

Tracking the Archetype - Part 2

Design Disintegration

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Design purity is most likely to be maintained over long periods when motifs remain within a single weaving medium. Continuity is especially predictable in the restrictive weaves. For example, designing in brocading and warp-substitution, with their severe constraints, remains much more constant than in knotted-pile or soumak. Any weaver can freely alter knotted or soumak motifs as she pleases. It is design migration from medium to medium, however, that truly encourages design changes and disintegration.

When a weaver attempts to use freely formed designs (knotted, embroidered or soumak designs) in a technique with more constraints (such as brocading, warp substitution or slit tapestry), the task is often impossible. Major alterations are usually required. Such borrowed forms are often difficult to integrate and may survive only briefly in the new medium. When we consider the overall picture, in Middle Eastern village and nomad weaving, the flow of design influence in this reverse direction has been minimal.

On the other hand, where influence flows more normally -- from restrictive techniques to freer ones -- design adaptation is rarely necessary. Direct copies are possible, as we saw earlier in the soumak copy (Figure 2) of a zili brocade design (Figure 1). Changes are not forced. Modifications can be easily made to suit each weaver's fancy. Changes are most often minor and gradual. I would like to show a few of the ways that designs are routinely modified.

First, structural design devices may be distorted when their raison d'être no longer exists. The common border of kilim hooks in the slit tapestry here has been transformed by a Kazak knotted-pile weaver (far right). The horizontal bars, used to stabilize the weave in tapestry but redundant in knotted pile, have been misplaced and a new design has emerged. This form then became institutionalized, and variations on it appeared in several places.

A similar kind of distortion occurs when knotted-pile weavers copy standard kilim border crenellations, but turn part of their crenellations vertically. [25]



Figure 22a. Slit-tapestry border design with horizontal stabilizing elements. Anatolia.
Figure 22b. Knotted-pile border with slit-tapestry design, but structural elements altered. Kazak, south Caucasus.



Second, color distribution and usage may be altered in a new medium, where its placement is not dictated by structural requirements. When a carpet weaver borrows a warp-pattern design such as the common arrow and half-arrow jajim motif, she is not limited to two colors in vertical succession. In the first Caucasian border below, several color changes have been used to visually help join two offset rows of arrow halves. Outlining adds one more color element.



Figure 23a, b, and c. Caucasian knotted-pile borders showing adaptations of the common warp- substitution half-arrow motif.

Third, critical design proportions may be altered in a new medium. Earlier we saw a Tekke knotted ensi border (Figure 9a) that used the features of the "ainak" warp-substitution design, but altered the spacing so critical in that technique. The knotted-pile weaver, with no warp tension problems to worry about, simply squeezed the motifs together.

Working with few technical limitations, the knotted-pile weaver is also free to reshape motifs. The first border above shows a fairly straight-forward copy of the basic warp-substitution motif. Spindly linear elements have been used to join two separate, multi-colored borders of arrow halves. A strong, reciprocal field/ground design relationship has been retained; the white background itself makes a forceful pattern. In the second border above, the vertical sequences have been severed, the hooks have been reversed, and the diagonal joinings have been handled perhaps more successfully; the white background, however, has been shattered. The weaver of the third border has gone still further in an attempt to integrate the separate parts: she has curved both the hooks and triangular bases, then turned the vertical arrow shafts inward. Refined versions of this design are far removed indeed from the simple, precisely engineered warp-pattern archetype.

The next set of borders, below, shows the gradual disintegration of another archetypal warp-patterned motif -- the double-weave band

design that we saw previously in a Beyshehir carpet border (on the left here). In the second border, the blocks have been separated and variously colored. In the third example, a Star Kazak version, color changes dissect the simplified border blocks themselves, while in the last, on the right, the motif's framing has disappeared entirely. Such drastic changes in color placement and design can easily occur in knotted pile because the restraints of the original warp-pattern technique no longer apply.



Figure 24a, b, c, d. Knotted-pile borders showing evolutionary changes in one archetypal double-weave design. The third border is from a Caucasian Kazak rug; the others are Anatolian.

A fourth kind of design disintegration involves a shift of focus from positive to negative design elements. The common warp-pattern "S" border has begun to disintegrate in this Bergama knotted-pile rug because parts of the background have been variously colored.

