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Heritage as Aid and Diplomacy in Asia: An Introduction

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In spite of a growing academic interest in the politics of heritage in Asia, few studies have directly questioned the role of international and transnational cooperation in heritage conservation. First, even though the literature has widely addressed the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a powerful disseminator of international standards of conservation (e.g., Askew 2010; Daly and Winter 2012; Labadi 2010, 2013a; Logan 2001), it has not yet tackled the impact of UNESCO's normative discourse on other cultural policy agents. Secondly, the social sciences have largely neglected other international structures such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the European Union, USAid, the Asian Development Bank and many others that have their own engagements in the conservation of heritage in Asia. These organizations often collaborate with UNESCO or participate in bilateral or multilateral initiatives by providing funding and "expertise" in the management of sites. The IMF, for instance, played an important role in the establishment of the International Coordinating Committee of the World Heritage Site (hereafter WHS) of Angkor under the aegis

of UNESCO. Many of these initiatives are carried out by states' cultural diplomacies in often well-thought-out strategies. Pioneer countries in cultural diplomacy include France, Italy and the Netherlands, but also India and Japan. Today, most Asian states are also engaging in cultural diplomacy. In the last two decades, China, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have considerably strengthened their investments in regional "heritage cooperation". Some of them, like India or Japan, have a long history of cultural international intervention (Ray 2012). Thirdly, private "philanthropic" programmes like the Ford Foundation, the Agha Khan Foundation, the World Monuments Fund and the Getty Trust have long had a major impact on the management of heritage in Asia. They are now joined by newly established Asia-based foundations such as Korea's Samsung Foundation. Finally, new connections have recently been drawn between market-driven "development" schemes explicitly linking "culture" and "economic opportunities" as part of the global capital-driven developmentalist discourse, as when WHS become mass tourism destinations incorporated in national economic development schemes (Labadi and Logan 2016). This new model of "cultural-capitalism" is fast becoming prominent, as is the global campaign of systematic digitization of library collections by the multinational Google, "responsible capitalism", or micro-credit schemes. These essentially capitalist constructions collaborate with state-sponsored cultural heritage structures, including UNESCO, as well as with elite-originated private cultural philanthropy.

In Asia, historical colonial legacies and postcolonial negotiations of these experiences have inflected the heritage discourse in dynamic ways (cf. Logan 2001, 2016; Huang and Lee 2018). The relative shortage of historical, sociological, political and ethnographic research on these multiple incarnations of "Heritage as Aid or as Diplomacy" in Asia is all the more surprising when we consider how cultural and heritage management represents a major area of international cooperation as well as a powerful instrument of "soft power" by states, corporate forces and social elites. These national, international, transnational state and non-state agents are prolific producers of knowledge on heritage. Often following the theoretical (and sometimes ideological) avenues set by UNESCO and its different state proponents, they provide thoughtful historical and philosophical legitimating arguments in favour of the idea of heritage as aid. When confronted with local situations, however, they may offer alternative approaches to the dominant discourses. Their interactions with

local educational institutions, especially universities, are another aspect of their capacity to produce normative knowledge on heritage that are worth reflecting upon.

But we need to reflect first on UNESCO and its capacity to shape a referential framework of knowledge and values around the notion of heritage, and its role and impact in Asia. Following the establishment of the World Heritage List (WHL) programme in the 1970s, UNESCO became instrumental in defining the "universal value" of cultural heritage and in guiding heritage discourses and conservation practices all over the world. The WHL ranking process has contributed to reinforce a "global hierarchy of [cultural] values" (Herzfeld 2004). As pointed out by Lowenthal (1985), what we now understand as "Heritage" is socially and politically constructed. What is considered as "heritage" often results from state-initiated actions through regulations, legal determinations and also practices of selection and classification. This is what Smith points out when she stresses how the state, through its multifaceted incarnations and roles, via the use of appointed "experts", technocratic apparatuses and bureaucracies, defines the meaning of heritage (Smith 2006; Rico 2014, 2015). For instance, states use heritage discourse and ideology to legitimate their own authority and build their soft power in the domestic and international arenas, and to expand their control over citizens. Scholars/experts are making local, national and global recommendations. In the world of heritage regime, what are the mechanisms and manipulations of ideological, political and cultural transmissions?

