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Synthesis of hydroxy-γ-sanshool

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Abstract



Hydroxy- γ -sanshool was prepared with 19.5% overall yield through eight steps. Wittig reactions of ylides with ethyl 4-oxobut-2-enoate as well as (2*E*,4*E*)-hex-2,4-dienal were key steps to construct a carbon skeleton. The 2*E*,4*Z*-isomer in ethyl 8-hydroxyocta-2,4-dienoate can be isomerized to the desired 2*E*,4*E*-isomer with iodine as a catalyst, and free tetradeca-2,4,8,10,12pentaenoic acid can be purified through crystallization in 1% ethyl acetate in *n*-hexane. The impurities in other intermediates can be easily removed, the synthetic process can avoid the synthesis or use of 4-bromobutyraldehyde which comes from the oxidation of unstable 4-bromobutan-1-ol, and the work-ups were simple.

Graphic abstract



Keywords Pentaenamide · Total synthesis · Wittig reaction · Isomers

Introduction

Sanshools are isolated from Zanthoxylum bungeanum, mainly including α -sanshool, β -sanshool, γ -sanshool, δ -sanshool, and hydroxy-sanshool analogs which contain hydroxyl on amino part (Fig. 1) [1].

Ren et al. found that hydroxy- γ -sanshool could activate the mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR) pathway and improve the metabolism of diabetic rats [2]. Katina et al. proved that hydroxy- γ -sanshool was a good antagonist of the cannabinoid 1 (CB1) receptor. Thus, hydroxy- γ -sanshool may be a potential candidate for the treatment of type-1 diabetes [3]. In addition, other pharmacological effects had been discovered, such as anesthesia [4] and gastrointestinal regulation [5]. However, the content of hydroxy- γ -sanshool in Zanthoxylum bungeanum is very low (less than 0.01%) [1]. Thus, chemical synthesis became only the source of hydroxyl- γ -sanshool.

Zicheng Li sculzc@scu.edu.cn Aoki et al. synthesized hydroxyl- γ -sanshool using 4Z,6E,8E-deca-4,6,8-trienenitrile-Fe(CO)₃ complex as a key intermediate [6]. Although high yield was achieved, the process involved highly toxic carbonyl iron, and reaction conditions were harsh.

Crombie et al. synthesized hydroxyl- γ -sanshool from ethyl (2*E*,4*E*)-8-hydroxyocta-2,4-dienoate by Horner-Wadsworth-Emmons (HWE) reaction. The ethyl (2*E*,4*E*)-8-chloroocta-2,4-dienoate was prepared from 4-chlorobutan-1-ol [7, 8]. But the activity of 8-chloroocta-2,4-dienoate is not satisfactory in the next reaction of forming phosphonium salt.

Xia et al. synthesized γ -sanshool and hydroxy- γ -sanshool from sorbaldehyde and (6-ethoxy-6-oxohexyl)triphenylphosphonium bromide to construct triene fragment. A three-step Corey-Fuchs reaction was used to reduce the ester to an aldehyde and the aldehyde to the triene [9]. Although a good yield had been achieved, the substrate was expensive and harsh conditions were required.

As one of our projects, we have finished the synthesis of hydroxyl- α -sanshool from ethyl 2-oxoacetate and 4-bromobutyl acetate [10], here we reported the synthesis

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of hydroxy- γ -sanshool from ethyl 4-oxobut-2-enoate and 4-bromobutyl acetate, the synthetic route was depicted in Scheme 1. The impurities in the process can be separated by utilizing the insolubility of phophonium salts 1 and 5 in ethyl acetate and ethyl ether, most of the 2*E*,4*Z*-isomer in compound 3 can be isomerized into the desired 2*E*,4*E*structure with iodine as a catalyst and the desired 8*Z*-isomer free acid 7 can be crystallized in 1% ethyl acetate in *n*-hexane.

