

## *The Characteristics and Essence of Multiculturalism in Greater Khingan Mountains*

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### **Abstract**

Greater Khingan Mountains region is a relatively independent geographical area, which can be regarded as a cultural region. There are many ethnic groups such as Han, Mongol, Daur, Ewenki, Oroqen, Manchu, etc. distributed in the region. These ethnic cultures interact with specific environments. They not only form a cultural region at the macro scale, but also form sub-cultural regions with neighbouring cultures at the micro scale. These cultures, as components of cultural regions, are capable of generating new cultural traits, as well as their common cultural tendencies are underpinned by a common basis of values and religious beliefs. As a result, ethnic groups are able to harmonise with each other and coexist in an integrated manner. As educators, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of regional cultural characteristics and related issues in order to effectively and appropriately formulate relevant educational and cultural policies. This paper analyses the cultural characteristics of the Greater Khingan Mountains region by using documentary analysis as a research method. It emphasises on the characteristics and connotations of the Greater Khingan Mountains' multiculturalism, which includes the dimensions of its natural environment, cultural diversity, the phenomenon of multiethnic cultural integration, and religious beliefs. Eventually, the development of multiculturalism in the Greater Khingan Mountains are proposed to formulate relevant policies in three dimensions: protection of the ecological environment, promotion of the tourism industry, and education of multiculturalism, in order to form a healthy development model of "protection", "development", and "inheritance".

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Greater Khingan Mountains, Cultural Diversity, Cultural Coexistence Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

In the twenty-first century, the process of global integration has been accelerated by economic development and advances in science and technology, transport and Internet technology. Interconnections and interactions between different countries, ethnic groups, races and religions are becoming more and more frequent, resulting in a gradual shift towards "globalisation" of the once relatively separate humanistic world. This paper argues that cultures within a cultural region develop new qualities that are adapted to the region after their "entry" into the region, and that these qualities enable the cultural components to preserve themselves while protecting other cultures in the neighbourhood. As a relatively independent geographical area, the Greater Khingan Mountains region can be seen as a cultural region where the Han, Mongol, Daur, Ewenki, Oroqen, Manchu and other ethnic groups are located. Each of these groups has managed to preserve their languages and traditional cultures relatively well. Even though their populations are relatively sparse<sup>[3]</sup>. In 1964, China began full-scale development of the Greater Khingan Mountains, and a large number of railway corps, the educated youth, cadres and intellectuals who went to the countryside entered this cultural area<sup>[14]</sup>. It is probably because of being in such a specific area that these cultures have developed the ability to co-exist with other cultures, preserving their own culture as well as other cultures.

## **2. Research Background**

China is a country of 56 nationalities, 55 of which are ethnic minorities. They make up about 8 % of the country's population. Minorities with a population of over 1 million are mainly found in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Tibet Autonomous Region, Yunnan Province, Guizhou Province, Qinghai Province and Sichuan Province, which show a plurality of cultural forms<sup>[1]</sup>.

As a developing country composed of many ethnic groups, China is also facing the challenges of globalisation and diversification of economic development. For China, cultural pluralism comes not only from the colourful local cultures of various ethnic groups, but also from China's cultures with regional characteristics and unbalanced development, such as urban and rural cultures, as well as the diversification of values brought about by the unbalanced economic development, etc. The importance of multicultural to economic development is reflected in the following ways: (1) Innovation and creativity: people with different cultural backgrounds have different ways of thinking, experiences and knowledge, which help generate new ideas and solutions in the business field. People from different cultural backgrounds have different ways of thinking, experience and knowledge, which help to generate new ideas and solutions in the business field. (2) Market diversity: multicultural societies represent diverse markets, which provide opportunities for businesses to expand their products and services. (3) Internationalisation and globalisation: businesses with a multicultural outlook can better connect with businesses and customers in different countries and regions, facilitating international trade and cooperation. (4) Attracting international talents: cities and countries with a multicultural atmosphere are more likely to attract talents from different countries and backgrounds<sup>[8]</sup>. Therefore, in the context of globalised economy, it is particularly important to cultivate talents with multicultural vision.

