions. The use of open ended or unstructured questions enabled us to obtain deep insights into the nature of negation in KKD. The checklist was administered to some three consultants of KKD whose ages range from 35-62 years and they were drawn through purposive sampling because they were judged to have

1.	Kenyang	Kendem	Denya
1 st	/m- béké rè kintòkò yó/ I+ negmod.Play that I did not play	/mă ĩ-kónfwólè tĩĩ òñě/ I conc-like neg to cook food I would not like to cook	/ń-tjégè fómèñé/ I cook neg food I will not cook food
2 nd	/m-pú kiñ tòkò j́/ I+negdoplay that I will not play	/m- pámə ntĩĩ òñě/ I+ neg I cook food I would not cook	/ń- lúgàntf́/ I neg yet come I have not come
3 rd	/m-púné nèné nó/ I neg eat food that I will not eat that food	/j́é f́ñé/ I neg. eat "I have not eaten"	/m-béné/ Or /m-bénê (f́)/ I dance I dance (neg) I will not dance

As languages of the same family, they exhibit some regularity or sameness in terms of the structural patterning of negative constructions. This could be a matter of chance or could be due to the fact that they have the same origin. The three languages make use of the structure subject + neg + verb + (obj). However, unlike Kenyang and Kendem, Denya exhibits a higher level of dynamism as far as the structure of negative constructions is concerned. In addition

insightful knowledge of the languages under consideration. The data was recorded through the use of a recorder, transcribed through the use of ELAN and later cross-referenced with other consultants for validity and reliability. The use of ELAN in the transcription of data helped in the structuring and organisation of the data in such a way that it would be legible and easy to observe.

The data obtained are therefore analysed through the use of the basic linguistic framework, an upgraded approach whose roots can be traced right back to the works of Ferdinand de Saussure. This approach was postulated by Dixon (2010) with the aim, as he puts it; "to provide an outline characterization of the structure of human language and to provide a guide for those who wish to pursue the central business of linguistics - describing and analysing natural languages..." (page 1). Through insights from this volume, we were able to not just describe, but also analyse the nature of negation strategies both structurally and semantically. With regard to the presentation of data, we followed the Leipzig glossing rules which hold that, data should be glossed in a tier-like manner, providing a morpheme by morpheme translation before the free translation.

4.1 Negation strategies in KKD

In this section, we present details of how negation is done in KKD. From the analysis, we realized that these three languages: Kendem, Kenyang and Denya reveal interesting phenomena that are unique to African languages. Just like other Bantu languages such as Mokpe, Oroko, Lombe, these languages make use of a plethora of negative particles, with the least of them making use of two negation markers. Kendem makes use of three negation markers /pé, f́ and fwól/, Denya follows in the same suit with three particles /lú, f́/ and the high tone (H) while Kenyang makes use of two (pú and béké). This is better illustrated using the data below.

to having negative constructions with the above mentioned structure, it was realized that the negative marker in this language could equally take a post-verbal position there by yielding the additional structure *subj + verb + neg + (obj)*.

In order to ease the understanding of how negation is done in these Nyang languages, let us consider them individually.

4.1 Kenyang

As already seen in preceding sections, this language makes use of two (2) distinct particles to mark negation /*pú* and *béké*/. They occur pre-verbally and they generally accommodate tense, aspect and modal characteristics (TAM). In this language, the distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect is not crucial in the discussion of

negation. This is because the progression or completion of an action does not affect or influence the marking of negation. However, we realize that in some instances, depending on the negative particle in use, TAM can be expressed overtly or covertly. Consider the following examples.

2.	Negative	Positive
	/pú/ covert TAM	
a.	/m-pú kiñ tòkò jǔ/ I+neg+TAMdo play that "I will not play"	/ñ-tǝŋki kèsàkà kó/ I TAM play that "I will play"
b.	/m-púkintòk I neg+TAM do play "I could not play"	/m-bǝŋ bé kintòk/ I able to do play "I could play"
c.	/m-pú ɲé/ I neg+TAMeat "I cannot eat"	/n-dǝŋé bé ɲé/ I+TAM to eat "I can eat"
d.	/m-pú ɲé nǝŋé nó/ I+neg+TAM eat food that "I was not eating"	/mǝ ɲé nǝŋé/ I eat food "I was eating"
	/mbéké/ overt TAM	
e.	/m-béké-rè/rǝtwó/ I+neg+ TAM come "I have not come"	/n-ǎŋtwó/ I+TAM come "I have come"
f.	/m-béké-rè βǝnnǝβén/ I neg+TAM dance dance "I could not dance"	/m-bǝŋ βǝβǝnnǝβén / I TAM to dance "I could dance"
g.	/m- béké-rè ɲé nǝŋé nó / I+ negTAM eat food that "I did not eat that food"	/ná ɲǝ/ I eat "I ate that food"

