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Exploring the Design of Chinese Ethnic Totems in Children's Picture Books

E Tian

School of Textile University, Wuhan, China.

Abstract: Cultural heritage can start from "believing", just like believing that "Santa Claus is real", so that Chinese children, and even children from other countries, can understand China's ancient myths through our traditional cultural totem, so that they can identify with China's history and culture from their hearts. The Chinese traditional totem is engraved with the wisdom and creation of the Chinese ancestors, and has constructed the Chinese history and culture of more than 5000 years. It is through this inheritance that Chinese culture can enable us to constantly understand and innovate. This paper takes the design of Tujia white tiger totem in children's picture books as an example to think about how national totem can be spread through children's picture books.

Keywords: National totem; White Tiger Totem; Children's picture books; Picture book design; National culture.

1. Introduction

Totem is a belief of primitive people, who believe that everyone starts from a specific species, and very often, they associate themselves with certain plants and animals, so they consider these plants and animals as their ancestors, for example, in "The Records of the Grand Historian", "Heaven appointed the Xuan bird to descend and become Shang", and the Xuan bird became a kind of Shang dynasty Therefore, the totem worship is not the worship of animals and plants, but the worship of ancestors, and this worship makes a more exact blood connection between the totem and the tribe. For example, the totem of Tujia in China is mostly based on the "white tiger" as the totem, and it is said that the ancestor of Tujia, Ba Mousang, was the leader of Tujia as the head of five tribes long ago, called "GG". GG led his people to cross the river by boat, went to Yangyang, killed those ferocious salted fish goddesses, and settled here, the people lived well and naturally worshipped GG. Later, he died and his soul turned into a white tiger. The white tiger has since been worshipped by the Tujia as their ancestor, from which the tiger of Bayu comes. With the development of society, economy and culture, especially after the 1990s, new totems have appeared in Chongqing and other places. Some people use the totems as symbols, others use them as their family symbols, some will use them as their clan emblems, and some will even use them for religious ceremonies.

Picture book is an abbreviation of a foreign word, which is called "えほん" in Japanese and "絵本" in Chinese, and "PictureBook" in English, which means picture book. Picture books are not only equivalent to "books with pictures", but also emphasize the joint role of words and pictures in storytelling, and they can help children build a world of mind and develop multiple intelligences in a holistic way. All human civilizations have a tradition of narrative with pictures, and words also come from pictures, as do the Chinese people. From archaeological discoveries, there have been relic paintings of our ancestors in the Yangtze and Yellow River basins: rock paintings, pottery paintings, murals, etc. All these kinds of pictures to tell the story can be considered the first record in China.

1.1. Current Status of Research

1.1.1. Current status of research on traditional Chinese totemic culture

The sincere totem worship of China's primitive ancestors has climbed up the five thousand years of Chinese civilization, with intertwined roots stretching on and on, from historical changes, merging with different cultures and passing on to this day. Totem worship, as an ancient and mysterious cultural phenomenon, has a rich and profound connotation, and the worship of totems is both a romantic cultural phenomenon and a cultural history for centuries. Totem not only has a strong vitality and eternal value, but also is a special and sacred form of faith, and it is a cultural symbol engraved in the life of the nation. Hu Xiaojing's "From Totem Worship to Hero Worship: A Discourse on the Origin, Development and Decline of Totem Worship" says, "Totem worship arose from man's mystery and tie to the behavior of certain animals and the role of plants, and with the development of society, man began to change from a slave of nature to a natural With the development of society, man began to change from a slave of nature to a master of nature, and man was not absolutely weak in front of nature, and it became possible for heroic figures to conquer nature, so the worship of heroes increased day by day and totem worship gradually withdrew from the historical stage". He Xingliang's "Overview of Chinese Totem Culture" [He Xingliang. Overview of Chinese Totem Culture [J]. Yunnan Social Science, 1990, (02)] mentions that there are seven types of totems in Chinese history, namely, clan totem, cell totem, tribal totem, ethnic totem, gender totem, family totem, and personal totem. This research provides sufficient historical information and material reference for the creation of illustrated books. Li Jingjiang's "New Interpretation of Totem Worship and Totem Culture" [Li Jingjiang. Totem Worship and New Interpretation of Totem Culture [J]. Journal of Social Sciences of Jilin University, 1993, (01)] says: "Totem is a rather solid concept, which has been deposited in the conception of primitive people for generations and has become the core of mythological thinking. It had a profound influence not only on the primitive mythology of our clan and tribe, but also on the culture of the tribes and nations that believed in it when it entered class society." The full text