### 3. Characteristics of Multiculture in the Greater Khingan Mountains Region

The Greater Khingan Mountains are the demarcation line between the Northeast China Plain and Inner Mongolia Plateau, as well as the demarcation line between monsoon and non-monsoon regions in China. They are also the demarcation line of 400mm precipitation line in China, the demarcation line of two or three grades of China's topography, as well as the demarcation line between temperate monsoon climate and temperate continental climate. The Greater Khingan Mountains extend from the banks of the Heilongjiang River in Mohe City, Heilongjiang Province in the north to the upper valley of the Xilamulun River in the northern part of Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, with a total length of more than 1,400 kilometres and a width of about 200 kilometres, which are a mountain range consisting of low and medium mountains <sup>[2]</sup>. The Greater Khingan Mountains are anciently known as the Great Xianbei Mountain located in the northeastern part of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and the northwestern part of Heilongjiang Province. The Greater Khingan Mountains are part of Heilongjiang Province, with a total area of 327,200 square kilometres. (Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region is about 240,000 square kilometres and Heilongjiang Province is 84,800 square kilometres.) The Greater Khingan Mountains are the largest area of well-preserved primary forest in China. "Xingan" in the Chinese pronunciation of "the Greater Khingan Mountains" is a Manchu word meaning "extremely cold place", so named because of the cold climate.

The Greater Khingan Mountains region is China's northernmost and highest latitude border area, the political area north of the Sino-Russian border, west of Heilongjiang Province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region junction. There are 4 districts, 1 county-level city and 2 counties under the jurisdiction of the Greater Khingan Mountains Region, including Gagdach District, Songling District, Xinlin District, Huzhong District, Mohe City, Huma County, and Tahe County. Jurisdiction area of a total area of 83,000 square kilometres (jurisdiction of Jiagedaqi District, Songling District rights belong to Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, an area of 18,200 square kilometres, accounting for 21.9% of the total area of jurisdiction), with a total population of 439,000 people. It is China's northernmost prefecture-level administrative region, as well as it's winter is long and cold <sup>[2]</sup>.

"Oroqen" is the national name for "people who use reindeer". The Oroqen nationality is known as the "Chinese God of the Hunt" and the "Pride of the Forest". They believe in shamanism and mainly worship the god of hunting. The Oroqen nationality is the earliest aboriginal people in the Greater Khingan Mountains, one of the least populous of the country's 56 ethnic minorities, and it is mainly found in the north-eastern part of the Greater Khingan Mountains in Inner Mongolia. The Oroqen nationality is one of the least populous of the country's 56 ethnic minorities, which is mainly found in the Inner Mongolia Oroqen Autonomous Banner, Zalantun City, Moli Dawa Banner, Arong Banner in the northeastern part of the Mountains, as well as Tahoe, Huma, Sunke, Jiayin County, and Heihe City in Heilongjiang Province. The Oroqen nationality retains its own language, which is generally spoken in Han because of a lack of writing, with some Oroqen nationality using the Mongol language <sup>[4]</sup>. The Oroqen are traditionally hunters and gatherers and fishers. After the 1950s, the government arranged for them to come out of the forest to engage in farming. According to the 2021 national census, the Oroqen nationality has a population of 9,168, and the Greater Khingan Mountains has a registered population of 1,346 <sup>[3]</sup>. The Oroqen nationality is a typical example of the transition from a primitive to a modern society. The cultural development of this people has been greatly challenged in a time span of just over half a century.

The Oroqen people, who made their living by hunting, lived in the hinterland of the Greater Khingan Mountains in the north-east of China in the early days. Later, a part of the Oroqen people kept moving southward and reached the territory of Oroqen Autonomous Banner of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region today. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Oroqen has seen unprecedented economic and social development. In October 1951, the Oroqen Autonomous Banner was established. From 1951 to 1958, with the help of the Oroqen Autonomous Banner government, the Oroqen nationality, which was accustomed to a nomadic life, was gradually settled. In order to cope with the damage to the ecological balance of the Greater Khingan Mountains caused by excessive hunting by immigrants, the Oroqen Autonomous Banner Government issued the Hunting Prohibition Notice in 1996. Since then, the Oroqen nationality has also had to "abandon hunting and switch to farming"<sup>[5]</sup>.

