

Theoretical Results of Lasso Solutions

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1 Single variable Lasso

Consider single variable Lasso problem

$$\underset{\beta}{\text{minimize}} \left\{ \frac{1}{2N} \sum_{i=1}^N (y_i - z_i \beta)^2 + \lambda |\beta| \right\} \quad (1.1)$$

which is a convex problem. By optimal condition of convex optimization problem, set the subgradient be 0 then we have

$$\hat{\beta} = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{N} \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} \rangle - \lambda & \text{if } \frac{1}{N} \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} \rangle > \lambda \\ 0 & \text{if } \frac{1}{N} |\langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} \rangle| \leq \lambda \\ \frac{1}{N} \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} \rangle + \lambda & \text{if } \frac{1}{N} \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} \rangle < -\lambda \end{cases}$$

which can be write as

$$\hat{\beta} = \mathcal{S}_\lambda \left(\frac{1}{N} \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} \rangle \right),$$

where $\mathcal{S}_\lambda(x) = \text{sign}(x)(|x| - \lambda)_+$ is the *soft-thresholding operator*.

2 Uniqueness of Lasso solution

Now given a response vector $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$, a design matrix $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times p}$ and a tuning parameter $\lambda \geq 0$, the lasso estimate is

$$\hat{\beta} \in \underset{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p}{\text{argmin}} \frac{1}{2} \|y - X\beta\|_2^2 + \lambda \|\beta\|_1. \quad (2.1)$$

Tibshirani et al. [2013] gave some basic propeties about the lasso solutions, which is called the uniqueness of fitted values.

Lemma 2.1 *For any y, X and $\lambda \geq 0$, the lasso problem (2.1) have the following properties:*

1. Every lasso solution gives the same fitted value $X\hat{\beta}$

2. If $\lambda > 0$, then every lasso solution has the same ℓ_1 norm $\|\hat{\beta}\|_1$.

Proof: Suppose there are two different solutions $\hat{\beta}^{(1)}$ and $\hat{\beta}^{(2)}$, and denote the minimum value by c^* . By the strong convexity of $(y - x)^2$ and convexity of ℓ_1 norm, for $0 < \alpha < 1$ we have

$$\frac{1}{2} \left\| y - X \left(\alpha \hat{\beta}^{(1)} + (1 - \alpha) \hat{\beta}^{(2)} \right) \right\|_2^2 + \lambda \left\| \alpha \hat{\beta}^{(1)} + (1 - \alpha) \hat{\beta}^{(2)} \right\|_1 < \alpha c^* + (1 - \alpha) c^* = c^*,$$

which leads a contradiction. Then we have proved assertion 1, it follows assertion 2 immediately. \blacksquare

By KTT conditions, we have the following results

$$X^T(y - X\hat{\beta}) = \lambda\gamma, \quad (2.2)$$

$$\gamma_i \in \begin{cases} \left\{ \text{sign}(\hat{\beta}_i) \right\} & \text{if } \hat{\beta}_i \neq 0 \\ [-1, 1] & \text{if } \hat{\beta}_i = 0 \end{cases}, \quad \text{for } i = 1, \dots, p$$

Here γ is the subgradient of $\|\beta\|_1$ evaluated at $\hat{\beta}$. First we define the equicorrelation set

$$S = \left\{ i \in \{1, \dots, p\} : \left| X_i^T(y - X\hat{\beta}) \right| = \lambda \right\},$$

and by (2.2) and the uniqueness of fitted value, every lasso optimal solution has the same subgradient. **If there exist a optimal solution $\hat{\beta}$ such that its subgradient satisfies $|\gamma_i| < 1$ for any $i \notin S$** , then the lasso problem (2.1) has the unique equicorrelation set for fixed $\lambda > 0$.

