Variation and evolution of the human skull
Overview

Short description

This half-unit course, taught in Term 1, gives a detailed introduction to the methodology used in the study of the skull in archaeology and physical anthropology, and the main current issues in research. It provides an anatomical background to the skull, as well as morphological variation, changes with age and development, and pathology, dealing specifically with the remains of Late Pleistocene and Holocene hominids, especially anatomically modern humans, but including Neanderthals. The week-by-week schedule is given below.

Methods of Assessment

This course is assessed by means of one essay (2500 words ± 5%) and a practical test (lasting about one hour). The essay counts for 60% of the final mark and the test for 40%. More detail on both assessments is given below.

Teaching methods

Teaching is by lectures and practicals. Each week there is a lecture which introduces a topic in the study of the skull and prepares students for the practical session later in the week. Most lectures are based around PowerPoint presentations and these are available on Moodle, which is an online teaching resource that you will be able to access at any time on a password controlled UCL website. Details of this will be given during the first week of the course. Practicals are to teach students the identification skills required, more general understanding of the anatomical structure of the skull, experience of sex and age estimation, measurement and non-metrical variation. Most practicals are supported by worksheets and other handouts which are distributed each week.

Prerequisites

This course does not have a prerequisite although, if you have no previous experience of the skeleton, it would be sensible to ask the advice of the course coordinator.

Workload

There are 10 hours of seminars/lectures and 15 hours of practical sessions for this course. Students are expected to undertake around 90 hours of reading, plus 50 hours of independent practical work combined with preparation of the assessed work. In addition, about 25 hours revision is needed for the class test. This adds up to a total workload of 200 hours.

Aim, objectives, assessment

Aims

This course introduces students to the study of the skull in archaeology and physical anthropology, and the main current issues in research. It provides an anatomical background to the skull, as well as morphological variation, sexual dimorphism, changes with age and development, and cranial pathology. It deals specifically with the remains of Late Pleistocene and Holocene anatomically modern humans.

Objectives

It is intended that this course will provide students with the skills required to plan a research project, under the supervision of a more experienced researcher. With this in mind, when they have successfully completed the course, students should:

- be able to identify confidently all the bones of the skull in both adult and juvenile remains
- be able to label the main features and landmarks of the skull
- have an understanding of variation in size and shape of the skull, and its interpretation in terms of sexual dimorphism, growth and modern human origins
- to be able to take the most commonly used skull measurements and have a working knowledge of the main statistical methods used to interpret them
- have an understanding of development of the skull and its role in estimating age at death
- be able to recognise the most common types of pathological lesions and developmental anomalies in the skull and discuss the ways in which they may be interpreted.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, in addition to specialist knowledge and skills, students should have developed skills of observation and inference, critical reflection and application of acquired knowledge.

Coursework and Candidate Codes

PLEASE READ THIS. There are one essay and one class test. They are marked anonymously and you are identified by a candidate code of letters and numbers, for example like this: "XZZR5". They were introduced in 2012 and have caused quite a lot of trouble because they are difficult to remember and we continue to get a fair few wrong ones on the essays and tests that are handed in. If you are a continuing UCL student, this may be because you are using your last years code. They change every year and you need to look your current code up on Portico. It is very difficult for us to check, so please make SURE you've got it right! Even more problematic, the codes don't automatically appear on Turnitin (below) so make sure you start your essay title with your exam code like this: "XZZR5 What might variation in mastoid process size..." and do the same in the essay itself. In short, use the code where you would normally expect to put your name!

Essay

Students develop their own essay question through consultation with their tutor. All questions must be agreed by the course coordinator at latest by the end of week 7 in Term 1. Please make sure the title is a genuine question, with a question mark, that can be answered by your essay. Do not make the title a statement. The course requirement is for one 2500 word essay and the deadline for handing it in at Reception in the Institute of Archaeology is 5 pm on the Friday of Week 1 of Term 2. It must also have been submitted to Turnitin and the date stamp is provided by that, not by Reception.