The Anatolian carpet below shows how readily transformations occur when the original warp-pattern color limitations no longer apply. Common warp-pattern arrows in the vertical border have been turned sideways. Spaces *between* these brown arrows have been outlined and colored variously, transforming them into positive shapes. In the horizontal border, at the top, these new



forms have been alternately flipped, so the dark brown arrows disappear entirely.

Figure 25. Knotted-pile carpet border. Bergama area, western Anatolia.



Figure 26. Knotted-pile carpet with borders showing the shift of focus from positive to negative design areas. Central Anatolia. Courtesy, Harald Böhmer.

Fifth, when motifs migrate, designs are often simplified, segmented and isolated. Cohesiveness may be lost, as positive/negative design relationships are altered. The familiar "kotchak" cross in the knotted Tekke border here can be viewed in two ways: as four diagonal arms with hooks, or as four inward-pointing arrows. The weaver must see both. In the second photo, a dramatically simplified Lori/Bakhtiari soumak version, only four arrows have survived; the linear, hooked arms have disappeared. Everything is disjointed; the simple background shapes have even become small, isolated, stepped figures. When this design was transferred from one structure to another, a new mind set was required of the weaver. [26] Cohesion and strong positive/negative design relationships are among the most useful of all clues when tracing design origins.



Figure 27a. Tekke knotted 'kotchak' design of four arrows.



Figure 27b. Lori/Bakhtiari soumak border with negative design elements isolated to become separate figures. Courtesy, James Opie.

When motifs migrate **WITHOUT** changing form, to appear as either major design elements or minor details in a less restrictive medium, they may be quite different stylistically from other parts of the design. We previously saw contrasting styles of pattern execution that occurred when warp-patterned designs migrated to knotted pile and soumak. The soumak bag at the right, as well as Figures 10 and 12, show motifs with stepped diagonals in borders surrounding fields with smoothly executed design elements.



Likewise, the saddlebag we saw earlier shows marked contrasts between parts of its design that have different origins. Although the field has a blocky, stepped zili brocade design, the large border in this weaving uses tapestry motifs with smooth-edged diagonals. The contrast is subtle and effective. [27]

Stylistic inconsistencies within complex field designs are equally informative. They should alert us immediately to the likelihood of design migration. Within a single field pattern, the presence of stepped motifs along with others that are smooth-edged can be a telling incongruity. But numerous, less obvious stylistic inconsistencies can lead us to conclude that parts of a pattern originated elsewhere. We may find further discrepancies in the construction or proportioning of designs, peculiar contrasts in scale, varying methods of pattern articulation, diverse approaches to the use of negative space, or conflicting concepts of pattern organization. We can even find instances in which the weaver has made mid-course alterations in weave structure to accommodate borrowed design forms. These overlapping and multifaceted subjects are too complex to be covered here.



Although we may discover elements of borrowed design in nearly every fiber medium, incongruous or unassimilated alien forms appear the most frequently, by far, in knotted-pile rugs, soumak textiles and embroideries -- the least restrictive structures. I would like to comment briefly on one case in point which is simple and clear enough to require no structural or technical explanations: an Azerbaijani embroidery with major elements derived from knotted-pile carpet design. Although several writers have pointed out similarities between embroideries and carpets from the Southern Caucasus, I have read no satisfactory

arguments to support their speculations that embroidery designs inspired the carpets. [28] In my opinion, the embroideries are nearly always the copies.

A detail of a large Azerbaijani blossom carpet from the Iparművészeti Museum, Budapest, is shown below. In *HALI 59*, Jennifer Wearden contrasted this carpet design with that in with a small domestic embroidery. [29] The parallels between these two pieces are striking: the major motifs are nearly identical. But the differences are dramatic as well.

In the large workshop carpet (below), minor motifs are consistent with the main figures. Small, angular leaves just above and below geometrically- shaped medallions are repeated throughout the carpet; the angular forms are echoed in background tracery. This knotted carpet is formal, angular and symmetrical throughout.



