

WINTER 2022 | ISSUE 12

# BU Anthropology News

*The official newsletter of the Boston University Department of Anthropology*



## ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS!



Dept Holiday Party, Photo Credit: Ruofei Shang (CAS'25)

# FEATURED: LUKE GLOWACKI

*New NSF Grant and Intergroup Cooperation & Peace*

**Luke Glowacki** is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology. He studies the evolution of complex social behavior, including cooperation and war. He has done extensive fieldwork among nomadic pastoralists along the Ethiopian/South Sudanese border studying inter-ethnic violence.



**Q: What inspired your current research?**

A: Right now, I'm studying intergroup cooperation, when it may have become important in our species' history, and the social and psychological mechanisms it requires. The topic of warfare and intergroup conflict is enormous. We have well developed theory about why intergroup conflict evolves but we have much less insight into how intergroup cooperation and peace emerges. This gap is puzzling because intergroup cooperation is such an important part of our species' success, ultimately enabling cumulative cultural evolution. I hope my work on this topic begins to answer some of these questions.

**Q: You just received a \$450k grant – what does that mean for your research?**

A: The National Science Foundation awarded us a grant to study the formation of social relationships across distinct groups in Ethiopia. Our primary questions are about how positive relationships that cross salient group boundaries are created. What social, structural, or individual factors lead to their emergence? We will primarily use the tools of network science, but my research has a strong ethnographic component. It's very hard to know the questions to ask, the types of data that are meaningful, and how to interpret them without ethnography.

**[Read the full interview on our website!](#)**



# FEATURED: ROBERT HEFNER

*Hefner invited to the R20 Conference in Indonesia*



Robert Hefner is a professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Pardee School of Global Affairs. He specializes in the anthropology of religion, ethics and law, education and youth development, as well as the comparative study of gender, citizenship, globalization, and modernity.

**Q: What is your connection with the Indonesian government?**

A: Just about my entire adult life, I have worked conducting research in Indonesia. But over the past 10 years or so, I have had an especially close relationship with an organization known as "Nahdlatul Ulama" (NU), or the "renaissance of ulama." NU was once a very conservative and traditionalist organization. But about 20 years ago, it began to change under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid, the former chairman of NU who went

on to become president of Indonesia. Wahid was a close friend of mine. He represented a progressive, reform-minded, Gender-equity-affirming wing within NU. Wahid passed away in 2009, but his successor Yahya Staquf was very close to him and reached out to me to be on the Executive Board of the center that he created, called the Center for Global Civilizations. That's a group that aims to show there is no "clash of civilizations," and that what is needed today is cooperation across civilizations and nations.

**Q: Has there always been an R20?**

A: The G20 has 8 sub-groups dealing with a variety of things, including women, economic development, and religion. The R20 concept – that is, establishing a religious subsection in the G20 – was an idea pioneered by Indonesia this year, after it assumed the role of host for the G20. As a result of Indonesia's leadership this year, there will be an R20 at every G20 in the future. The premise of the R20 is not that all religious organizations are good. In the subgroup's own words, the purpose of the organization is to "combat the instrumentalization of religion for identity, politics and political divisions" – and to transform religious organizations and peoples into agents for the global good.



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**Q: You were asked to deliver a keynote speech at the end. What did you talk about?**

