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# Excellent Carrier Transport Property of Hybrid Perovskites Sustained under High Pressures

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ABSTRACT: High pressure treatment has become an effective way to tune the optical properties of halide perovskites. However, how compression can affect the carrier transport in perovskites remains unknown. Herein, by combining time-resolved imaging microscopy with a diamond anvil cell, we report *in situ* measurement of carrier transport in CH<sub>3</sub>NH<sub>3</sub>PbI<sub>3</sub> perovskite microcrystals (MCs) under high pressure. From ambient pressure to 5.7 GPa, the pressure induces a phase transition at 0.3–0.4 GPa and an isostructural phase transition at about 3 GPa. The carrier diffusivity is found to increase by at least 30% from ~1.82 cm<sup>2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> at ambient pressure to 2.32–2.90 cm<sup>2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> at 0.4–5.7 GPa, leading to long carrier diffusion lengths of 5–8  $\mu$ m. This result indicates that the perovskites can sustain excellent carrier transport properties under high pressure and thus enhances the potential of compression for optimizing the optoelectronic performance of perovskite materials.

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rganic-inorganic metal halide perovskites are a family of semiconductor materials, attracting great attention for their tremendous applications in optoelectronic devices such as photovoltaics, light emitting diodes, and photodetectors.<sup>1-4</sup> In parallel with the development of various perovskite-based devices, tuning or optimizing their optical and electronic properties by chemical composition adjustment (e.g., substitution or doping of chemical elements) or by the change of environmental conditions (e.g., temperature and pressure) has also become a subject under extensive investigation.<sup>5-8</sup> Different from chemical composition adjustment, hydrostatic pressure is a straightforward and clean tool to tune the crystal structure and electronic wave functions by changing the lattice bond lengths and angles, which in turn alter materials' optical and electronic proprieties.<sup>9-16</sup> In the past five years, pressure-induced structural, energetic, electronic, and optical properties of 3D perovskites (ABX<sub>3</sub>, where  $A = CH_3NH_3^+(MA)$  or  $NH_2CHNH_2^+(FA)$ , B = metal cation, and  $X = Cl^{-}$ ,  $Br^{-}$ ,  $I^{-}$ ) have been studied by many research groups through structural and spectroscopic measurements within a wide pressure tuning range up to 60 GPa.<sup>17-19,9,10,20-22,11,23-25</sup> For example, Kong et al. reported band gap narrowing and carrier lifetime prolongation in MAPbX<sub>3</sub> perovskites under mid pressures (0-0.3 GPa), which was a change supposedly leading to improved perovskite photovoltaic performance.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the apparent band gap closure and metallization of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> at ultrahigh pressure



up to 60 GPa were also found.<sup>22</sup> Recently, Shi et al. applied pressure (400–500 mbar) during the encapsulation of perovskite solar cells and found an improved photovoltaic performance.<sup>26</sup> These results indicate that a pressure treatment can significantly change the properties of perovskites. Note that applying high pressure to a realistic perovskite device is yet a great challenge. However, these high pressure related fundamental works can provide insights about how to maximize or tune the optical properties of perovskites, particularly when the pressure treatment can make a permanent change to the perovskites or the pressure-induced properties. It is worth mentioning that the effects observed in pressure experiments are expected to be reproduced through synthetic or chemical tuning.

In many perovskite optoelectronic devices, the carrier mobility (or diffusivity) and diffusion length are fundamental properties that determine the device performance.<sup>27,28</sup> Therefore, understanding the change of these properties with compression is essential to evaluate the influence of pressure treatment on the optoelectronic performance of perovskites.

