

Understanding How They Work: The Agents' Strategies in Producing Indonesian-English Literary Translation

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Abstract

This article contains a study on Yogyakarta literary agents' strategies in producing a translated work from Indonesian into English (Indonesian-English literary work) entitled "Pilgrimage in the Land of Java". Due to the development of literary studies based on the practice of its agents, this study aims to understand more the pattern and vision of agents in producing translated literary work in a particular context. In this case, the agents are a poet Iman Budhi Santosa, an indie publisher Interlude, and a translator Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang. This study adopts the Bourdieusian concept of strategy in cultural production as the framework of thought. Meanwhile, interview and document selection are two primary techniques to collect data for this qualitative research. This study reveals the strategies implemented by the three primary agents during the production of "Pilgrimage in the Land of Java". Although running on the same track, it turns out that each of them had specific strategies based on the role that they possessed during the production. This study also discloses the significance of social capital in translation practice.

Keywords: agents; strategy; Indonesian-English literary work; social capital

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Introduction

The emergence of Indonesian literary works at the Frankfurt Book Fair (FBF) 2015 has shown the attempts made by literary agents in Indonesia to earn global recognition for Indonesian literature in general or even its literary men in particular. With a lengthy historical background (since Johannes

Gutenberg invented the printing machine during the 15th century), FBF has now transformed into a brand mark and a model of the international cultural exhibition, with hundreds of thousands of visitors worldwide attending every year. It is believed that the social capital given by the event can potentially attract the world's public to learn more about the literary culture that is now titled "17.000

Islands of Imagination". Therefore by joining the exhibition, the struggle of Indonesian literature to enter the international scale of literary contestation has moved one step forward.

Since 2007, Indonesia has tried to get involved in FBF by independent initiation from IKAPI (Indonesian Publishers Association). However, that attempt always found deadlock due to a limited source of funds. Until 2009, with serious support from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Tourism (Kemendikbud), Indonesia could routinely be involved in FBF and other international book fairs. The ministry then established the National Committee (later the National Book Committee). This committee must curate potential works that deserve a funding subsidy for the English translation project. Then in 2014, the committee announced the recommended name of writers, publishers, and book titles that earned the subsidy program. Based on the list launched by the ministry, besides essay anthologies, non-literary books, children's books, and comics, there were 79 novels, 57 short story anthologies, 58 poetry anthologies, 14 dramas, one memoir, and also one short story and poetry mixed anthology.

After further exploration, one of the literary translations listed can now be found by the researchers of this study. That particular work is "*Ziarah Tanah Jawa*" (2013) – written by a prominent poet, namely Iman Budhi Santosa – that has been translated into "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*" (2014) and published by Interlude publisher Yogyakarta. This kind of work leads to an interesting fact to be further investigated because it shows the existence of a cultural phenomenon that can produce such a specific literary product.

In the field of Indonesian literature, especially in Yogyakarta, Iman Budhi Santosa's name is highly recognized. This poet is seen as an agent who has a dominant position due to his respected and consistent reputation for decades, having a creative process in the field of Yogyakarta literature (Safitri, 2015; Salam, 2018). During his long-life career, Iman has produced many works in different genres such as the novel, short story anthology, and poetry anthology (including '*geguritan*'). One of his

poetry anthologies is "*Ziarah Tanah Jawa*" – containing a collection of 81 poems from 2006 until 2012 – translated into the English version "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*" by a translator namely Siddha Malilang, and published by Interlude publisher.

An interesting fact in this discussion is the practice of cultural production that results in 'Indonesian – into – English' (or Indonesian-English) literary work. In this study, the practice behind the production of such literary work is considered attractive because by investigating the practice of the agents during the production of Indonesian-English literary work, it is assumed that the cultural dynamic that happened in the Indonesian literary translation production can be further understood. Accordingly, this study focuses on exploring the strategies of literary agents in the production of "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*". It is conducted to disclose how an Indonesian literary work – that shows Javanese locality – is transformed into the English version.

