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KENESARY KASYMULY AND YESET KOTIBARULY: ANALYSIS OF THE CONNECTION AND CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN TWO LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Abstract. This article examines the relationship and contradictions between two major national liberation movements in 19th-century Kazakhstan – the uprisings led by Kenesary Kasymov (1837-1847) and Yeset Kotibarov (1847-1858). The study aims to reconstruct the actual nature of the relationship between the two leaders by analyzing conflicting historiographical perspectives. The author provides a critical analysis of the concepts of "tribal insularity" and "parochialism" that predominated in Soviet historiography, while also considering the opposing viewpoint of A. Ryazanov. The research demonstrates that both connections and contradictions existed between the two leaders. The study identifies common features of both movements as well as their differences. The scientific inadequacy of the "tribal insularity" concept that dominated Soviet historiography is substantiated. The primary cause of the contradictions is identified as the different strategic choices made by the two leaders. Yeset Kotibaruly's uprising is characterized as a direct continuation of the national liberation struggle initiated by Kenesary Kasymuly.

Key words. Kenesary Kasymuly, Yeset Kotibaruly, national liberation movement, historiographical analysis, Soviet historiography, tribal insularity, Junior Juz, Khanate of Khiva, 19th century, Kazakhstan.

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КЕНЕСАРЫ ҚАСЫМУЛЫ ЖӘНЕ ЕСЕТ КӨТІБАРҰЛЫ: ҰЛТ-АЗАТТЫҚ ҚОЗҒАЛЫСТЫҢ ЕКІ КӨСЕМІ АРАСЫНДАҒЫ БАЙЛАНЫС ПЕН ҚАРАМА-ҚАЙШЫЛЫҚТЫҢ ТАЛДАУЫ

Аңдамна. Мақала XIX ғасырдағы Қазақстан тарихындағы екі ірі ұлт-азаттық қозғалыс – Кенесары Қасымұлы (1837-1847) және Есет Көтібарұлы (1847-1858) бастаған көтерілістер арасындағы байланыс пен алшақтық мәселесіне арналған. Зерттеудің мақсаты – тарихнамада қалыптасқан қарама-қайшы пікірлерді саралай отырып, екі көсемнің қарым-қатынасының нақты бейнесін ашу. Кеңестік тарихнамада басымдық танытқан «рулық тұйықтық», «жершілдік» тұжырымдарына сыни талдау жасалып, А.Рязановтың қарама-қайшы пікірі назарға алынды. Зерттеу нәтижесінде екі көсем арасында әрі байланыс, әрі алшақтық болғандығы дәлелденді. Кеңестік тарихнамадағы «рулық тұйықтық» концепциясының ғылыми негізсіздігі айқындалып, алшақтықтың басты себебі – екі көсемнің әртүрлі стратегиялық таңдауы екендігі көрсетілді. Есет көтерілісі Кенесары бастаған ұлт-азаттық күрестің тікелей жалғасы ретінде танылды.

Кілт сөздер. Кенесары Қасымұлы, Есет Көтібарұлы, ұлт-азаттық қозғалыс, тарихнамалық талдау, кеңестік тарихнама, рулық тұйықтық, Кіші жүз, Хиуа хандығы, ХІХ ғасыр, Қазақстан.

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КЕНЕСАРЫ КАСЫМУЛЫ И ЕСЕТ КОТИБАРУЛЫ: АНАЛИЗ СВЯЗИ И ПРОТИВОРЕЧИЙ МЕЖДУ ДВУМЯ ЛИДЕРАМИ НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-ОСВОБОДИТЕЛЬНОГО ДВИЖЕНИЯ

Аннотация. Статья посвящена проблеме взаимосвязи и противоречий между двумя крупными национально-освободительными движениями в истории Казахстана ХІХ века – восстаниями под предводительством Кенесары Касымұлы (1837-1847) и Есета Котибарұлы (1847-1858). Цель исследования – раскрыть реальную картину отношений двух лидеров, проанализировав сложившиеся в историографии противоречивые мнения. Проведен критический анализ господствовавших в советской историографии концепций «родовой замкнутости» и «местничества», рассмотрена противоположная точка зрения А.Рязанова. В результате исследования доказано, что между двумя предводителями имели место как связи, так и противоречия. Выявлены общие черты двух движений и их различия. Обоснована научная несостоятельность концепции «родовой замкнутости», доминировавшей в советской историографии. Главной причиной противоречий признан различный стратегический выбор двух лидеров. Восстание Есета Котибарұлы квалифицировано как прямое продолжение национально-освободительной борьбы, начатой Кенесары Касымұлы.