introduces in detail the totem culture, totem worship stories, the spiritual connotation of totem worship, and the thinking of totem worship from a cross-cultural perspective, and this subject study provides the basis for the theoretical construction of the totem storyline. Li Xijian's "Primitive Totem and Ethnic Aesthetic Consciousness" [Li Xijian. Primitive Totem and Ethnic Aesthetic Consciousness [B]. Literature and Art Research, 1997, (01)] research article specifically elaborates on the primitive aesthetic consciousness displayed by the design of primitive totems, as stated in the article, "Dragon worship, transformed into a large, infinite, and masculine aesthetic consciousness, while the totem worship of the phoenix, transformed into an inner beauty and femininity. Applying the most primitive aesthetic attributes to the creation of children's picture books can give them a stronger appeal. Sun Minghai and Li Dan's "An Analysis of Totem Culture in Illustration" [Sun Ming,Hai Li Dan. The Totem Culture in Illustrations in Superficial Analysis [J]. Popular Literature and Arts, 2019, (02)], the full study focuses on visualizing the surname totem in illustration, while showing the applied research of totem illustration. This research direction provides the basis for continued exploration of design exploration in the creation of children's picture books.

1.1.2. Current status of research on children's picture books

The picture book is a comprehensive art carrier full of literature and artistry, and in Liu Huan's "The Concept of Contemporary Picture Books Defined" [Liu Huan. The Definition of the Concept of Contemporary Picture Books [G]. Art and Design (Theory), 2009,2(07)], it is mentioned that "picture books are books that use pictures as the main means of expression, with a logical relationship of narration implied between pictures and images, with text to assist in guiding the interpretation of pictures, and with a combination of pictures and text to narrate a complete story together, and are distinguished from comic books, comic books, and illustration books. " The whole paper attempts to define the term picture book, which has multiple meanings, and to summarize and analyze its categories. Using a combination of theoretical and empirical research, the paper establishes the nature and connotation of picture books, and analyzes the similarities and differences between picture books, comic books and illustrated books. At the same time, it is emphasized that picture books are classified according to the reading audience and the subject matter, and for children's picture books, it is necessary to highlight the childishness, inspiration and fun of children's books. Pei Yonggang's "Current Situation, Problems and Development Trend of Children's Picture Books" [Pei Yonggang. The Present Situation, Problems and Development Trend of Children's Picture Books [G]. China Publishing, 2005, (09)], in which the research author repeatedly discusses various problems that have emerged in the current domestic picture books and proposes some solutions accordingly, focusing on the need to design Chinese localized picture book contents and to design different illustration contents according to different age stages. Zhou Ziyuan's "Exploring the path of publishing original children's picture books in China in the new century" [Zhou Ziyuan. An Exploration of the Publication Path of Original Children's Picture Books in China in the New Century [G]. Editorial Journal, 2021,(02)] mentioned in the subject study that the children's picture market has been developed rapidly into the new century and the whole picture market has entered a period of rapid development. In the intricate international and domestic publishing environment, the development of domestic children's original books has moved from theory to practice, imitation to innovation, from introduction to going out, and from local to overall development path. Therefore, we should actively explore the resources of Chinese writers in the design of picture books, patiently cultivate a group of excellent literary and artistic creative talents, and form a creative team with a strong creative team, and actively explore the traditional Chinese culture to cultivate children's national self-confidence. In terms of book publishing, it is necessary to establish a child-centered concept, enhance market awareness and competitiveness, and take the market as a guide to reasonably differentiate children's picture books for different age groups in order to better select and set themes to suit the needs of Chinese children and youth.

