

## **The element of heritage as one of the sources of contemporary creativity (Case study)**

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### **Abstract:**

Cultural heritage is considered one of the basic elements that define the features of a society and specify its cultural identity as it grants uniqueness to its inhabitants that allows its cohesiveness, stability and personality. Through what it represents from continuous cultural creativity that have been lasting for centuries, starting with primitive art till the enormous art variations and their connections with significant crafts in the society

1

. Folk arts are considered major part of the cultural heritage, as the folk heritage is basically consists of people habits and traditions, what they express of thoughts and views that are transmitted from one generation to the other, and it is a sequel to the public folklore as in folk tales, legendary and heroic stories, it also includes crafts, arts and kids' poetic tales, as well as public quotes, urban legends, ceremonies and religious celebrations.

Many meanings and symbols that express the Egyptian identity are found within the heritage elements. Many Egyptian artists have used the public folk heritage elements at their artistic works. The folk, artistic heritage is considered a basic component of the Egyptian personality. Inherited Handy crafts are considered a distinguished, civilized, cultural heritage that the Egyptian habitant is characterized by; especially at Upper Egypt, Northern Sinai and Siwa oasis. Siwi handy crafts have been chosen as a field of study and experiment as they are considered elements for innovation to produce contemporary artistic pieces.

### **Key words:**

heritage element- contemporary innovation- arts and crafts.

### **The research problem:**

How effective is the heritage element of the folk arts on the artistic work? As well as the cultural and social significances that are confirmed by the artistic models through this study, to benefit from the heritage vocabularies to confirm the identity in the contemporary works by reviving the heritage.

**The aim of the study is** to create contemporary, artistic works that are inspired from the heritage.

### **The research significance:**

- Identify the cultural inheritance through the heritage crafts.
- Identification of artistic works that handled the folk heritage.
- Identification of the crafty artist and, fine artist by the significances of their works.

**The research aims:**

- Benefiting from heritage handy crafts in producing illustrations or photographic, artistic works that have originality and contemporaneity.
- Documenting the cultural inheritance through the artistic pieces.

**The research hypothesis:**

The research assumes that studying the Siwi heritage crafts as a visual stimulus that acts as source of inspiration for the artist to produce contemporary artistic works whether oil illustration or photographic photos inspired from the cultural inheritance.

**The research limitations:**

**Spatial limits:** Siwa oasis as it is the area that the study is concerned with.

**Time limits:** includes all ancient handy crafts till the time being.

**The research methodology:**

It follows the analytical methodology through the analysis of some fine, artistic works of Egyptian artists. Then the experimental methodology by doing a case study of the heritage elements in Siwa to produce abstracted, expressive, artistic works.

**Introduction:**

Art is considered an important social and cultural phenomenon in the society as it always reflects the dominant social circumstances and evolves according to its laws. The social history of art confirms that the social forms can't appear out of only individual conscious but they express a certain view that the society specify towards the world. Knowing that the cultural and intellectual influence of the art in its manifestation of certain moral or philosophical ideas that are linked to reality of all categories of the society<sup>1</sup>.

Cultural and civilizational heritage of nations is considered a source for creativity and inspiration to all fields in particularly in our country that has many monuments of several civilizations that have passed by it throughout ages and left many kinds of arts that enriched the imagination of artists and designers at many fields.

2

The importance of the research is related to identification of the field of heritage culture and focusing specifically on heritage handy crafts in Siwa. A handy crafter is a man who is professional at his occupation though the general concept of the art that it is a spontaneous, free action characterized by liberty and creativity, but the social point of view is just the opposite of that, as it sees the artist as the professional individual who introduces a positive work that has its influence in the core of social life and it is most significant that the artistic activity has gone deeper inside the society.<sup>3</sup>

**Identification of the heritage:**

There is no specific identification of it but there are many about scientists and writers who wrote about heritage, especially Philips' identification; he is one of heritage and archeology scientists, he says:

“heritage is considered a broad cultural continuity in both fields of time and place, it is specified according to the continuous formations of the total culture which includes a relatively long period of time and a variable spatial place but environmentally distinguished”.

The American scientist Harsco Vets the famous folklore scientist (1895-1963) thinks that heritage is a synonymous for culture, that means it is a vital part of people culture and isn't disconnected from it.

