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## The historical and archaeological significance of the Bohai cultural layers at the site of Utesnoe-4<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords / Mots-clefs:* Bohai; Jurchen; Utesnoe-4

*Abstract:* The site of Utesnoe-4 is located in the Primorye region, near the village of Utesnoe (district of Ussuriysk), in the southern part of the Russian Far East. It is a stratified site with archaeological artefacts ranging from the Krounovka culture to the Jurchen period. More than 200 Bohai and Jurchen sites are located in the Primorye region; however, it is only at Utesnoe-4 that Mohe, Bohai and Jurchen artefacts are found on the same site and this provides the opportunity to analyse them in a different way. Despite the fact that Russian archaeologists have excavated Utesnoe-4 for only two field seasons, materials from this site have the potential to contribute important information to the history and archaeology of the region. The aim of this article is to present the analysis of the assemblages from Utesnoe-4 and consider the historical significance of this site and neighbouring areas.

*Résumé:* Le site d'Utesnoe-4 se situe dans la région de Primorye près du village d'Utesnoe dans le district d'Ussuriysk dans la partie sud de l'Extrême Orient russe. Il s'agit d'un site stratifié avec un mobilier datant de l'époque de la culture de Krounovka jusqu' à l'époque des Jurchens. Plus de 200 sites Bohai et Jurchen sont connus dans la région de Primorye mais Utesnoe-4 est le seul à avoir produit des ensembles datant des périodes Mohe, Bohai et Jurchen; par conséquent Utesnoe offre la possibilité de les analyser d'une manière entièrement innovatrice. Bien que l'équipe russe n'ait fouillé le site d'Utesnoe-4 que pendant deux saisons, le matériel provenant du site offre la possibilité d'ajouter des données importantes pour l'histoire et l'archéologie de la région. Cet article a pour but de présenter l'analyse du matériel provenant d'Utesnoe-4 et d'évaluer l'importance du site et de ses environs du point de vue historique.

*Zusammenfassung:* Der Fundplatz von Utesnoe-4 liegt in der Region Primorye (südöstlicher Teil der Russischen Föderation) nahe der Stadt Utesnoe (Bezirk Ussuriysk). Es handelt sich dabei um einen mehrphasigen Fundplatz mit Artefakten der Krounovka Kultur bis zur Jurchen Periode. In der Region Primorye wurden mehr als 200 Bohai und Jurchen Fundstellen lokalisiert, aber nur in Utesnoe-4 wurden gleichzeitig Artefakte der Mohe, Bohai sowie Jurchen gefunden und auf unterschiedlichem Weg analysiert. Obwohl russische Archäologen auf dem Fundplatz nur zwei Grabungskampagnen durchführen konnten, bietet das geborgene Material doch das Potenzial, wichtige Erkenntnisse über die Archäologie und Geschichte der Region zu gewinnen. Das Ziel des vorliegenden Artikels ist es, die Artefakte aus Utesnoe-4 zu analysieren und die historische Bedeutung der Fundstelle und der benachbarten Regionen herauszustellen.

Utesnoe-4 (Fig. 1) is one of a number of sites within the Ussuriysk group. F.F. Busse, the chairman of the Society for the Study of the Amur Region, was foremost among Russian specialists to record sites near Ussuriysk at the

end of the nineteenth century. His expeditions found many sites from the Bohai and Jurchen