Yuan Weiwei's "How traditional cultural elements can be integrated into children's picture book creation" [Yuan Weiwei. How traditional cultural elements are integrated into children's picture book creation [G]. China Publishing, 2016,(19)] article, the following three suggestions are made for children's picture creation: first, to enrich children's perceptual experience of traditional art, game elements can be added to the pictures, such as hole books, folding books, and three-dimensional books, which are currently popular on the market, so that children can deepen their memory of the contents in the process of thinking; second, to comply with children's traditional story At the same time, the essence and kernel of traditional stories are taken out of the past and told in a way that is more in line with modern children's cognition. Thirdly, we deepen children's emotional experience of traditional culture by incorporating Chinese cultural connotations into the creation, allowing children to feel, empathize, relieve and heal through reading, and ultimately deepen their emotional experience.

2. Overview of Chinese Ethnic Totem Culture

2.1. The Origin of Chinese Totems

In ancient China, totem worship was more closely related to ancestor worship, and totems existed in the form of gods within the clan, playing a role in uniting the group, having close blood ties, maintaining social organization, and differentiating from one another. At the same time, people also gain recognition of their identity in the totem and seek shelter in their lives. We have always considered "dragon" as the earliest totem of Chinese people, but our totem culture, as an ancient multi-ethnic nation, is very diverse, complex, and geographically distinctive. In ancient times, human beings regarded the creatures in nature as their totems, and some studies found that the "dragon" was just a collection of various animals, a product of later social development. Some studies found that the "bear totem" was the first totem in Chinese history, but at the same time, archaeologists also found a large number of bird images in the historical remains of Chinese matriarchal societies, according to records, the ancestors discovered the law of birds laying eggs and eggs laying birds, so they incorporated this law into the creation myth and began to think about whether human beings were also From this, the world is not also born, so the research scholars believe that totem worship began with the bird totem, in the ancient Shang dynasty there is a myth: "Shang ancestor of the deed, is the mother Jane Di swallowed the eggs of the

Xuan bird and born", so the Xuan bird became the totem of the merchant society, there are also research scholars read in the article "Liezi": "Her sacrifice's, female snail's, Shen Long (Nong)'s, Xia Hou's, snake body and human face, bull's head and tiger's nose." So it is believed that the snake is also the species of origin of Chinese totems, and until today, many scholars who study totems consider birds and snakes and bears as the most primitive forms of Chinese totems.



Fig.1 Dragon Totem

2.2. Types of Chinese Ethnic Totems

He Xingliang's article "Overview of Chinese Totem Culture" mentions that there are seven types of totems, namely, clan totem, cytological totem, tribal totem, ethnic totem, gender totem, family totem and personal totem. In China, totem worship is divided into three main periods, namely, the Stone Age, the Ancient Ethnic Age, and the Modern Ethnic Age. In this paper, the main emphasis is on modern ethnic totems, and all 56 ethnic groups in China, all of them have their own totem worship. Classified according to the objects of worship, totems include animal, plant, supernatural, and non-living things. Due to the diversity of regions, the totem worship differs even among the same ethnic group and different tribes. At present, more totem cultures are preserved among the ethnic groups in the southwest of China. The totem of Yi is mainly black tiger; the totem of Bai is mainly male chicken; the totem of Naxi is mainly frog; the totem of Tujia is mainly white tiger; the totem of Dai is mainly peacock; the totem of Miao is mainly butterfly, dog and bamboo; the main totem of Qiang is sheep; the totem of Kazakh is mainly white swan; the totem of Kirgiz is wolf; the totem of Manchu is mainly willow branch, crow and wolf; the totem of Mongolian is mainly The totems of the Mongolians are mainly wolves and bears; the totems of the Zhuang are mainly frogs; the Yao worship dogs and gourds; and the totem of the She is a phoenix.

2.3. The Aesthetic Function of Chinese Ethnic Totem Culture

2.3.1. Totems reflect the discourse and mentality of the ancestors

The core of totem worship is the belief that an animal, plant or inanimate object is related to one's clan, is the ancestor and relative of the clan, and honors it as the sign, symbol and protector of the clan. Totem is a family to ensure the safety of life and continue to flourish and create a familiar image from around, is a spiritual sphere of trust, while totem cohesion of the original ancestors strong emotions, ideas, beliefs and expectations, is the most primitive natural philosophy, such as the Tujia ancestors worship, commemoration and pray for protection of the remarkable example, the Tujia "white tiger "Totem is the most primitive natural philosophy.