Dr. Abd Al-Hamid Al-Kafafy <sup>4</sup> mentioned that heritage in the Arabic dictionaries and in the Arabic literature is what we inherited from our ancestors and it is originated from the word inherit.

So in order to have an Arabic word that is a synonymous for the English world folklore, the academy of Arabic language decided to use the word heritage instead of folklore.

### **Difference between civil and folk heritage (folklore):**

The word heritage includes all what the ancestors have left of manuscripts, sciences (medical, astronomical, industrial, etc.), buildings, castles, and arts (illustrations, music, songs, dances, etc.). they are all included within the word heritage so a specific vocab has to be determined for the word folklore to separate it from the civilizational or the national heritage, whenever you notice <sup>5</sup>

the word folklore it is expressing the folk heritage and it is consisted of 2 syllabi which the academy of Arabic language has translated into 2 words which are “the folk traditions” and study folklore has been linked to human science

<sup>6</sup>

### **Identification of folk heritage:**

It is an art that represents people habits and traditions and what they express from opinions, ideas and feelings that are being transferred from one generation to the other. The biggest part of the folk heritage is consisted of folk tales such as poems, sonnets, urban legends, heroic and legendary tales. It also includes arts, crafts, dances, games, songs, kids lullaby, myths, ceremonies and religious celebrations. <sup>7</sup>

Safwat Kamal has described it saying” it is an art that grants the Arabian life a civilized, aesthetic and distinguish style. At the same time, it confirms the genuine connection of the Arabian individual in the unity of expression about the unity of intellect and inner feelings with the integration of the psychological mood in creating life on his land”. <sup>8</sup>

Abd Al-Ghany Al-Shal thinks that one of the common mistakes that the folk art is thought to be a primitive art cause the word primitive has a historical significance and is related to the first humane civilizations. <sup>9</sup>

### **Types and forms of heritage:**

1- **Civilizational heritage:** it includes what the ancestors have left of ancient heritage such as monuments with all its types and includes (Babylon, Sumerian, Assyrian) heritage with all its regulars from manuscripts, pots, tonsils, drawings and inscriptions which is called “ancient archeology”.

2- **National heritage:** it includes the time period when all nationalities appeared and each has created and maintained its own specific system, hence appeared nations and nationalities that cherish their heritage, scientists, poets, singers, thinkers and physicians. Romanian, Persian,

Greek, and Arabic nationalities have appeared and took independent national forms of language, land and people where modern history of each nation was built.

3- **Folk heritage:** it is complementary for the previous 2 types; the civilizational and the national, where each group or habitat has obtained its characteristics of habits, traditions, industries, costumes, etc.

Scientists of anthropology were more accurate as they divided the heritage into branches and sections to give each its share of specific and précised study <sup>10</sup>. There are many divisions for heritage including unmaterialistic heritage which includes (dances, and songs). Cultural heritage includes all cultures of (songs, poems, tales, myths, epics, etc.) which confirms the undeniable clear fact that heritage isn't just some old literature or ancient ancestors' writings but it lives integrated within the culture of the people and the major part of the heritage is inside the folklore which has a distinguished culture called the folk culture that is different than the official written culture that has been written by modern authors and writers in novels and short stories.

### **Resources of heritage:**

what our ancestors left for us from written resources are the most important field of study for researchers about heritage, come next place are books from Arabic, foreigners' travelers and orients in addition to documents and manuscripts that all give an integrated image about the various life aspects that have been extinct. But daily human life is something that can't be ignored, all experiences from previous communities have transferred to the contemporary culture. Some researchers tend to consider heritage as a cultural phenomenon that has stopped evolving and was linked to a certain historical era.