New UCL-wide regulations with regard to the granting of extensions for coursework have been introduced with effect from the 2015-16 session. Full details will be circulated to all students and will be made available on the IoA intranet. Note that Course Coordinators are no longer permitted to grant extensions. All requests for extensions must be submitted on a new UCL form, together with supporting documentation, via Judy Medrington’s office and will then be referred on for consideration. Please be aware that the grounds that are now acceptable are limited. Those with long-term difficulties should contact UCL Student Disability Services to make special arrangements.

If students are unclear about what is required in the essay or the handing in procedure, they should ask the Course Co-ordinator, who is willing to discuss an outline of the student’s approach to the essay, provided this is planned suitably in advance of the submission date. Students are not permitted to re-write and re-submit essays in order to try to improve their marks. However, students may be permitted, in advance of the deadline for a given assignment, to submit for comment a brief outline of the assignment.

Essay format and presentation

PLEASE READ THIS TOO. Keep the introduction short. Do not use it to summarise what you are going to argue later as that is simply a waste of space. Aim to write clearly and concisely. Start by amplifying your question and placing it in context. Then present the material that you have gathered to address your question in a logical order and exercising critical judgement. Finally, try to draw sensible conclusions from your material that answer the question you have set yourself in your title.

For the essay in this course, please set your work out like this:
- print on one side of the paper only (then we can write comments on the back if needed)
• use 12 point size letters, ideally Arial typeface and 1.5-line spacing (because I find it easier to see it clearly)
• follow each full stop with two spaces (otherwise it’s very hard for me to see where one sentence ends and the other starts)
• leave wide margins so comments can be written in them by examiners
• use diagrams and/or tables where appropriate, but only if you refer to them in the text, and give a caption which includes the source if you’ve copied a diagram
• 2375–2625 words long (i.e. 2500 ± 5%) – not including title page, contents pages, lists of figure and tables, abstract, preface, acknowledgements, bibliography, lists of references, captions and contents of tables and figures, appendices. Penalties will only be imposed if you exceed the upper figure in the range. There is no penalty for using fewer words than the lower figure in the range: the lower figure is simply for your guidance to indicate the sort of length that is expected.
• start your title with your Candidate Code (see above – and get it right!)
• staple together the sheets in the top left corner, with the submission form at the front
• do not put your essay into any kind of binder, folder or envelope (it slows us down hugely when we mark them)

Spelling and choice of words

Do check your spelling, punctuation, grammar, citations and bibliography carefully, because there is no sense at all in being marked down for basic mistakes of this kind. Read it out loud — you notice the punctuation and grammar better that way. Automatic spell checkers in word processing programs can let you down with strange errors, especially with anatomical and archaeological terms, and are no substitute for me. Be very careful with words which are used both in statistics and in common writing, such as correlated or significant or population or sample. As much of the material you will be writing about comes from scientific papers that report their results using statistics, I will assume you are using those terms with a specifically statistical meaning (for example where a significance test has been done or a correlation coefficient calculated). I use population to mean a living group of people who mate amongst themselves (rather than with members of a different population). In no sense does a collection of skeletons from an archaeological site ever constitute a “population”. The whole idea of a “skeletal population” is frankly silly if you think about it. Similarly, it is not a “sample” because, in a statistical sense, this implies the collection was randomly selected from some once living population and this is demonstrably untrue as well as an obvious nonsense if you think about the situation carefully. Instead, we use the term assemblage, or collection. And then there are the “-a” words: some data, a single datum; some agenda, an agendum; a criterion, some criteria; a bacterium, some bacteria. Please, please don’t tell me something is “interesting”, because I will decide that for myself, thank you. Similarly, please don’t use the word “incredible”. If it is incapable of being believed, there’s no point in writing about it. Formal writing is not the same as ordinary spoken language and you need to leave out all those redundant, throat clearing expressions that you might use in conversation.