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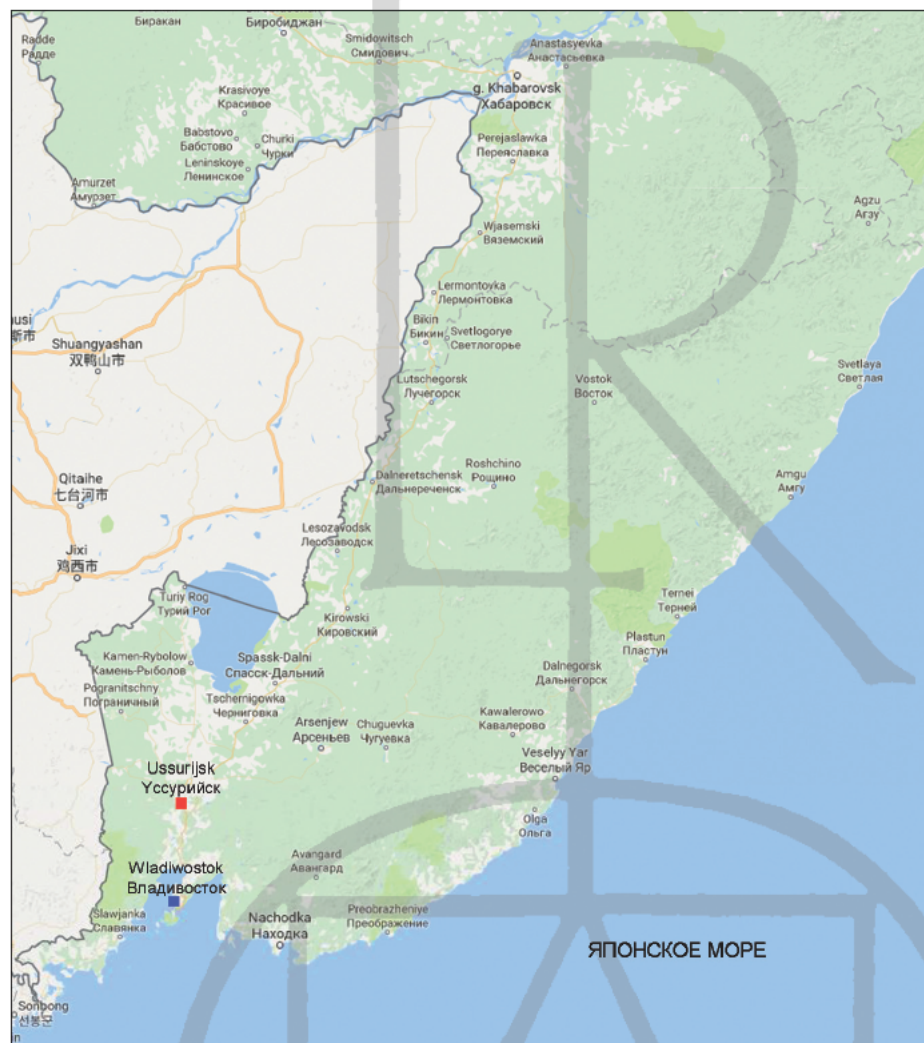


Fig. 1

Map of the Primorye region (the town of Ussuriysk is marked in red, Vladivostok is marked in blue).

periods in the modern Primorye region (Fig. 2)<sup>2</sup>. From 1911 to 1928, another member of the Society for the Study of the Amur Region, the Russian officer A. Z. Fyodorov, excavated the same sites near Ussuriysk. But in the period from the Stalin era to the Second World War, Russian excavators did not investigate archaeological sites in modern Primorye. It was not until the period 1950–1990 that many Soviet and Russian scholars (A. M. Kuznetsov, V. E. Medvedev, A. P. Okladnikov, E. V. Shavkunov, V. I. Boldin, A. L. Mezentssev, etc.) came to study and excavate many of the sites near Ussuriysk<sup>3</sup>. The results were of great importance: a large group of sites, ranging in date

from the Krounovka archaeological culture to the modern period (twentieth century), was found. The spectrum of types of sites in this group is very wide, ranging from cemeteries to large towns such as the sites of Krasnoyarsk and Zapadno-Ussuriysk and the temples of Krounovka. It is clear that the Ussuriysk district is archaeologically and historically of great interest and significance. However, although numerous Soviet and Russian scholars have studied this district, they did not discover

<sup>2</sup> Busse 1888; Busse/Kropotkin 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Vasil'eva 1989; 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Mezentssev 1997.



Fig. 2. Location map of Utesnoe-4 in the Primorye region (the site is marked as a red triangle).

the cultural layers of Utesnoe-4 because these were located deep under several sterile layers.

The site was found by accident. During the 1990s the banks of the river Razdolnaia were destroyed. In November 1996 the members of a club of young archaeologists (Rezerv, Ussuriysk, led by A. L. Mezentsev) found the site where one of the river banks had collapsed<sup>4</sup>. They examined some of the layers of Utesnoe-4 and identified them as belonging to a stratified site with medieval and ancient cultural layers. The Rezerv informed the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Vladivostok) about their discovery.