Bottom of line is that researchers of heritage are mostly concerned about written resources in particularly in the Arabic world. We shouldn't oversight the role of ancient Arabian scientists such as Al-Gahez who wrote about the public life at his age, about troublemakers, beggars and brats, between (775-868), his book "the stingy" is the best witness to that. So as Abd Allah son of Al-Mokafaa (759) with his book "Kaleela and Demna". "book of songs for Abu Al-Farag Al-Asfahany (897-967). Al-Farabi with his great musical book (950) and Ayman Khaldon with his well-known intro. <sup>11</sup>

Since a human being is considered a result of an interaction among environmental conditions and inheritance factors that affect his various expressions and reactions that we can find at all forms of visual arts and colors' values that all depend on the cultural storage that leads to the artist creativity. Traditional crafts are the result of previous communities that had history and civilization and they are the product of environmental crafts that are directly related to daily life and reality as they express folk traditions and beliefs with aesthetical and beneficial values that show a handy skill and a spontaneous artistic sensation that leads to natural sense of beauty, the will to continuous

renovation and innovation. Crafty arts for the artist are considered ways to satisfy his artistic sensation and humanitarian needs in the form of a creative, artistic product that has an aesthetical taste that reflects on the successive generations <sup>12</sup>.

After the researcher visit to Siwa during the Siwi ceremonies, she did a few experiments that were shown at Mahmoud Mokhtar museum among the exhibition of the artists of the siwi

ceremonies at 2012, then the researcher made some visits to Siwa to continue with the artistic pieces that are inspired by the Siwi crafts.

### **Briefs about Siwa:-**

Herodotus said” people of Siwa; some talk with an Egyptian tongue, the others with an Ethiopian tongue” “they talk the Berber language which spreads at northern Africa and is called “Amazigh” but due to its historical isolation, its language has become a bit different that the northern African language, some Siwi letters were found and they are called (Tifnar), people of Siwa still speak their language at their daily life”.

Al- Maqrizi said” it’s an oasis that is inhabited by 600 persons of Berber and their language sounds like the language of Zenata. It has gardens of palm trees and is an 11 days walk from Alexandria, 14 days walk from Giza. It is famous with healing tourism and has its own, unique architecture where traditional houses are built by the archives stones which consist of salt and soft sand mixed with soil (shape1), doors and windows are made of olives, palms’ trees, (shape2).



**Shape 1 Shali castle- photo credit to the researcher- Siwa**



**Shape 2 shows windows and doors- photo credit to the researcher- Siwa**

### The Siwi crafts:

Siwa is known for having the best handy crafts among the oasis of the western desert where you can buy the best handmade textiles such as embroidered carpets, shape4, unique tajines made of clay, desert tonsils with its traditional pyramidal shape- hand made and decorated beautifully, they are made by putting them inside the baking ovens. Pottery handcrafts are considered are of the most distinguished traditional crafts in the oasis, shape 3.

Embroidery is one of the most important crafts, there are embroidered, traditional, barbarian wedding gowns as Siwa is characterized by wedding nights as the bride put on 7 various dresses on top of each other; the 1<sup>st</sup> one is transparent, the 2<sup>nd</sup> is red, 3<sup>rd</sup> is black, 4<sup>th</sup> is yellow, 5<sup>th</sup> is blue, 6<sup>th</sup> is pink silk and the outer 7<sup>th</sup> dress is embroidered. Shape 5,6.

In the oasis of Siwa men wear short galabia with a pants beneath it and a vest on top of it and a hat, shape7. Women wear a long galabia that covers all her body. Those traditional styles are being inherited through generations all over Egypt and they reflect the folk beliefs and concepts of the nature of the environment, shape 8,9 <sup>13</sup>.



Shape 3 shows handmade pottery- Siwa museum- photo credit to the researcher



Shape 4 shows some of the handcrafts in Siwa.



Shape 5,6 show the bridal embroidered gown. Siwa museum- photo credit to the researcher.



Shape 7 shows the male outfit



Shape 8 the bridal embroidered gown- Siwa.

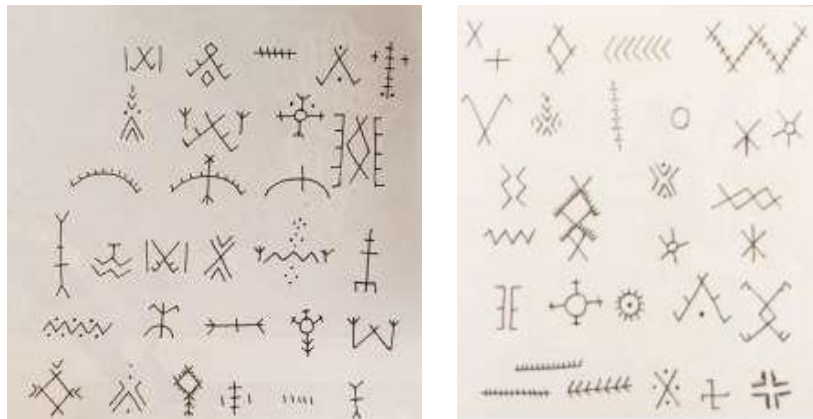




Shape 9 shows the female outfit in Siwa.