This book seeks especially to explore the international projection of state power through the use of heritage, heritage preservation and notions of world heritage or *Patrimoine Mondial* as defined by UNESCO (Meskell 2018). David Harvey (2014) noted how contemporary heritage-making is embedded in cultural politics operating at multiple scales, ranging from the local to the national and the international. Different players with multiple interests and roles participate in the making and unmaking of "Heritage". The complexity of a multi-scalar process in defining what we call "heritage" in the present reflects a discursive construct of heritage assemblages. The notion in fact corresponds to a messy congregation of discourses, visions and ideologies. As a subject of study, we have to recognize heritage as a discursive construct that can only be understood in its particular social, political and cultural contexts. In general the agents that define heritage involve players like nation states, but also local communities, policymakers,

bureaucrats, corporations, NGOs and international organizations. In its international projection, the "heritage discursive and ideological assemblage" is influenced by shifting global political and economic power relations and the complex institutional and legal international apparatus that is supposed to mediate them. Transnational actors such as churches, social movements or transnational business ventures are also involved in the definition of canons of heritage beyond borders.

While several important works have focused on the role of the state and its related apparatus (Smith 2006), how heritage is consumed by tourists (Salazar 2010), and the social impacts on local communities (cf. Brumann and Berliner 2016), with recent attention paid to the upper echelons of UNESCO itself (Meskell 2014, 2016, 2018), there remains a broad scope for players situated in the middle in the global heritage assemblage. Through a selection of cases highlighting the complex interaction between different social and institutional actors on the international scene, we want to point to the critical role heritage discourse plays in international policy as well. We note that behind various "heritage sites" there is a complex discursive assemblage that needs to be unpacked.

Since the establishment of the World Heritage Convention, a newly formed "international heritage regime" has emerged in which different interests—mainly those of states—compete through regulated or unregulated international relations mechanisms resulting in a regime of competitive internationalism. UNESCO, the cultural and educational agency of the United Nations was set up in 1945 to ensure peace in "international society". The concept of World Heritage emerged out of the Cold War competition for political influence between the two blocs over Egypt, the construction of the Aswan High Dam and the salvation of Egyptian temples such as those at Abu Simbel, an initiative largely triggered by countries from the Western bloc as a reaction to the building of the dam in collaboration with the Soviet Union (Bett 2015; Meskell 2018). The World Heritage convention of the 1970s and contemporary heritage discourses were framed by transnational institutions such as UNESCO, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which led to the construction of a real UNESCO-connected and UNESCO-inspired international heritage-focused regime, with its codes, values, circles of influence, experts and internal

power mechanisms, etc. We argue that a new symbolic and professional "field" of "Heritage Studies", with new forms of knowledge and new relations between people and places emerged from this apparatus. This form of "heritage internationalism" has gained traction to the point that other national and international organizations have sought to include it in their own operations. This is the case of the World Bank. Nation states, for their part, have gained in experience and sophistication to use heritage internationalism as a powerful force of legitimation for their domestic or international strategies. The normative power of UNESCO is so effective that scholars have named this official discursive apparatus the "heritage regime", a process in which one international organization (UNESCO) hegemonizes cultural heritage practices through its heritage-related bureaucratic bodies, expertise and funding schemes, as well as conventions, policies and rules (De Cesari 2013).

Since the 1990s, however, a number of voices have criticized these UNESCO-led heritage preservation practices and the Eurocentric bias of this global hierarchy of cultural values (cf. Smith 2006; Harrison 2013). Drawn from the Japanese and Korean practices of heritage conservation, the concept of "intangible heritage" was introduced to the hitherto Western-dominated official debate on heritage in places like UNESCO (Aikawa-Faure 2014). In 2003, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted. Although the concept of intangibility, itself defended by state entities, has been accepted and taken on by a number of Western countries, the new category largely expands heritage discourse on a global scale. It has introduced a plurality of definitions for what is called "cultural heritage" in different geographical and historical contexts. This led to the inclusion of non-Western and marginalized cultural practices. As a result, the definition of heritage has gained in fluidity while its scope has expanded. Scholars have come to realize that "Heritage conservation" that imbibes universal meaning should incorporate ways in which local people understand these cultural forms and how they should be preserved. They have also critically analysed some of the problematic aspects of this "heritage regime" as developed by UNESCO.