There are some other equivalent forms of Lasso problem (2.1),

$$\min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \|y - X\beta\|_2^2 \quad \text{subject to } \|\beta\|_1 \leq \lambda_s,$$

and

$$\min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \|\beta\|_1 \quad \text{subject to } \|y - X\beta\|_2^2 \leq \gamma_s.$$

Candes and Tao [2007] proposed Dantzig selector as

$$\min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \|\beta\|_1 \quad \text{subject to } \|X^T(y - X\beta)\|_\infty \leq \lambda_D. \quad (2.3)$$

Let $\tilde{\beta}$ be the optimal solution of Lasso program (2.1), by the zero-subgradient condition, it's easy to see that $\tilde{\beta}$ is a feasible solution of (2.3) when $\lambda_D = \lambda$.

3 Lasso dual

Given $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$, $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times p}$, recall the Lasso problem

$$\min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \frac{1}{2} \|y - X\beta\|_2^2 + \lambda \|\beta\|_1.$$

We can transform the primal to

$$\min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p, z \in \mathbb{R}^n} \frac{1}{2} \|y - z\|_2^2 + \lambda \|\beta\|_1 \quad \text{subject to} \quad z = X\beta.$$

Then the dual function is

$$g(u) = \min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p, z \in \mathbb{R}^n} \frac{1}{2} \|y - z\|_2^2 + \lambda \|\beta\|_1 + u^T(z - X\beta),$$

taking derivatives on z and β , according to optimal condition we have

$$\begin{aligned} z &= y - u \\ \lambda \partial \|\beta\|_1 &= X^T u. \end{aligned}$$

This yields the lasso dual problem

$$\max_{u \in \mathbb{R}^n} \frac{1}{2} (\|y\|_2^2 - \|y - u\|_2^2) \quad \text{subject to} \quad \|X^T u\|_\infty \leq \lambda,$$

or equivalently

$$\min_{u \in \mathbb{R}^n} \|y - u\|_2^2 \quad \text{subject to} \quad \|X^T u\|_\infty \leq \lambda.$$

Further, note that given the dual solution u , any lasso solution β satisfies

$$X\beta = y - u,$$

so the lasso fit is just the dual residual.

4 ℓ_2 bound

Next we will establish the ℓ_2 bound for $\|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|$. First we will rewrite the Lasso program as

$$\hat{\beta} = \arg \min_{\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \frac{1}{2} \beta^T A \beta - b^T \beta + \lambda \|\beta\|_1, \quad (4.1)$$

where $A = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n X_i X_i^T$ and $b = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n y_i X_i^T$.

Theorem 4.1 *Suppose that there exists some positive constants c_1 and c_2 such that*

$$\min_{\delta: \|\delta\|_1 < c_1 \sqrt{s} \|\delta\|_2} \frac{\delta^T A \delta}{\|\delta\|_2^2} \geq c_2, \quad (4.2)$$

and the regularization parameter satisfies $\|A\beta^ - b\|_\infty \leq \frac{\lambda}{2}$. Then there exists some positive constant c such that*

$$\|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_2 \leq c \sqrt{s} \lambda, \quad (4.3)$$

where $k = |S|$.

Proof: First we need to verify the scale of regularization parameter, note that

$$\|A\beta^* - b\|_\infty = \left\| \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n X_i w_i \right\|_\infty = \max_{1 \leq j \leq p} \left| \sum_{i=1}^n X_{ij} w_i \right|.$$

Then by exponential inequality, there exists some positive constant C such that

$$\lambda = C \sqrt{\frac{\log p}{n}},$$

and $\|A\beta^* - b\|_\infty \leq \frac{\lambda}{2}$ holds with probability 1 for sufficiently large n . Next we will prove $\|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_1 \leq 4\sqrt{s}\|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_2$. Using the fact that $\hat{\beta}$ is the optimal solution of the Lasso program, then we obtain

$$\frac{1}{2}\hat{\beta}^T A\beta - b^T \hat{\beta} + \lambda \|\hat{\beta}\|_1 \leq \frac{1}{2}\beta^{*T} A\beta^* - b^T \beta^* + \lambda \|\beta^*\|_1, \quad (4.4)$$

which implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{2}\hat{\beta}^T A\beta - b^T \hat{\beta} - \left(\frac{1}{2}\beta^{*T} A\beta^* - b^T \beta^* \right) &\leq \lambda \left(\|\beta^*\|_1 - \|\hat{\beta}\|_1 \right) \\ &= \lambda \left(\|\beta_S^*\|_1 - \|\hat{\beta}_S\|_1 - \|\hat{\beta}_{S^c}\|_1 \right) \\ &\leq \lambda \left(\|\beta_S^* - \hat{\beta}_S\|_1 - \|\beta_{S^c}^* - \hat{\beta}_{S^c}\|_1 \right). \end{aligned}$$

Note that,

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{2}\hat{\beta}^T A\beta - b^T \hat{\beta} - \left(\frac{1}{2}\beta^{*T} A\beta^* - b^T \beta^* \right) &\geq (A\beta^* - b)^T (\hat{\beta} - \beta^*) \\ &\geq -\|A\beta^* - b\|_\infty \|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_1 \\ &\geq -\frac{\lambda}{2} \|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_1 \\ &= -\frac{\lambda}{2} \left(\|\hat{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*\|_1 + \|\hat{\beta}_{S^c} - \beta_{S^c}^*\|_1 \right) \end{aligned}$$

and combining the inequalities above we have

$$\|\hat{\beta}_{S^c} - \beta_{S^c}^*\|_1 \leq 3\|\hat{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*\|_1. \quad (4.5)$$

Thus we can obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_1 &= \|\hat{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*\|_1 + \|\hat{\beta}_{S^c} - \beta_{S^c}^*\|_1 \\ &\leq 4\sqrt{s}\|\hat{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*\|_2. \end{aligned}$$

Then by assumption (4.1), we have

$$\left(\hat{\beta} - \beta^* \right)^T A \left(\hat{\beta} - \beta^* \right) \geq c_2 \|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_2.$$

In addition, the zero-subgradient condition implies $\|A\hat{\beta} - b\|_\infty \leq \lambda$, then

$$\begin{aligned} (\hat{\beta} - \beta^*)^T A (\hat{\beta} - \beta^*) &\leq (\hat{\beta} - \beta^*)^T (A\hat{\beta} - b - (A\beta^* - b)) \\ &\leq \frac{3}{2}\lambda \|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_1. \end{aligned}$$

Thus $\|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_2 \leq 6\sqrt{s}\lambda$. ■

5 Primal-Dual Witness Construction

For any vector $\beta \in \mathbb{R}^p$, we define its support $S(\beta) = \{i | \beta_i \neq 0\}$. Then we begin with a lemma in [Wainwright \[2009\]](#).

Lemma 5.1 1. A vector is optimal if and only if there exists a subgradient vector $\hat{z} \in \partial|\hat{\beta}|_1$ satisfying

$$\frac{1}{n}X^T X (\hat{\beta} - \beta^*) - \frac{1}{n}X^T w + \lambda_n \hat{z} = 0. \quad (5.1)$$

2. Suppose the subgradient vector satisfies the strict dual feasibility condition $|\hat{z}_j| < 1$ for any $j \notin S(\hat{\beta})$. Then any optimal solution $\tilde{\beta}$ of lasso program satisfies $\tilde{\beta}_j = 0$ for any $j \notin S(\hat{\beta})$.
3. Under the condition of part (2), if the $k \times k$ matrix $X_{S(\hat{\beta})}^T X_{S(\hat{\beta})}$ is invertible, then $\hat{\beta}$ is the unique optimal solution of the Lasso program.

Proof: The assertion 1 and 2 follows KKT conditions and uniqueness of subgradient in section 2.