### The embroidery units in Siwa could be classified into:

- 1- **Geometrical embroidery units:** such as (triangle, square, rectangle and they are presented in the traditional industries in the oasis)
- 2- **Botanic embroidery units:** such as (leaves and palms and they are being used in making pots, costumes, amulets and palm leaves are also used in decorating some wooden boxes)
- 3- **Various embroidery units:** (animal or human) like using fish or hands, spiders in an abstract way. Shape 10,11.
- 4- **Embroidery units from calligraphy** like sentences “Alla Akbar” that is added on jewels, spells and wooden boxes <sup>14</sup>. Shape 12.



Shape 10,11 shows the Various embroidery forms in Siwa



Shape 12 shows decoration on a wooden box- Siwa museum- photo credit to the researcher.

### Artistic symbols and their significances in Siwa:

- 1- **Crescent moon and a star:** it is a symbol for god Seen (god of moon) for ancient Egyptians, while crescent moon is a spell against envy in the folk beliefs and they are used in silver jewelry like rings.



- 2- **Triangle:** symbolizes the eye in the Siwi beliefs and it is used against envy and they put it on veils and female cloth.
- 3- **Circle:** symbolizes the sun as the oasis was a home foe worshipping god Amon and his symbol was the sun.
- 4- **Written sentences:** their use is limited to be added to boxes and amulets.
- 5- **Square and rectangle:** represent the abstract form of the eye and used to push envy away.
- 6- **Botanic symbols:** like palms which represent good and blessings, it is significant for the life of the bride <sup>15</sup> , one of the Siwi habit that the groom give a heart of a palm as a gift for his bride before the wedding.
- 7- **Fish** they symbolize good and they are used in decorating silver rings.
- 8- **Animals like the lion** which symbolizes power and it has been used on illustration on some pieces of furniture as in the Siwi box at shape 12, in shape 13,14 show the use of motifs recently and in the past at Siwa as it keeps its heritage till now.



Shape 13- Siwi motifs that have been done lately



shape 14- old Siwi motifs and jewelry.



Shape 15 shows costumes and jewelry in Siwa museum- photo credit to the researcher.

### **Examples of artists who handled the folk heritage in their artistic works:**

The generation of the pioneers was affected by the folk heritage in Egypt, such as Mohamed Nagy, Mahmoud Saied, Abd El-Hady Al-Gazar, Hamed Nada, Taheia Halim, Gazebya Serry. They introduced artistic works that were inspired from the public environment and used new artistic forms that match the social and political transformations that Egypt had witnessed during that time, a contemporary, artistic direction was evolved that is based on deepening itself by inspiring elements from the folk heritage and the public environment.

### **Group of “the Contemporary Egyptian art”:**

That group was formed in 1946, its pioneer was the artist Hussin Youssef Ameen, and one of its greatest artists were Abd El-Hady Al-Gazar, Hamed Nada, Samir Rafea, Maher Raef. Those artists managed to go deep inside the subconscious to what’s beyond the surfaces of the

folk life, they inspired their expressive symbols from symbols of folk arts from the depth of the Egyptian habitat.

Here we are about to discuss some examples of Egyptian artists who inspired their paintings from the folk heritage (Abd El-Hady Al-Gazar, Hamed Nada, Taheia Halim, Gazebya Serry). We find at shapes 16,17,18,19 how the folk heritage life affected those works, and how the works have expressed the Egyptian identity. One of the principles of the group of Contemporary Egyptian art is to look for whatever is bizarre in the folk life, the most significant basic that the group was concerned about is the psychological vision for what's beyond the heritage elements where all contradictions mix from truth to illusions and they have expressed those contradictions with symbols that have deep, folk significances and a skilled psychoanalysis <sup>16</sup>. We can notice the artists cared about adding the human element in the artistic works, it has become the basic axis that all works are revolving around. Also the color in the public heritage was linked to the folk beliefs across ages, those inheritances were reflected in the inherited folk arts generation after generation, we can find the green, red and blue colors in the same shades that have been inspired from the habitat, shade of red that resemble the color of henna, shades of blue in the color of the farmers' galabias and baby blue as the color of the Nile, shades of green that resemble fields of clover <sup>17</sup>.