Scientific studies toward literary translation practice have been developing all around the world. Besides studies that focus on motive or purpose that tend to be various (Yu, 2010; Abdolmaleki, 2018; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Ashcroft, 2014), that literary practice, in general, can also show certain cultural conditions. They can be seen from studies on translators' role, translation institutions, government policy, also strategies and impacts given by literary agents' practice (Tekgül, 2016; Harding, 2014; Zahrawi, 2018; Saito, 2015; Hadley & Akashi, 2015; Xu, 2012; Yuan, 2018; Bai, 2009; Solum, 2018; Haroon, 2017; Lygo, 2016; Daldeniz, 2010; Milani, 2017; Hanna, 2005 & 2009).

However, the study on Indonesian-English literary production is still hard to find in Indonesia. The current condition shows how minimum the attention of literary researchers toward literary translation production and its agents' practice inside. It is proven by the lack of variation in translation studies in Indonesia (Dewi, 2019). In her study, Dewi shows that most translation studies developed in Indonesia only focus on the text, and the investigation of the literary translation process and its agents have not attracted the

attention of Indonesian literary translation scholars. It is ironic since the name of Indonesian literature has been highlighted since 2015 among the world literary public. It will be unfortunate if Indonesian scholars miss such a practice of literary production. Thus, this study can potentially fulfil an empty area that previously seemed ignored by them.

Some scholars have conducted studies on agents' strategies in translated literary production. Among many of them, there are Daldeniz (2010), Xu (2012), Hadley and Akashi (2015), and Zahrawi (2018). Each study focuses on agents such as the translator, publisher, and literary man. Daldeniz develops a study focusing on the strategy and orientation shift of publisher Timaş Yayinlari as an agent of western classical works translation in Turkey. This study highlights (economic) capital conversion as a strategy implemented by Timaş Yayinlari to accumulate or reproduce more capital to adapt to the shift of society's political orientation in a particular period.

In a study related to the translator's strategy, Xu sees that scholar translators tend to raise their visibility by pursuing a different strategy than other translators in literary translation. Here, Xu studies the translation result demonstrated by Jeffrey C. Kinkley toward Shen Congwen's "*Biancheng*". Xu reveals some strategies in this case: 1. Kinkley uses Congwen's literary capital as one of the world's most recognized Chinese writer, 2. Kinkley attaches his reputation as an expert on Congwen's works in his translation work by giving some paratexts (footnote and endnote) that expose his credibility as a scholar.

Almost in line with Xu's study, Hadley and Akashi studied Haruki Murakami's strategy to raise his visibility as a celebrity translator due to his reputation as a prominent literary man. Based on the study, they find that Murakami uses a foreignization strategy for he realizes that this can attract readers' attention to the translator of the work and, eventually, Murakami's role as a celebrity translator.

In the other context, Zahrawi focuses his study on the translator's strategy in negotiating the meaning and keeping cultural identity from the source text into the target text in two different works. The study reveals that both

translations contain various levels of foreignization and domestication. In one literary work, the translator uses a domestication strategy to ease target text readers' understanding of the translated work. Meanwhile, the translator of another work prioritizes the foreignization strategy to keep the cultural identity of the original work before target text readers. Such a study shows that each strategy has its function. In domestication, the translator's target is the high reception of target readers, while in the foreignization strategy, the translator's ultimate aim is to inform the cultural identity of the original text to the readers. Therefore, they can be related to the socio-cultural context where the text was born.

According to those studies, it can be seen how the concept of strategy has become an essential object of discussion to understand various practices possessed by many agents in the production of literary translation. However, none of them realizes that in particular circumstances, the production of literary translation can be a collective work that involves the writer, publisher, and translator as the agents of production. That situation is found in the production of "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*". Here, the poet, the publisher, and the translator work together to produce a work projected to be exhibited in FBF 2015. Instead of seeing literary translation as the product of a translator or publisher only, this present study will see it as a collective form of action. It is potential to see their interaction and strategies during the work production. How they collaborate and strategize to achieve a shared vision must be investigated in this case.

