

## THE WOW FACTOR

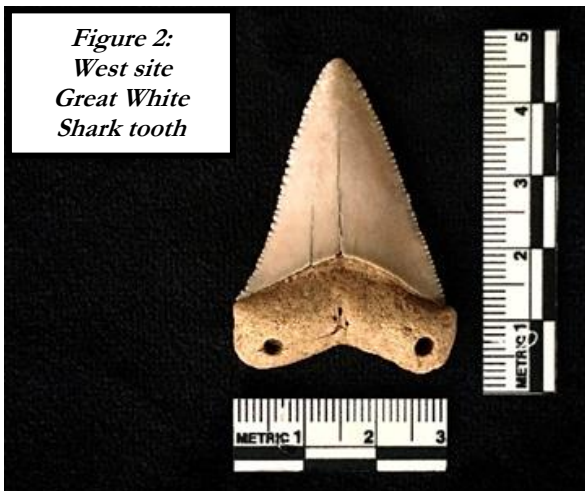
John Krizmanich (NCAS At-Large Board Member)

As site steward for a large multi-component archaeological site in northeastern North Carolina, I have encountered countless artifacts over the years that have helped tell the story of what was once there. Every so often, an artifact is recovered that is unique. Often these standout artifacts can not only capture the imagination of the general public but also excite even the most experienced archaeological professionals. These artifacts have what some would call a certain “wow factor.” Recently one such curious item, a shark tooth, was recovered along the shoreline of the West site (31CK22).



*Figure 1: Shark tooth as found  
(West site, Currituck Co., NC)*

The West site is an eroding bluff that sits along the shore of the Currituck Sound, the northernmost of the inland sounds that separates the mainland from the barrier island beaches of the North Carolina Outer Banks. Increasingly, features and artifacts from various time periods become exposed along the shoreline due to erosion. This constantly changing environment requires frequent monitoring to ensure site integrity. In May 2020, during one of these site-monitoring visits, a shark tooth was found lying in a small tidal pool along the shore. Measuring 3cm wide at its base and 4.5cm long from its tip to the root base (fig.2), the tooth had two small 3mm in diameter holes drilled through from the labial surface to the lingual of the root lobes as if to be worn as a pendant (fig.3). The white enamel of the tooth and the beige exposed root dentin were not typical of the usually dark-colored fossilized shark teeth that are sometimes found along the ocean shore of the Outer Banks. This tooth, instead, appeared to have been found or removed from a shark that was alive around the time that the tooth had been modified for human use.



*Figure 2:  
West site  
Great White  
Shark tooth*

The tooth was found in the West site’s Late Woodland Carolina Algonquian occupation component (A.D. 800-1650). Features and artifacts recovered at the highest elevation in this area are usually thought to be ceremonial as, in the past, Algonquian-associated ossuaries and burials have been found eroding from the embankment in this specific area. Emergency salvage excavations performed by archaeologists with the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology and East Carolina University have removed these burials for further study (see Souther 2014; Petrey 2014).

With the find properly recorded at the site, research then turned to trying to further understand the out-of-context artifact. A



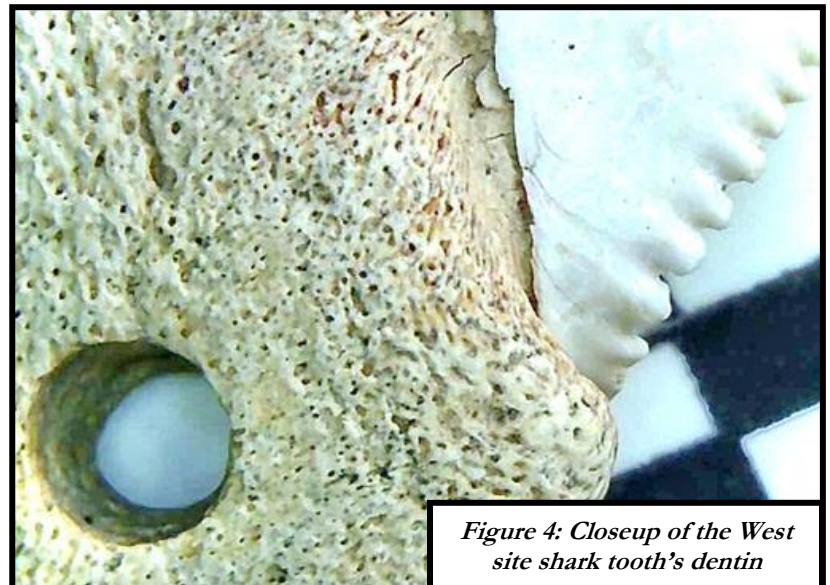
**Figure 3: Two small holes perforate the base**

shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*) (Martin 2003). Making sense of the broad range of material remains recovered and time periods represented at the site often requires the expert knowledge of a brain trust of professional archaeologist friends and acquaintances. Once again, this researcher would need to utilize the invaluable resource of crowdsourcing through social media.

Images of the artifact were posted online and immediately the responses and feedback began to come in. A number of articles and reports began to fill my email inbox. One article discussed the Woodland period's native people of the Chesapeake Bay region collecting and trading fossilized shark teeth that they had found along the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay (Lowery et al. 2011). Ancient Miocene period deposits (23-5 million BP) erode from the coastal banks and cliffs leaving behind lag deposits of material, sometimes including fossilized shark teeth. The Woodland period people of the Chesapeake region highly valued the fossil teeth. Research suggests that shark teeth have been used as tools or decoration by North American pre-historic cultures for perhaps 10,000 years or more (Lowery et al. 2011:93-94). Some of the many uses for the teeth include being used as projectile points, drills, or cutting tools, or even items of personal adornment such as necklaces, amulets or talismans (Lowery et al. 2011:96). Also discussed was the possibility that the fossilized shark teeth recovered from Middle Woodland Hopewell culture sites of the Ohio Valley may have originated from the Chesapeake Bay Miocene formations. The fossil teeth were gathered locally by the coastal tribes of the Chesapeake then traded to the Ohio Valley people across Appalachian trade routes (Lowery et al. 2011:105-106). Another interesting point raised was that the Woodland people preferentially collected and prized the rarer fossilized Great White shark teeth above all other species of shark represented in the fossil record (Lowery et al. 2011:103).

Another journal article received was a report on the Hand site (44SN22), a very late woodland (ca. AD 1580-1640) Iroquoian site located on the Nottaway River in Southampton County, Virginia (Mudar et al. 1998). The southeastern Virginia location of the site is near the boundary of the inner and outer coastal plains which was also the boundary between the Iroquoian-speaking Tuscarora and Meherrin people to the west and the Algonquian-speaking groups, such as the Powhatan and the Weapemeoc to the east. To help determine the Iroquoian cultural

microscopic examination of the tooth was conducted by dental professionals at Bay View Dental Laboratory in Chesapeake, VA. The dental implant technicians at the laboratory are experienced in a broad range of bioactive bone grafting materials including human, animal, and synthetic bone. It was observed that the tooth's dentin and enameloid crown does not appear to have undergone the permineralization process seen in fossilization and that the tooth demonstrates traits consistent with those of a non-fossilized tooth (fig.4) (Collins 2021). The North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island was contacted with the hope that they could assist with the identification of the shark species. Resources were provided by the staff that helped to confirm that the tooth was from a Great White



**Figure 4: Closeup of the West site shark tooth's dentin**

affiliation of the graves at the Hand site, the researchers examined several differences in mortuary practices between the Iroquoian and Algonquian people of the time and region. One important difference observed is that grave goods or personal items are rarely found in Algonquian communal ossuary type burials. However, the smaller family unit burials of the Iroquois always contained at least some grave goods, such as shell or copper beads (Mudar et al. 1998:147). At the Hand site, 8 of the 131 burials found were deemed to be of high status, possibly the burials of kings or high priests. These 8 high-status graves were differentiated from the others due to being isolated from the other burials, having large fires built over them, and containing perforated shark teeth. The shark teeth were the only status-signifying artifacts recovered at the site (Mudar et al. 1998:148-150).