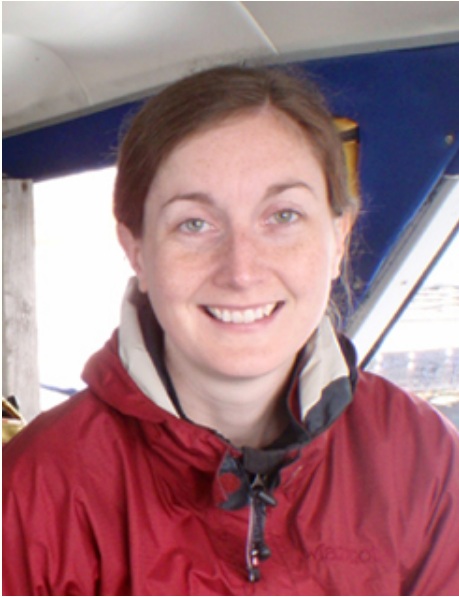
A: I was not told ahead of the final dinner that I was supposed to give a keynote talk, and I had come to dinner planning to enjoy a relaxing end-of-conference meal with friends. At the last moment, though, one of the Indonesian hosts came to my table and said "Pak [Mr.] Hefner, we'd like you to give the final dinner keynote." So I had to improvise! (laughter). I talked about the takeaways from our meeting and the positive message we have sought to present to the world: decrying religious extremism and calling for religion to serve as an instrument for peace and social justice. I emphasized that the R20 delegates had just sent an important message about the positive role religion can play in world affairs – when religion is not instrumentalized for exclusive or anti-democratic ends. I also applauded the delegates for beginning the building of a global network for drawing people from diverse faith traditions into the struggle for global justice and inclusivity. Lastly, I pointed out that what is remarkable about Indonesia is not that it has always been peaceful or tolerant – in fact back in the 1950s and 1960s the country suffered from repeated outbreaks of political violence. What makes Indonesia and organizations like NU remarkable, then, is that they have overcome these difficult legacies and turned themselves into forces for democracy, gender equity, and social justice. That's a historical lesson from which all of us can learn.

**[Read the full interview on our website!](#)**



# FEATURED: CATHERINE WEST

*New NSF grant “Historical Ecology of the Pacific Cod Fishery”*



Catherine West is a research associate professor in the Anthropology Department and Archaeology Program with affiliation with the Marine Program.

## **Q: Talk about your past and present research**

A: When I started grad school, I knew that I wanted to use the animal bones in archaeological sites to understand how past people interacted with local resources and environments. When I was a graduate student, my research focused on the effects of climate change on past fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and how people adapted their fisheries to cooling and warming periods. I'm really interested in how northern communities have adapted their subsistence practices to changing climate both in the past and today.

One of my central interests is how we can apply animal bone records to contemporary environmental concerns - doing applied zooarchaeology. People living in the Gulf of Alaska are deeply concerned about warming, especially in the ocean. In the last five years, marine heat waves have dramatically affected marine life across the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea, and animal species are either disappearing or struggling terribly. This affects the huge commercial fisheries that are fundamental to economic and social life across the North Pacific Ocean and into the Bering Sea.



# FEATURED: CATHERINE WEST

*New NSF grant “Historical Ecology of the Pacific Cod Fishery”*

**Q: What is the new NSF Grant that you received?**

A: This grant is funded by a new NSF division called Navigating the New Arctic, which is concerned with the effects of changing climate change, economics, and international relations in the Arctic. It's also concerned with collaboration and knowledge co-production with Indigenous communities across the Arctic, especially the western North American Arctic. This interdisciplinary project examines the history of the Pacific cod fishery in the North Pacific Ocean. The cod fishery, which is really economically important, has suffered during recent marine heat waves, and my resource management collaborators are interested in knowing if we can look to the past to understand what might happen in the future as marine temperatures continue to increase.

The main goal of this project is to be collaborative. To answer our questions we are working closely with Pacific cod managers at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center to design our research program. We are a team of archaeologists, a paleo-climatologist, genomicists, chemists, and climatologist Bruce Anderson, who's in our Department of Earth and Environment here at BU. Together we will use contemporary fisheries data, the historical record, and archaeological fish remains to understand the dynamics of the ancient and modern ecosystems, in an effort to extend our understanding of how climate influences fish populations.

**Q: How does your team plan to carry out this research?**

A: Most fisheries are managed using data for the last 30 years. We would like to push that back to a thousand or maybe even five or 6000 years to see if we can identify trends in marine temperatures and how both fish and people responded to those changes. The first step was here at BU in 2020 when I had a Pardee Center Faculty Fellowship and I hosted a symposium to discuss whether long-term data can inform modern fishery management (it's on YouTube!). And based on this symposium, we wrote this NSF grant. In January we will all convene in Seattle to design our research projects and discuss their relevance to cod management. In the summer of 2023 we will start gathering data: some people will go in the field in Alaska to interview and work with indigenous Aleut people, while others of us will go to museums to collect archeological samples. Then we'll reconvene again in a year to share our data with each other.