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Such measurements usually need to be carried out in a diamond anvil cell (DAC). The pressure-dependent carrier lifetime has been extensively investigated by combining the high pressure method with time-resolved photoluminescence (PL) and transient absorption techniques.<sup>10,21,29,5,30,24,31-</sup> However, limited by the small working space in a DAC and the inside pressure transmitting media, the measurements of charge mobility and diffusion length in a DAC are challenging when using traditional electrical techniques. Nevertheless, Jaffe et al. reported the conductivity of MAPbI3 perovskites increased with compression up to 5 GPa and reached a plateau at 10 GPa.<sup>34</sup> Wang et al. also reported a decrease of conductivity of MAPbBr<sub>3</sub> with compression up to 25 GPa.<sup>17</sup> However, these measurements only focused on the change of the electric properties of perovskites, but without considering their corresponding variation of optical property (e.g., carrier lifetime) with compression; therefore, their results are not directly relevant to the carrier transport of perovskites under high pressure. Furthermore, charge mobility measurement using tera Hertz (THz) spectroscopy also encounters significant signal disturbance caused by the optical reflection/diffraction from a DAC.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, how the photogenerated carrier diffusivity and diffusion length can change in perovskite materials under high pressure remains unknown.

Herein, by combining time-resolved and PL-scanned imaging microscopy with a DAC apparatus, we report a spetroscopic and in situ measurement of photoinduced carrier transport in MAPbI3 perovskite microcrystals (MCs) under high pressure up to 5.7 GPa, when the perovskties retain a single crystal phase. The MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs are found to exhibit a tetragonal-to-cubic phase transition at 0.3-0.4 GPa and an isostructural phase transition at about 3 GPa as the pressure increases. Through the direct examination of carrier transport dynamics in a DAC, we find that the diffusion coefficient of perovskties shows an increase by more than 30% when the pressure is over 0.4 GPa. Combining the corresponding carrier lifetimes, the carrier diffusion length  $(L_{\rm D})$  is found to be from 5 to 8  $\mu$ m under different pressures. This result suggests that the MAPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskites can sustain their excellent carrier transport properties under a pressure treatment ( $\leq$ 5.7 GPa), even though the pressure can cause significant structural defects to the crystal.

MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs were prepared by using the previously reported methods (see the Supporting Information for details).<sup>36,37</sup> To investigate the structure change of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs under pressure, we carried out in situ high pressure PXRD measurements on an ensemble of ground MCs in the procedure of compression (from 0 to 11.8 GPa) and decompression (Figure 1a). Consistent with the observations in previous reports, <sup>18,19,9,38–40,10,25</sup> the first phase transition process is found to occur at about 0.3–0.4 GPa (Figure 1a), and the transition is identified to be from tetragonal to cubic phase through the Rietveld method of XRD data taken at 1 atm and 0.4 GPa (Figure S1). As the pressure is  $\geq$ 4.6 GPa, a broad diffuse background at about 13.8° appears and some Bragg diffraction peaks disappear or become broad, indicating that the single crystals start to become amorphous and complete the amorphization before 11.8 GPa. Until now, a consensus is still lacking in the literature for the amorphization pressure of the MAPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskite. The start of amorphization at 2-3 GPa,<sup>39,40</sup> 3-4 GPa,<sup>18,9</sup> and >4 GPa<sup>19,38</sup> pressures has been reported in different works. Upon decompression, the amorphous MAPbI<sub>3</sub> begins to recrystallize at 1.4 GPa and all



Figure 1. (a) XRD patterns of  $MAPbI_3$  collected at different pressures up to 11.8 GPa and decompression. (b) Raman spectra of  $MAPbI_3$  MCs at different pressures.

diffraction peaks re-emerge and eventually return to the original tetragonal phase at ambient conditions (Figure S2);  $^{18,19,38-40,10,25}$  this indicates that the phase transition in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> is totally reversible.