As one of the key concepts from Bourdieu's field of cultural production theory (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 17), the strategy can be viewed as the specific orientation of practice in which this concept is not based on conscious calculation (as a product of habitus), but the result of unconscious dispositions toward practice (*unconsciousness*). Accordingly, the action the agents take follows the game flow (*feel for the game*) that has already been internalized in their mindset. This concept is also directly related to the practice of an agent in social space or particular fields based on their capital. Accordingly, capital can be understood as a set of force and power resources that

agents can use to practice in a specific field of literature.

In this case, Bourdieu (Jenkins, 2013, p. 125, Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 118-120, and Karnanta, 2013, p. 11) categorizes capital into four types: economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. Economic capital can be seen in the form of production tools, materials, and money. Cultural capital is a holistic intellectual qualification that can be produced through formal education or family tradition. Social capital is social networking possessed by an agent with other agents with power or relevant capital. Meanwhile, symbolic capital is a form of accumulated prestige, status, authority, and legitimation.

The practice of producing literary work reflects how an agent fights to struggle and gain some profit in the literary field. In this context, Bourdieu (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 8) believes that when the agents have come into a field, all of their capital has already automatically invested in gaining more capital from their involvement. The general logic that can be used in this case is that none want to get lost in the game they play in that field. Thus, they need strategies to succeed in every production of literary work they run because the result of the production is projected to give more capital to each agent.

That is how investigating literary agents' strategy is vital to understanding socio-cultural implications in the production of literary work, especially to see how they struggle to reach the objective that they aim. Therefore, in the context of literary translation or general literary production practice, the strategy can be investigated both from every action taken by the agents during production and also by comparing the textual form of both source text (ST) and target text (TT), considering TT commonly reflects the production practice and logic behind that work. The strategies implemented by Iman as the poet and Interlude as the publisher is traced further in this particular study. However, specifically for the translator's strategy needs a more specific perspective than the Bourdieusian concept explained previously.

Accordingly, specifically in the typology of text translation, Venuti (Munday, 2016, p. 225-226) explains two translation strategies which are '*domestication*' and '*foreignization*'. Domestication is a translation that emphasizes a transparent and fluent style in the TT. It is intended to minimize the foreignness of the target text as if it is not a translated text. Conversely, foreignization is a translation that prioritizes a heterogeneous style highlighting ST's foreign identity. It is used to preserve the original identity of ST toward the receiving readers so that they can be aware of the linguistic and cultural differences inherent in the foreign text. Those strategies can be seen in how the translator translates some Javanese cultural texts in "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*". Therefore, the strategy implemented by Siddha as a translator will be examined through such a framework.

Methodology

In general, the material object is known as the object that becomes the field of research, while the formal object is the aspect studied from the chosen material object (Udasmoro, 2012). Thus, in this research context, the material object is the production of Indonesian-English literary work entitled "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*" by Iman, Interlude, and Siddha Malilang. Meanwhile, the formal object is the practical strategy implemented by those three main agents during the production of that work.

In the context of this research, studying the strategy implemented during the translation process by those three agents is essential since their strategies are fundamental in the practice of cultural production. In the case of translated literary work production, the agents' strategies are set for their objective accomplishment in the production. Here, the connection among Iman Budhi Santosa as the poet, Interlude as the publisher, and a translator, namely Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang (Siddha), potentially form a kind of inter-agent relation in the process of cultural production that resulted "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*".

By developing a comprehensive understanding of a particular human culture from an objective perspective, this research

focuses on finding relevant data related to the role of some cultural agents and their strategies in producing Indonesian-English literary work. The data are obtained by interviewing the main agents (the poet and the publisher) and observing both the source text (ST) and target text (TT). Specifically, this research needs information about agents' practices that can be explored through some written sources (i.e., journal articles and essays) and asked directly to the agents via interview. Besides, it also needs data on the translator's work by collecting specific texts – in the form of lines and stanzas – both in ST and TT. Those data will be inductively selected and classified based on the research needs to answer the problem stated previously.

As a set of methods to figure out the relationships among data collected, three primary ways are applied for analyzing the data in this research. *First*, analyze data from interviews to understand the roles and actions taken by all literary translation agents during the production process. It is conducted to know how each agent interacts with each other and what kind of responses they take to overcome every challenge faced during the production process. *Second*, analyzing how some selected texts in ST are transformed into TT. This analysis aims to know how some specific acts implemented by the agents are reflected in the final result of the translation work.