General stylistic points

We expect UK English spelling and grammar. In academic writing it is necessary to adapt so, for example, in some journals I need to write in North American English. We expect your writing to be concise, to the point and logically organised into paragraphs. Please don’t write single sentence paragraphs. Group your ideas together a bit and make them flow. Please don’t make your essay read like an internet news bulletin or a party political statement but at the same time avoid very long and rambling sentences. My publisher told me to write with alternating longer and shorter sentences and I do think he was right. For citations and references we use the Harvard system. Don’t know what it is? It’s all in the MA/MSc Handbook (page 41) and you’ve all got a copy of that. Just follow those instructions to the letter. For the citations, you have a choice of present tense or past tense as in, for example, “Hillson and Rando (2005) suggest that…” as opposed to “Hillson and Waldron (2005) found that…”. Personally, I prefer to
cite in the past tense but I know others have been taught differently. Whichever you choose, please stick with the same choice throughout your essay.

Backup your work

PLEASE READ THIS. Every year at least one student has a problem with deleting their essay by mistake, broken down computer, or theft and they don’t have a backup copy of their essay, so they have to start again from scratch. Please do not let it be you. Of course you know all this but it seems I still need to remind everyone. Keep daily backups separately from your computer – on a USB flash drive, email the file to yourself, Dropbox, Google Drive – lots of options. Change the filename as you save different versions so you don’t over-write previous versions. Numbering and dating your different versions actually in the filename is a really good idea.

Class test

The test will take place on Friday of Week 12 of Term 1, during your normal practical class time, depending on your practical group, at the Royal College of Surgeons. You will not have seen the specimens before and you are not allowed to use your notes or books when you are taking the test – if you have them with you they must be put away in your bag at the side of the room. You are strongly encouraged to spend a lot of your own time independently looking at skull specimens, with textbooks, making notes and diagrams. Drawing a specimen is a good way to understand its shape, even if you don’t consider yourself good at drawing. You could even take some rough measurements with a ruler to help you draw it reasonably in proportion. Keep taking apart and putting together the magnetic teaching skulls until you don’t even have to think about where everything fits. It is possible for you to book time at the Royal College of Surgeons and you will be able to use the smaller collection in room 308 of the Institute of Archaeology when it is not being used for other teaching (see timetable on door).

In the test you are asked to write short notes on each specimen that you are shown. Each specimen is a bone, no other tissues are present, and comes from the skull in its broadest sense (including mandible, middle ear bones, and hyoid, as well as the main cranial part and upper face). There are about 15 specimens and you have 5 minutes to write about each one. You will remain seated in one place and the specimens will be passed round to change them every 5 minutes. For each specimen, what I expect you to write is the maximum number of observations and deductions you can make in the time available. This will include, for example, a comment about the region of the skull you think the specimen came from, the identification of the individual bones present, the side of the skull from which it came, the portions of each bone which are preserved (when it is incomplete), the main features (such as foramina, fossae or processes) which you can name, or any evidence that might be used to estimate age-at-death, or assign a sex. None of the specimens is from an individual of independently known age, so there is no “correct” answer for absolute age-at-death. I will not expect you to give age ranges in years, for example for fusion of synchondroses, but I will expect you to be able to suggest that a specimen might be from a young child, an older child, or an adult. Similarly, none of the specimens will be from an individual of known sex, and although I will expect you to comment on a possible sex identification, there is no definitive “correct” answer.

The test is written on a set of sheets which are provided for you, with a numbered box for each specimen that you can write in. So long as you write clearly, it will not matter what you write with (I will have some “emergency” pens and pencils that you can use in case of accident). Drawings are acceptable if they help you to make your points quickly but, if not, it is usually better just to write your notes. It will not matter if your use of English is not grammatically correct so long as it is comprehensible – note form is satisfactory. If you spell terms correctly, you will be credited for it, but so long as your meaning is clear you will at least receive some credit for recognising that a feature is there. When your test has been marked, it will be returned to you with a feedback sheet giving a short paragraph on the features and deductions which it is felt, at a minimum, you might be able to make on each specimen. This is purely intended as feedback, to avoid making detailed comments on your paper, and does not in any way constitute a marking scheme for the test.