**Caucasian Floral Carpet. Detail.
Iparművészeti Museum, Budapest,
24.462**

The small embroidery has no such consistency. Its central medallions and pendants are formal, symmetrical, and rigid, just like those in the carpet. These forms, with their constant 45-degree diagonals and their horizontal/vertical orientation, are natural products of coarse, knotted-pile weaving. A few angular leaf forms are also present in the needlework. Most of the embroidered background motifs, however, are sprawling forms that twist and turn to fill the spaces. They nearly overpower the main design. The smallest details are inconsistent as well. A peculiar mix of curvilinear appendages sprouts from the secondary medallions in the center row.

This embroidery, with its naiveté and charm, is a hodge-podge of forms: free-wheeling exuberance is mixed with the staid angularity of pseudo woven shapes. Two completely different esthetics have been combined. Even the embroidery's narrow border is composed of motifs that are structurally generated in *woven* form: they are small, rather weak, serrated medallions. The embroidery's numerous inconsistencies tell us that this needleworker copied standard rug motifs, then filled in her background freely, in a comfortable, familiar and unrestrained manner.

Conversely, not a single embroidery characteristic appears in the large, formal workshop carpet. The carpet's execution shows no attempt to circumvent the natural limitations or inclinations of its technique. [30] Over the years, in this Caucasian carpet tradition, lancet leaves and palmettes, both with angular interior details, gradually changed from crisp, cohesive forms to an assortment of bulges, angles and protrusions. It is completely illogical that an embroiderer, working with no loom constraints should have devised, by coincidence, this particular *woven* convention -- especially a degenerate woven convention that represents merely one stage in a long evolutionary sequence. The various elements in this design are easily traced to early dragon rugs and even earlier Persian floral carpets.

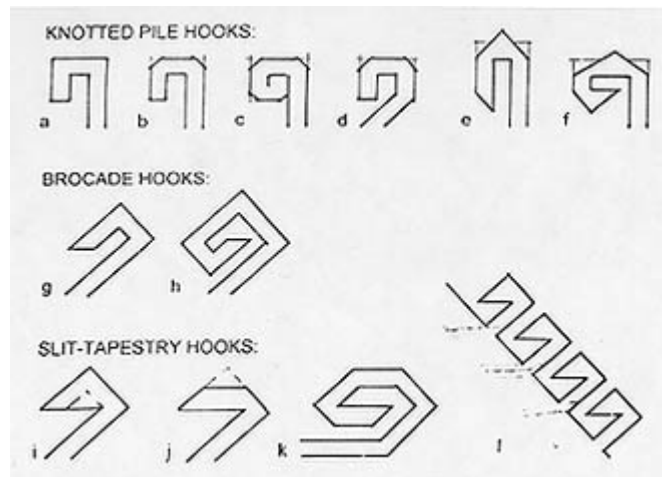
But we need hardly be aware of this history to identify the needlework as a copy. Not only are the *differences* between the embroidery and the knotted carpet informative, the *similarities* are telling. Since the nearly identical motifs in the two pieces reflect basic knotted-pile design limitations, and minor motifs in the embroidery transcend such limitations, our basic premise applies: design influence has flowed in the normal direction, from the more restrictive to the freer medium.



**Azerbaijani
Embroidery. Detail,
HALI 48, cover. Textile
Museum, 2.18**

Variations on One Design Element: The Anatomy of a Hook

I would like now to follow a single detail as it travels about from one textile medium to another. I would like to examine the *anatomy of a hook*.



In knotted pile, the hook is most naturally an angular, horizontal and vertical device, although its outer corners can be easily rounded. This Memling gul illustrates both forms. The most naturally evolving hooked form in decorated reed screens is also the simple horizontal and vertical version.

Knotted hooks can be refined or elaborated in a number of ways. A diagonal stem can be added to make the form seem more curvilinear. The all-over hooked patterns in Aimak (Mushwani) carpets use this kind of form. [31] If, on a larger scale, the interior corners are rounded as well, the form becomes octagonal.



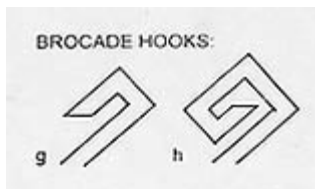
Figure 28. Two kinds of knotted-pile hooks: rectangular and rounded. Central Anatolia.





Points may be added to the top, bottom or sides of knotted-pile hooks, while the interior, basic structure remains horizontal and vertical. Some Caucasian rugs exemplify this approach, as do a great many Turkmen weavings.