Results and Discussion

The Poet's Strategies

According to a direct interview with Iman Budhi Santosa and the Interlude publisher's management, the researchers can finally come up with some findings related to Iman's strategy as the poet in the holistic production process of *"Pilgrimage in the Land of Java"*. There are two main strategies he implemented during the production process. *Firstly*, he uses his networking. *Secondly*, he acts as a mediator to actualize the expected translation spectrum. Before that, it must be known that literary translation production – like general literary production – will never be detached from its agents' preferences. The preference must deal with the positions employed by each agent during the production process. The more

capital (social, cultural, economic, or even symbolic) they possessed, the more power they had to dominate the process. In this context, the researchers see Iman as an agent who has an exceptionally high bargaining position among other agents. Besides his symbolic, cultural, and social capital, he also has economic capital because the fund used for the production was granted to him as the author.

As a prominent literary man participating in the Yogyakarta literature, managing mass media, and other activities, Iman undoubtedly had a wide range of social networking at that time. That condition enabled him to comfortably convert such kind of economic capital into the form of literary work production. Furthermore, he also used his social capital to look for a publisher and translator that could help him produce the work. It must be known that during the pre-production process, Iman chose other agents, such as Interlude publisher and Siddha Malilang, by himself to later support him based on their particular portion. In this case, Sukandar (Interlude's management) was one of Iman's 'ideological apprentices' who confessed that he had learned so much from him. Meanwhile, Siddha had previously worked on translating Iman's other works for his academic purpose. Eventually, it turned out that both Iman and Siddha had similar ideologies related to the translation spectrum.

Based on such a social relation, Iman chose both to help him publish *"Pilgrimage in the Land of Java"*. Besides, for the sake of running the production process much more manageable, it implies an idea that Iman had known best about the cultural capital owned by those two agents and calculated this variable for the production. For instance, Siddha took an M.A degree in English education and was a Ph.D. candidate in creative writing pedagogy or Sukandar as Interlude's management was an activist for literary events and community in Yogyakarta. Moreover, both were very close to Javanese culture – as they are ethnically Javanese – for the poetry anthology to be published containing thick Javanese values. Iman implemented that strategy to keep the work's proportionality according to the International

reader's segmentation targeted through this work.

The following strategy is becoming a mediator between the publisher and the translator during the production process. According to the interview, it turns out that there was no sufficient social connection between Interlude and Siddha because this collective work was conducted separately without having any direct communication with one another. Consequently, as the central agent, Iman took the role of mediator to bridge the gap and did some specific discussions with each of them to produce a translated literary work as expected. Iman discussed book design (cover and backside), content layout, and translation results with Interlude. Meanwhile, with Siddha, he dealt with the Indonesian-English translation strategy to be implemented in his book. Iman conducted such a strategy for organizing the growing production process at that time, solving gap problems between two other agents, and also realizing the production result targeted to international readers. As a belief that he often expresses that translation indeed must be oriented to its target readers.

Accordingly, unlike the previous studies that only highlight the role of translator and publisher, the production of *"Pilgrimage in the Land of Java"* shows that a poet's existence is also vital during the production process. His social and cultural capital enabled him to implement two strategies explained previously. Social capital is crucial for the first strategy because it needs a wide range of social networking to know which kind of agent is suitable for a literary project. The poet's decision to choose Interlude and Siddha Malilang as the co-agents in the production implies that he already understood that both were competent to produce a literary translation product. Meanwhile, cultural capital in the form of working experience in literary and mass media production enabled the poet to lead the production process, such as distributing the task to the publisher and translator, monitoring the process, and evaluating the final product.

The Publisher's Strategies

Based on an interview with Interlude, the researchers eventually discovered some strategies this agent implemented as an independent publisher in the production of *"Pilgrimage in the Land of Java"*. *Firstly*, like Iman, Interlude also used its current social networking at that time, and *secondly*, it took a role in designing a book that could represent the quality of the book and attract international readers. Here, the researchers also find that Iman gave Interlude sufficient discretion to explore the design and layout arrangement for a book to be published. As an independent publisher, even though Interlude's management admitted this publisher still had many weaknesses in terms of personnel compared to major publishers, they did not lose the tactical idea. For that case, Interlude cooperated with a freelance painter Toni Malakian to create a cover painting and *Gapura Omah Desain* to design the book cover and its content.