Results and discussion

The key steps in the preparation of hydroxyl- γ -sanshool were the formation of several double bonds of carbon–carbon. Hydroxyl- γ -sanshool can be synthesized in two routes, one is as the procedures of Xia et al., another is the ylide from ethyl (2*E*,4*E*)-8-bromooct-2,4-dienoate reacted with (2*E*,4*E*)-hex-2,4-dienal followed by amidation. Ethyl (2*E*,4*E*)-8-bromooct-2,4-dienoate can be relatively easily prepared as Fig. 2.



Fig. 2 The synthetic route of ethyl (2E, 4E)-8-bromooct-2,4-dienoat

Initially, 1,4-butanediol or 4-bromobutan-1-ol was chosen to prepare 4-bromobutyraldehyde which involved the oxidation reaction with PCC [11–13]. However, 4-bromobutan-1-ol is unstable during its synthesis, storage, and oxidation. The yield of aldehyde was low and the purification was very difficult. Relatively, 4-bromobutyl acetate can be easily prepared from tetrahydrofuran reacting with acetyl bromide. And 4-bromobutyl acetate can be easily transformed into ylide which was reacted with commercially available ethyl 4-oxobut-2-enoate. Although the 2E,4Z-isomer was main product, it can be isomerized to its 2E,4E-isomer. This process can avoid utilizing oxidation reaction with PCC and unstable 4-bromobutan-1-ol.

4-Bromobutyl acetate was reacted with Ph_3P to afford 1, 1 was reacted with ethyl 4-oxobut-2-enoate to give 2, compound 2 was hydrolyzed and 2*E*,4*Z*-3 was isomerized to 2*E*,4*E*-3, 3 was then transferred into 4 with CBr_4 and Ph_3P . All impurities in 4 including those that existed in 4-bromobutyl acetate can be separated during the synthesis of quaternary phosphonium salt 5, because 5 can't be dissolved in ethyl acetate or ether while other compounds can. The 2*E*,4*Z*-isomer in compound 3 was converted into the desired 2*E*,4*E*-isomer with iodine as a catalyst. The initial ratio of 2*E*,4*Z*:2*E*,4*E* in compound 3 was 58:42; after the isomerization, the ratio of 2*E*,4*Z*:2*E*,4*E* was 89.6:10.4.

The phosphonium salt 5 was reacted with (2E,4E)-hex-2,4-dienal in the presence of Cs_2CO_3 to give 6, the percentage of 2E,4E,8Z,10E,12E-isomer in 6 was 62% by relative peak area in HPLC. Compound 6 was hydrolyzed with NaOH in a 33% methanol aqueous solution, and pure 7 was obtained by crystallization in 1% ethyl acetate in *n*-hexane. Finally, hydroxy- γ -sanshool was obtained smoothly by the condensation reaction with 1-amino-2-methylpropan-2-ol catalyzed by HBTU.

Conclusion

Hydroxy- γ -sanshool was synthesized with an overall yield of 19.5% including two Wittig reactions to construct carbon skeleton, the process was easily operation, raw materials were available, and work-ups were simple. All intermediates and the target product have been characterized by ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, and HRMS.

Experimental

All the reagents were purchased from commercial suppliers without further purification unless otherwise specified. ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance 400 MHz spectrometer. NMR spectra were recorded in DMSO- d_6 or chloroform-d solutions at room temperature $(20 \pm 2 \,^{\circ}\text{C})$. ¹H and ¹³C chemical shifts are quoted in parts per million downfield from TMS. High-resolution mass spectra (HRMS) were obtained on a MicrOTOF-Q II mass spectrometer with an ESI source (Waters, Manchester). As for known compounds, only ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectra were confirmed with previously reported literature and the main intermediates were characterized by ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR spectra, and mass spectra. HPLC was performed on LC-3000 HPLC system using a Welchrom C18 column (4.6 mm × 250 mm, 5 µm) or U-3000 HPLC system using a Syncroni C18 column ((4.6 mm × 250 mm, 5 µm)).