Fig.2 Totems embody the natural philosophy of primitive ancestors' god worship

2.3.2. Totem reflects the natural philosophy of primitive ancestors' worship of gods and minds

The primitive ancestors brought together their most familiar objects and the blurred features of nature and, with great devotion, painted or carved the natural phenomena they worshipped into works that, though only copies, expressed the religious concept that the originals believed they could live in peace and prosper under the blessing of this sacred object. The Chinese "dragon" totem, for example, was endowed by primitive ancestors with spiritual aspirations such as power, wisdom, and prayers for peace.



Fig.3 The most original Chinese phoenix totem

2.3.3. The development of totemic art reflects the development of early societies

People in primitive societies tend to interpret various natural phenomena as the role of the gods because of their low productivity and limited cognitive ability. The knowledge of various things in nature stayed in the abstract and figurative nature images, which became the source of people's initial topical worship. Totems reflect the ignorance of nature worship in primitive society, the beginning of people's understanding, and also reflect the low productivity of society. As an ideology, with the development of productivity and changes in social system, the primitive totem was consciously preserved in the deep structure of national spirit, aesthetic consciousness and art culture, evolving into a special cultural belief and custom, constituting an important genetic mechanism and a distant prototype of national traditional

cultural aesthetic consciousness.

2.4. The Communication Value of Chinese National Totem Culture

Chinese traditional ethnic totems are engraved with the wisdom and creativity of Chinese ancestors, constructing a history and culture of over 5000 years in China. It is through this inheritance that we can continuously comprehend and innovate Chinese culture. Totem is an important component of the traditional culture of our country and nation, and a valuable spiritual asset. Whether it is as a religion, belief, symbol, or language, totem culture is one of the oldest and most unique cultures of humanity. It is closely related to modern culture and has played a huge role in cross-cultural communication in China.

3. Overview of Chinese Original Children's Picture Books

3.1. The Development Stage of Chinese Children's Picture Books

3.1.1. The Beginning of Chinese Children's Picture Books

The most primitive state of picture books, known as "drawing", has appeared as early as prehistoric times, mainly manifested in rock paintings, pottery paintings, murals, and the emergence of portrait stones, scroll paintings, novel template illustrations, and other historical forms. We can consider these forms as "drawing books", but the carrier they carry is not books, but other media. In 1922, "Children's World" published by the Commercial Press was China's first truly children-oriented journal, and the "Picture Story" column published in it can be seen as the embryo of Chinese children's picture books. On June 15, 1931, the children's literature journal "Children's Magazine" was founded and launched the "Children's Art Special Account" with talk patterns and life comics by Chen Zhifo, Feng Zikai, and others. Since then, domestic original picture book works have emerged in different eras, such as Hua Junwu's "Dalin and Xiaolin", Yang Wenxiu's "Little Doctor", Chen Yongzhen's "Little Horse Crossing the River", Ke Ming's "Golden Dou'er, Silver Dou'er", Liu Jude's "Nine Color Deer", Chen Qiugao's "Little Tadpole Looking for Mother", and so on.

3.1.2. The Development of Chinese Children's Picture Books

The viewpoint of "discovering children" was proposed by Zhou Zuoren during the May Fourth New Culture Movement. For the first time in Chinese history, treating children as a complete, independent, and thoughtful person. This concept has a profound impact on children's education and reading. The decade after the reform and opening up was an important period for the development of Chinese original picture books. At this time, the subject matter of the picture books was diverse, but the painting style was mainly traditional ink painting and meticulous heavy color, incorporating some traditional cultural elements into children's books.

Some visionary painters, driven by the cultural exchange between China and Japan in the 1980s, began to explore Chinese original picture books. From then on, both picture book readers, painters who create picture books, and publishing houses have increasingly attached importance to the development prospects of picture books and devoted themselves to the cause of original picture books in China. Nowadays, through research on excellent foreign picture books, combined with China's excellent traditional culture and ethnic customs, we have created original children's picture books that belong to China. Especially in 2007, the "Chinese Picture Book Series", which was coauthored by children's picture book painters Xiong Liang and some picture book painters, attracted much attention. This picture book series is mostly based on traditional Chinese stories, fully showcasing a "memorable China" on the basis of traditional Chinese painting techniques. Works such as "The Rabbit", "The Little Stone Lion", "The Kitchen God", and "Nian", which condense the symbols of Chinese cultural images, are among the high-quality domestic original picture books that have brought new inspiration to Chinese original picture books in recent years. Of course, there are also picture book works that have been active in the field of children's book creation, such as Zhou Xiang's "Morning Market in Lotus Town", Cai Gao's "Bao'er", "Peach Blossom Garden", and Zhu Chengliang's "Flame", which have combined the design ideas of European and American picture books and innovated them into excellent picture book works. At the same time, publishing houses have also begun to realize the importance of creating original picture books unique to China, and have gradually allocated support energy to domestic original picture books.