For generations, the Oroqen people, who have made their living by hunting, have gradually developed a hunting rhythm in their daily lives, a kind of "habit". In the face of the external impact of "hunting ban" and "farming", the traditional rhythm of daily life of the Oroqen people has been broken, as well as some of them have fallen into poverty due to the difficulty of adapting to the new rhythm of life<sup>[5]</sup>. Large-scale farming may bring considerable income, but the hunters may not be able to adapt quickly to the new rhythm of farming life. In the Greater Khingan Mountains, the different ethnic groups are in a constant process of learning from each other. As a result, their cultures and habits are constantly being intertwined. The process of learning and exchange is a two-way interaction. It is not appropriate to place these peoples in a unidirectional ladder of evolution. The survival wisdom of different peoples can help to reflect on the habitual unidirectional and stepped concepts of development and help to understand the difficulties facing the development of modern societies.

"Ewenki" is the self-proclaimed name of this nationality, which means "the people who live in the big mountains and forests". They believe in shamanism and mainly worship the god of fertility. The Ewenki nationality is mainly distributed in the east and west foothills of the Greater Khingan Mountains and deep forests in China. The Ewenki nationality in China is mainly distributed in the eastern and western foothills of the Greater Khingan Mountains and deep in the forests, which can be divided into the Solon Ewenki, the Tunguska Ewenki, and the Reindeer Ewenki according to their dialect, area of settlement, and historical origins, etc. It is one of the ethnic groups with a relatively small population in China, with a total population of 34,617 in 2021<sup>[4]</sup>. Although the population is relatively small, each of the three groups maintains its own language and customs.

The Ewenki nationality has created a unique hunting culture during their long life in the forest. They believe in Shamanism, that "Shaman" is the messenger between any gods. At the same time, they believe that the god "Shewoke" will possess Shaman and make Shaman the representative of the god. The Shaman's costumes show a complete concept of nature: the god's hat is in the shape of antlers. The hanging animal ornaments include bears, deer, wild boars, wolves, cuckoos, waterbucks, fishes and so on, which almost include the whole animal world. Hunting Ewenki people and hunting Oroqen people have common beliefs and customs. The hunters will also sun, moon, stars, wind, rain, thunder, electricity, mountains and rivers as the object of worship<sup>[7]</sup>. The largest settlement of Ewenki nationality is the Ewenki Autonomous Banner of Inner Mongolia. The Banner is located in the Wuling Mountains of the Greater Khingan Mountains, which have both natural pastures, forests and arable land. Due to the different natural conditions, there are relatively large differences in the production and lifestyle of the Ewenki nationality in each region. Ewenki nationality living in Ewenki

nationality autonomous flag and Chenbalhu flag are mainly engaged in animal husbandry; Ewenki nationality in Nehe county is engaged in agriculture; Ewenki nationality living in Molidawa flag, Arong flag and Zalantun city make their living by half-farming and half-hunting; and Ewenki nationality in Ooluguya Ewenki nationality township, Ergunazuo Banner, is currently engaged in reindeer breeding after they stopped their hunting<sup>[3]</sup>.

Daur nationality is also mainly distributed in the Greater Khingan Mountains east and west foothills, living in Inner Mongolia Moli Dawa Daur nationality autonomous flag, Ewenki nationality autonomous flag, Zalantun city, Arong flag and Qiqihar city district of Heilongjiang province, Meiris District, Furalki District, Longjiang County, Fuyu County, Nenjiang County, Aihui County, etc., with a total population of 132,699 according to the 2021 national census<sup>[3]</sup>. The ancestors of the Daur people used to be spread out in the valleys from the south of the Stanovoy Range to the north bank of the Heilongjiang River. They were gradually relocated to the Nenjiang Valley, Hulunbeier, Aihui, and Xinjiang from the mid-17th century onwards. Fishing and hunting were their traditional livelihood activities. After the migration, agriculture developed. In addition, the Daur people have maintained their language and traditional culture well<sup>[4]</sup>.