Please let the course coordinator know in advance of the examination if you are registered with UCL as having dyslexia or any other learning difficulty which requires me to offer you extra examination time. Please also contact Judy Medrington (telephone 020 7679 4777 or email j.medrington@ucl.ac.uk) about this. We will allow you whatever extra time the UCL Dyslexia Centre has recommended for you.
ONLINE RESOURCES

Institute of Archaeology coursework guidelines
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/handbook/common/marking.htm
Institute of Archaeology individual course information
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/silva/archaeology/course-info/
UCL Moodle site http://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/ is a key resource for you – log in with the course code ARCLG144 and the password “skull”
American Association of Physical Anthropologists site http://physanth.org/

We expect you to have about 10 good references that you cite in your essays. There is no excuse for having too few references because you can search and get access to an amazing array of material through the following resources:

Google Scholar http://scholar.google.co.uk/. This is absolutely the fastest way to build a bibliography if you have at least some idea what you are looking for. Try different combinations of keywords. You can link Scholar to UCL library and ejournals by setting a link in Scholar Settings, Library links, Show library access links, UCL. Once you’ve done this, a large link, labelled “SFX@UCL - Fulltext” will appear if UCL has the item. You can then usually download a pdf. Google Scholar may point you to another Google Books http://books.google.com/. You can get online access to a surprising number of books without leaving your computer. Worth trying before you go to the library. Archive http://archive.org/details/ This is an amazing resource of out-of-print books. Well worth looking at if you want something old, not in English or whatever.
UCL Explore allows you to search for keywords http://ucl-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=UCL_VU1&reset_config=true and you will find that quite a few books are available electronically through that. Worth a try anyway.
PubMed http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/ is a US public resource for medicine. Nevertheless, it has a wide coverage in general biological sciences, including items of interest to us. You can also use SFX links to UCL subscriptions by using the modified link http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?myncbishare=iuucllib&dr=Citation instead of the normal one.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dyslexia and other disabilities
If you have dyslexia or any other disability, please make your lecturers aware of this. It is particularly important to do so well in advance of the practical test. Please discuss with your lecturers whether there is any way in which they can help you. Students with dyslexia are reminded to indicate this on each piece of coursework.

Libraries and other resources
In addition to the Library of the Institute of Archaeology, other libraries in UCL with holdings of particular relevance to this degree are the Science Library and Cruciform Library. See also the online journal and database resources provided in the UCL library website: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/. A lot of relevant journals are available electronically, at least for recent years. Similarly some books are available online through UCL Explore (above). One of the most efficient ways to find what is available electronically is Google Scholar. With this you can search on a subject keyword or author’s name. A journal article may available externally, or through UCL subscriptions.
### Teaching schedule – this is a Term 1 course

- **Lectures**, on **Mondays at 12 – 1 pm**, in room 612 in the Institute of Archaeology
- **Practicals**, on **Friday afternoons at either 11 am – 1 pm or 2 – 4 pm**. You will be assigned to either the **Morning** or the **Afternoon** group after asking for your preference at our first lecture. None of us likes Fridays but unfortunately the timetable and large size of our group don’t give us an alternative!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lectures and seminars</th>
<th>Please review on Moodle</th>
<th>Practicals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How skulls vary in size and shape between populations (CR)</td>
<td>Endocranial anatomy</td>
<td>The endocranial views of the skull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Development of the skull</td>
<td>Cranial vault bones</td>
<td>Individual bones of the cranial vault – frontal, parietals, temporals, occipital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Development of the face (CR)</td>
<td>Face bones</td>
<td>Individual bones of the face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Origins and dispersals of modern humans</td>
<td>Craniometric points. Skull measurements. Cranid manual</td>
<td>Traditional skull measurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Origins of modern humans – evidence from fossils.</td>
<td>Cranid manual</td>
<td>Cranid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Skull shape and form – geometric morphometrics (SW)</td>
<td>Geometric morphometrics</td>
<td>Geometric morphometrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Microscopic structure of bone: development and turnover</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Facial reconstruction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Practical Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB** We may need to change this timetable to adapt to circumstances  
CR – lectures given by Dr Carolyn Rando  
SW – lecture given by Suzy White  
Practical Test will take place in Week 12 of Term 1  
Essay will be handed in by 5 pm on the last day of Week 1 in Term 2  
Student appraisal forms distributed, completed and collected in Week 11; review of course appraisal during class in Week 12
Core texts including support for practical classes