Utesnoe-4 is located on the bank of the river Razdolnaia, 1.45 km south-east of the south gates of the site of Krasnoiarovskoe and 2.55 km south-east of the bridge over the river Razdolnaia. An initial assessment clearly

identifies Utesnoe-4 as a very interesting site. It occupies a favourable riverine position, in a location where people lived for nearly two thousand years. However, the site remained unexcavated by Russian archaeologists for a long time.

The economic crisis of the 1990s in the states of the former Soviet Union had an impact on Jurchen and Bohai studies in Russia<sup>5</sup>. Russian scholars have found a number of potentially rewarding archaeological sites but currently they often cannot obtain sufficient funding to initiate excavations. As a result, many archaeological expeditions in the area can only be conducted if they receive financial support from private organisations, foreign foundations or other sponsors. In spite of these difficulties and the

<sup>5</sup> Ivliev/Klyuev 2006: 42.



withdrawal of some major figures, research in this field has continued, albeit on a smaller scale. Russian archaeologists have continued the excavations of Jurchen and Bohai sites. Thus Nadezhda Grigor'evna Artem'eva has been excavating the site of Krasnoiarovskoe<sup>6</sup> to the present day, while Tat'iana Afanas'evna Vasil'eva has excavated the site of Ekaterinovskoe, and Valerij Alexandrovich Horev and Vladimir Ernstovich Shavkunov have worked at the sites of Anan'evskoe and Aurovskoe.

During the twelve-year period in which Russian archaeologists did not excavate Utesnoe-4, some cultural layers and areas of the site have been destroyed by the river Razdolnaia. Therefore we cannot estimate the size of the site of Utesnoe-4. It was not until the field seasons of 2008–2009 that A. V. Burdonov with members from the Rezerv club of young archaeologists (Ussuriysk) was able to excavate Utesnoe-4 in order to salvage the assemblages from the site from further destruction by the river. The Russian archaeologists excavated thirteen layers in 2008, and eleven layers in 2009. Several scholars from the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography and several departments of the Far Eastern State University (recently Far Eastern Federal University) took part in the analysis and examination of the material.

After these campaigns the Russian archaeologists did not pursue the excavation of Utesnoe-4 because of the financial difficulties mentioned above. Recently, Russian excavators have not had extensive financial support for excavations and have been unable to study sites over several field seasons. Only archaeological groups in receipt of financial support from Korean or Japanese research institutions have been able to investigate archaeological sites over a sustained period<sup>7</sup>. Since every year the river threatens Utesnoe 4 with destruction, important information may be lost.

Our research specifically targeted the medieval layers of Utesnoe 4. The study of the Bohai layers gave interesting results. The state of Bohai (in Russian: Бохай, in Korean: Parhae 발해, in Chinese: Bohai 渤海) existed in what is

now the Russian Maritime Region (Primorskij kraj/Приморский край), North Korea and North-eastern China from the late seventh to the early tenth century AD<sup>8</sup>. According to the Ruiju-kokushi (類聚国史) Japanese annals, the Bohai state was founded in AD 698<sup>9</sup>. Korean specialists see Bohai exclusively as an heir to the Koguryo culture<sup>10</sup>, while Chinese archaeologists present it as a part of the Sinic world, as a "provincial power of the Tang Empire"<sup>11</sup>.

The Jurchen (in Chinese: Jurchen 女真/女真, Russian: чжурчжэни, Korean: yeojin 여진) tribes inhabited what is now the Russian Far East, North Korea and North and Central China from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. The Jurchen established several states, the most powerful of which was the Jin Empire (The Golden Empire) (金) (1115–1234)<sup>12</sup>.

We identified the medieval layers of Utesnoe-4 as belonging to Mohe and Bohai on the basis of the classification of its ceramics. In the layers dominated by Bohai ceramics, fragments of Jurchen vessels were also recovered but we shall first focus our attention on the Bohai layers.

Russian archaeologists have considered two large groups of Bohai sites in the Primorye region. The first includes towns and settlements of the Bohai period, the second consists of sites which were occupied after the Bohai destruction of AD 926.