Shape16 Abd El-Hady Al-Gazar, Al-Mawled,1955.



Shape17 Taheia Halim, oil on fabric.



Shape18 Gazebya Serry- oil on fabric.



Shape19 Hamed Nada pastel and coal on cardboard.

from the previous we can tell that the artists used symbolism to express the folk heritage as it is a world that rely on habits and beliefs, the symbol with its original meaning is a sign or a clue of something else. E. Cassirer said that it is just a sign that is full of significance, language, myth or knowledge are nothing but symbolic forms. Formation using symbol is one of the most significant functions of the mind. The Symbolic function allowed human to create language and culture and whatever is related to it from arts or literature of the simplest form of myth and legend to the various forms of arts. Hence the society is responsible for giving a meaning to the symbol<sup>2</sup>. From the previous we can find that folk heritage is a fertilized land for any artist as it is an environment that is full of symbols and expression<sup>18</sup>. That's why the researcher chose the heritage element in inspiring contemporary artistic works. The researcher also tried to produce some works that manifest the heritage element and Siwa.

### **The applied experiments of the researcher:**

After clarifying the most important heritage craft in Siwa which are considered a resource for innovation for any artist. The researcher made some artistic experiments during the Siwi ceremony (that were shown at Mahmoud Mokhtar museum, Isis hall during the exhibition of "products of the Siwi ceremony 2012" also some photographic images were shown at Al-Nile salon, a collaborative exhibition in UAE and another one in Turkey. The researcher handled some of the Siwi handicrafts that are made in Siwa such as "handmade porcelain- the Siwi doll" in addition to the Siwi houses as they are characterized by different architectural shape.

### **1- The first application for the researcher; shape20:**

The researcher used the heritage crafty elements in the proposed works:

The Siwi doll is one of the crafts that women do as this canvas doll is considered the mean of entertainment that the little kids are using to play and it is also considered one of the touristic products that is sold to foreigners as it is dressed in the same outfit that the Siwi male or female is wearing, also the camel toy as Siwa is known for camels. We find in the coming piece of work that the symbolic, expressive school is clear, camel in shape 20 is a symbol for the nature of the desert life as it has a huge importance in the Bedouin life, it is a mean of transportation, travelling and a source of nutrition, embroidery on camels expresses the craft of embroidery that most Siwi women took as their professionalism. The geometrical motifs on the shape of triangles, dots or repeated, tiny, pyramidal granules, those motifs go on and on unstopped as the desert is extended without stopping and those are the aesthetical values in the artistic piece. While the male doll which resembles the Siwi male costume on a canvas doll. The idea was to symbolize the nature of the daily life in Siwa. The artist tried to transmit the nature of the life through the canvas dolls. We can realize the simple lines and motifs and the trial to mimic the nature of life through the crafty elements. Color is considered one of the important elements in building the artistic piece, the researcher used the shade of brownish yellow that expresses the desert and earthy colors in the background as color is such a significant element in the school of symbolism.



Shape 20 acrylic on roll 60\*90- the work was shown in a collaborative exhibition in UAE by the ministry of culture- 2018.

## 2- The second application, shapes 21,22:

The researcher tried to create a doll that is to be a symbol of the nature of life that is not just about the external appearance that it was nothing but a doll, the research confirmed that meaning by emitting the eyes as in shape 21, the purpose is for those dolls to express the nature of people in the reality but in a symbolic way through the dolls, also the use of the Siwi costumes that are being embroidered, the painting is resembling the Siwi bride and groom. The use of the blue color is to express the clarity of the weather and the freshness of the air in Siwa.



Shape 21 acrylic on roll 60\*90- the work was shown in a collaborative exhibition in UAE by the ministry of culture- 2018.





Shape 22 acrylic on roll 50\*35- the work was shown in a collaborative exhibition in UAE by the ministry of culture- 2018.