Gray’s Anatomy. Available in room 308, or various parts of the UCL library. You can also often buy cheap reproductions of early editions – which are fine for the bones. The 1918 edition is reproduced online at http://www.bartleby.com/107/ and various other sites.


This list contains many useful references and you should follow these up to expand your bibliography. New publications appear all the time and it is a good idea to keep checking for these.

Reading list for main topics covered

**Origins of modern humans – fossil skulls, genetics, controversies**


Volume 17 (2008). Evolutionary Anthropology. This has a whole series of papers on origins of modern humans.


Skull measurements and the way they vary (including sexual dimorphism)


Cranial variation in modern humans


**Geometric morphometrics**


**Facial reconstruction based on skull form**


**Use of skull in identifications of individual people**


**Development of bones and the skull**


**Variation in non-metrical skull variants**


HOW TO UPLOAD YOUR WORK TO TURNITIN

Note that Turnitin uses the term ‘class’ for what we normally call a ‘course’.

1. Ensure that your essay or other item of coursework has been saved properly on your computer, and that you have the Class ID for the course and enrolment password.
2. Click on http://www.submit.ac.uk/en_gb/home (NB Not www.turnitin.com, which is the US site) or copy this URL into your favourite web browser.
3. Click on ‘New user’.
4. Click on ‘Enrol as a student’.
5. Create an account using your UCL or other email address. Note that you will be asked to specify a new password for your account - do not use your UCL password or the enrolment password, but invent one of your own (Turnitin will permanently associate this with your account, so you will not have to change it every 3 months unlike your UCL password). Once you have created an account you can just log in at http://www.submit.ac.uk and enrol for your other classes without going through the new user process again.
6. You will then be prompted for the Class ID and enrolment password.
7. Click on the course to which you wish to submit your work.
8. Click on the correct assignment.
9. Double-check that you are in the correct course and assignment and then click ‘Submit’.
10. Enter your name (NB Staff will not be able to see what until after they have graded your work).
11. Enter the ‘submission title’. It is essential that the first word in the title is your examination candidate number (eg YGBR8). In what sense can culture be said to evolve?

If you have problems, please email the Turnitin Advisers on ioa-turnitin@ucl.ac.uk, explaining the nature of the problem and the exact course and assignment involved.

One of the Turnitin Advisers will normally respond within 24 hours, Monday-Friday during term. Please be sure to email the Turnitin Advisers if technical problems prevent you from uploading work in time to meet a submission deadline - even if you do not obtain an immediate response from one of the Advisers they will be able to notify the relevant Course Coordinator that you had attempted to submit the work before the deadline.

The Turnitin ‘Class ID’ is 2971014 and the ‘Class Enrolment Password’ is IoA1516. For further information see http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/administration/students/handbook/turnitin.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PUT YOUR EXAM CODE AT THE START OF YOUR ESSAY TITLE WHEN YOU SUBMIT IT TO TURNITIN.
APPENDIX A: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 2015-16 (PLEASE READ CAREFULLY)
This appendix provides a short précis of policies and procedures relating to courses. It is not a substitute for the full documentation, with which all students should become familiar. For full information on Institute policies and procedures, see the following website: http://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/archadmin
For UCL policies and procedures, see Academic Regulations and UCL Academic Manual: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/isrs/academic-regulations; http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual

GENERAL MATTERS
ATTENDANCE: A minimum attendance of 70% is required. A register will be taken at each class. If you are unable to attend a class, please notify the lecturer by email.

DYSLEXIA: If you have dyslexia or any other disability, please discuss with your lecturers whether there is any way in which they can help you. Students with dyslexia should indicate it on each coursework cover sheet.