In our opinion, Bohai people established a new settlement a long time after the destruction of the Bohai state. Moreover, the economic activity of the Bohai people at Utesnoe-4 was

<sup>6</sup> Artem'eva 1999; 2003; 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Boldin 2007; Boldin/Gel'man 2005; 2008; Mun/Lee/Boldin 2004; Nikitin/Jung Suk Bae 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Istorii stran zarubezhnoj Azii v srednie veka 1970.

<sup>9</sup> Ivliev 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Parhaesa 1996; Koguryo 1999; Lim 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Yao Feng 2001; Sung Hung 2001.

<sup>12</sup> However, some European scholars believe that the largest Jurchen state was the Qing (清) Empire (1644–1912) but, in the opinion of other specialists, Qing was a Manchurian state. And Manchurians were not Jurchens, though they were descendants of the Jurchens.

very different in style from that of the Mohe inhabitants, who had previously occupied the site. If Bohai immigrants had contacts with the Mohe, they surely would have made use of the fishing and other types of economic activity undertaken by the local population, but no trace of such activity has been recovered on site. It is likely that a process of Bohai immigration took place in the period of Jurchen expansion (twelfth century). The Jurchen thought of the Bohai people as relatives<sup>13</sup> and could send them to the Primorye region to control new lands. It is certainly possible that Bohai people arrived at Utesnoe-4 before the Jurchen period. For example, the Khitans moved the Bohai population in different directions after AD 926<sup>14</sup> and traces of Bohai migrants have been found on a site in Mongolia<sup>15</sup>. But the Khitans did not control areas of the currently defined Primorye region: Russian archaeologists have excavated many sites of the Bohai and Jurchen periods there, but no Khitan military artefacts such as weapons or arrowheads have ever been recovered.

If the Liao army had been stationed in the region, Liao material or remains would have been found and information would have been recorded in the Khitan annals about the Liao expedition to the Eastern Sea. Therefore, the Jurchen period should be regarded as the period in which the Bohai settlement at Utesnoe-4 was established. This conclusion is based on several elements. First, the Russian excavators found a Chinese bronze coin of 'Jin dae Yuan bao' type, dated to between 1004 and 1008, in the Bohai layers (Fig. 3). This coin was used in the Song Empire, very far from Utesnoe and it is possible that this coin reached Utesnoe-4 after a long period of use in other regions. If this is the case, the site could only have been established in the period of Jurchen expansion. Moreover, in the Mohe layers of Utesnoe-4, two-channel kang (Fig. 4)<sup>16</sup> have been found, while in the Bohai layers traces of three-channel kang have been recovered. A similar kang system can be seen on some Jurchen sites in Primorye<sup>17</sup>. But the Bohai and Jurchen people differed greatly from

each other in social, cultural and other aspects<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, we must note that the Bohai kang of Utesnoe-4 was built of stone (in the Bohai tradition), whereas the Jurchen kangs at Krasnoiarovskoe and other Jurchen sites near Ussuriysk, were established underground in ordinary Jurchen style.

We must also note that the Russian archaeologists recovered Jurchen ceramics (Fig. 5) in Bohai layers. Certainly, the number of Jurchen artefacts was not large and consisted of less than ten percent of all the ceramics found in the Bohai layers. Utesnoe-4 is nevertheless the first site, in which both Bohai in Jurchen pottery occurs in the same layer. In the light of these findings, we propose that this settlement might be interpreted as indicative of a Jurchen migration policy in the Primorye region.

Further support for this opinion comes from the remains of the economic activity of the new inhabitants of Utesnoe-4. On the basis of the osteological finds from the Bohai layers, differences with the Mohe site emerge. The bones of mammals and birds dominate the Bohai assemblage (532 items compared to only three fish remains). Most bones belong to domestic animals, suggesting that Bohai people preferred cattle-breeding to hunting. This is evidently different from the situation on Jurchen sites, because in many Jurchen layers the quantity of wild animal bones is greater than that of domestic animals<sup>19</sup>. Grain was also found by the Russian archaeologists, but its identification to species has proved difficult. It nevertheless indicates farming, an

<sup>13</sup> Maliavkin 1942, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Ye Longli 1979; Wittfogel/Feng 1949, 96.