First of all, they found that states use heritage discourse for territorial boundary-making to assert their sovereignty over forms of heritage whose practice predates the modern nation-state framework (and its universalizing projection through UNESCO) at the expense of "non-national communities". The state becomes the dominant actor defining

these invented "national" categories by claiming their exclusive identities. Tangible and intangible heritage are not just "nationalized". They are, thanks to UNESCO, internationally proclaimed as such. This is the case of Court "Ballet" Dance in Cambodia, registered in 2008 as an Intangible Heritage of Humanity, a "tradition" also practised in neighbouring Thailand and Laos. The UNESCO registration carried out by the Cambodian government was made at the expense of the latter countries. Nation-states can also use heritage for grand diplomatic schemes. There is a trend towards bilateral or multilateral cooperation over heritage conservation, such as the proposal to inscribe the "Silk Road" as World Heritage in 2014, which was a joint effort by China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. At present, China is working on another transnational inscription of what is called the "Maritime Silk Road", which starts from Quanzhou in Southeast China, passes through the Indo-Chinese Peninsula and crosses the Indian Ocean and Red Sea until finally reaching East Africa and Europe. While the first Silk Road links China to Central Asia through political, economic and cultural cooperation with the surrounding countries, the Maritime Silk Road does the same with respect to Southeast Asia and beyond. Both the Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road nominations echo China's soft-power strategy of Chairman Xi Jinping's "Belt and Road Initiative" (cf. Tim Winter 2015). We see here a new form of interregional economic and political ties legitimized through international heritage-making. This mode of heritage-making can also take the form of bilateral cooperation between former colonies and their former "metropoles", often problematically referred to as "shared heritage". These new constructions have the ability to create new configurations of allegiance towards states among people on the ground.

Secondly, state and international actors are competing with each other on the ground of heritage sites. Not only does the heritage site become a locus in which strategies carried out by nation-states are put on open display, it is also fertile ground where international organizations can help legitimize a mixing of business and public ventures. One WHS therefore becomes a theatre in which teams supported by different nation-states or international organizations promote a multiplicity of visions and models of conservation practices, building infrastructure as well as developing tourism. In general, closer relationships between international institutions, governments and private interests over heritage projects are sought, usually at the expense of local communities. This has recently become the subject of critical examination on the part of a number of researchers such

as Meskell (2013) and Brumann (2014), who suggest a reflexive approach to interrogate unstated motives behind institutional mechanisms and implementing procedures of UNESCO heritage listing.

The best example of this normative expansion of the concept of heritage in its utilitarian self-serving (state-serving) definition is the UNESCO Secretariat of the Angkor International Cooperation Committee (hereafter ICC). Supporting the concerns of one of its founding members, the French government, one of its "co-chairs", the ICC not only facilitates France's engagement in favour of the integrity of the World Heritage Site but it also seeks to promote the interests of the French multinational company that operates the international airport of Siem Reap–Angkor, with the tacit agreement of the other co-chairs, the representative of Japan and the representative of the Cambodian (host) government. Likewise, the Japanese government representative's official stance in favour of the heritage preservation of Angkor should be read as a way to facilitate the work of the Japanese state aid agency JICA, which itself facilitates the sealing of lucrative contracts for Japanese infrastructure-building companies to operate in the Siem Reap–Angkor zone (see chapter 4 by Peycam in this volume). Lynn Meskell's article in the present book points to the manoeuvres of US diplomacy in facilitating the resolution of tensions existing between Thailand and Cambodia over the sovereignty of the world heritage monument of Preah Vihear as a way to secure access to oil-rich zones off the coasts of both Cambodia and Thailand on behalf of the US oil giant Exon.