By the discretion possessed, Interlude had the freedom to determine its agent members during the pre-production process. Interlude has often cooperated with both of them in producing literary books in Yogyakarta during its practice as an indie publisher based on friendly relationships. For the same reason, the management then chose them to support *"Pilgrimage in the Land of Java"* publication. Besides knowing their cultural capital or capacity already, the main reason Interlude cooperated with them was proximity so that the interaction during the production process could be fluid, communicative, and comfortable. Interlude implemented that strategy to keep the quality of work and – more than that – to overcome every obstacle, especially the limitation of economic capital, in the production process by utilizing its social capital.

The following strategy is to design a book cover that reflects the book's content so that it can also attract readers' attention to enjoy it further. In this case, Sukandar acknowledged that the most challenging part was designing the book cover because he believed that this will always be crucial for readers' first impression, whether or not they want to dive deeper into exploring the book content. As the

one close to Iman and his works, Sukandar – more or less – had understood the literary vision of the poet, born in Magetan on March 28th, 1948. Hence, he then tried to arrange the basic idea that would be applied as a cover book illustration with some symbolism: 1. Winding road in the form of '*keris*' as a symbol of pride in Javanese culture, 2. A parent who wears '*blangkon*' walks along with a child as a symbol of the Javanese education system, and 3. The horizon conventionally symbolizes a future. Therefore, the cover of this book holistically symbolizes a parent who leads a child making a pilgrimage, re-exploring, and re-understanding Javanese local wisdom, for the sake of a brighter future.

Inevitably, not all readers would so easily understand the meaning behind those symbols. Nonetheless, with some illustrations of goods identical to Javanese culture on the book cover, it implies a specific strategy to attract the interest of international readers. Based on the interview, Sukandar, Interlude's owner, believed that *keris* and *blangkon* have already been well-known as part of Javanese culture and tradition. Based on that reason also, the publisher decided to illustrate them on the book cover and hoped that when slightly saw "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*", that impression could directly attract international readers to read it until the end.

Besides that, the publisher also strategized to pursue the visibility of all agents involved in this book production by mentioning the names of the poet and translator and the publisher's logo on the cover. Even on the last page – although without consent – the publisher decided to put Iman's face illustration along with his short biography to introduce a poet whose dozens of poems are contained inside this work. Moreover, on the back cover, the publisher also showed a poem entitled "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*", so the readers could read and be moved to read it more. All those strategies were implemented to give the readers an attractive first impression. By that, the publisher hoped readers would buy the book, open it page after page, and get hooked up with the texts translated by the translator Siddha Malilang.

Here, social capital in the form of social networking was utilized to solve the lack of

personnel. Besides, cultural capital in the form of knowledge in the book production and publishing strategy enabled the publisher to think about an interesting book presentation by using Javanese symbols on the cover and ensuring the visibility of agents involved in the production by acknowledging all of them on the book cover, book identity page, and the last page. Thus, like the poet, Interlude's social and cultural capital enabled this publisher to overcome every challenge during the production.

The Translator's Strategies

As explained by Venuti previously, the strategies applied in translation practice can be domestication or foreignization. Both are the results of the ethical attitude of the translator toward a foreign text and culture. However, in the context of "*Ziarah Tanah Jawa*", the condition is relatively challenging. This anthology contains a lot of Javanese expressions and terms, so the translator must find a way to transfer them into the TT (English) properly. Therefore, the translation strategy implemented by Siddha on Javanese expressions and terms in "*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*" will be discussed further.