Besides the XRD measurement, we also collected the Raman spectra of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs under different pressures (Figure 1b). According to the reported Raman spectra of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> at 1 atm, the band at 105  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  can be assigned to stretching of the Pb–I bond, and the bands at 140 and 255 cm<sup>-1</sup> are assigned to the libration and torsional modes of the MA cation, respectively.<sup>41,40</sup> Note that the tetragonal-to-cubic phase transition at 0.3-0.4 GPa does not cause a prominent change in the Raman spectra; however, as the pressure increases to 3.0 GPa, the bands at 140 and 255 cm<sup>-1</sup> almost disappear. This result indicates the vibration modes of the MA cation are significantly changed at this pressure point, although the crystals still remain in the cubic phase as shown in the XRD data. Furthermore, the PL intensity, lifetime (Figure 2), and UV–vis absorption spectra (Figure S3) also show an abrupt change at similar pressure (discussed later).

To elucidate the pressure-induced change at ~3 GPa, we analyze the lattice constant of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs as a function of pressure and obtain the pressure–volume (P-V) correlation (Figure S4) based on the XRD data. The clear change of cell volume at about 3 GPa in the P-V plot, in combination with the abrupt changes in Raman, PL, and UV–vis absorption data under the same pressure, lead us to speculate that the MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs likely undergo an isostructural phase transition at about ~3 GPa.<sup>39,42,25</sup> This type of phase transition was also reported in CsPbBr<sub>3</sub> perovskites and other materials, which is believed to originate from the electronic structural change, but without altering the XRD patterns.<sup>43,44,5,11,45,46</sup>

To carry out the PL measurements on an individual MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC under pressure, the as-synthesized MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs were transformed to a DAC apparatus coupled with a time-resolved imaging microscope (see Figure S5 for the setup). Figure 2a shows the optical images of a MC under different pressures (the ambient pressure is denoted as 0 GPa). The morphology of the MC is found unchanged, confirming that we measure the same MC at different pressures; however, at 7.7 GPa, the black MC turns red. This color change is caused by the abrupt



Figure 2. (a) Optical images of a MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC at ambient pressure (0 GPa) and 5.5 and 7.7 GPa. The scale is 5  $\mu$ m. (b and c) Pressuredependent PL spectra of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs under laser excitation at 405 nm. (d and e) TRPL kinetics of a MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC under different pressures. Solid lines are the biexponential fits of the decay kinetics with the fitting parameters listed in Table S1. (f) Evolutions of the averaged PL lifetime and PL intensity as a function of pressure.

and large blue-shift in the absorption spectra of MCs as the pressure increases to >5 GPa (Figure S3), and within this high pressure range the MCs turn into an amorphous phase as confirmed in the XRD pattern (Figure 1a).<sup>18</sup> For the MAPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskites, the amorphization process was found to start at different pressures, and this may relate to variations of the crystalline quality between MAPbI<sub>3</sub> fabricated by different methods.<sup>18,19,9,39,40</sup> Before the investigation of carrier diffusivity under high pressure, we first carried out in situ PL measurements in the MCs to determine the pressure-induced change of carrier lifetime. In order to avoid laser damage to MCs, we use a low excitation density of 67 nJ cm<sup>-2</sup> pulse<sup>-1</sup>. Figure 2 shows the PL spectra and time-resolved PL (TRPL) kinetics of a MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC collected at different pressures in a DAC over a wide pressure range from 0 to 6 GPa. The steadystate PL intensity drops prominently as the pressure increases to 2.7 GPa, and a sharp recovery of PL is found at  $\sim$ 3 GPa, followed by a fast PL decrease as the pressure further increases (Figure 2b and c). Additional examples of PL spectral measurements in other MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs are shown in Figure S6, which repeat the similar PL variations at high pressures. Upon decompression, the PL spectrum completely reverts to its original state before compression, which excludes the effect of laser damage on the sample (Figure S7). Figure 2d and e exhibits the PL decay kinetics of the MC at different pressures, whose PL lifetimes are determined by fitting the kinetics with an exponential function (Table S1). The variation of the average PL lifetime as a function of pressure is well consistent with that of the PL intensity (Figure 2f). The abrupt change at  $\sim$ 3 GPa agrees with the change found in the Raman and P-V data and is attributed to the isostructural phase transition of the perovskite MC. Before and after the abrupt change at the pressure  $\sim$ 3 GPa, the increase of pressure significantly reduces the PL intensity and lifetime from ~200 ns to tens of nanoseconds.