<sup>15</sup> Kradin/Ivliev 2008.

<sup>16</sup> *Kang* is a heating system which was used by people in East Asia from antiquity right up to the modern period. Usually, the *kang* was located under the floor and varied in structural details. For example, it could take the form of either a two- or three-channel structure in Bohai and Jurchen houses. Sometimes more complicated *kangs* are encountered.

<sup>17</sup> Nikitin 1990.

<sup>18</sup> Kim 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Kim 2011a.



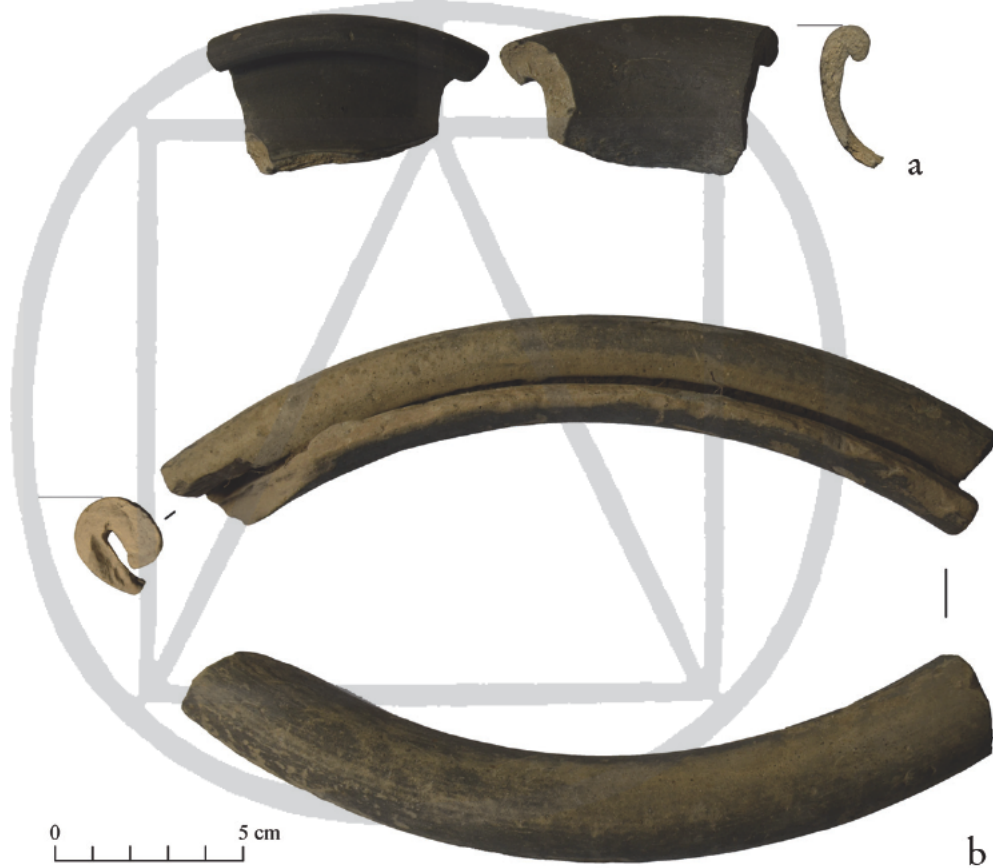
Fig. 3. Artefacts from Utesnoe-4. 1: Chinese coin of 'Jin dae Yuan dao' type; 2, 7, 8 and 14-17: ceramic beads; 3: fragment of cast iron; 4: iron bracket; 5: plate from body armour; 6: ceramic ring; 9 and 24: ceramic cores; 10: ceramic counter; 11 and 12: bone buttons; 13: fragment of a bone needle; 18: glass bead; 19-21: glass beads; 22: grater.



*Fig. 4.* The two-channel kang from Utesnoe-4.



*Fig. 5.* Jurchen ceramics.



aspect of the economy that is missing from the Mohe settlement.