# FEATURED: CHRISTIAN GAGNON

*Thermogenesis*

**Christian Gagnon** is a 5th year PhD candidate studying Biological Anthropology and working in the SMAGL lab with Dr. Chris Schmitt and Dr. Eva Garrett. Prior to joining the BU Anthropology Department, Christian received his BA and MA in Anthropology from CUNY Hunter College. His research broadly focuses on better understanding the evolution of complex traits.

**Q: Congrats on winning 2nd place in the NEEP Best Poster Presentation! Can you tell us about your current research?**

A: My research right now focuses on the molecular evolution genes associated with non-shivering thermogenesis in brown adipose tissue. Over evolutionary time, many mammalian lineages have experienced selective pressures to be able to withstand thermos-regulatory stress due to low temperatures.

Because mammals are warm-blooded, we have to maintain a core body temperature between a certain range in order for our physiology to function the way it is supposed to. We suggest that there are certain traits that would make that more efficient. For humans and primates more generally, we started in an equatorial environment and then expanded out to colder climates across the world. Even though this is mammalian trait it holds a particular significance for our species, as a species that is very adaptable and flexible and is known to inhabit some of the coldest places on earth. There's selection that occurred across the mammalian lineage, but we also expect to see this selection at the population level. This was the seed of everything I've done so far. I use savanna/vervet monkeys as a model for the evolution of early hominids.



**Q: What made you decide to be a biological anthropologist?**

A: When I was in undergrad I was premed student aiming to go to medical school. Senior year, I took a class in bioanth with Mike Steiper. I didn't know what anthropology was and I took it as an elective to fill a requirement, but as soon as he started talking about evolution and primates, I thought it was the most interesting class I've taken in my life. I still didn't fully understand what anthropology meant, but my professor saw the passion I had for it. He told me he thought this was a field I'd excel in and offer me a fellowship in his lab – that's where it all started. After that, things just kept reinforcing that this is where I'm meant to be. Per his suggestion, I did a field course in Uganda, which was my first experience in primatology. It was so amazing and formative, and I never looked back.



**[Read the full interview on our website!](#)**

# FEATURED: TREVOR LAMB

*Let's Talk About Plants*



**Trevor Lamb** is a 3rd year Anthropology PhD student, researching the foodways of the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq and Unangan Peoples in what is now called Southwest Alaska.

**Q: Tell us about yourself, and what you've been working on.**

A: I am interested in foods and how animal and plant foods are combined into meals. I did my Bachelors at the University of Maine in Anthropology and minored in Earth Science, which is where my interest in northeastern Turtle Island hunter gatherer societies began. Then I received my Masters in Anthropology at University of New Brunswick, applied to BU and here we are! This semester, I've been presenting at talks, and spent 2 weeks over the summer collecting over 100 contemporary plant specimens in Alaska for an herbarium.

**Q: What is an herbarium? Why an herbarium?**

A: Herbariums are long term archives. 4000 years ago, Alaska was warmer, so I originally went to look at hunting tools to see if people were hunting on the sea ice or whether they were hunting in open water, in essence testing the environment for hunting. Unalaska Island is an open landscape in the Aleutian Islands off mainland Alaska. There are no bears. No mosquitos. No ticks. It looks and feels almost like Ireland or Iceland. It's pretty mild, green, and lush. The perfect spot to collect over a 100 species of plants. Most field studies want to preserve the most you can, so I luckily brought two plant presses. It was a good idea with the constant wetness and rain, one being for collection, and the other I kept in the airbnb for transferring the samples. My hope and point for the herbarium is that future researchers can use it and look to it to create macro and microscopic comparative collections with ancient samples.



**[Read the full interview on our website!](#)**



# FEATURED: JADE LAU

*Fullbright Scholar in Vietnam*

Jade Isabella Lau earned a BA in Anthropology & Religion with honors from CAS in May 2021. Following graduation, Jade was one of eighteen selected for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) in Vietnam. She currently teaches English at Trà Vinh University, in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam.