Under the condition of part (2), the lasso program can be restricted in subspace $\beta \in \mathbb{R}^S$. If $X_{S(\hat{\beta})}^T X_{S(\hat{\beta})}$ is invertible, then the lasso program is strictly convex, therefore its optimal solution is unique. ■

Let S be the support set of the true vector β^* , and assume that $X_S^T X_S$ is invertible. [Wainwright \[2009\]](#) proposed an incredible method called *Primal-Dual Witness Construction*, which constructed an lasso solution covering true support set under strict dual feasibility condition. The steps of *Primal-Dual Witness Construction* are presented as following

1. First, we obtain $\check{\beta}_S \in \mathbb{R}^k$ by solving restricted Lasso problem

$$\check{\beta}_S = \arg \min_{\beta_S \in \mathbb{R}^k} \left\{ \frac{1}{2n} \|y - X_S \beta_S\|_2^2 + \lambda_n \|\beta_S\|_1 \right\}. \quad (5.2)$$

And the solution is unique under the condition that $X_S^T X_S$ is invertible. We set $\check{\beta}_{S^c} = 0$.

2. Second, we choose an subgradient of the ℓ_1 norm of $\check{\beta}_S$ denoted by $\check{z}_S \in \mathbb{R}^k$.
3. Third, we obtain \check{z}_{S^c} by solving the zero-subgradient condition (5.1). Then we check for strict dual feasibility, i.e. $|\check{z}_{S^c}| < 1$ for all $j \in S^c$.

4. Fourth, we check whether the sign consistency condition $\check{z}_S = \text{sign}(\beta_S^*)$ is satisfied.

Since the pair $(\check{\beta}, \check{z})$ satisfies the zero-subgradient condition (5.1), it must be an optimal solution of the Lasso program. Then according to Lemma 5.1, it's easy to see that if steps 1-3 succeed with strict dual feasibility, then the Lasso program has a unique solution with $S(\hat{\beta}) \subseteq S(\beta^*)$; If steps 1-4 succeed with strict dual feasibility, then the Lasso program has a unique solution with the correct signed support. Next we will prove strict dual feasibility and sign consistency condition.

We can write zero-subgradient condition (5.1) as matrix form,

$$\frac{1}{n} \begin{bmatrix} X_S^T X_S & X_S^T X_{S^c} \\ X_{S^c}^T X_S & X_{S^c}^T X_{S^c} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \beta_S - \beta_S^* \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} - \frac{1}{n} \begin{bmatrix} X_S^T \\ X_{S^c}^T \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} w_S \\ w_{S^c} \end{bmatrix} + \lambda \begin{bmatrix} z_S \\ z_{S^c} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad (5.3)$$

the element of noise vector w is sub-gaussian variable with zero-mean and parameter σ^2 . Using the assumed invertibility of $X_S^T X_S$ we can solve for $\check{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*$ as follows

$$\check{\beta}_S - \beta_S^* = \left(\frac{1}{n} X_S^T X_S \right)^{-1} \left[\frac{1}{n} X_S^T w - \lambda \check{z}_S \right]. \quad (5.4)$$

Moreover, we can solve \check{z}_{S^c} in terms of $\check{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*$ as

$$\check{z}_{S^c} = X_{S^c}^T \left[X_S (X_S^T X_S)^{-1} \check{z}_S + \Pi_{X_S^\perp} \left(\frac{w}{\lambda_n n} \right) \right], \quad (5.5)$$

where $\Pi_{X_S^\perp} = I_S - (X_S^T X_S)^{-1} X_S^T$ is orthogonal projection matrix. We define the random variable

$$\Delta_i := e_i^T \left(\frac{1}{n} X_S^T X_S \right)^{-1} \left[\frac{1}{n} X_S^T w - \lambda_n \text{sgn}(\beta_S^*) \right], \quad (5.6)$$

and note that, $\Delta_i = \check{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*$, when $\check{z}_S = \text{sgn}(\beta_S^*)$. Then the sign consistency condition is equivalent to the assertion that for all $i \in S$,

$$\text{sgn}(\beta_i^* + \Delta_i) = \text{sgn}(\beta_i^*) \quad (5.7)$$

holds. To prove the strict dual feasibility condition and sign consistency condition, now we impose the following assumptions:

Assumption 5.2 *There exists some **incoherence parameter** $\gamma \in (0, 1]$, such that*

$$\left\| X_{S^c}^T X_S (X_S^T X_S)^{-1} \right\|_\infty \leq (1 - \gamma). \quad (5.8)$$

And there exists some $C > 0$ such that

$$\lambda_{\min} \left(\frac{1}{n} X_S^T X_S \right) \geq C_{\min}. \quad (5.9)$$

Theorem 5.3 Under Assumption 5.2, and the n -dimensional columns of the design matrix X satisfy that $n^{-1/2} \max_{j \in S^c} \|X_j\| \leq 1$. Suppose that the sequence of regularization parameter $\{\lambda_n\}$ satisfies

$$\lambda_n > \frac{2}{\gamma} \sqrt{\frac{2\sigma^2 \log p}{n}}. \quad (5.10)$$

Then there exists some constant $c_1 > 0$, the following properties hold with probability greater than $1 - 2 \exp(-c_1 n \lambda_n^2) \rightarrow 1$.

1. The Lasso program has unique solution $\hat{\beta}$ and its support set contained within the true support set, i.e., $S(\hat{\beta}) \subseteq S(\beta^*)$. And $\hat{\beta}$ satisfies the ℓ_∞ bound

$$\|\hat{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*\|_\infty \leq \lambda_n \left[\left\| (X_S^T X_S / n)^{-1} \right\|_\infty + \frac{4\sigma}{\sqrt{C_{\min}}} \right]. \quad (5.11)$$

2. If the minimum value of the true parameter β^* on its support is bounded below as $\beta_{\min} > g(\lambda_n)$ where $g(\lambda_n) = \lambda_n \left[\left\| (X_S^T X_S / n)^{-1} \right\|_\infty + \frac{4\sigma}{\sqrt{C_{\min}}} \right]$, then $\hat{\beta}$ has the correct signed support.

Proof: Using the fact $|\tilde{z}_S| \leq 1$, (5.5) and incoherence condition (5.8), we have

$$\tilde{z}_{S^c} \leq 1 - \gamma + X_{S^c}^T \Pi_{X_S^\perp} \left(\frac{w}{\lambda_n n} \right).$$

Let $\tilde{Z}_i = X_j^T \Pi_{X_S^\perp} \left(\frac{w}{\lambda_n n} \right)$, $j \in S^c$, then

$$\max_{j \in S^c} \tilde{z}_j \leq 1 - \gamma + \max_{j \in S^c} \tilde{Z}_i.$$

By the property of sub-gaussian random variable and the fact that the spectral norm of Π_{X_S} is 1 and the condition $n^{-1/2} \max_{j \in S^c} \|X_j\| \leq 1$, the parameter of \tilde{Z}_i is bounded by

$$\frac{\sigma^2}{\lambda_n^2 n^2} \left\| \Pi_{X_S^\perp} (X_j) \right\|_2^2 \leq \frac{\sigma^2}{\lambda_n^2 n}.$$

Consequently, by tail probability bound of sub-gaussian variable and the uniform bound, we have

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\max_{j \in S^c} |\tilde{Z}_j| \geq t \right] \leq 2(p - k) \exp \left(-\frac{\lambda_n^2 n t^2}{2\sigma^2} \right).$$

Set $t = \frac{\gamma}{2}$, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P} \left[\max_{j \in S^c} |\tilde{z}_j| > 1 - \frac{\gamma}{2} \right] &\leq 2 \exp \left\{ -\frac{\lambda_n^2 n \gamma^2}{8\sigma^2} + \log(p - k) \right\} \\ &\leq 2 \exp \{ -\log p + \log(p - k) \}, \end{aligned}$$

then there exists some constant c_1 such that

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\max_{j \in S^c} |\tilde{z}_j| > 1 - \frac{\gamma}{2} \right] \leq 2 \exp(-c_1 n \lambda_n^2).$$