Since the modified non-fossil shark tooth was surface collected after being washed out of its depositional context, we can only surmise the tooth's true origin. The articles, papers, and comments I received as a result of my queries did greatly help shed light on the artifact. As an avocational archaeologist with some experience, I do understand that many questions this researcher has in regard to the Great White tooth found at the West site are unanswerable and lost to time. Perhaps better left to the imagination are questions like: How did the native people encounter the shark that the non-fossil tooth came from? Did a deceased Great White wash up on an Outer Banks beach to be found and processed by local Native Americans? Did a Great White venture into the shallows of the inner sounds and become trapped, then caught? Was this tooth worn by a leader or a shaman? And so on. I was once told by a friend that archaeology often creates far many more questions than answers. That certainly seems to be the case with the intriguing West site shark tooth.

#### References

Collins, Benedict (2021) The West site shark tooth examination at Bay View Dental Laboratory was conducted by Dental Implant Department manager Mr. Benedict Collins and the author in February 2021. The opinions expressed are based on personal observation and experience. The microscopic analysis of the shark tooth was performed utilizing a Meiji EMZ zoom stereo microscope 10-40x magnification with 5x eyepieces and a LED ring light.

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<https://www.calvertmarinemuseum.com/DocumentCenter/View/3520/Lowery-Godfrey-Eshelman-2012-Shark-Teeth>

Martin, R. Aidan (2003) "A "Quick & Dirty" Guide to Fossil and Recent Shark Teeth." *Biology of Sharks and Rays*.

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**MYSTERY ARTIFACTS** – The artifacts in this image are game pieces used for checkers or other similar games made in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century out of Minie balls. Minie ball bullets appeared in 1847 and disappeared soon after the Civil War. The general shape of the concave base and standard diameter size were attributes of recognition. While historical archaeologists may have recovered many Minie balls in excavations, the ones that impacted either human bone, metal, wood, or even clay, tend to splay into different forms that look impacted, but the top of these artifacts tends to represent a repeated hammering action.



*...but they really do look like my mom's biscuits!*

## NCAS Word Find: Queen Anne's Revenge

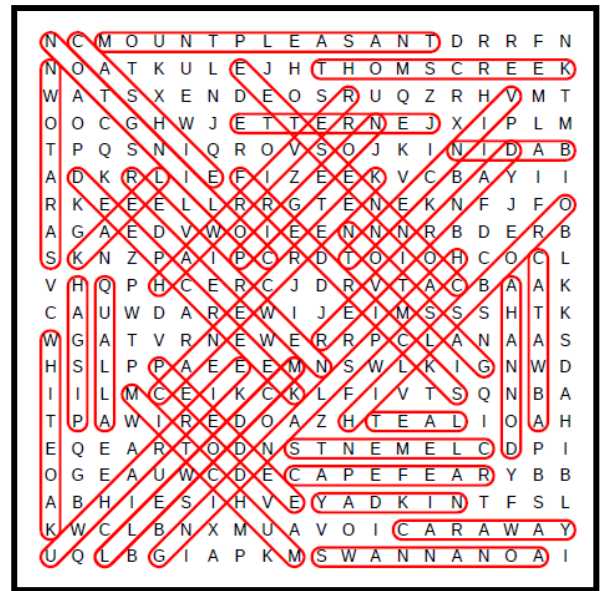
Grab your scuba gear and try to recover the 40 artifact words from the site of the Queen Anne's Revenge, as described in Mark Wilde-Ramsing and Linda F. Carnes McNaughton's *Blackbeard's Sunken Prize*. Be prepared to walk the plank if you aren't able to locate them all. Words can go forward, backward, or diagonally, me hearties. Answers will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter. WORD LIST:

- |                    |                  |                |                   |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| APOTHECARY JAR     | GIMBAL OIL LAMP  | OARLOCK        | SLEEVE LINKS      |
| BALLAST            | GOLD DUST        | PEWTER PLATTER | SOUNDING WEIGHT   |
| BARREL BANDS       | GRENADES         | PINS           | SPOONS            |
| BEADS              | GRINDING STONE   | PORCELAIN LID  | STEMWARE          |
| BLUNDERBUSS BARREL | GUN FLINTS       | PORRINGER      | STOPCOCK          |
| CANNON APRON       | KAOLIN PIPES     | SAUCEPOT       | STOVE BRICK       |
| CANNONBALL         | LEAD SHOT        | SCISSORS       | URETHRAL SYRINGE  |
| CANNON BAR SHOT    | LEG SHACKLE      | SHIP ANCHOR    | WATCH BELL        |
| CANNONS            | NAVIGATION TOOLS | SHIP BELL      | WINDOW PANE GLASS |
| DARBY COOKPOT      | NESTED WEIGHTS   | SHOE BUCKLES   | WINE BOTTLE       |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| K | T | S | S | D | N | A | B | L | E | R | R | A | B | R | A | J | Y | R | A | C | E | H | T | O | P | A | S | S | N |
| J | E | P | L | N | R | L | X | L | S | F | A | U | R | E | T | H | R | A | L | S | Y | R | I | N | G | E | T | T | O |
| N | S | O | S | T | A | S | Q | Q | L | R | W | P | E | W | T | E | R | P | L | A | T | T | E | R | K | M | O | V | U |
| W | E | A | T | N | T | Y | V | B | O | F | N | M | J | Q | P | J | O | P | N | C | S | S | G | Q | T | P | K | G | B |
| F | L | V | M | I | O | O | P | M | A | L | L | I | O | L | A | B | M | I | G | R | S | F | P | H | E | K | D | P | O |
| L | K | T | I | W | S | N | W | A | T | C | H | B | E | L | L | S | T | F | O | R | P | U | G | C | D | A | S | R | T |
| E | C | M | O | A | S | S | N | M | C | A | N | N | O | N | B | A | R | S | H | O | T | I | U | V | O | O | T | J | N |
| G | U | Y | R | P | T | T | L | A | G | D | Z | X | A | D | P | W | S | M | J | C | E | A | L | I | X | L | H | N | U |
| S | B | O | D | J | K | C | O | O | C | E | B | V | J | B | Y | I | W | A | Q | W | S | T | D | M | A | I | G | V | S |
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| P | S | F | N | V | Q | S | K | N | I | L | E | V | E | E | L | S | E | T | T | E | B | O | A | L | B | M | J | C | T |
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**MYSTERY ARTIFACT** – Summertime brings us thoughts of going to the beach and recreationally playing in the sand and surf. Some of us even like to build sandcastles. But this issue's mystery artifact is not a castle made of sand. Can you identify the artifact? For a bonus point, can you tell what event this artifact was made to celebrate? Answer in the next issue of the NCAS newsletter.



*Answer Key for Winter Issue Word Search*

## Digital Spotlight: Submerged NC Webinar Series

From violent storms and dangerous shoals to world wars, the waters off North Carolina have claimed thousands of ships over hundreds of years. These shipwrecks hold information about changing technologies and cultural and physical landscapes. They serve as a uniquely accessible underwater museum and a memorial to generations of mariners who lived, worked, and fought off our shores. Working together, the Office of State Archaeology and NOAA’s Monitor National Marine Sanctuary will tell these stories and celebrate North Carolina’s underwater cultural heritage with the Submerged NC webinar series.



Our next Submerged NC webinar, The Submarine Blitzkrieg against North America and the U.S. Response - December 1941 to August 1942, will air on Tuesday, May 11 at 1pm ET. Be sure to [register](#) and join Dr. Sal Mercogliano, Assistant Professor of History at Campbell University, to learn how and why the American East Coast became a strategic battlefield in the first five months after the U.S. entered World War II. Learn about the mistakes made, the men who made them, and the solutions found to turn the tide in the German U-boat war.

Recordings of previous webinars are available for viewing [here](#). To get information on future webinars, please visit our [Submerged NC](#) website. You can also follow us on Facebook [@ncarchaeology](#) or Instagram [@ncarchaeology](#). Attendees must register beforehand to watch webinars live, but registration is free.