Ключевые слова. Кенесары Касымұлы, Есет Котибарұлы, национально-освободительное движение, историографический анализ, советская историография, родовая замкнутость, Младший жүз, Хивинское ханство, ХІХ век, Казахстан.

Introduction. The formation of Kazakhstan as an independent state has necessitated a reassessment of national liberation movements of the past through new methodological approaches in historical scholarship. Today, the objective evaluation of popular uprisings directed against the colonial policies of the Russian Empire, free from former ideological constraints and grounded in historical reality, has become one of the priority directions of Kazakhstani historiography. In this regard, particular scholarly interest is attached to the historical significance and interrelationship of the two largest national liberation movements of the nineteenth century, led by Kenesary Qasymuly (1837–1847) and Eset Kotibaruly (1847–1858).

Although historians have long been interested in the question of both the connections and divergences between these two historical figures, no universally accepted conclusion has yet been established. The continuity between the uprisings led by these successive leaders, the nature of their mutual relations, and their attitudes toward one another remain insufficiently explored. While some studies emphasize the discontinuity and discord between them, others focus on the unity and historical continuity of the two movements.

Historiographical Background. The historiography of the issue under consideration may be divided into three principal stages. The first stage comprises pre-revolutionary Russian

historiography (L. Meyer, M. Terentyev, A. Dobrosmyslov, among others), in which Eset Kotibaruly was portrayed as a “rebel” or “bandit,” and his movement was characterized as an unlawful disturbance. Most of these authors worked within the framework of the imperial administration and sought to justify colonial policy.

The second stage encompasses Soviet historiography (E. Bekmakhanov, V.F. Shakhmatov, T.Zh. Shoinbayev), which was based on Marxist-Leninist methodology. E. Bekmakhanov explained the rupture between Eset and Kenesary in terms of “tribal isolationism” and local particularism, whereas V.F. Shakhmatov emphasized Eset’s allegedly hostile stance toward Kenesary. At the same time, contradictory interpretations also emerged during this period. For example, A.F. Ryazanov described Eset as a supporter of Kenesary Qasymov, thereby presenting an alternative perspective.

The third stage refers to the historiography of the independence period (Zh. Qasymbayev, M. Kozybayev, Kh. Dosmukhameduly), which advanced the interpretation of national liberation movements as a unified historical phenomenon of anti-colonial resistance.

Materials and methods of research. The study is primarily based on archival materials preserved in the collections of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Of particular importance are the documents contained in Fund No. 4 (Orenburg Border Commission) and Fund No. 383 (Administration of the Kazakhs of the Syr Darya Frontier). These materials include correspondence of the ruling sultans of the Junior Zhuz, reports submitted to the Orenburg Governors-General, as well as letters exchanged by Eset Kotibaruly with imperial officials and correspondence directly related to Kenesary Qasymuly.

Among the most significant documents are Eset’s 1844 pledge to oppose Kenesary and archival records confirming the participation of the Shekti tribe in Kenesary’s uprising. In addition, the study draws upon the monographic works of prominent scholars such as E. Bekmakhanov, Zh. Qasymbayev, Kh. Dosmukhameduly, and M. Kozybayev.

The research is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, systematic analysis, and comparative inquiry. Historiographical analysis is conducted through a critical reassessment of various interpretations, free from the ideological constraints that characterized the Soviet period. Furthermore, extensive use is made of comparative analysis through the examination of archival sources, published documents, and relevant scholarly literature.

Research Aim and Objectives. The aim of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the principal historiographical interpretations concerning the relationship and divergence between the national liberation movements led by Kenesary Qasymuly and Eset Kotibaruly, and to assess their scholarly validity.