(4-Acetoxybutyl)triphenylphosphonium bromide (1) [16] A mixture of 15.66 g of 4-bromobutyl acetate (80 mmol) (which was prepared according to the reported procedures [14]) and 21 g of triphenylphosphine (80 mmol) in 100 cm³ of acetonitrile was refluxed for 12 h under nitrogen [15]. Then it was cooled to room temperature and acetonitrile was removed to obtain a colorless oil. 50 cm³ of ether was added to the oil and frozen in the refrigerator for 2 h. The mixture was ground to obtain a white granular solid, which was filtered, washed with ether and ethyl acetate, respectively, and dried in vacuum to obtain a white powdery solid, 34.3 g with a yield of 93%. The product can be used directly in the next step without further purification. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 7.85 - 7.73$ (m, 15H, Ar–H), 4.09 (t, J=7.1 Hz, 2H, -CH₂O-), 3.64 (t, J=7.2 Hz, 2H, -CH₂-), 2.24 (s, 3H, COCH₃), 1.69–1.73 (m, 2H, -CH₂-), 1.18–1.20 (m, 2H, -CH₃) ppm; ¹³C NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 165.86$, 135.29, 130.65, 122.42, 119.06, 60.14, 32.39, 20.89, 20.27, 14.25 ppm.

Ethyl (2E, 4Z/2E, 4E)-8-acetoxyocta-2,4-dienoate (2, C₁₂H₁₈O₄) A mixture of 32 g of compound 1 (70.4 mmol), 9 g of ethyl (E)-4-oxobut-2-enoate (70.4 mmol) and 46.0 g of Cs₂CO₃ (141 mmol) in 100 cm³ of CH₂Cl₂ was refluxed for 24 h under nitrogen. After cooling to ambient temperature, the solvent was removed. Then 250 cm³ of *n*-hexane was added to the residue and stirred for 30 min. The solid was filtered, and washed twice with 200 cm^3 of *n*-hexane. Combined organic layer was evaporated to obtain a yellow oil, 12.1 g, with a yield of 76% (2E,4E:2E,4Z=42:58). The product can be used directly in the next step without further purification. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 7.50$ (dd, J = 15.2, 11.8 Hz, 0.42 H, = CH-), 7.21 (dd, J = 15.3, 9.5 Hz, $0.58H_{z} = CH_{z}$, $6.27 (d, J = 9.1 Hz, 1H_{z} = CH)$, 6.24-5.93(m,1H, = CHCO-), 5.87(d, J=15.3 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 4.12 $(q, J = 7.3 \text{ Hz}, 2\text{H}, -\text{OCH}_2)$, 3.99 (q, J = 6.3 Hz, 2H, 2H)-CH₂CO-), 2.37–2.16 (m, 2H, =CHCH₂-), 1.99 (s, 3H, -COCH₃), 1.66–1.73 (m, 2H, -CH₂-), 1.21 (t, J=7.1, 3H, -CH₂CH₃) ppm; ¹³C NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 170.72$, 166.62, 145.14, 139.21, 129.06, 119.78, 63.57, 60.11, 29.23, 27.61, 21.00, 14.51 ppm; HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for C₁₂H₁₈O₄ $([M + Na]^+)$ 249.1103, found 249.1106.