Daur nationality is one of the ancient ethnic groups in northern China. Since this ethnic group does not have its own written language, or the written language has been lost, there is no systematic history recorded in its own written language, except for the known relevant oral legends, recent history, customs and habits, as well as family names. Prior to ethnic identification, the Daur nationality mostly called itself "Daur Mongol", and practised Shamanism, a form of clan system in primitive societies. Shamanism is a form of clan system in primitive society. The three main elements of Shamanism are the worship of nature, totem and ancestor. Shamanism is the core of "all things have spirits". The Daur nationality has a long history of engaging in agriculture. The Daur in the Nenjiang River Basin are still mainly engaged in agriculture and practise the Han language, while the Daur who have moved to the western part of the country are either engaged in nomadic herding or live a life of farming and herding and practise the Mongol language. The Daur nationality is culturally diverse and heterogeneous. The culture of Daur nationality is diversified and colourful, rich in the unique cultural flavour of the northern ethnic groups in terms of living customs, songs and dances, arts and crafts, costumes and food, festivals and celebrations, as well as sports and competitions. Among them, there are arts such as Wuqin and Hakumaille; sports such as horse wrestling and Weilu chess; festivals such as Kumul Festival and Maguro Festival; handicrafts such as embroidery, Hanika and Lele car; as well as diets such as artemisia tea, Meiris meat and leeks<sup>[6]</sup>.

Russian nationality is the descendants of Russian immigrants, whose total population is 34,617 according to the 2021 national census<sup>[3]</sup>. The Russian nationality is concentrated in the northern part of Heilongjiang in the Greater Khingan Mountains region and in Hulunbeier City in Inner Mongolia, with a total of about 5,000 people. The Russians in Inner Mongolia are mainly found in the city of Hulunbeier, and in particular in the city of Ergun (county-level city). The city has the highest concentration of Chinese-Russian mestizos in China, with eight villages where the population of Chinese-Russian mestizos exceeds and is close to half<sup>[3]</sup>. A small number of Russians preserve the habit of practising Orthodox Christianity.

The population of the Mongol nationality is mainly found in Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Xinjiang, Hebei, and Qinghai in China, with the rest scattered in Henan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Beijing, and Yunnan. According to the China Statistical Yearbook in 2021,

the population of the Mongol nationality in China is 6.29 million<sup>[3]</sup>. The Greater Khingan Mountains region is located at the border of Heilongjiang Province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, with the Mongol nationality living in Gaghdach District, Songling District, Xinlin District, Huzhong District, Mohe City, Huma County, and Tahe County<sup>[4]</sup>. The Mongol nationality mainly believes in the religion of Shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism, as well as Shamanism is the original religion of the Mongol nationality.

The Mongol nationality in the Greater Khingan Mountains region, on the basis of the policy of self-sufficiency, systematically developed the pastoral agricultural economy, changing the history of the pastoral areas that did not produce food and single-operator animal husbandry economy. In this "food for the programme" policy orientation, the Greater Khingan Mountains area organised migration of the Mongol nationality people to settle down to live. Some of the Mongol people operate pastures for farming, while others are engaged in agriculture, mainly cultivating fodder or vegetables such as potatoes, cabbages and turnips.

The Manchu are scattered throughout the country, with the largest number living in Liaoning Province and others in large and medium-sized cities in Jilin, Heilongjiang, Hebei and Inner Mongolia. According to the 2021 national census, the Manchu population is 10.42 million<sup>[3]</sup>, which is the second largest ethnic minority in China after the Zhuang. However, only some of the population living in Fuyu County, Heilongjiang Province, at the eastern foot of the Greater Khingan Mountains, and in Aihui Town, Heihe City, still speak Manchu. Elsewhere, the vast majority of Manchus have adopted the Han language<sup>[4]</sup>. In Manchu, where hunting has long been a profession, the development of handicrafts was slow. But in the 17th and 18th centuries, against the background of the integration of the ManchuHan culture, handicrafts in Liaodong Manchuria developed rapidly, with the emergence of shipbuilding, textiles, weapons manufacturing, and papermaking industries.