COURSEWORK
SUBMISSION PROCEDURES: You must submit a hardcopy of coursework to the Co-ordinator’s pigeon-hole via the Red Essay Box at Reception (or, in the case of first year undergraduate work, to room 411a) by stated deadlines. Coursework must be stapled to a completed coversheet (available from IoA website; the rack outside Room 411a; or the Library). You should put your Candidate Number (a 5 digit alphanumeric code, found on Portico. Please note that this number changes each year) and Course Code on all coursework. It is also essential that you put your Candidate Number at the start of the title line on Turnitin, followed by the short title of the coursework (example: YBPR6 Funerary practices).

LATE SUBMISSION: Late submission is penalized in accordance with UCL regulations, unless permission for late submission has been granted. The penalties are as follows: i) A penalty of 5 percentage marks should be applied to coursework submitted the calendar day after the deadline (calendar day 1); ii) A penalty of 15 percentage marks should be applied to coursework submitted on calendar day 2 after the deadline through to calendar day 7; iii) A mark of zero should be recorded for coursework submitted on calendar day 8 after the deadline through to the end of the second week of third term. Nevertheless, the assessment will be considered to be complete provided the coursework contains material than can be assessed; iv) Coursework submitted after the end of the second week of third term will not be marked and the assessment will be incomplete.

GRANTING OF EXTENSIONS: New UCL-wide regulations with regard to the granting of extensions for coursework have been introduced with effect from the 2015-16 session. Full details will be circulated to all students and will be made available on the IoA intranet. Note that Course Coordinators are no longer permitted to grant extensions. All requests for extensions must be submitted on a new UCL form, together with supporting documentation, via Judy Medrington’s office and will then be referred on for consideration. Please be aware that the grounds that are now acceptable are limited. Those with long-term difficulties should contact UCL Student Disability Services to make special arrangements.

TURNITIN: Date-stamping is via Turnitin, so in addition to submitting hard copy, you must also submit your work to Turnitin by midnight on the deadline day. If you have questions or problems with Turnitin, contact ioa-turnitin@ucl.ac.uk.

RETURN OF COURSEWORK AND RESUBMISSION: You should receive your marked coursework within four calendar weeks of the submission deadline. If you do not receive your work within this period, or a written explanation, notify the Academic Administrator. When your marked essay is returned to you, return it to the Course Co-ordinator within two weeks. You must retain a copy of all coursework submitted.

WORD LENGTH: Essay word-lengths are normally expressed in terms of a recommended range. Not included in the word count are the bibliography, appendices, tables, graphs, captions to figures, tables, graphs. You must indicate word length (minus exclusions) on the cover sheet. Exceeding the maximum word-length expressed for the essay will be penalized in accordance with UCL penalties for over-length work.

CITING OF SOURCES and AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: Coursework must be expressed in your own words, citing the exact source (author, date and page number; website address if applicable) of any ideas, information, diagrams, etc., that are taken from the work of others. This applies to all media (books, articles, websites, images, figures, etc.). Any direct quotations from the work of others must be indicated as such by being placed between quotation marks. Plagiarism is a very serious irregularity, which can carry heavy penalties. It is your responsibility to abide by requirements for presentation, referencing and avoidance of plagiarism. Make sure you understand definitions of plagiarism and the procedures and penalties as detailed in UCL regulations: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/guidelines/plagiarism

RESOURCES
MOODLE: Please ensure you are signed up to the course on Moodle. For help with Moodle, please contact Nicola Cockerton, Room 411a (nicola.cockerton@ucl.ac.uk).

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY COURSEWORK PROCEDURES
General policies and procedures concerning courses and coursework, including submission procedures, assessment criteria, and general resources, are available in your Degree Handbook and on the following website: http://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/archadmin. It is essential that you read and comply with these. Note that some of the policies and procedures will be different depending on your status (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate taught, affiliate, graduate diploma, intercollegiate, interdepartmental). If in doubt, please consult your course co-ordinator.

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