Here, we take a "Latourian" approach to apply the "Actor Network Theory" (1987, 2005)—where everything involved in the social and natural worlds, including objects, ideas, processes, people and other factors as well as networks interact with each other in making and remaking social situations—to examine the multifaceted mechanisms at play to define heritage in particular contexts or locations, and how state and non-state institutions negotiate and take decisions that become new international norms. At different levels, human and non-human agencies ranging from international institutions, UNESCO-driven laws and policy mechanisms, national authorities, heritage professionals and "experts", academics and "heritage bearers" or practitioners of "intangible heritage" are all involved in processes of making heritage discourses. For instance, UNESCO makes abundant use of the word "culture" to promote economically or politically driven "development" projects, a mode of operation that amounts to a

new kind of cultural imperialism instrumentalized through the promotion of "universal heritage values" (Nielsen 2011; Labadi 2013b). Berliner (2012) uses the term "UNESCO-isation" to describe the impact upon local communities of such politically saturated discourse on heritage and heritage value. For example, as described by Wang (2016), while the stated aim of UNESCO is to promote sites contributing to "universal values", that carried by state-led nationalism in China is to bring "civilization" and "progress", in overt contradiction with the views of the local villagers who have been displaced or who are fighting to remain in their homes. Local communities are, as a result, often excluded from the management plans prescribed under the UNESCO banner. They find themselves forced to either relocate outside the World Heritage Site or, if they stay, their living conditions deteriorate. Unfortunately, International organizations such as UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and other inter-state agencies, as well as transnational heritage organizations or funds, have adopted and co-opted the UNESCO definition of culture to define heritage practices in Asia.

We must therefore consider international heritage discourses as evolving in the nexus of competing claims between state and non-state actors, both locally and internationally. Heritage diplomacy reveals a complex process of global exchange and gift giving (Meskell 2015). World heritage status mobilizes a network of multilateral cooperation and dependency. Heritage-making therefore represents one of the dimensions in international diplomatic relations that helps forge transnational alliances and dependencies. As Meskell notes (2015, p. 13), "heritage sites have become thing-like: their mattering is not in their physicality but in their possibilities for circulation beyond culture to expanding global networks". In this sense, "sites then become gifts, objects and tokens that garner and bestow benefits, developments and ultimately, world peace" (2015, p. 13). Heritage is not used to legitimate itself, but to reflect the expansion of power. At the local level, heritage sites are nowadays given a facelift through place-making, regeneration, and development projects.

The cases presented in this book are part of a larger discussion initiated by IIAS (the Netherlands), the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute (Singapore) and the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica (Taiwan) on cultural heritage in Asian contexts in the form of a series of topical conferences. The first event (Singapore, January 2014) focused on the role of the state in heritage-making. The second (Taipei, December 2014) investigated the role

of citizens, local communities and civil society organizations in defining what heritage means to them. The last (Leiden, May 2016) examined the politics of international organizations, transnational institutions, as well as nation-states in their capacity to influence the global heritage discourses. With the aim of recovering or reclaiming the specificity of local agencies and the creativity of Asian actors in their grappling with the concept of heritage as an expression of "knowledge as power" (Foucault 1980), these conferences considered various factors and actors involved in heritage-making processes and the ways in which they are intertwined in the production and reproduction of "Heritage".

The present book is a result of the third of these three conferences. Drawing from different disciplinary approaches, it seeks to feature a diversity of situations where cultural heritage is invoked or promoted to serve interests or visions that supposedly transcend local or national paradigms. The book also represents an interdisciplinary endeavour to reflect the interwoven social, cultural, economic and political nature of heritage as aid and diplomacy. The making of heritage sites is a negotiation and contestation in the cultivation of heritage values among interest groups. Through a collection of case-specific articles, we intend to explore some of the following questions. Under the current international heritage regime, what are the mechanisms and manipulations of ideological, political and cultural transmissions? What is heritage diplomacy and how can we conceptualize it? How do the complicated history and colonial past of Asia constitute the current practices of heritage diplomacy and shape heritage discourse in Asia? How do international organizations, nation-states, NGOs, heritage brokers and experts contribute to the history of global heritage discourse? How has the flow of global knowledge been transferred and transformed? How does the global hierarchy of cultural values function? This edited book introduces examples of these interconnections and contestations as they operate in Asia at a global level. We are aware that "Asia" is a very imperfect and arbitrary notion. It is not different from other regions of the world or human groups. This set of conferences only sought to highlight a number of situational modes of power relations and human agency different than those—mostly from Western countries, regions and societies—that are usually considered in Western and/or "northern" academic institutions and circles, another reflection of the continuing imbalances within a larger "hierarchy of cultural values" that these edited volumes seek to break open.