Thus with probability greater than $1 - 2 \exp(-c_1 n \lambda_n^2)$, $S(\hat{\beta}) \subseteq S(\beta^*)$ holds. By triangle inequality,

$$\|\check{\beta}_S - \beta_S^*\|_\infty \leq \left\| \left(\frac{X_S^T X_S}{n} \right)^{-1} X_S^T \frac{w}{n} \right\|_\infty + \left\| \left(\frac{X_S^T X_S}{n} \right)^{-1} \right\|_\infty \lambda_n.$$

For each $i \in S$, we define

$$V_i := e_i^T \left(\frac{X_S^T X_S}{n} \right)^{-1} X_S^T \frac{w}{n},$$

obviously V_i is a zero-mean sub-gaussian variable with parameter at most

$$\frac{\sigma^2}{n} \left\| \left(\left(\frac{1}{n} X_S^T X_S \right)^{-1} \right) \right\|_2 \leq \frac{\sigma^2}{C_{\min} n}$$

Then by sub-gaussian tail bound and the union bound we have

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\max_{i=1, \dots, k} |V_i| > t \right] \leq 2 \exp \left(-\frac{t^2 C_{\min} n}{2\sigma^2} + \log k \right),$$

setting $t = 4\sigma \lambda_n / \sqrt{C_{\min}}$ and using the fact $8n\lambda_n^2 > \log p \geq \log k$, we obtain

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\max_{i=1, \dots, k} |\bar{Z}_i| > 4\sigma \lambda_n / \sqrt{C_{\min}} \right] \leq 2 \exp(-c_1 n \lambda_n^2).$$

Therefore, we have proved assertion 1 and assertion 2 follows immediately. \blacksquare

6 Some useful inequalities

Lemma 6.1 (Tail Bounds for χ^2 Variables) *Given a centralized χ^2 variable X with d degrees of freedom, then for all $t \in (0, \frac{1}{2})$, we have*

$$\mathbb{P}[X \geq d(1+t)] \leq \exp \left(-\frac{3}{16} dt^2 \right), \quad (6.1)$$

$$\mathbb{P}[X \leq (1-t)d] \leq \exp \left(-\frac{1}{4} dt^2 \right) \quad (6.2)$$

Lemma 6.2 (Concentration of spectral norms) *For $k \leq n$, let $U \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times k}$ be a random matrix from the standard Gaussian random ensemble (i.e., $U_{ij} \sim N(0, 1)$, i.i.d). Then for all $t > 0$, we have*

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\left\| \frac{1}{n} U^T U - I_{k \times k} \right\|_2 \geq \delta(n, k, t) \right] \leq 2 \exp(-nt^2/2), \quad (6.3)$$

where $\delta(n, k, t) := 2 \left(\sqrt{\frac{k}{n}} + t \right) + \left(\sqrt{\frac{k}{n}} + t \right)^2$.

Lemma 6.3 *For $k \leq n$, let $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times k}$ have i.i.d rows $X_i \sim N(0, \Lambda)$.*

1. If the covariance matrix Λ has maximum eigenvalue $C_{\max} < \infty$, then for all $t > 0$, we have

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\left\| \frac{1}{n} X^T X - \Lambda \right\|_2 \geq C_{\max} \delta(n, k, t) \right] \leq 2 \exp(-nt^2/2). \quad (6.4)$$

2. If the covariance matrix Λ has minimum eigenvalue $C_{\min} > 0$, then for all $t > 0$, we have

$$\mathbb{P} \left[\left\| \left(\frac{X^T X}{n} \right)^{-1} - \Lambda^{-1} \right\|_2 \geq \frac{\delta(n, k, t)}{C_{\min}} \right] \leq 2 \exp(-nt^2/2). \quad (6.5)$$

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