To achieve this objective, the following tasks have been formulated:

1. To examine historiographical approaches developed during the Soviet and post-independence periods;
2. To compare E. Bekmakhanov’s assertion that “Eset severed ties with Kenesary” with A. Ryazanov’s opposing claim that “Eset was a supporter of Kenesary” through the analysis of factual evidence;
3. To systematize historical facts concerning the relationship between the two leaders and identify the objective causes underlying both the continuity and differences between them;
4. To determine the common features and distinctive characteristics of the two national liberation movements.

Scientific Novelty. The article offers, for the first time, a systematic analysis of the relationship between Kenesary and Eset not only from the perspective of historical facts but also through the lens of historiographical evolution. Soviet interpretations that explained the divergence between the two leaders primarily through “tribal isolationism” are critically

reassessed, while greater attention is given to the strategic differences between their movements and the broader political contexts in which they operated.

Moreover, archival evidence demonstrates that Eset's attitude toward Kenesary was neither static nor uniform; rather, it constituted a dynamic process that evolved over time in response to changing political and military circumstances.

Results and Discussion.

1. HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

1.1. Concepts in Soviet Historiography. In Soviet historical scholarship, national liberation movements were examined through the lens of Marxist-Leninist class struggle theory. According to this methodology, any armed movement was first and foremost to be assessed as a peasant uprising against "feudal oppression." This approach inevitably diminished the national character of the movements and, at times, completely ignored it.

One of the most prominent scholars addressing this issue in Soviet historiography was Ermukhan Bekmakhanov. His monograph "Kazakhstan in the 20-40s of the 19th Century" is considered a model of Kazakhstani historical scholarship of the Soviet period [1]. Bekmakhanov extensively studied the history of Kenesary's uprising and was the first to dare characterize it as a "national liberation movement" [1]. However, it was precisely this boldness that led to his subsequent persecution.

Bekmakhanov's position on the relationship between Eset and Kenesary was clear and sharp. According to the scholar, "the main reason for Eset's withdrawal from Kenesary's uprising lies in the remnants of patriarchal-clan relations, tribal insularity, and parochialism" [1, 194-195 pp.]. In other words, Eset pursued only the interests of his own Shekty clan, subordinating the general national interest to them. Bekmakhanov supported this argument with a letter written by Eset to the ruling sultan Baimagambet Aishuakuly, in which Eset promised to fight against Kenesary.

The second prominent representative of Soviet historiography was V.F. Shakhmatov. His article "Eset Kotibarov" is one of the most extensive studies in this field [2]. Shakhmatov held an even harsher position than Bekmakhanov. In his view, "Eset maintained hostile relations with Kenesary for a long time, viewed Kenesary with suspicion, refused to recognize Kasymuly as khan, and provided no assistance to Kenesary's struggle against the tsarist government" [2, 113 p.].

However, within Soviet historiography itself, views contradicting those of Bekmakhanov and Shakhmatov also emerged. One such scholar was A.F. Ryazanov. In his work "The Raids of Khivans and Turkmens into the Kirghiz Steppe in 1848", Ryazanov described Eset as a "supporter of Kenesary Kasymuly" [3, 20 p.]. This directly contradicts the conclusions of Bekmakhanov and Shakhmatov.

1.2. Post-Independence Historiography. The acquisition of independence by the Republic of Kazakhstan opened new possibilities for historical scholarship. National liberation movements could now be examined as integral historical phenomena directed against colonialism, freed from the constraints of the "class struggle" schema.

One of the most distinguished scholars of this period is Zh. Kasymbayev. In his works "Khan Kenesary" and others, he extensively examined the foreign political relations of Kenesary, including diplomatic ties with the Khanate of Khiva and influential biys and batyrs of the Junior Juz. According to his research, Kenesary maintained a policy of mutual understanding with the Khivan khan and was prepared to form an alliance [4]. Eset Kotibaruly also maintained ties with Khiva. The orientation of both leaders toward Khiva demonstrates a common strategic outlook.