Figure 29. Rectangular knotted-pile hooks with points added. The Caucasus.



In contrast, brocade hooks are normally diagonal, formed of progressively offset weft floats. They are angular and linear, with the parts neatly parallel.

This diagonal form is sometimes duplicated in knotted pile. These hooks often appear in Baluch knotted-pile borders, as well as in one type of Yomud asmalyk field (below). We see brocade-type hooks in the border figures of the early Anatolian animal carpet in the Metropolitan Museum. [32] This kind of hook sometimes becomes an angular spiral.



Figure 30. Diagonal brocade hooks. Kurdish cover, Anatolia.



Figure 31. Brocade-type hooks in knotted pile. Yomud asmalyk.

None of these forms is satisfactory for slit tapestry. The first, the vertical and horizontal knotted-pile hook, requires long slits. The second, the brocade hook, with parallel diagonals, makes an extremely weak slit-tapestry structure. The tapestry weaver's solution is ingenious: she simply adds a stabilizing horizontal element to the basic diagonal brocade form by filling in the crook to make a triangular-ended form. This way it is strong. This hook is everywhere in kilims -- always diagonal and horizontal.

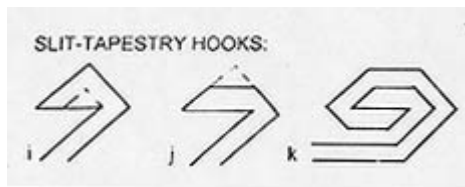


Figure 32. Medallions with reciprocal slit-tapestry hooks. Konya kilim, Central Anatolia



Standard kilim hooks can be flattened or rounded on top and still maintain their structural integrity. When kilim hooks are elaborated to become spirals, they are often flattened. This emphasizes their horizontal and diagonal orientation and makes a stronger construction.

Figure 33. Flattened slit-tapestry hooks. Kilim from the Burdur area of Western Anatolia.



When hooks are used to edge a kilim medallion, the wefts forming the stem of each hook cross into the medallion or diagonal border itself, significantly strengthening an otherwise long, weak diagonal edge. Such kilim hooks are more than pure ornamentation. When we ponder the origins of the common hooked medallion, we must consider this important structural function.



When we see kilim hooks copied in knotted-pile rugs, this detail provides useful information on the carpet's tradition. Kilim-type hooks, for example, are prominent in the early Berlin "Dragon and Phoenix" carpet, and in the Metropolitan Museum's early Anatolian animal rug. In the "Marby" carpet (shown here) we see generic kilim hooks, but also awkward attempts to adapt these hooks to vertical and horizontal medallion edges. This is most unnatural in slit tapestry, where diagonal hooks are constructed only to ornament diagonal edges.



Rarely are graceful, powerful and precisely drawn triangular hooks well articulated in media other than tapestry. Fuzzy pile doesn't do them as well, unless the hooks are very large. Jaf Kurds have used offset knotting to handle triangular hooks somewhat better, but not with total success. [33] Knotted-pile examples that combine various types of hooks, such as this Anatolian rug, typically display strong, well-articulated squared hooks, but weak and wobbly diagonal kilim hooks.



Likewise, soumak textiles often fail to articulate triangular kilim hooks gracefully. This is especially true of Lori/Bakhtiari and Kurd soumak examples [34], but also applies to Shahsevan work. Nor are triangular kilim hooks well suited to the large wrapped units of decorated reed screens (below). We must remember that articulation is an important clue to a motif's origin. Clarity is important. If a form is consistently clumsy, it probably originated elsewhere.

Figure 34. Knotted-pile carpet with both rectangular hooks and triangular kilim-type hooks. Central Anatolia. Courtesy, Harald Böhmer.



Figure 35. Kurdish reed screen with triangular kilim-type hooks. Eastern Anatolia. Courtesy, Josephine Powell.

In assimilating triangular kilim hooks, the weaver of this weft-substitution rug turned half of her red hooks sideways -- those at the top and bottom of the central motif. Knotted-pile carpet weavers sometimes do the same, since tapestry restraints do not apply.

The Seljuk carpet below has triangular kilim hooks fitted neatly into the side border design. But the top border is a mess. This weaver seems to have been comfortable with the ordinary kilim form, but could not handle the vertical adaptation she truly needed when her knotted kufic border changed directions at the top.