**Q: What does your role entail?**

A: At Trà Vinh University, I am independently responsible for teaching over 100 students courses in English speaking and listening. The majority of my students are in the same generation as me. I teach about 14 hours of class each week. To create spaces for students to explore concepts outside of the curriculum, I host weekly office hours as well as workshops covering themes such as language, culture, identity, and poetry. I also visit classes of students who are not majoring in English to guest teach and answer student's questions. Further, I support the English Speaking Club and other extracurricular activities on campus. Outside of teaching, I host festive celebrations, field trips, and informal get togethers to facilitate intercultural conversations.

**Q: How did you learn about this Fulbright program?**

A: I was introduced to the Fulbright Program in Vietnam by my Anthropology Professor and Fulbright alumnus, Dr. Merav Shohet. In May of 2021, I attended a Vietnam Studies Symposium orchestrated by Dr. Shohet, in which I was introduced to more Fulbright scholars and their work. While studying abroad, I was recommended to apply for Fulbright by my Professors and Fulbright alumni. Based on our shared experience studying abroad and interests in culture and language, my Professors recommended that I apply for the Fulbright Program. I was deeply inspired by how Fulbright was formative in building my Professors'



careers and globalizing their perspective. Upon researching the Fulbright Programs further, I was enthusiastic to apply to the English Teaching Assistantship Program in Vietnam, as it was perfectly aligned with my values, experiences, and future aspirations.

**[Read the full interview on our website!](#)**

# WELCOME: AMANDA LEISS

*New Visiting Assistant Professor*

Amanda Leiss is a paleoanthropologist broadly interested in paleoecology, taphonomy, osteology and human evolution. She is an active member of the Gona Paleoanthropological Research Project, and has been conducting research in Ethiopia since 2010. She has also piloted field and museum research with the Baringo Paleontological Research Project, in Kenya.



**Q: How did you get into anthropology?**

A: I have always been interested in the natural world and categorizing things. I used to dig up my backyard and collect fossils on the beach when I was a little kid. I took an archaeology class in high school. In undergrad did two internships, one in Ethiopia and one in Peru, working with both human and animal remains.

**Q: What do you enjoy about teaching?**

A: Through teaching bioanthropology, I've learned that it is really benefiting the world. If I can teach students about the evolutionary path to human variation, where they come from, and instill in them some kind of passion to teach their friends about it -- then I have done wonders for the world.



**Q: Tell us more about your research.**

A: I have been working in Ethiopia since 2010. My research focuses on Hominid behavior, specifically the evolution of stone tool use, hunting, increases in cognitive behavior, and the transition to *Homo erectus* through reconstructing the paleoenvironmental context. I'm also working on an isotope project in Peru looking at the domestication of camelids. What I do helps to inform people who study health outcomes in humans today.

**Q: How did you prepare for your research and fieldwork?**

A: I learned Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia, in graduate school. As an undergrad, I learned a lot of basics and surface level skills -- how to do archaeology, what

bioanthropology is, how those two work together. In graduate school I learned how to write grants and a lot more about Great Apes. I'm really informed by a lot of what my colleagues do, which makes me ask different kinds of questions.

# FACULTY GRANTS, AWARDS & PUBLICATIONS

- **Thomas Barfield** published a second edition of his book, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, with Princeton University Press. This edition contains a new chapter that covers 2010-2021 when the government fell to the Taliban.
- **David Carballo** published a new article, “Sacred Landscape and Cultural Astronomy on the Marcahuasi Plateau, Peru,” in *Journal of Anthropological and Archaeological Sciences*.
- **Joanna Davidson** and Dinah Hannaford co-edited a new book: *Opting Out: Women Messing with Marriage Around the World*, published with Rutgers University Press.
- **Luke Glowacki** published a new article entitled “Norm Violations and Punishments Across Human Societies” in *OSF Preprints*.
- **Luke Glowacki** published a new article entitled "Mutual Intelligibility in Musical Communication" in *PsyArXiv*.
- **Frank Korom** has been invited to give the Distinguished Lecture in Social Anthropology at Presidency University in Kolkata, West Bengal, India on the topic of "The Dynamics of Contemporary Sufi Hagiographies in South Asia" in January 2023.
- **John Marston** and alumna Kathleen Forste published a new article, “Urban agricultural economy of the Early Islamic southern Levant: a case study of Ashkelon” in *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*.
- **John Marston** published a new article called “Urban agricultural economy of the Early Islamic southern Levant: a case study of Ashkelon” in *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*
- **Fallou Ngom** was awarded \$129,837 (£107,920) by the British Library for his project titled “Digital Preservation of Fuuta Jalon Scholars’ Arabic and Ajami Materials in Senegal and Guinea.”
- **Merav Shohet** was awarded the inaugural Carole H. Browner Society for Medical Anthropology Undergraduate Mentorship Award at the American Anthropological Association’s meeting.
- **Catherine West** and Bruce Anderson (Dept of Earth & Environment) received an NSF grant entitled “Historical Ecology of the Pacific Cod Fishery” from the Navigating the New Arctic division.