Ethyl (2E,4E)-8-hydroxyocta-2,4-dienoate (3) [17] A mixture of 11.5 g of compound 2 (50.7 mmol) and 10 g of pre-treated strong acidic styrene type cation exchange resin 732 in 50 cm³ of ethanol was refluxed for 5 h. After cooling to ambient temperature, the resin was filtered out and washed with ethanol. To the filtrate was added 10 drops of 0.1 g/cm³ iodine in ethanol solution, the reaction was then refluxed for 12 h. The solvent was evaporated to obtain a brown oil, which was dissolved in 50 cm³ of CH₂Cl₂, and washed three times with 30 cm³ of water. After the organic phase was dried over Na_2SO_4 , the solvent was evaporated to obtain a yellow oil, 8.2 g with a yield of 87% (2E, 4E: 2E, 4Z = 89.6: 10.4). The product can be used directly in the next step without further purification. ¹H NMR $(DMSO-d_6): \delta = 7.53 \text{ (dd, } J = 15.2, 11.7 \text{ Hz}, 0.9\text{H}, = \text{CH}),$ 7.22 (dd, J = 15.3, 10.0 Hz, 0.1H, = CH), 6.27 (d, J = 5.8 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 5.99–5.85 (m, 2H, = CH), 4.46 (s, 1H, -OH), $4.13 (q, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H, -OCH_2CH_3), 3.43 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H,$ -CH₂OH), 2.36–2.15 (m, 2H, =CHCH₂-), 1.52–1.57 (m, 2H, -CH₂-), 1.22 (t, *J*=7.1, 3H, -CH₂CH₃) ppm; ¹³C NMR $(DMSO-d_6): \delta = 166.74, 145.44, 145.26, 128.68, 119.44,$ 60.54, 60.13, 31.99, 29.49, 14.59 ppm; HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for $C_{10}H_{16}O_3$ ([M+H]⁺) 185.1178, found 185.1173. Ethyl (2E,4E)-8-bromoocta-2,4-dienoate (4) [18] CBr₄ (7.1 g, 21.3 mmol) was added to a solution of 10.8 g of Ph₃P (41.1 mmol) in 100 cm³ of CH₂Cl₂ cooled in ice bath, and the reaction was stirred for 1 h. To the reaction was added a solution of 7.8 g of compound 3 (42.3 mmol) in 10 cm³ of CH₂Cl₂, the reaction was stirred for 2 h in ice bath and another 2 h at ambient temperature. The solvent was evaporated to obtain a viscous yellow solid, 50 cm³ of *n*-hexane was added to the viscous solid and stirred vigorously until the mixture was dispersed into a granular solid, the solid was filtered and washed with *n*-hexane $(2 \times 20 \text{ cm}^3)$. The filtrate was evaporated to give 4 as a light-yellow oil, which was used directly in the next reaction, 8.4 g with a yield of 81%. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 7.53$ (dd, J = 15.1, 11.9 Hz, 0.05H, = CH-), 7.21 (dd, J = 15.4, 10.0 Hz, 0.95H, = CH-), 6.35-6.21 (m, 2H, = CH-), 5.90 (d, J = 15.4 Hz, 1H, = CH-),4.11 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H, -CH₂CH₃), 3.53 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 2H, -CH₂-), 2.28 (q, J=7.2 Hz, 2H, =CHCH₂-), 1.89–1.96 (m, 2H, -CH₂-) ppm; ¹³C NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 166.72$, 145.21, 143.40, 129.45, 119.94, 60.22, 31.61, 31.22, 31.15, 14.64 ppm; HRMS (ESI): *m/z* calcd. for C₁₀H₁₅BrO₂ ([M+H]⁺) 247.0334 and 249.0313, found 247.0336 and 249.0309.

((4*E*,6*E*)-8-Ethoxy-8-oxoocta-4,6-dien-1-yl)triphenylphosphonium bromide (5, $C_{28}H_{30}BrO_2P$) A solution of 8.5 g of Ph₃P (32.4 mmol) and 8.0 g of compound 4 (32.4 mmol) in 30 cm³ of acetonitrile was refluxed 24 h under nitrogen. The solvent was evaporated to obtain a colorless oil. 20 cm³ of ether was added to the oil, which was placed in the refrigerator for 2 h, then ground to obtain a white granular solid. The solid was filtered and washed with 20 cm³ of ether and 20 cm³ of ethyl acetate, respectively. The obtained solid was dried in vacuum, 14.9 g with a yield of 91%. The product can be used directly in the next step without further purification. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 7.94 - 7.73$ (m, 15H, Ar-H), 7.47 (dd, J = 15.2, 11.8 Hz, 0.53H, = CHCH₂-), 7.18 (dd, J=15.4, 9.8 Hz, 0.47H), 6.28 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 6.25-5.92 (m, 1H, = CHCO-),5.96-5.81 (m, 1H, = CH-), 4.12 (dq, J = 14.1, 7.1 Hz, 2H, $-CH_2CH_3$, 3.67 (q, J = 6.4 Hz, 2H, $= CHCH_2$ -), 1.66 (dt, J = 8.9, 4.4 Hz, 2H, -CH₂-), 1.20 (dt, J = 8.7, 7.1 Hz, 3H, -CH₃), 1.00–1.13 (m, 2H, -CH₂-) ppm; ¹³C NMR (DMSO d_6): $\delta = 166.70, 145.116, 143.05, 139.67, 135.44, 135.44,$ 135.41, 134.13, 134.03, 130.82, 130.69, 129.74, 127.88, 122.42, 120.13, 119.31, 118.46, 60.41, 33.31, 28.59, 20.77, 14.66 ppm; HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for $C_{28}H_{30}O_2P^+$ 429.1983, found 429.2011.