We realize from the data in (2) that negation markers in Kenyang are bound morphemes which are suffixed to the subject of the sentence. As is the case with Lombe (Atindogbé 2008), there is an intricate relationship between negation and the notions of tense, aspect and mood (TAM). This is seen in the fact that negation marking is always accompanied by TAM which could be marked both covertly as an intricate part of the negative marker, or overtly. In Kenyang negative constructions, the covert or overt nature of TAM depends on the negative particle in use. Whenever the negative marker is /*pú*/, TAM is covert. In so doing, TAM becomes an integral part of the negative marker. On

the other hand, whenever negation is marked by the particle /*béké*/, TAM is overtly marked through the use of the marker /*ré*/ or /*ré*/. The TAM marker is therefore suffixed to the negative marker, which in turn is suffixed to the subject of the negative construction.

As regards the structure of the negative construction, the examples in (2) reveal that the negative marker always occurs in an environment immediately before the verb. This then gives the following structure for negative constructions in Kenyang: *SM + Neg. + verb + (object)*. This is demonstrated in 3.

3. Negative construction											Positive construction				
a.	/m-	pú	ɲé	nɛɲé	nó/	/h-	tɔŋ	mé	ɲé	nɛɲé	nó/				
	SM	Neg+TAM	Verb	Object	Dem	SM	TAM	Conc.	Verb	Object	Dem				
	“I will not eat that food”					“I will I eat food that”									
b.	/m-	béké	rè	βén	nɛβén/	/m-	bòŋ	bé	bén/						

SM	Neg.	TAM	Object	Object	SM	TAM	INF	Object
"I could not dance"					"I could dance"			

The examples in 3 clearly demonstrate the structure of negative constructions in Kenyang. It is important to note that the above structure remains unchanged irrespective of the tense of the construction. Having shown how negation is done in the Kenyang language, we now move to the Kendem language.

4.2 Kendem

As stated in the preceding sections, negation in Kendem is marked through the use of three possible distinct markers: /pé, fó, and fwó/. Just like in Kenyang, the negative marker in Kendem occurs pre-verbally. In constructions with more than one verb, the negation marker occurs in between the two verbs, in a position before the main verb. As will be shown in 4, when the negative marker is /pé/, it occurs between the subject marker and the concord marker, giving

between the subject marker and the concord marker, giving												
4a.		/pé/										
i.		/m-	pê	mè	né/		/mè		lù	né/		
		I	Neg.	Conc.	eat		I		do	eat		
		"I would not eat"					"I would eat "					
ii.		/m-	pê	mè	pjé	òtù/	/mènpjé òtù/					
		I	Neg.	Conc.	do	play	I do play					
		"I would not play"					"I would play"					
iii.		/m-	pé	mè	ntfi	òně/	/mè		n-	dù	tfi	òně/
		I	Neg.	I	cook	food	I		Conc.	to be	cook	food
		"I would not cook"					"I am cooking"					
b.		/fwó/										
i.		/mě	ř-	kónj	fwó	lè	tfi	òně/				
		I	Conc.	like	Neg.	to	cook	food				
		"I would not like to cook"										
c.		/fó/										
i.		/jé	fó	jè/		/mè		lù	jé/			
		I	Neg.	eat		I		do	eat			
		"I have not eaten"					"I have eat en "					
ii.		/jé	fó	pjé	òtù/	/mèn		pjé	òtù/			
		I	Neg.	do	play	I		do	play			
		"I would not play"					"I would play"					

The interesting thing to note in this language is that, tense is not overtly marked. Distinctions of actions performed or not performed in the present, past or future are deduced in context. In so doing, to distinguish between tenses, the specific time when the action denoted by the verb was

specific time when the action denoted by the verb was						
5a.	/m-	pé	mè	né	òné	nánè/
	I	Neg.	Conc.	eat	food	today
	"I did not eat today"					
b.	/m-	pé	mè	né	òné	dámpù/
	I	Neg.	Conc.	eat	food	tomorrow
	"I would not eat tomorrow"					
c.	/hè	fó	hè	ndzú/		
	I	Neg.	eat	yesterday		
	"I did not eat yesterday"					

It should be noted that the examples in 5, just like all other examples in this work are based on native speaker intuition. As explained by the Kendem speakers, there is no lexical

negative constructions the following structure: sm + Neg. + Conc. + verb + (object).

On the other hand, the negation marker /fwó/ is rarely used and it's only used in constructions with more than one verb. In such constructions, the marker occurs between two verbs, precisely before the main verb. Just like the other Neg. Particles, /fwó/ is an embodiment of tense, aspect and modal properties.