A large amount of animal bones was found in the Mohe layers. This assemblage leads us to conclude that fishing played a dominant role in this phase of the settlement. Indeed, the fish remains numbered 1038, whereas the bones and fragments of bones of mammals and birds amounted to 958. As is known, fish bones decompose relatively quickly, unlike the bones of mammals. For example, Soviet and Russian archaeologists could only find very small quantities of fish remains on other sites of the Bohai or Jurchen periods<sup>20</sup>.

In the Mohe layers of Utesnoe-4 the Russian excavators recovered 75 shells of bivalve molluscs and the remains of two crabs (*Brachyura*). Among the excavated shells river bivalves and scallops (*Pectinidae*) were identified. The crab remains were of a large size; crabs are known from rivers in the Primorye region but these are small. The large crab remains may indicate that the crabs came from the sea and not from the river, although we cannot identify the crabs to species. It nevertheless suggests that the inhabitants from Utesnoe-4 had an interest in sea fishing. The site is located nearly 100 km from the sea, and the route to the coast was difficult to negotiate in the medieval period. This would have required the Mohe people to spend a great deal of time and effort on these expeditions, which in turn suggests that sea fishing was a valuable resource for the population of Utesnoe-4.

As indicated above, it appears that the Bohai people preferred cattle-breeding and hunting. Unfortunately, some of the osteological material from the Bohai layers was destroyed and the Russian specialists were unable to identify the bone remains. While we are aware of this unfortunate situation, we may still venture that the small number of fish bones that were recovered from the site suggests that fishing did not play a prominent role among the new population of the site and that the Bohai people from Utesnoe-4 did not engage in fishing expeditions to the coast. Fishing accessories such as fish hooks or net sinkers

were not found in the Bohai layers either (nor were they present in the Mohe horizon). In sum, we cannot detect the traditional activity of the people represented in the Mohe layers in the economic activity and the kang system of the inhabitants of the Bohai sites. We can conclude that the population represented in the Bohai layers differed from that of the Mohe horizon not only in economic terms, but in other aspects too.

In the Jurchen phase of the settlement, the economic activity of the population (and we believe the population itself) changed. Bohai people appear to have replaced the Mohe inhabitants of Utesnoe-4 and established a new settlement in this favourable location on a large river; the importance of the settlement is owed to its strategic position on the river (a particularly valuable asset in the medieval period), its transport and trade links, and the advantages it could provide for agriculture and control over the neighbouring regions.

The kang system changed too, becoming more complex. No Mohe ceramics have been found on the site, but fragments of vessels from the Bohai and Jurchen cultures have been recovered. This forms the basis of our contention that the Bohai population of Utesnoe-4 lived under Jurchen rule. The new inhabitants preferred cattle-breeding and hunting; fishing existed, but played a less prominent role as the economic activity of the population changed.

In conclusion, we consider four elements that, in our opinion, indicate that the Bohai population of Utesnoe-4 arrived from outside and did not have contacts with previous Mohe people: 1) the kang system was more complex than that found in the Mohe layer; 2) the Bohai population preferred cattle-breeding to fishing, unlike the Mohe group; 3) a Chinese coin recovered in the Bohai layer points to developed trade contacts of the inhabitants of Utesnoe-4 with other cities; and 4) grain

<sup>20</sup> Alekseeva/Boldin 1986; 1989; 1994; Boldin 1986; Panasenkov/Gelman 2008; 2009.



was found in the Bohai horizon and not in the Mohe phase.

Because the river has destroyed the site of Utesnoe-4 on a yearly basis, it is not possible to estimate the size of the site. Nevertheless the excavation of Utesnoe-4 over two field seasons has demonstrated the importance of this site in the medieval period. We consider Utesnoe-4 to be the first settlement of the Bohai population in the Primorye region in the Jurchen period. The Bohai immigrants did not have any prior contacts with the previous inhabitants of Utesnoe-4. We submit two reasons in support of this opinion: the traces left by different types of economic activity and the differences in the archaeological assemblages of the two medieval layers suggest the existence of two population groups.

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*Figure credits:*

1 Topographical map of Russian Far East (marked by Mezentshev); 2 satellite image from Google Earth / KAAK; 3, 4 Andrei V. Burdonov; 5 Alexander L. Mezentshev

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