Figure 36. Weft-substitution weave with half of the triangular kilim-type hooks turned sideways. Afshar, South Persia.



Figure 37. Konya knotted-pile carpet. Kilim-type hooks are featured in the kufic border; they change directions unsuccessfully in the end border at the top. Turk ve Islam Eserleri Muzesi, Istanbul, Inv. no. 681.

The weaver of the Bergama carpet below has used traditional pairs of small rounded pile-carpet hooks to ornament the top, bottom and sides of her medallions. On the diagonal edges she has substituted diagonal, triangular kilim hooks. We can understand this substitution if we look inside the medallions at the radiating arms. There, on the diagonal, she had considerable difficulty in handling the usual carpet forms. The substitution of flatweave forms for standard knotted-pile carpet conventions, the appropriateness of such forms, and the degree to which they are integrated, are all useful clues in tracing a tradition's development.



Figure 38. Bergama knotted-pile carpet showing the substitution of kilim hooks for standard carpet forms on diagonal medallion edges. Western Anatolia.

Most importantly, though, when we follow our hook from medium to medium, we must be aware that **RECIPROCAL** designs are much more likely to evolve in certain weaves than in others. The freedom inherent in knotting and soumak neither fosters nor discourages reciprocity. In more restrictive weaves, however, reciprocity is either a natural characteristic or is encouraged to varying degrees. In one of the most common kinds of Anatolian brocading, for example, three-span floats alternate on a fabric's front and back sides, automatically forming designs with reciprocal elements (Figure 30). In warp substitution, warp tension problems encourage reciprocity. In these cases reciprocity is *structurally generated*.

On the other hand, the reciprocal designs characteristic of slit tapestry are encouraged by the unique *weaving process*. A slit-tapestry artisan need not complete rows of weaving across a kilim's entire width. Instead, she can weave individual sections separately. There is only one restriction: sections *below* diagonals must be woven before anything *above* those diagonals. Thus sections of the background often must be woven before positive parts of the design. Everything is



Figure 39. Slit-tapestry

simplified if the background consists of well understood shapes. Because of this, motifs with identical but reversed positive and negative shapes -- interlocking hooks of the same size and the same shape -- develop naturally in slit tapestry. The weaver of the kilim shown on the loom is constructing identical, interlocking red and black hooks.

kilim on the loom, with reciprocal hooks being woven. Fethiye area of Southwestern Anatolia.

The reciprocal design in the Konya kilim of Figure 32 (detail below) is truly basic--it is *technique generated*. Similar hooked forms are found in slit tapestry around the world. The Peruvian slit-tapestry tunic below, from the 11th century, has the same forms.



Figure 40. Reciprocal slit-tapestry hooks of archetypal form in an Ica/Chincha tunic. Peru, c. 1000 A.D.

Courtesy, Paul Hughes.

Reciprocal hooked designs certainly can be copied in knotted pile, soumak or even embroidery. But maintaining such forms over a long period, when they are not inherently natural, is another matter. The critical proportions are easily changed; reciprocity is easily lost. In the Konya pile carpets below, we see the typical progression: on the left, brocade-type hooks edging the medallions are reciprocal. In a later carpet, on the right, the hooks have become merely stuck-on, sprawling curls. They are not integral parts.



Figure 41. Konya knotted-pile carpet with reciprocal brocade-type hooks lining the medallions. Central Turkey. Courtesy, Sotheby's.

Figure 42. Konya knotted-pile carpet with non-reciprocal hooks lining the medallions. Central Turkey. Courtesy, Harald Böhmer.

Most "dyrnak" guls in Turkmen carpets feature both knotted-pile hooks and triangular kilim hooks. In the Gökkan example on the left, the kilim hooks are reciprocal; in the Ersari example, reciprocity has been lost. This kind of change -- the loss of reciprocity -- occurs much less often in slit tapestry, because the tapestry process exerts the same design pressures on modern weavers as it did on weavers centuries ago.



Figure 43. Gökkan knotted-pile carpet with guls formed of reciprocal hooks.

Figure 44. Ersari knotted-pile juval showing the loss of reciprocity in the hooked dyrnak guls.