Ethyl (2E,4E,8Z,10E,12E)-tetradeca-2,4,8,10,12-pentaenoate (6, C₁₆H₂₂O₂) A mixture of 14.2 g of compound 5 (27.9 mmol), 2.67 g of (2E,4E)-2,4-hexadienal (27.8 mol), and 36.4 g of Cs_2CO_3 (55.9 mmol) in 100 cm³ of CH_2Cl_2 was refluxed for 24 h under nitrogen. After cooling to ambient temperature, 15 g of diatomite was added and stirred for 30 min. The solid was filtered and washed with 20 cm³ of CH₂Cl₂, combined organic layer was concentrated to obtain a yellow viscous oil. Subsequently 50 cm³ of *n*-hexane was added to the oil and the mixture was stirred vigorously at ambient temperature for 30 min. The solid was filtered and washed with 60 cm^3 of *n*-hexane, combined organic layer was concentrated to obtain a pale-yellow oil. The crude oil was purified by flash silica gel column chromatography (ethyl acetate-petroleum ether, 1:30) to give a colorless oil, 5.42 g with a yield of 79%. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 7.49$ (dd, J = 15.2, 11.7 Hz, 0.38H, = CH-), 7.20 (dd, J = 15.3,9.9 Hz, 0.62H, =CH-), 6.74–6.34 (m, 1H, =CH-), 6.35–6.25 (m, 1H, = CH-), 6.21 (d, J = 11.3, 1H, = CH-), 6.18-6.11 (m, J = 11.3, 1H), 6.18 $1H_{,} = CH_{-}$), 6.07 (d, J = 20.6 Hz, $1H_{,} = CH_{-}$), 6.03–5.91 (m, 1H, = CH-), 5.87 (d, J = 15.2 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 5.55–5.32 $(m 1H, = CH-), 4.09-4.16 (m, 2H, -CH_2CH_3) 2.32 (dt,$ $J = 22.7, 7.4 \text{ Hz}, 2\text{H}, = \text{CHCH}_2$ -), 2.22 (dt, J = 11.3, 5.4 Hz, $2H_{2} = CHCH_{2}$), 1.74 (d, J = 6.9 Hz $3H_{2} = CHCH_{3}$), 1.21 $(td, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, -CH_2CH_3) ppm; {}^{13}C NMR (DMSO$ d_6): $\delta = 166.69, 145.28, 139.48, 133.65, 132.36, 130.55,$ 130.15, 129.79, 129.10, 126.03, 119.74, 60.17, 32.09, 26.92, 18.56, 14.62 ppm; HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for $C_{16}H_{22}O_2$ $([M+H]^+)$ 247.1698, found 247.1698.