Finally, the marker /fó/ occurs immediately after the subject, precisely before the verb. Of all these markers, the most commonly used is /pé/. The others are mostly used by older speakers of the language. Consider the following examples.

performed or not performed is mentioned by making reference to the time (2 o'clock, in the morning), day (yesterday, tomorrow, on Tuesday etc.). Consider the examples in 5 below.

item that is used to make reference to time. As such, in order to make reference to time, the speakers make

mention of the specific time, day or moment when an action was or was not performed.

4.3 Denya

Negation in this language is marked by the use of three distinct particles: /fó/, /lú/ and H-tone/. It should be noted that these negation morphemes are all high toned and occupy mutually exclusive positions in negative constructions. While the morpheme /fó/ occurs post-verbally and stands alone as a free morpheme, the morpheme /lú/ occurs pre-

verbally and it's always suffixed to the subject marker. This indicates that it is a bound morpheme in the language since it does not stand on its own. From a comparative perspective, we realize that negation particles in this language, just like in Kenyang and Kendem, occur pre-verbally but unlike in the above mentioned languages, negation particles also occur post-verbally.

The negative marker /fó/ occurs immediately after the verb. This post-verbal negation is unique to this language seeing as negation particles in other languages of this cluster only occur before the verb. Consider the examples in 6.

6.	/fó/	Negative				Positive			
a.	/m-	bénê	fó/			/m-	bènê/		
	I	dance	Neg.			I	dance		
	"I will not dance"					"I will dance"			
b.	/h-	kwánê	fó/			/h-	kwànê/		
	I	sing	neg			I	sing		
	"I will not sing"					"I will sing"			
c.	/h-	tjégê	fó	mèpê/	Or	/h-	tjégê/	/h-	tjègè mènê/
	I	cook	Neg.	food		I	cook	I	cook food
	"I will not cook / I will not cook food"					"I will cook"			

The occurrence of /fó/ as a negation marker is different from that of /lú/. Notice that the particle /lú/ occurs before the

verb as stated above and its occurrence is mutually exclusive from that of /fó/. As a bound morpheme, it is always suffixed to the subject pronoun. This is shown in 7.

7.	/lú/	Negative constructions				Positive constructions			
a.	/h-	lú	gàn	tjóf/		/h-	tjóf	mé/	
	I	Neg.	yet	come		I	come	comp/already	
	"I have not come"					"I have come"			
b.	/h-	lú	gàn	ɲé	mènê/	/mà	ɲé	mé/	
	I	Neg.	yet	eat	food	I	eaten	comp	
	"I have not eaten"					"I have eaten"			
c.	/h-	lú	gàn	bé	màbê/	/mà	bé	mé/	Or /m-
	I	Neg.	yet	dance	dance	I	dance	comp	I dance comp
	"I have not danced"					"I have danced already"			

The third negation particle is the high tone. The use of the high tone to mark negation in this language is one of the most unique functions of tone not just in this language but in other tone languages in general. The high tone in this

language is a negative morpheme. For a sentence to be negated, a distinct high melody is linked to the subject marker and the verb of the construction. This can be emphasized by the following data.

8.	H-tone melody			
	Negative constructions		Positive constructions	
a.	/m-	béné/	/m-	bènê/
	I	dance	I	dance
	"I will not dance"		"I will dance"	
b.	/h-	kwánê	/h-	kwànê/
	I	sing	I	sing
	"I will not sing"		"I will sing"	
c.	/h-	tjégê	mènê/	/h-
	I	cook	food	I cook food
	"I will not cook food"		"I will cook"	

Note that mode is an intricate part of negative constructions and as such, negation always patterns with modality be it overtly or covertly. In Denya, mode is generally covertly expressed in negative constructions. However, in the future

past tense when /fó/ is the negative marker in use, modality is expressed overtly using the morpheme /háká/ "able" and this morpheme immediately precedes the verb. Consider the following examples.

9.	Negative constructions					Positive constructions		
a.	/m-	bó	h-ká- gè	ɲê	fó/	/h-	ká- gè	ɲê/

	I	pst	I-able+Fut.	eat	Neg.	i	able-fut.	eat
	“I could not eat”					“i could eat”		
b.	/m-	bó	ń-ká- gé	bé	fó/	/ń-	kà- gè	mbé/
	I	Pst	I- able-Fut.	dance	Neg.	i	able-fut.	dance
	“I could not dance”					“i could dance”		
c.	/m-	bó	ń-ká- gé	ntjè	fó	mèpě/	/ń-	kà- gè
	I	pst	I-able-Fut.	Cook	Neg.	food	i	able fut.
	“I could not cook”					“i could cook”		

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