One of the assumptions in approaching these questions is that the notion of heritage conservation in Asia is deeply influenced by the region's colonial legacies. For example, Ray (2018) investigates British agency in the archaeological survey in India. And Huang and Lee (2018) explore how China and Korea deal with their difficult Japanese imperial and military heritages, often resulting in geopolitical tensions in northeast Asia. A number of chapters in this volume comment on the complex interactions between ex-colonial countries and their former colonies in managing so-called "shared heritage" sites. In addition to formal state-sanctioned networks, professions such as academics or expert consultants live off international organizations or programmes to provide legitimating "expertise". Scholars working with organizations like UNESCO and the World Bank make recommendations and produce schemes that assign scientific and "universal" value (as well as national heritage values) to certain sites or cultural practices. Consequently, they situate the extant traditions of groups in new socio-political relationships (Meskell 2005). Other cases involve competing heritage ownership between different countries or ethnic and religious groups of people.

Asian countries are, moreover, engaged in classic international relations politics and competition, and heritage becomes a convenient instrument of diplomacy. After its reduction as an economic power with little political clout, post–World War II Japan sought to secure its influence over the Asian region through an active strategy of aid and cultural diplomacy. From the 1970s it began to massively invest in international structures like UNESCO. It began to distribute aid and technical resources for sites such as Angkor Wat, the Mogao Caves and Borobudur with the intention of projecting a positive image as an economic and cultural leader of Asia. More recently, China started its "Belt and Road Initiative" in 2013, which includes regional economic cooperation and the inscription of cross-national cultural heritage. China started the bid for UNESCO heritage on the Silk Road with some countries in Central and Southeast Asia. The Voyage of Admiral Zheng He across the Indian Ocean is also being used to project a vision of power beyond what is commonly regarded as Asia.

By now it should be apparent that the field of heritage as an arena where diplomacy and aid operate is indispensable for understanding the role of heritage in international and regional politics. The book is arranged in five parts that interrogate various aspects of this dynamics.

The first part centres on international heritage production. Physical cultural heritage sites are attached to specific places, but heritage production involves actors on several scales. In the heritage field, actors negotiate and compete. The discussion of heritage aid and diplomacy concentrates on the international production of heritage. Meskell argues that capitalist logic and neoliberalism have influenced the state's management of heritage resources. Colonizing projects have been done through heritage projects. Cambodia's Angkor dynasty is famous for its Angkor site, but there are other Angkor heritages in other countries in Indochina. For example, the conflict between Thailand and Cambodia over the Preah Vihear Temple intensified in the winter of 2008 when the latter country nominated the temple for inclusion on the World Heritage List. Hauser-Schäublin examines the genealogy of three expert reports concerning Preah Vihear and their situatedness in different political regimes of truth. She shows how each report drew on the previous one, starting with French colonial politics, via the 1962 case at the International Court of Justice up to the UNESCO heritage listing—with dramatic political consequences. These international discourses shape the way contemporary society treats Preah Vihear as a World Heritage Site. Peycam's chapter argues how a series of programmes aimed at spatial transformations of the "Angkor region" featured crucial strategies by the official teams of the French and Japanese governments in framing the committee's activities and its interactions with the Cambodian authorities. ICC and UNESCO representatives made self-legitimizing claims asserting the success of their work as a model of international cooperation for the safeguarding of World Heritage Sites. But can a proper mechanism of international cooperation for the safeguarding of a major heritage site like Angkor be realized, or sustained, without the effective participation of the communities living in and around these sites?