**Looking for a Temporary Paid Position?** – Keith Reeves, an Architect and past President of the Central Florida Anthropological Society, owns about 150 acres in rural NC adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway near Glendale Springs. In August/September 2021, Keith will be providing an exhibit at a local West Jefferson arts museum. Entitled “Sheets Gap Road,” the exhibit is to trace the life and culture of this unique area and Keith would love to include its prehistory (i.e. Native American occupation). If interested or have questions about the project, please contact Keith at 407-620-9744 or by email at [iskr5@aol.com](mailto:iskr5@aol.com).

## “The Dig”: Treasure Finds and the Law in the UK

(Sarah Watkins-Kenney, Ph.D., RPA, MCIFA)

The Sutton Hoo ship burial is probably the most famous “treasure” found by archaeological excavation in the UK. As dramatized in the 2020 Netflix film “The Dig”, on 14 August 1939, a Coroner’s Inquest determined the ship and its contents were not legally “treasure” and therefore belonged to the landowner – Mrs. Edith Pretty (Carver 1998:20). What happened to them was up to her. She could have kept them or sold them, but in what has been described as the “most munificent and magnificent single gift ever made in the lifetime of a donor,” she donated the finds to the British Museum (Caygill 1992:52).

Treasure laws in the UK go back over 800 years. In 1195, King Richard I introduced the first Treasure Trove (TT) law. It had nothing to do with antiquities but secured the sovereign’s right to claim finds of silver and gold for the which the original owner could not be identified. As interests in antiquarianism developed through the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such finds were occasionally recognized as also important ancient artifacts. King George III (reign 1760-1820), in return for more regular funding from the Civil List, waived the sovereign’s personal rights to treasure. Silver and gold finds, as revenue, then went to the Treasury instead. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century there was increasing concern that TT laws should be enforced by the State (on the Crown’s behalf) to keep valuable antiquities in the public domain. In Scotland, finders began to be rewarded the “full intrinsic value” of a find if declared treasure by the State. This practice became routine also in England and Wales in the 1920s (Burnett 1993; Sheridan 1995; Watkins 1998).

By the 1939 Sutton Hoo discovery, in England and Wales, silver and gold finds were subject to a Coroner’s inquest at which a jury determined whether a find was treasure. To be treasure the find had to be made of silver or gold and deliberately concealed with the intention of recovery (not lost or buried as grave goods), and the owners or their heirs unknown. It also had to be confirmed who the finder was and whether they had acted legally, including with the landowner’s permission.

Treasure law remained essentially unchanged until the 1990s, by which time there was increasing political, professional, and public recognition that reform was needed, including a statutory definition of treasure, to streamline administration of the law and make it more enforceable. Responsibility for TT was transferred from the Treasury to the Department of National Heritage (DNH) in 1993, but the Government did not plan to reform the law through its legislative program. The only chance of updating the law would be a Private Member’s Bill. At the first attempt in 1994, a Bill drafted by the Surrey Archaeological Society and the British Museum, with support of DNH, was defeated amidst much publicity and opposition from both archaeologists and metal-detectorists. A re-drafted Bill was successfully passed and received Royal Assent on 4 July 1996. The Bill had been re-written to be acceptable to both the archaeological profession and bodies representing metal detectorists. After a Code of Practice had been approved by both Houses of Parliament, the 1996 Act came into effect 24 September 1997 (Watkins-Kenney 1998:65-66). The Act applies only in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, additionally, it became a statutory duty under the Historic Museums and Archaeological Objects Order 1995, for finders to report all archaeological objects whatever made of, within fourteen days to the police or to the Ulster Museum. In Scotland, all ancient objects found belong to the Crown and have to be reported. A Treasure Trove Advisory Panel makes recommendations to the Crown Agent who ultimately decides if finds go to a museum or are returned to the finder.