Another prominent figure in post-independence historiography is M. Kozybaev. In his monograph "I Tied the Banner and Struck the Enemy", he wrote: "The uprisings of Isatai and

Makhambet (1836-1837), Kenesary (1837-1847), Zhankozha (1856-1857), and Eset (1855-1858) – did they not embrace the whole of the Kazakh land, with one beginning and another continuing? And who can say that the connection and the main motive of these movements are not one and the same?" [5, 21 p.]. This is a fundamental methodological conclusion that counters the tradition of studying these uprisings in isolation.

The works of Kh. Dosmukhameduly were also republished during this period and entered scholarly circulation. In his book "Isatai – Makhambet", he boldly asserted: "By the time of Kenesary, the Junior Juz had completely lost hope in khans. The Junior Juz did not follow Kenesary; he had no influence over the Junior Juz. In 1843, Kenesary attacked the Shekty on the Oyl River, became an enemy of the Junior Juz, and eventually could not remain there" [6, 50-51 pp.].

2. FACTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS

2.1. Evidence of Connection between the Two Leaders. Despite the characterization of the relationship as one of "rupture" and "hostility" in Soviet historiography, archival documents reveal a more nuanced picture.

First, Eset's connection with Kenesary – albeit indirect – is evident through Eset's joint actions with Zholaman Tilenshiuly. Zholaman batyr was a leader of a major national liberation movement in the Junior Juz and later became one of Kenesary's most trusted companions in the region. In 1838, Eset, together with Zholaman, attacked the Elek fortress. According to information submitted to the Orenburg Border Commission, "the Kirghiz batyrs Zholaman, Zhanaly Tokpan Turymov, and Eset Kotibarov united, gathering up to 3,000 men, and fortified themselves in the Karatogai gorge" [2, 28 p.].

Second, Bekmakhanov's monograph includes a table showing that in 1844, the Kabak clan of the Shekty tribe participated in Kenesary's uprising [1]. The leader of this clan was Eset Kotibaruly. If Eset had maintained hostile relations with Kenesary, it is difficult to explain why his own clan would have participated in Kenesary's uprising.

Third, during the Khivan campaign of General V.A. Perovsky (1839-1840), Eset refused to provide the required camels and supplies. According to dissertation materials, "Eset Kotibaruly and Zholaman Tilenshiuly offered significant resistance to the Khivan campaign, contributing to its failure" [7, 95 p.].

Fourth, A.F. Ryazanov directly called Eset a "supporter of Kenesary Kasymuly," noting that "Eset, the famous supporter of Kenesary Kasymov, an intelligent and very cautious batyr, had for several years been rousing the angry Kirghiz tribes" [3, 20 p.].

2.2. Evidence of Contradictions between the Two Leaders. Soviet historiography advanced several arguments intended to demonstrate the estrangement between Eset Kotibaruly and Kenesary Qasymuly. Each of these pieces of evidence warrants separate examination.

As the principal evidence of tension between Eset and Kenesary, Bekmakhanov cites a letter written by Eset to Baimagambet Aishuakov, the ruling sultan of the western part of the Junior Zhuz. In this letter, Eset pledged to oppose Kenesary militarily [1, 195 p.]. Bekmakhanov interpreted the document as proof that Eset had abandoned his association with Kenesary.

However, a critical assessment of this source is necessary. First, the letter was written in 1844, during the most intensive phase of Kenesary's uprising. At that time, the imperial administration was mobilizing all available resources to suppress the movement. Eset's attempt to present himself as loyal to the tsarist authorities may therefore be interpreted as an act of political pragmatism rather than a genuine declaration of hostility toward Kenesary.

Second, according to Kh. Dosmukhameduly, "in 1843, Kenesary attacked the Shekty on the Oyl River" [6, pp. 50-51]. This evidence indicates that an armed confrontation did occur

between the two sides. Nevertheless, the causes and circumstances of the attack have not been fully clarified in archival sources.

One possible interpretation is that the attack represented an attempt by Kenesary to demonstrate his authority and compel the Junior Zhuz tribes to join his movement. Alternatively, it may have reflected the continuation of earlier intertribal disputes. Regardless of its precise cause, the incident should not be viewed as conclusive proof of long-term hostility.

Third, according to V.F. Shakhmatov, "Kenesary constantly demanded that Eset pay tribute (zyaket), but these persistent efforts yielded no results" [2, 113 p.]. Eset refused to recognize Kenesary as khan. Shakhmatov interpreted this fact as evidence that Eset refused to recognize Kenesary's authority as khan.