The second part of the book moves on to discuss heritage as aid through money, knowledge and technology. Aid to developing countries is very important, and power relations between developed and developing countries is the theme of this part. Zurbuchen's case study shows how private philanthropic foundations from developed countries are engaged in the cultural sector of developing countries in the name of heritage. She analyses how the Ford Foundation from the United States developed a specific cultural strategy for Southeast and South Asian countries in parallel with more political or economically driven ones, including during the Cold

War and the foundation's involvement in anti-communist activities. Yapp's paper examines the city of Kota Semarang in Indonesia and discusses aid from developed to developing countries. Aid is not only economic support but is also entangled in "colonial" connections. Indonesia was under Dutch colonial rule for almost 150 years and Dutch colonial heritage is apparent in many Indonesian cities. The city port of Semarang is home to many experts on Dutch heritage. Yapp analyses how experts from the "previous colonial state" interact with local heritage in Semarang. She explains how formerly colonized states face challenges emanating from projects and organizations originating from former colonizing countries. This paper also discusses how personal actors establish and affect heritage practice through private social networks.

The third part of the book focuses on how international relations affect heritage policy and how heritage reconstructs international relations. How do states with different historical perspectives interpret the same cultural heritage? Heritage is both a tool and a means. Chan demonstrates how China and Japan have used heritage in diplomatic competition and historical national narrative discourses. Their diplomatic relations caused tension after the change of Japanese leadership in 2012. Japan would bid for UNESCO World Heritage status for its industrial heritage of the Meiji period, but this was regarded as the outcome of Chinese and Korean forced labour. In another case, the Chinese government planned to apply to have the Nanjing Massacres listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme. However, though Japanese textbooks recognized the killing of civilians in Nanjing by Japanese forces, Japan disagreed with China on the factual history, the numbers of victims and the forms of violence. In fact, Japan's official discourses about World War II history have evolved along with its leaders. Wang's chapter discusses the heritage of the Goguryeo period in China and North Korea. When North Korea made its bid for the Goguryeo site, China applied for the same site as a protest. Relations between North Korea and China affect the respective discourses of the Goguryeo site. Moreover, South Korea claims authority over this site, and this has complicated international relations and diplomacy.

The fourth part turns to the shifting meanings of heritage. Meharry explains how the excavation of the Bamiyan Buddhas—the classic cultural heritage of Afghanistan—has been affected by regime changes in Afghanistan, a country that has been alternately dominated by nationalist,

progressive or conservative Islamist governments. Ong's chapter describes the changes in the Chinese handling of intangible heritage, in particular that of *kunqu* opera. With the Cultural Revolution, the country's economic reform and the World Heritage Regime, both *kunqu* opera and its performers changed.

The last part of the book discusses neoliberalism, a rather new topic in heritage studies. Cultural heritage becomes valuable in combination with the tourism market, and it becomes an object that can be used to support private economic interests. Wardana's chapter discusses how democratized and decentralized politics produced neoliberal spatial strategies after the overthrow of the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia in 1998. Wardana uses the listing of rice terraces in Bali in the World Heritage List to suggest that the benefits from listing the terraces drives competition and the goals for a "neoliberalized heritage". Roberts is concerned with the collaboration between international aid and local preservation organizations. This chapter focuses on Myanmar, which partially opened to international aid in 2010. As opposed to the diplomatically isolated relations under the era of military rule, the new Myanmar, and especially its capital Yangon, have become an attractive locus for international organizations. However, the neoliberal tendencies of international organizations along with the elitism of the local heritage trust organizations that emanate from the new international connections has led to competition for heritage resources and to strategies that assign a lower priority to—and which often exclude—local communities and social groups.

Drawing from these Asian experiences, this collection of articles thus not only considers processes of "UNESCO-ization" of heritage (or their equivalents when conducted by other international or national actors) by exploring the diplomatic and developmentalist politics of heritage-making at play and its transformational impact on societies. It also describes how local and outside states often collude with international mechanisms to further their interests at the expense of local communities and of citizens' rights. As was however articulated in the volume *Citizens, Civil Society and Heritage-Making in Asia*, such transnational and international modes of power exertion through culture must grapple with an increased number of situations in which social movements can emerge that seek to preserve vernacular heritages and (re-)claim local identities, a trend that reflects the steady growth of civil society as a potent political actor in the region (cf. Hsiao et al. 2017).

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