In tapestry, when hooks become decorative space fillers, stuck-on flourishes, or sprawling totems, the motifs may be exotic or dramatic, they may have symbolic meaning, but they are not truly archetypal forms. They are mutant offspring.

Likewise, in soumak variations, when skinny, non-reciprocal triangular hooks become irregular bird or animal-head attachments, as in Lori/Bakhtiari soumak work, they stray far from the archetype. It is my opinion that the purest triangular hooked forms -- the prototypes -- are reciprocal forms, rooted in slit-tapestry production. Knotted-pile and soumak versions are copies or adaptations, not always degenerate, but certainly derivative.

Figure 45. Kuba slit-tapestry kilim showing a loss of reciprocity in the hooked elements. Caucasus



Figure 46. Lori/Bakhtiari soumak "animal-head" column composed of diagonal/triangular hooked forms far removed from reciprocal slit-tapestry medallion archetypes. Courtesy, James Opie.

Conclusion

Design influence flows normally from restrictive to less restrictive techniques. Design features that are dictated by structural limitations clearly indicate their origins. Structural problems should alert us to outside influences. Inconsistencies in design execution often indicate diverse design sources. Fine articulation, cohesiveness and strong positive/negative design relationships can point us toward likely origins. And last, design change and disintegration is accelerated as motifs migrate from medium to medium, since different technical

constraints apply.

Studies of design origin have often been characterized by baseless theorizing, unsubstantiated claims, and wishful thinking. Work in this field must, at the very least, be based on an understanding of the following questions:

1. Can any single design be produced, without changes, in every fiber medium?

The answer: No. Several structures and techniques are so restrictive that they prevent the use of certain forms without substantial alteration.

2. Do designs exist that are technique dependent -- that can be produced in only one medium?

The answer: No. The freest techniques -- soumak, knotting and embroidery -- can copy almost anything. More restrictive structures permit limited design exchanges.

3. Are certain designs typical of particular techniques or structures? Are there truly technique-generated designs?

The answer: Yes, definitely. With every weave structure and process, a distinctive repertoire of naturally evolving forms is generated. It is in the medium of its origin that each pure, archetypal form is found.

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25. A related kind of alteration is apparent in a knotted rug illustrated by James Opie, *op. cit.*, Plate 14.14. Although this rug has vertically banded patterning, it is not, as Opie suggests, a copy of a warp-patterned jajim design. Instead, it shows weft-substitution patterning turned on end. Although this knotted example closely copies a familiar flatweave product, it is easy to imagine how subsequent changes might effectively add to the confusion concerning its origin.
26. **Soumak wrapping is slightly more continuous, linear and horizontal in its emphasis than knotted pile. The soumak weaver is more likely to separate ground and figure -- to "in-fill" a background -- than is a knotted-pile weaver. Positive and negative forms are less often given equal attention.**
27. **See M. Mallett, 1993, for a discussion of ways that an unsuitable weave balance, along with contrasting styles of**

patterning execution, can indicate pattern borrowings.

- 28. See Jennifer Wearden, "A Synthesis of Contrasts," *HALI* 59, pp. 103-111. See also, Carol Bier, "Weavings from the Caucasus: Tradition and Technology," *HALI* 48, pp. 16-25. Provocative articles by Christine Klose have been concerned with a limited group of embroideries that raises a separate set of questions.**
- 29. The Textile Museum embroidery is also published as the cover photo of *HALI* 48. This same embroidery appears as Fig. 9 (p. 17) in C.G. Ellis, *Early Caucasian Rugs*, Washington, 1975, where it can be compared with a closely related carpet in Plate 26.**
- 30. Embroidery characteristics occasionally discernable in weavings, along with the woven features that often appear in embroideries, make up a complex subject in itself. It is the striking inconsistencies that are of primary importance in the current embroidery example. We find parallel kinds of design inconsistencies in village knotted-pile carpets that include motifs borrowed from brocading, warp substitution, tapestry, etc.**
- 31. See Opie, *op. cit.*, Plate 13.21 or Jeff Boucher, *Baluchi Treasures*, Alexandria, Virginia, 1989, Plates 62 and 63.**
- 32. See *HALI* 53, p. 154.**
- 33. Opie, *op. cit.*, Plate 9.9.**
- 34. Opie, *op. cit.*, Plates 5.37 and 8.6.**

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