Xianbei culture originates from the Xianbei Mountains in the Greater Khingan Mountains. The Xianbei culture, like other ancient peoples in the north, believed in the Shaman culture. The concept of all living things is the foundation of their culture, which is reflected in<sup>[3]</sup>: the worship of sacred animals, the worship of the sun, and the worship of trees. Although the Xianbei nationality continued to merge with other nationalities in the evolution of later generations and was actively sinicised until it died out, it is one of the oldest, longest surviving and most influential nationalities in the Chinese national system. Its Shaman culture is even more colourful and has a distinctive personality.

The population of the Han nationality in the Greater Khingan Mountains is mainly composed of railway corps, the educated youth, cadres and intellectuals who went to the countryside in response to the national call for the development and construction of the Greater Khingan Mountains since 1964. The Han nationality is widely distributed in the Greater Khingan Mountains region, and it has an absolute advantage in terms of population. The integration of Han immigrant culture with local culture has led to the emergence of new cultures.

At the macro scale, the ethnic groups of the Greater Khingan Mountains have formed their own cultural regions. At the micro scale, they have formed their own sub-cultural regions. The same cultural tendencies that support their commonalities are the common basis of their religious beliefs. With the exception of Russians, who are "pure" believers in Orthodox Christianity, and Muslims, who are "pure" believers in Islam, the situation is more complex. The Ewenki nationality, the Oroqen nationality, the Daur nationality, the Manchu, and the Mongol nationality all have the Shaman faith as their foundation in the depths of their beliefs,

which are rooted in the hunting culture's need to regulate the relationship between human beings and animals. Therefore, these peoples, both at the macro and micro levels, have adapted to the cultures of other peoples in accordance with their own customs and live together harmoniously. The example of the Greater Khingan Mountains are a very strong proof that relations between peoples can be based on mutual respect and harmonious coexistence. All relationships between these groups are regulated by custom, and these relationship systems are rarely disturbed by conflict.

To sum up, the characteristics of the culture of ethnic minorities in the Greater Khingan Mountains region are as follows. 1. It has the characteristics of the culture of ethnic minorities in the frontier region, which are embodied in the following aspects: plurality, folklore, cohesion and inclusiveness. Diversity and folklore are mainly determined by different natural environments and production methods, while cohesion and inclusiveness are attributed to the common Shaman cultural beliefs of ethnic minorities in the Greater Khingan Mountains region. 2. It has an immigrant cultural identity. The population of the Han in the Greater Khingan Mountains region comes from all over the country. They have different cultural backgrounds, customs and values. Migrant culture is inclusive and open, which promotes cultural integration and development. In the process of adapting to new environments, migrants create new cultural elements and cultural phenomena, which give migrant culture its unique charm and vitality.

#### **4. China's Development Policies in Recent Years**

The Chinese Government has been committed to promoting the development and improvement of remote areas, as well as has adopted a series of policies and measures, including:

Education policy <sup>[9]</sup>: The Chinese Government attaches importance to the development of education in remote areas, and has strengthened its support for local schools, improving the strength of teachers and the quality of education. The subsidy policy implemented by the education sector consists of two elements. One is to raise the basic salary of teachers in mountainous areas so that they can earn higher incomes, and the other is to receive an additional subsidy of 500 RMB per month as an incentive for them to teach in remote areas. In addition, after two years of teaching in the areas they support, the teachers will be eligible for exemption from the examination for entry into the labour force, providing them with greater opportunities for future employment. The implementation of this policy will attract more capable young people to teach in mountainous areas, helping to improve the uneven distribution of local educational resources, as well as improving the learning opportunities and quality of education for students in mountainous areas.

When taking the college entrance examination, ethnic minority candidates are entitled to certain extra points to make up for their shortcomings in language and culture. In addition, examinations in minority languages have been introduced in some areas where minority nationalities live in large numbers to facilitate the examination of minority nationalities' candidates.