This argument possesses a certain degree of validity because it reflects a political and legal disagreement between the two leaders. Following his proclamation as khan in 1841, Kenesary sought to establish authority over all three Kazakh zhuzes and consequently demanded the payment of zakat. Eset, however, perceived himself as an autonomous batyr who was independent of both sultans and khans and therefore rejected such demands.

The dispute thus represented a conflict over political authority rather than personal hostility. Eset's refusal to recognize Kenesary's khanate did not necessarily imply that the two leaders were enemies; rather, it reflected their differing political positions and competing conceptions of legitimate leadership within Kazakh society.

Fourth, Eset lived in Khiva from 1842 to 1844 [8, p. 13]. This period coincided with the most active phase of Kenesary's uprising. This fact indicates that he was outside the territory of Kazakhstan during one of the most active phases of Kenesary's uprising.

His presence in Khiva significantly limited opportunities for direct communication and cooperation with Kenesary. This objective circumstance contributed to the weakening of their relationship. However, such a development should be explained primarily by geographical and temporal factors rather than by the "tribal isolationism" emphasized in Soviet historiography.

Consequently, Eset's absence from the region provides a more plausible explanation for the limited interaction between the two leaders during this period than interpretations based on tribal particularism or personal antagonism.

2.3. Explaining the Contradictions. An examination of the evidence discussed above makes it possible to identify several factors that contributed to the emergence of contradictory interpretations within the historiography of the relationship between Eset Kotibaruly and Kenesary Qasymuly.

The first factor concerns methodological differences. Soviet historiography, represented by scholars such as Bekmakhanov and Shakhmatov, interpreted popular movements within the framework of Marxist-Leninist theory and the paradigm of class struggle. As a result, these movements were commonly characterized as either "feudal" or "peasant uprisings." Within this interpretative framework, questions of national unity and historical continuity were relegated to a secondary position. In contrast, although Ryazanov also worked during the Soviet period, his interpretation departed from the rigid class-based model and allowed for a broader understanding of the political and national dimensions of the anti-colonial struggle.

The second factor relates to the incompleteness of the source base. Soviet historians often argued that the absence of archival evidence documenting direct meetings or formal agreements between Eset and Kenesary demonstrated the lack of any meaningful relationship between them. However, the absence of direct documentary evidence does not necessarily imply the absence of political or ideological connections. Even though correspondence between the two leaders has not been preserved, the synchronicity of their actions and their simultaneous resistance to Russian colonial expansion suggest significant similarities in their political objectives and outlooks.

The third factor concerns differences in political context. Eset and Kenesary operated within distinct political environments and pursued somewhat different strategic goals. As a descendant of the Chinggisid lineage, Kenesary sought to unite all three Kazakh zhuzes and restore an independent Kazakh state under centralized leadership. Eset, by contrast, was a batyr and tribal leader whose primary objective was the elimination of colonial oppression within the territory of the Junior Zhuz. Although these strategic differences generated certain divergences between the two leaders, they did not amount to a complete political separation.

The fourth factor is the role of time and circumstance. Eset's ability to participate directly in Kenesary's movement was constrained by specific historical circumstances. During 1838–1839, he acted alongside Zholaman Tilemishuly, a development that may be interpreted as indirect support for the broader anti-colonial movement associated with Kenesary. Between 1842 and 1844, however, Eset resided in Khiva, limiting his opportunities for active involvement. Moreover, after 1844, members of the Shekti tribe continued to participate in Kenesary's uprising. Consequently, the relationship between Eset and Kenesary should not be understood in absolute terms. Rather, it represented a dynamic process that evolved over time under the influence of changing political and military circumstances.

3. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO MOVEMENTS

Common Features. First, the main goal of both uprisings was the same: to free the Kazakh people from Russian colonial oppression and restore national independence. As I propose in my monography, according to British historian D.Ch. Boulger, the goal of Eset's uprising was "to become an independent state" [7, p. 39].