Based on the analysis, it is found that the translator uses the domestication strategy in most Javanese cultural texts. This study finds 47 Javanese cultural texts translated into English, and these are some examples of how the translator transformed those texts:

ST-1: "*karena wong Jawa nggone semu, sinamun ing samudana, sesadone ing adu manis*" (Santosa, 2015, p. 3)

TT-1: "*can you read the faces of Java? What lies under the masques and tongues?*" (Santosa, 2014, p. 3)

ST-2: "*tak ada lagi sesanti: "bener durung mesthi pener, salah durung mesthi kalah, becik bisa kuwalik."*" (Santosa, 2015, p. 108)

TT-2: "*there is no more saying: 'being true may not be right, the wrong may not be lost, the righteous may be wronged.'*" (Santosa, 2014, p. 112)

ST-3: "*tembang dolanan*" (Santosa, 2015, p. 16)

TT-3: “*children song*” (Santosa, 2014, p. 19)

ST-4: “*pungkuran*” (Santosa, 2015, p. 16)

TT-4: “*backyard*” (Santosa, 2014, p. 19)

Nevertheless, a different thing was found in some other cultural texts. It is also found that the translator uses the foreignization strategy to translate five Javanese cultural texts, as follows:

ST & TT-5: “*Cempe-cempe undangna barat gedhe, takopahi dudu tape, yen kurang golekka dhewe...*” (Santosa, 2015, p. 6 & 2014, p. 8)

ST 6: “*udan liris, sidamukti*” (Santosa, 2015, p. 104)

TT-6: “*udan liris to sidamukti*” (Santosa, 2014, p. 108)

ST & TT-7: “*suta-naya, dadap-waru*” (Santosa, 2015, p. 95 & 2014, p. 99)

ST & TT-8: “*vatusastra*” (Santosa, 2015, p. 38 & 2014, p. 41)

ST & TT-9: “*serat babad*” (Santosa, 2015, p. 23 & 2014, p. 26)

From 52 cultural texts found in the ST, it turns out that 90,4% are transformed into the target language, while 9,6% are preserved as foreign texts. Therefore, it shows that the translator tends to perform a transparent and fluent translation practice in producing “*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*”. With such a domestication strategy, the translator can minimize the foreignness of this work to receiving readers. This strategy can realize a condition where the poet is brought back home to the target culture.

However, several original texts still potentially present foreignness to the target readers. In this case, it is well-understood that there was no way for Siddha except to keep those texts as they were. Otherwise, the readers will lose the cultural context of the poetry. Unfortunately, he did not attempt to give any explanation upon those kinds of ‘exotic’ texts – neither as the footnote nor as to the endnote – so there lies a probability if that text could not be well-understood by the

readers, or maybe it can be in the opposite, the readers can even be stimulated to learn more about Javanese culture instead. Since the fundamental function of foreignization is “*to make the readers realize that they are reading a translation of a work from a foreign culture*” (Munday, 2016, p. 226).

The decision to use either domestication or foreignization type of translation must be determined by the translator’s academic background and practical experience. Here, cultural capital in the form of knowledge and techniques in translating literary work enabled the translator to transfer the ST to TT. Therefore, cultural capital is very influential in the practice of literary text translation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has proven at least three significant findings. *First*, all agents’ social and cultural capital were the main factor supporting the production practice of literary translation. In the context of “*Pilgrimage in the Land of Java*”, the poet, the publisher, and the translator were bound in a social chain in which Iman Budhi Santosa became the binder knot. *Second*, the poet, the publisher, and the translator as literary agents strategized with each logic of practice (habitus). The publisher strategized in designing an attractive book ‘packaging’, the translator strategized by dominantly domesticating the cultural texts into English, and Iman was the one who organized the whole process. *Third*, all the agents strategized to produce a translated literary work by expecting that this work could be well-accepted and easily read by receiving readers.

By focusing on the agents’ strategies during the production process, this study can only reveal some specific actions they took when a translated work was in the making. It is unable to explore further how the literary production they have conducted can potentially impact their existence as a poet, a publisher, and a translator. As previously emphasized theoretically, the orientation of the agents investing their capital through a production practice is to gain some more profit in the literary field, be it economic, social, cultural, or symbolic. Thus, it is recommended to investigate further what kind of capital the

agents can accumulate through the production of an Indonesian-English translated work and how that accumulated capital can potentially support the agents' practice and strategy in the Indonesian literary field. By doing that, we will see a bolder picture of how translation is tightly related to the social practice of the literary agents.

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