Under the 1996 Act, treasure includes:

- All finds containing at least 10% of gold or silver and more than 300 years old, and associated artifacts - whatever made of and however deposited.
- All coins - two or more found together if more than 300 years old and containing at least 10% gold or silver, and associated artifacts.
- All coins - ten or more found together if more than 300 years old and containing less than 10% gold or silver, and associated artifacts.
- Objects of any materials, not found associated with gold or silver, if declared by the Secretary of State to be “of outstanding historical, archaeological or cultural importance (Treasure Act 1996, Clause 2).

Finds excluded as treasure include objects: for which owners can be traced; natural unworked; from the foreshore from a wreck; and from Church of England consecrated ground. Procedures for reporting finds, coroner’s Inquests, rewards to finders, and how museums might acquire treasure were also covered in the Act and the Code of Practice (DCMS 2002; DDCMS 2020; Hobbs et al 2002; Watkins 1998:66). There was a second revision of the Code of Practice in 2002 (DCMS 2002). Since 2019, the Government is again reviewing the Treasure Act and associated Codes of Practice, as even under current definitions of treasure it is increasingly difficult to “ensure that important archaeological items are preserved for public benefit” (DDCMS 2020).

Following the 1996 Treasure Act, a “Portable Antiquities Scheme” (PAS) was established in England and Wales with grant funding through DNH. This was in response to a proposal to the government by the Council for British Archaeology-convened Standing Conference on Portable Antiquities for a voluntary reporting scheme by which the public (including metal-detectorists) could report any finds to “Finds Liaison Officers” (FLOs). Discoveries are recorded before finds are returned to the finder or reported to the Coroner (Watkins 1998:66). The scheme is managed by the British Museum and Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales). There are 40 FLOs in museums across the country. An online database, freely accessible to anyone via the PAS website at <https://finds.org.uk/>, includes descriptions, images and identifications of over 1.5 million objects ranging from Paleolithic to Modern; with many items dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is another resource for identifying finds from post contact sites in North Carolina.

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**KNOW YOUR DATES, PLAN AHEAD (IF THEY HAPPEN)***Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS)**(May 18-27, 2021, Virtual Meeting)***SE Conf. on Historic Sites Archaeology (SECHSA)***(September 24-25, 2021, Cayce, SC)**Southeastern Archaeological Conference (SEAC)**(October 24-27, 2021, Durham, NC)***Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA)***(January 5-8, 2022, Philadelphia, PA)***Society for American Archaeology (SAA)***(March 30-April 3, 2022, Chicago, IL)***NCAS Officers****President:** Shane C. Petersen ([scpetersen@ncdot.gov](mailto:scpetersen@ncdot.gov))**Vice-president:** Emily Nisch Terrell ([emilyaterrell@gmail.com](mailto:emilyaterrell@gmail.com))**Treasurer:** Mary Beth Fitts ([mbfitts@gmail.com](mailto:mbfitts@gmail.com))**Secretary:** Linda Carnes-McNaughton ([lfcmdoc@gmail.com](mailto:lfcmdoc@gmail.com))**Editor:** David Cranford ([david.cranford@ncdcr.gov](mailto:david.cranford@ncdcr.gov))**Newsletter Editor:** Paul J. Mohler ([pjmohler@ncdot.gov](mailto:pjmohler@ncdot.gov))**At-Large Board Members:** Danny Bell, Nicholas Henderson, Douglas Hill, John Krizmanich, Celeste Purvis, and Sarah Watkins-Kenney**NCAS Newsletter****Publication Schedule**

All NCAS members should submit articles and news items to Paul J. Mohler ([pjmohler@ncdot.gov](mailto:pjmohler@ncdot.gov)) for inclusion in the Newsletter. Please use the following cut-off dates as guides for your submissions:

**Winter Issue – January 31****Summer Issue – July 31****Spring Issue – April 30****Fall Issue – October 31**

**IN MEMORIAM** – Once again, we are all saddened by the passing of one of our own, Rodney Snedeker, who worked for the US Forest Service as an Archaeologist for over 40 years. Rodney was a friend to many of us, was passionate about his work, and will be greatly missed ([Rodney Snedeker Obituary \(1952 - 2021\) - Asheville, NC - Asheville Citizen-Times \(legacy.com\)](#)).

NC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
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