(2*E*,4*E*,8*Z*,10*E*,12*E*)-Tetradeca-2,4,8,10,12-pentaenoic acid (7) [9] A mixture of 5.2 g of compound 6 (20.8 mmol) and 3.2 g of NaOH (80 mmol) in 20 cm³ of methanol and 40 cm³ of water was refluxed for 2 h. The solvent was concentrated and 20 cm³ of water was added to the solution. After washing with ether (3×50 cm³), the aqueous phase was adjust to pH 1 with hydrochloric acid (1 mol/dm³). Then the aqueous phase was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (3×50 cm³), the combined organic layer was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, and evaporated to obtain a yellow sticky solid. The solid was recrystallized with 1% ethyl acetate in *n*-hexane solution, 2.4 g with a yield of 52%. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃): $\delta = 7.32$ (dd, J = 15.3, 9.9 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 6.53–6.23 (m, $1H_{,} = CH_{-}$, 6.24–6.19 (m, $1H_{,} = CH_{-}$), 6.17 (s, $1H_{,} = CH_{-}$), 6.14 (d, J = 4.1 Hz, 1H, = CH), 6.08 (dq, J = 11.6, 2.2 Hz,1H, = CH-), 6.02 (t, J = 11.0 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 5.78 (dd, J = 15.3, 2.2 Hz, 1H, = CH-), 5.74–5.56 (m, 1H, = CH-), 5.57–5.28 (m, 1H), 2.29 (tdd, J = 19.8, 10.4, 6.4 Hz, $4H_{2} = CHCH_{2}$, 1.76 (td, J = 6.6, 1.4 Hz, 3H, -CH₂) ppm; ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃): $\delta = 172.74$, 147.44, 145.11, 133.61, 131.85, 130.37, 129.74, 129.58, 128.81, 125.33, 118.72, 33.15, 26.96, 18.51 ppm; HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for $C_{14}H_{18}O_2$ ([M+Na]⁺) 241.0728, found 241.0729.

Hydroxy-γ-sanshool [9] Et₃N (5.1 g, 50.4 mmol) and 5.5 g of HBTU (14.4 mmol) were added into a solution of 2.1 g of compound 7 (9.62 mmol) in 50 cm³ of CHCl₃, the reaction was stirred for 30 min in an ice-water bath, then 3.06 g of 1-amino-2-methylpropan-2-ol (34.3 mmol) was added under nitrogen. The reaction was stirred for 1 h in an ice water bath and another 3 h at ambient temperature. 50 cm^3 of water was added to the reaction and stirred for 30 min. After separating the organic layer, the aqueous layer was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (2×20 cm³), then the combined organic layer was washed with 1 mol/dm³ of hydrochloric acid, brine, saturated NaHCO₃ solution, and brine. The organic layer was dried over Na₂SO₄ and evaporated to obtain a light yellow oil. 20 cm^3 of petroleum ether was added to the oil, and the mixture was frozen in the refrigerator for 2 h. White granular solid was obtained after vigorous stirring for 10 min, which was collected by filtration and dried under vacuum. 2.57 g, 92% yield. The product has the same retention time as an authentic sample in HPLC. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 8.03 - 7.87$ (m, 1H, -NH), 7.50-7.14 (m, 1H, =CH-), 7.03 (s, 1H, =CH-), 6.28 (d, J = 13.5 Hz, 1H, =CH-), 6.17 (t, J = 5.6, 1H, = CH-), 6.10 (d, J = 15.1 Hz, 1H, = CH-),6.09-5.82 (m, 1H, = CH-), 5.82-5.76 (m, 1H, = CH-), 5.75 (d, *J*=6.9 Hz, 1H, =CH-), 5.63–5.39 (m 1H, =CH-), 3.16 (t, J = 5.9 Hz, 3H, -OH, -NHCH₂-), 2.43–2.30 (m $2H_{2} = CHCH_{2}$), 1.80 (d, J = 7.7 Hz, $2H_{2} = CHCH_{2}$), 1.25 $(d, 3H, = CHCH_3), 1.09-1.06 (m, 6H, -CH_3, -CH_3) ppm;$ ¹³C NMR (DMSO- d_6): $\delta = 166.01, 139.58, 138.02, 134.04,$

133.65, 132.41, 130.14, 127.66, 126.30, 126.07, 124.13, 69.97, 50.26, 27.71, 20.74, 17.56, 16.99 ppm; HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for C₁₈H₂₇NO₂ ([M + Na]⁺) 312.1940, found 312.1935.

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