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

## *Graduate Students*

- **Graham Albert** successfully defended his dissertation and is now Ph.D.
- **Zoe Albert** had an exclusive Q&A interview with CISS communications intern Lily Belisle about biological anthropology.
- **Martin Aucoin** presented a paper entitled: "You Can Make It Here!": Producing Europe's Mobile Borders in the New Gambia" at a recent African Studies Association Conference.
- **Amirah Fadhlina** presented a paper entitled "Conditions of Possibility, Queering Islam, and the Rise of Trans Activism in Indonesia." at AAR on a panel "Panic in the Hegemony - Islamic Piety, Gender, and Authority Crises." Also on the panel was BU PhD student in Religion, Garrett Kiriakos-Fugate.

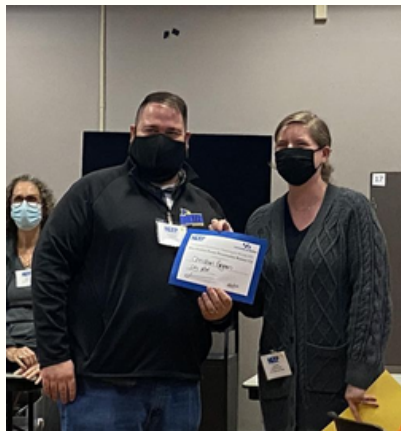


Martin Aucoin

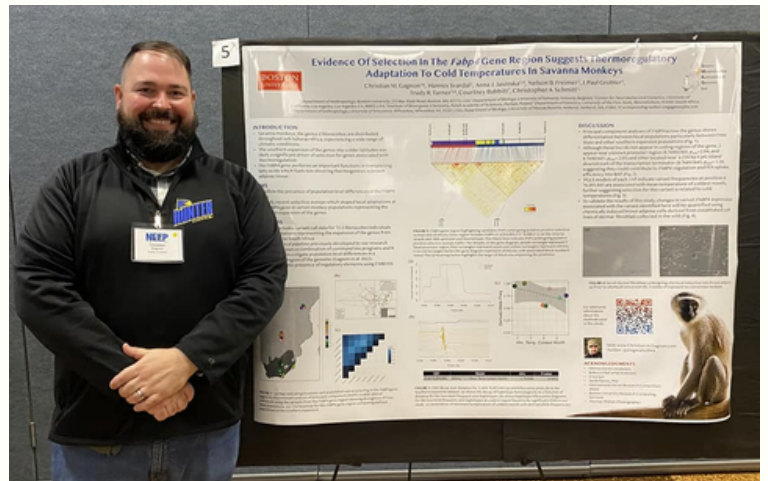


Amirah Fadhlina

- **Christian Gagnon** won second place at Northeastern Evolutionary Primatologists conference in the best poster presentation contest.



Christian Gagnon



# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

## *Graduate Students*

- **Begum Ergun** received the 2022 summer Society for Psychological Anthropology & Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellowship
- **Christian Gagnon** was awarded a Leakey Foundation research grant for his dissertation research entitled, "Validating selection using expression UCPI in fibroblast-derived brown adipocytes".
- **Sarah Lewinger's** co-edited volume on the effects of COVID-19 on education in Africa was just published as part of Routledge's Perspectives on Education in Africa book series. [Order it here.](#)



Sarah Lewinger

## *Undergraduate Students*



**Anthro in the Works Undergraduate Club** hosted a discussion with Dr. Adam Gamwell on *Beyond Academia: Anthropology and Culture in the Public Eye*.