3.2. The main problems faced by Chinese original children's picture books

3.2.1. The Development Status of Original Children's Picture Books in China

According to the "2022-2027 Research Report on the Development Trends of China's Children's Picture Book Industry" by Zhongyan Puhua, it is pointed out that in 2021, children's book sales accounted for 28.15% of the market segment with the largest proportion of children's books. China publishes nearly 50000 types of children's books every year, including more than 5000 types of children's picture books, but there are only less than 2000 original picture books. At the same time, according to the analysis data of the e-commerce children's book market from 2022 to present, The live streaming of children's books accounts for 16% of the total book live streaming, an increase of nearly 100% compared to 2021. Related data also indicates that the total sales of e-commerce books in the vertical category in 2021 increased by more than 110% compared to 2020, with over 300 accounts with single sales exceeding one million. The category of children's books has increased by more than four times in 2021 compared to 2020. Looking at the data content, we can clearly see that there is a great potential for an increase in the demand for children's picture books in China, but at the same time, we also face a major problem, which is the lack of originality in domestic picture books.

3.2.2. The content of traditional Chinese ethnic totem culture is relatively limited

In the latest Dangdang website picture book ranking data, the top ten children's picture book series are: "Cricket Ballad", "Dad's Just Different", "Pickling Plum Dries with Grandma", "Eating the Dark Monster", "Miss Dinosaur.", "Hello Dr. Anton", "Shit Beetle's Birthday Gift", "Boat Journey", "Krista", "Little Zhen's Long Hair". Based on the content of the above picture books, we can understand that the current original picture books mostly involve some basic life knowledge, and there is very little content about traditional Chinese culture and totem series.

3.3. Constructing picture book content from an adult perspective, lacking certain childlike design elements

3.3.1. Painting style

The following image content is taken from some picture books from "Cricket Ballad" and "Grandma's Straw Weaved Shoes", as well as excellent picture books from abroad. From the pictures, it can be seen that in terms of painting style, although the first and second pictures use the traditional Chinese ink painting style and traditional elements such as lotus and lotus leaves, the entire picture is rigid and lacks vitality. In "Grandma's Grass Woven Shoes", the entire picture style is too childish, and the characters and animals in the picture are too realistic and lack interest. The style of the later excellent picture books, whether in terms of the structure of characters, animals and plants, or the overall composition of the picture, all appear full, lively and lovely, especially in terms of the characters. They exaggerate the shape and facial features of the characters, enhancing the vitality of the entire picture.

3.3.2. Painting Color

The color brightness and saturation used in the two picture books are too low, and the colors are single, lacking in shaping. In contrast to several excellent foreign picture books, the color brightness and saturation are relatively high, with rich and delicate shapes, and the overall picture is full of childlike charm.

3.3.3. Interactive design of picture books

In "Cricket Ballad" and "Grandma's Straw Woven Shoes", the design of the picture books is flat and there are no interactive links. However, several excellent picture books from abroad have designed three-dimensional pages and some small games. Although in recent years, domestic picture books have also begun to pay attention to the interactive design of picture books, such as cave books, flipping books, guessing puzzles, and games, from the overall content of picture books, the interactive design of picture books still needs to be improved. For example, can we link audio and video within a picture book using QR codes; Utilize AR/VR technology to create virtual and real interactions, etc.