### 3- The third application, shapes 23,24.



Shape 23 acrylic on roll 40\*50- the work was shown in a collaborative exhibition in Turkey - 2014.



Shape 24 Lino print on paper- various color experiments- the work was shown in a collaborative exhibition in Turkey - 2014.

The researcher tried to focus on the aesthetics of the artistic work from texture, color and composition as the external analysis of the aesthetics on the characteristics of the subject that affect the aesthetical responses like size, color, composition, external look, balance, etc. while the symbolic analysis focuses on meanings, significances and symbols that are being linked to

the characteristics of the appearance. Portius distinguished the various forms of aesthetics; sensual, symbolic or formal. Sensual aesthetics care about those pleasure that human feels when he receives certain emotions from the environment. While formal aesthetics are more about tasting forms, rhythm, voids and masses. Symbolic aesthetics are about the meanings that exist from the environment and its culture, habits and traditions <sup>19</sup>.

#### 4- The fourth application, shapes 25-26-27:



Shape 25 acrylic on roll 50\*35 cm.



Shape 26 acrylic on roll 50\*35 cm.



Shape 26 acrylic on roll 70\*50 cm. that collection was shown among the exhibition of Siwa ceremony-2012

#### The application of photography by the researcher, shapes 28-29-30-31:

The experiment wasn't limited to drawing only but the researcher also used photography to utilize the elements of heritage in Siwa to produce artistic works that express Siwa. photography played a major role in the various social life, since they appeared at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Voltaire Benjamin wrote that technological changes have their major influence on the meaning of art in the society <sup>20</sup> and an artist should use all the available tools to express the artistic content and link it to technology and cultural inheritance, photography is no longer just about documenting, camera has become a tool for expression like colors and brush that an artist could control his tools the way he wishes.

In shape 28 the researcher expressed the Siwi doll and camel, she used the heritage element in a symbolic form as the doll in her artistic piece is an expression about the Siwi woman. Woman in Siwa gets married at a young age as marriage is every little girl's dream once she hits her 17 as she is being brought up to that since she was young and the researcher expressed the common idea of girl waiting to get married and the artist used the symbolic meaning through the shadow of the camel as the girls who is dreaming about marriage is waiting for this shadow, lighting had a significant role in promoting the meaning.



Shape 28



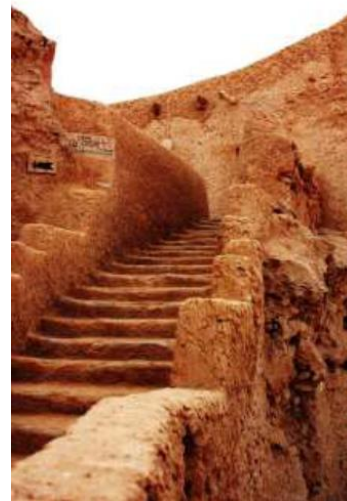
shape 29

Shape 28 is a photograph 100\*70 cm- print on wood- was shown at the Nile salon for photography- the palace of arts- opera house.

Shape 29 is a photograph 100\*70 cm- print on wood- was shown at Mahmoud Mokhtar museum, Isis hall during the exhibition of "the Siwi ceremony"



shape 30



shape 31

Shape 30 is a photograph of mosque of the old Shali village 100\*70 cm - was shown at Mahmoud Mokhtar museum, Isis hall during the exhibition of "the Siwi ceremony".

Shape 31 is a photograph of houses of the old Shali village 100\*70 cm - was shown at a collaborative exhibition in Turkey



**The research results:**

- 1- The significance of experimenting to reveal new elements and vocabs that enrich the innovation process of the artist.
- 2- Finding various formative formulations through recognizing the symbolic meanings of the realistic forms.
- 3- The effect of the folk heritage element, that could be used in producing illustrations and photographic artistic works.

**The research recommendations:**

- 1- The significance of experimenting to reveal new elements and vocabs that enrich the innovation process of the artist.
- 2- The necessity to care about crafts and cultural inheritance to maintain our civilizational history.
- 3- An artist should link the Egyptian culture to the development in contemporary art to enrich the artistic work.
- 4- The necessity to care about technology and how to employ it in expressing contemporary artistic works that are connected to the cultural inheritance.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Pp. 137-138

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