Follow Anthropology in the Works on Instagram [@anthroworksbu](#) to learn more about the meetings & events!

**Kennedy Williams** was a featured speaker for TEDxBU at the Howard Thurman Center and gave a talk titled "Activism and Mental Health- Taking Care of Oneself to Take Care of Other People".



# ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Andrea DiGiorgio** (GRS '19) has an article in the Philadelphia Zoo News, "More (inner) Bark than Bite: Studying Orangutan Diets". [Read it here.](#)
- **Andrea DiGiorgio** (GRS '19), **Natalie Robinson** (CAS '18), and Dr. Cheryl Knott co-authored a recently accepted paper, "Famished Frugivores or Choosy Consumers: A generalist frugivore (wild Bornean Orangutans, *Pongo pygmaeus wurmbii*) Leaves Available Fruit for Nonfruit Foods" along with BU alums from other departments: Suchi Gopal (E&E), Yaxiong Ma (E&E), and Elizabeth Upton (Stats) in the *International Journal of Primatology*. [Read it here.](#)
- **Carol Ferrara** (GRS '19) has a new article out in the *British Journal of Religious Education*, "Religious education in French private schools: Categories, confluences, and inequities". [Read it here.](#)
- **Laura Heath-Stout** (GRS '19) coauthored article "Confronting Ableism in Archaeology with Disability Expertise" came out in the *SAA Archaeological Record* this fall. [Read it here.](#)
- **Laura Heath-Stout** (GRS '19) appeared on Platypod, the podcast of the Committee on the Anthropology of Science, Technology, and Computing, in August. [Listen here.](#)
- **Michael Sheridan** (GRS '01) has a new book coming out in Spring 2023, entitled *Roots of Power: The Political Ecology of Boundary Plants*. [Preorder it here.](#)



In November, Anthropology alumni, current students, and faculty reunited at the annual American Anthropological Association conference in Seattle.

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

## *Outreach Achievements*

### New Anthropology Logo!

With the minimalist design saying "BU Anthropology", we used the classic BU Red and took inspiration from the seal to design the new department logo.

Designed by Ruofei Shang (CAS'25)



### Follow us on Instagram!

#### @buanthropology

Earlier this year in April, we launched our official Instagram page @buanthropology.

So far, we have been updating all of our ongoing and future events as stories and posts.

In addition to the news, we just recently started a campaign to feature more faces of BU Anthropology: undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, faculty, etc. In addition to the Alumni Spotlight Series launched in September, we started interviewing faculty as part of "Meet Your Professor" series. We've doubled our number of followers since the beginning of the semester! Follow us on Instagram to stay updated on all department events and things happening around campus.



68 Posts    159 Followers    250 Following

#### BU Anthropology Department

We offer BA, MA, and PhD Anthropology degrees engaged in sociocultural anthropology, bioanthropology, and archaeology. 🦁 🧬 🍷 📖  
[linktr.ee/buanthropology](https://linktr.ee/buanthropology)

### Send us your News!

Do you have any news you would like to share with us? Now you can go to [bu.edu/anthrop/send-us-your-news/](https://bu.edu/anthrop/send-us-your-news/) to tell us about it. We will update all news to our website, Facebook, Twitter, and compile them for our newsletters.

Want to be featured on our page? Fill out the Alumni Spotlight form. We will contact you when your spotlight is posted!

### *Resources*

Check out what everyone is up to at [bu.edu/anthrop/community/department-news/](https://bu.edu/anthrop/community/department-news/)  
[bu.edu/anthrop/alumni-resources/](https://bu.edu/anthrop/alumni-resources/)                      [bu.edu/anthrop/student-resources/](https://bu.edu/anthrop/student-resources/)

# Thank you!

*click the icons for more*

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More news? Did we fail to include your achievements? Did we get something wrong? Please let us know and we will be happy to publish in a future newsletter.

**Contact us at [anthro@bu.edu](mailto:anthro@bu.edu) or 617-353-2195**

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