Second, the driving forces of both uprisings were similar: ordinary nomadic Kazakh herders and tribal militias. Kenesary's uprising involved major clans such as the Kypchak, Argyn, Naiman, and Kerey. Eset's uprising involved the Shekty, Tabyn, Adai, Karakesek, Tortkara, Karasakal, Kete, and Tama clans.

Third, Kenesary's final period (1845-1847) unfolded in the Junior Juz – specifically along the Irgiz, Turgai, Zhem, and Elek rivers. This region was the main area of Eset's uprising.

Fourth, both Kenesary and Eset sought assistance from the Khanate of Khiva in their struggle against Russian colonialism.

Table 1 – Distinctive features of both uprisings

Criteria	Kenesary Kasymuly	Eset Kotibaruly
Origin	Sultan, descendant of khans	Batyr, bi (Shekty clan)
Political status	Proclaimed himself khan (1841)	Never accepted khan title
Scope of movement	Covered most of the Middle and Junior Juz	Primarily the southwestern part of the Junior Juz
Army size	Up to 20,000 men	Approximately 2,000 men
Military tactics	Regular army, open battles	Partisan warfare, guerrilla tactics
Duration	1837-1847 (10 years)	1847-1858 (11 years)

If Eset had truly been guided solely by "clan interests," why did he gain support not only from his own Shekty clan but also from other tribes such as Tabyn, Adai, Karakesek, Tortkara, and Karasakal? This demonstrates that the concept of "tribal insularity" in Soviet historiography lacks scientific foundation. The primary reason for the contradictions between the two leaders was their different strategic choices, not tribal narrow-mindedness.

Conclusion. This study has examined the connection and contradictions between two major national liberation movements in 19th-century Kazakhstan – those led by Kenesary Kasymuly and Eset Kotibaruly.

First, the evolution of historiographical perspectives shows that in Soviet historiography (Bekmakhanov, Shakhmatov), the contradictions between Eset and Kenesary were explained through such concepts as "tribal insularity," "patriarchal remnants," and "parochialism." These explanations were often shaped by ideological pressure and contradicted factual evidence. Ryazanov's opposing view indicates that even within Soviet historiography there was no unified position on this issue.

Second, post-independence historiography (Kasymbayev, Kozybaev, Dosmukhameduly) has demonstrated the importance of studying the two uprisings in relation to one another. Kozybaev's conclusion – "one began, the other continued" – defines the methodological position of contemporary historical scholarship.

Third, factual analysis reveals that both connections and contradictions existed between the two leaders. Connections include: joint actions with Zholaman Tilenshiuly; participation of the Shekty clan in Kenesary's uprising; coordinated resistance during the Khivan campaign; and Ryazanov's conclusion that Eset was a supporter of Kenesary. Contradictions include: Eset's letter of 1844; Kenesary's attack on the Shekty in 1843; Eset's refusal to pay tribute; and Eset's presence in Khiva from 1842-1844.

Fourth, the continuity between the two movements is evident in the commonality of their goals, driving forces, geographical areas, and ties with the Khanate of Khiva. Their differences – in origin, political status, scope, and military tactics – reflect different strategic choices, not personal enmity.

Fifth, the "tribal insularity" thesis of Soviet historiography requires critical revision. Eset defended the interests not only of his own clan but of the entire Junior Juz. The main reason for his failure to unite with Kenesary was his lack of confidence in the khanate institution, not tribal narrow-mindedness.

Sixth, Eset Kotibaruly's uprising was a direct continuation of the national liberation struggle initiated by Kenesary Kasymuly. The year of Kenesary's death (1847) coincides with the beginning of Eset's uprising. Eset did not allow the banner to fall to the ground; he continued the liberation struggle for another eleven years.

Both Kenesary Kasymuly and Eset Kotibaruly were prominent figures in the centuries-long liberation struggle of the Kazakh people against Russian colonialism. Although there were some contradictions and disagreements between them, these differences did not make them enemies. Both strived for the same goal – the independence of Kazakhstan. They chose different strategies to achieve this goal: Kenesary chose a mass popular uprising, while Eset chose partisan warfare. But this strategic difference does not mean they opposed each other. On the contrary, both dedicated their strength, knowledge, and experience to a common cause – the national liberation struggle of the Kazakh people.

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