Because the tetragonal-to-cubic phase transition occurs at 0.3-0.4 GPa, a detailed examination of the PL property from 0 to 1 GPa is also performed on an individual MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC (Figure S8). The PL intensity and lifetime also show an abrupt increase when the phase transition occurs at 0.3-0.4 GPa, and other than this phase transition point, the increase of pressure causes large decreases of the PL intensity and lifetime.

The pressure-dependent PL intensity and lifetime of hybrid perovskites have been investigated by many research groups.<sup>10,29,47</sup> Kong et al. reported that the pressure could first raise and then lower the PL lifetime of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> within the pressure range  $\leq 2$  GPa; such change was attributed to the formation of different trap states.<sup>10</sup> However, Wang et al. also observed the reduction of carrier lifetime with the increase of pressure from ambient pressure to 0.3 GPa, which was explained by a pressure-induced reduction of the Rashba splitting and the energetic shift to a more direct band gap.<sup>29</sup> In this work, within the pressure tuning range up to 5.7 GPa, before and after the phase transition points, the drop of the PL lifetime is well consistent with that of PL intensity (Figure 2f), implying a pressure-induced increase of nonradiative carrier decay. Therefore, the decrease of carrier lifetime is likely due to the generation of more structural defects caused by pressureinduced lattice distortion. However, at the tetragonal-to-cubic phase transition point (0.3-0.4 GPa), the rearrangement of the lattice eliminates the pressure-induced structural defects, thus leading to the recovery of PL lifetime and intensity. The PL improvement at the isostructural phase transition point  $(\sim 3 \text{ GPa})$  should be due to the change of the electronic band structure; however, the physical origin of the PL change at the isostructural phase transition for MAPbI3 remains unknown and needs further experimental and theoretical investigations.

Given the carrier lifetime values under different pressures, the carrier diffusion length  $(L_D)$  can be calculated by  $L_D = \sqrt{D\tau}$ , where  $\tau$  is the carrier lifetime and D is the carrier



Figure 3. (a) Time-integrated PL intensity images of a MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC collected at ambient pressure (0 GPa) and 0.4 and 3.1 GPa, showing the position of excitation and a distance of 5.8  $\mu$ m from the excitation point. The scale is 2  $\mu$ m. (b) Comparison of the carrier transport kinetics extracted at a position with a transport distance of 5.8  $\mu$ m at ambient pressure (0 GPa) and 0.4 and 3.1 GPa.

diffusivity. To determine the diffusivity, we carried out a direct measurement on the carrier transport process in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs in a DAC by using the time-resolved and PL-scanned imaging microscope (see Figure S5 for the setup), by which the visualization of the charge carrier transport in many nano-structured perovskite materials has been previously realized.<sup>37,48,49</sup>

Figure 3a shows the time-integrated PL intensity images of a representative MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MC collected at ambient pressure (0 GPa), 0.4 GPa (tetragonal-to-cubic phase transition), and 3.1 GPa (isostructural phase transition). The MC was excited at a fixed position at one end of the MC by using a focused laser with a low excitation density of 61 nJ  $cm^{-2}$  pulse<sup>-1</sup> to avoid laser damage. Meanwhile, at the pressure 5.7 GPa, the uniform PL intensity image and identical PL kinetics at different locations in the MC under homogeneous excitation further exclude any local laser damage to the MC (Figure S9). Because the PL intensity is positively proportional to the carrier density, the PL signal from any positions other than the excitation site indicates that the carriers diffuse away from the excitation spot and recombine along the transport pathway. Therefore, the carrier transport kinetics with a distance to the excitation spot can be extracted from the images. Figure 3b compares the carrier transport kinetics extracted at a position with a transport distance of 5.8  $\mu$ m at 0 GPa, 0.4 GPa, and 3.1 GPa, and the comparisons of carrier transport kinetics at all examined pressures are shown in Figure S10. The kinetics at 0.4 and 3.1 GPa shows a faster rising process than that at 0 GPa, indicating that the pressure causes a faster carrier transport in the perovsktie MC. Additional examples of carrier transport in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs are shown in Figure S11, showing a similar increase of the carrier transport kinetics. Figure S10 exhibits a set of PL kinetics with different transport distances at different pressures. These kinetics can be described by a twodimensional diffusion model:

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{O}(x, y, t)}{\partial t} = D \left\{ \frac{\partial^2 \mathcal{O}(x, y, t)}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 \mathcal{O}(x, y, t)}{\partial y^2} \right\} + f(\mathcal{O}(x, y, t))$$
(1)

where  $\phi(x,y,t)$  is the concentration of charge carriers at time t at position (x, y)  $(0 \le x \le L_x, 0 \le y \le L_y; L_x \text{ and } L_y \text{ are the side lengths of the crystal}); D is the diffusion coefficient; and <math>f(\phi(x,y,t))$  is the charge recombination function. The boundary condition for the diffusion is defined as

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{O}^{+}(L_{x}, y, t)}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{O}^{-}(0, y, t)}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{O}^{+}(x, L_{y}, t)}{\partial y}$$
$$= \frac{\partial \mathcal{O}^{-}(x, 0, t)}{\partial y} = 0$$
(2)

The + and-indicate the forward and backward first-order differential. The recombination of charge carriers can be described by a simple rate equation.

$$f(\emptyset(x, y, t)) = -k_1 \emptyset(x, y, t) - k_2 \emptyset(x, y, t)^2$$
(3)

where  $k_2$  is the radiative electron-hole recombination rate constant and  $k_1$  is the defect-induced nonradiative carrier trapping rate constant. Moreover, we use the Gaussian function to describe the initial (t = 0) distribution of charge carriers at the excitation site:

$$\emptyset(x, y, 0)_{exc} = \emptyset(x_0, y_0, 0)$$
$$\exp\left(-2\frac{(x - x_0)^2 + (y - y_0)^2}{r^2}\right)$$
(4)

$$\int \emptyset(x, y, 0)_{exc} \, \mathrm{d}x \, \mathrm{d}y = \emptyset_0 \tag{5}$$

where  $\phi(x_0, y_0, 0)$  is the carrier density at the center of the distribution; r is the radius of the distribution which is measured to be ~0.64  $\mu$ m; and  $\phi_0$  is the total initial carrier density. Because eq 1 does not have a resolution, we perform the simulation of the carrier diffusion process in perovskite MCs using a home-built program. The side lengths of the MCs  $(L_x \text{ and } L_y)$  and excitation site  $(x_0, y_0)$  were determined from the optical and PL intensity images. From this simulation, the change of the carrier density as a function of delay time at any position in the MC is determined. The PL intensity  $I_{\text{PL}}(x,y,t)$  is proportional to  $k_2 \phi(x,y,t)^2$ .

With global fitting of these kinetics, the carrier diffusion cofficient is found to be  $D = 2.73 \pm 0.033$  cm<sup>2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> at 3.1 GPa, 2.90  $\pm$  0. 036 cm<sup>2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> at 0.4 GPa, and  $D = 1.82 \pm 0.024$  cm<sup>2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> at 0 GPa. The diffusion coefficient obtained at 0 GPa is comparable to those previously reported in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> single crystals using different methods, implying that the diffusion coefficients measured at high pressure are reliable.<sup>28,50,51,37,52-54</sup>

The results of measurements under other pressures are demonstrated in Figure S12. The carrier diffusivity measured at different pressures is summarized in Figure 4. At pressures from 0.4 to 5.7 GPa, the perovskite MCs all show a larger diffusivity by at least 30% than that at 0 GPa, and within the



Figure 4. Carrier diffusivity (D) and diffusion length  $(L_D)$  of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs measured at different pressures. Also exhibited are the simulated plots of  $L_D$  as a function pressure, assuming carrier lifetimes of  $\tau = 50$  and 10 ns.

examined pressure range, the carrier diffusivity does not exhibit a significant variation.

In MAPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskites, the charge carriers have been known to diffuse in polarons because of the soft lattice and strong charge—phonon coupling, and their mobility can be estimated by  $\mu = e\tau_s/m^*$ , where *e* is the electronic charge,  $\tau_s$  is the carrier scattering time, and  $m^*$  is the effective mass.<sup>55,56</sup> We speculate that upon compression, the lattice of the perovskite becomes more rigid, and the size (thus the effective mass) of the polaron can become smaller; in addition, the more rigid lattice can also increase the carrier scattering time by reducing the phonon density. These pressure-induced changes should all lead to an increased mobility and thus a larger diffusivity.

Combining the lifetime data in Figure 2f, the carrier diffusion length  $(L_D)$  of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs is calculated to be from 5 to 8  $\mu$ m under different pressures via  $L_{\rm D} = \sqrt{D\tau}$ (Figure 4). The carrier diffusion length is about 6  $\mu$ m at 0 GPa, which is comparable with the values in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> single crystals reported in others' and our previous works.<sup>50,37,54</sup> The variation in diffusion length between different measurements is mainly caused by the variation of carrier lifetimes, by which the carrier diffusion length is calculated by  $\sqrt{D\tau}$  (D is the diffusion coefficient and  $\tau$  is the intrinsic carrier lifetime). The carrier lifetime in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> is usually limited by the quality (or density of trap states) in perovskites, which may vary significantly between samples synthesized by different methods. This remarkable  $L_D$  value at high pressure is owing to the increased diffusivity, which compensates the pressureinduced reduction of carrier lifetime, and the variation of  $L_{D}$ between different pressures is majorly caused by the change of carrier lifetime. Because the carrier diffusivity is determined by the lattice scattering rather than defect scattering, we believe that the high diffusivity value of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> can still be maintained even though the pressure has caused significant structural defects (thus shorter lifetimes).<sup>57,58</sup> We therefore can estimate the diffusion length in a more serious case by assuming even smaller lifetimes of 10 or 50 ns and find decent  $L_D$  values of about 1 and 3  $\mu$ m under different pressures (Figure 4). This result indicates that the pressure treatment does not make a fatal damage to the carrier transport in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs because of the large D. Extending the result to the case of MAPbI<sub>3</sub> polycrystalline films whose lifetime is usually shorter than single crystals, we expect that compression may also be able to improve the intrinsic carrier diffusion (inner grain) in the polycrystalline perovskite films. However, applying high pressure in a realistic device is of great challenge,

and our results, from a fundamental point of view, may provide a potential pathway to improve the intrinsic carrier transport property of perovskite materials, particularly if the pressure effect can be reproduced or achieved by synthetic, chemical, or structural modification.

In summary, we have realized a direct observation of carrier transport in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> MCs under high pressure by combining a DAC apparatus with the time-resolved and PL-scanned imaging microscope. We demonstrated that the perovskite carrier lifetime changed significantly with the increase of pressure because of the pressure-induced structural defects and phase transition. However, the carrier diffusivity was increased by at least 30% within the examined pressure range of 0.4 to 5.7 GPa, which allowed the perovskites to maintain a long carrier diffusion length (5–8  $\mu$ m). The result in this work sheds light on the influence of pressure on the carrier transport in MAPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskites and paves the way for the utilization of compression to tune or optimize the optoelectronic properties of perovskites.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

#### **5** Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acsenergylett.1c02359.

Experimental details; powder XRD, UV-vis absorption, and Raman spectra measurements; and additional results of measurements (PDF)

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#### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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