Fig.4 Cricket Ballad



Fig.5 Cricket Ballad

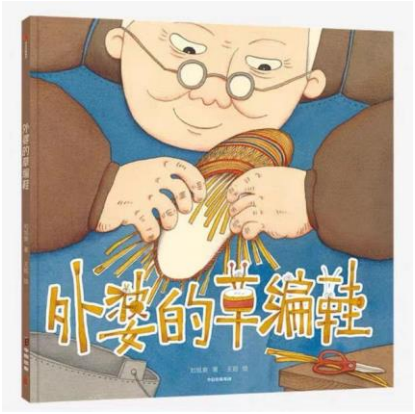


Fig.6 Grandma's Straw Woven Shoes



Fig.7 Grandma's Straw Woven Shoes



Fig.8 Grandma's Straw Woven Shoes



Fig.9 Excellent picture books from abroad



Fig.10 Excellent picture books from abroad



Fig.11 Excellent picture books from abroad

4. Exploration of the Design of Traditional Chinese Totem Culture in Children's Picture Books

4.1. The Design Characteristics of Traditional Chinese Totem Culture in Children's Picture Books - Taking the Tujia White Tiger Totem Design as an Example

4.1.1. Totem Image Design

Most traditional totem objects in China are mainly animals and plants. In terms of image design, we combine the current flat style and the prevalence of IP image design, abandoning the previous flat style, ink painting style, and realistic style, and making the overall image design more three-dimensional; At the same time, in terms of color design, the image colors tend to be lively and cute, and the color shaping also has a more layered sense. The following is an example of the white tiger totem design of the Enshi Tujia ethnic group:



Fig.12 The Primitive White Tiger Totem of the Tujia Ethnic Group in Enshi, Hubei Province



Fig.13.Redesign of the White Tiger Totem Image

The overall image design combines the current design trend, with white as the main body, wearing the classic Tujia clothing "Xilan Kapu" clothing, using personification techniques to give the white tiger a lively, cute, and enthusiastic personality, while changing the serious demeanor of the white tiger totem itself, giving it affinity and making it easier for children to accept.

4.1.2. The Painting Techniques of Picture Books



Fig.14 Redesign of the White Tiger Totem Image

This design combines elements of Chinese ink and wash painting with the ethnic elements of the Tujia ethnic group's "back basket", using high color brightness and saturation. The overall image not only avoids the direct appropriation of traditional elements, but also combines modern painting styles, creating a vivid and vivid design image.

4.1.3. Content arrangement of picture books

The Tujia White Tiger Totem is symbolized by the white tiger, praying to the gods for good weather and prosperity of the family. The White Tiger Totem is the sustenance of the Tujia spirit and the carrier of the development of the Tujia ethnic group for thousands of years. So in terms of creating picture book content, we should not only comply with children's cognitive laws, from intuition to abstraction, from simplicity to complexity, and construct new experiences based on children's existing knowledge schemas, but also meet the expected purpose of creation and promote Chinese national culture.

In order to attract readers' attention, this page design incorporates a reading perspective into the activity scenes of the kindergarten, displaying familiar scene scenes to readers while also incorporating the totem image subject into this scene, allowing readers to autonomously develop interest in the image subject.



Fig.15 Redesign of the White Tiger Totem Image

4.1.4. Interactive design of picture books



Fig.16 Redesign of the White Tiger Totem Image

The picture book adopts a three-dimensional page design as a whole, and when the book is opened, the pages are directly unfolded in a three-dimensional manner, allowing children to experience the authenticity of the characters and breaking through the traditional flat and rigid mode. At the same time, some small games are also designed in the picture book, such as guessing, looking at pictures to find faults, etc., so that children can think while reading. And combine the flat style for content rendering.

5. Conclusion

Nowadays, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, with equal emphasis on cultural confidence, road confidence, theoretical confidence, and institutional confidence. Moreover, China's cultural industry is also in a flourishing stage of development. Therefore, how to effectively improve the originality of domestic picture books has become an urgent task. China's national totem embodies the wisdom of its ancestors, and we should explore, excavate, and inherit it. In fact, primitive picture books of traditional Chinese culture such as "Kitchen God", "Nian Beast Kingdom", and "Fox Immortal Kingdom" have already appeared in China. However, due to the scarcity of picture books, single themes, low popularity of picture books, and the small size of most picture book creation teams in the domestic picture book industry, there is a lack of collective teams and influential and well-known creators. In foreign countries, the creation of picture book illustrations is relatively valued, and there are large-scale awards specifically for picture book illustrations. This incentive mechanism, even the system for cultivating talents, has not yet formed in China. At the same time, there are also shortcomings in the promotion and promotion of the original work and creators. In the current cultural environment, high-quality children's picture books require our attention and change.

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