In 2023, Heilongjiang province secondary school examination minority policy is: for Mongol, Daur, Ewenki, Oroqen, Herzhe, Kirgiz, Sibe and other ethnic minority candidates, the score line in the high school they filled in will be dropped to 20 points in the casting. In addition to

the above mentioned ethnic minority candidates, the score line in the school they have filled will be dropped to 5 points of the casting.

In 2023, Heilongjiang provincial college entrance examination minority policy is: candidates from ethnic minorities whose household registration is in autonomous counties (Dulbert Mongolian Autonomous County) and who attend high school in autonomous counties (local household registration for more than three consecutive years and three consecutive years of enrolment and actual attendance in local high schools) apply to national universities for a 5-point grade increase on top of the total score of the general cultural examination, and their acceptance is decided by the university's review <sup>[10]</sup>.

The Chinese government has been endeavouring to promote the development and improvement of remote and ethnic minority areas and has adopted a series of effective policies and measures. The cultural policies needed in the Greater Khingan Mountains are as follows. 1. The reform of the cultural system is continued and the development of the cultural industry is promoted. 2. Support and guidance for the cultural tourism industry are strengthened, as well as the mutual promotion of economic and cultural development is promoted. 3. The protection and inheritance of cultural heritage are strengthened, multicultural education is valued, as well as the organic combination of cultural inheritance and development is promoted. 4. The supervision of the cultural industry is strengthened to ensure the healthy development of the cultural industry. 5. The supervision of cultural industries is strengthened to ensure the healthy development of cultural industries.

## **5. Conclusion: Vision and Recommendations for the Future of the Greater Khingan Mountains Region**

The significance of multicultural in the age of globalisation is the preservation and transmission of cultures to ensure that they are not assimilated or eliminated by more populous or powerful cultures. People from different cultural backgrounds bring with them various ways of thinking, ways of solving problems and different forms of art. This helps to promote the development and improvement of technology, art and social systems. This accommodates people from different racial, religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This inclusiveness helps to increase social cohesion and reduce social tensions and conflicts.

Promoting tourism <sup>[16]</sup>: At present, the Greater Khingan Mountains has not only natural landscapes, but also humanistic landscapes and more physical attractions throughout the region, with five major tourism resources that have a national monopoly, such as the source of the Boundary River, alpine ice and snow, as well as the Northern Lights. These resources have distinctive features, which are excellent carriers of forest ecotourism. There are many national and provincial forest parks, accounting for two-thirds of the national and provincial forest parks in Heilongjiang Province. It has a unique advantage in developing forest ecotourism. The unique natural landscape of the Greater Khingan Mountains area is being utilised for the development of eco-tourism. This will help increase the economic income of the region and provide employment opportunities. Cultural heritage and conservation need to show short-term benefits to those who engage in them. Culture is the soul of tourism, and tourism is the carrier of culture.

Multiculture Education: The unique multicultural of the Greater Khingan Mountains is protected. The education sector should develop policies to support education in all cultures and languages to ensure that all students have equal access to education that respects and



fully develops their own cultural identity. At the same time, intercultural understanding and respect should be fostered. Specific promotional strategies include: (1) Curriculum design: educational institutions can adapt their curricula, including multicultural education content, to ensure that students are aware of the history, traditions and contributions of different cultures. (2) Teacher training: training teachers to adapt multicultural education is key. Teachers need to understand how to teach multicultural lessons and relate to students from different cultural backgrounds. (3) Resource support: multicultural resources are provided, which include books, teaching materials and intercultural training to support multicultural education. (4) Policy and legal support: policies and laws are in place to ensure that multicultural education is delivered and that students are protected from discrimination and prejudice. (5) Campus culture: schools can create a multicultural-friendly campus culture, including celebrating multicultural activities, organising cultural festivals and encouraging students to share their culture. (6) Family Involvement: parents are encouraged to participate in the school's multicultural education programmes to strengthen students' cultural ties between home and school.

In multicultural education, administrators (heads of organisations such as the Department of Education; headmasters and heads of departments in each school) play a key role and function. They need to provide leadership in formulating policies, allocating resources, training teachers, and establishing culturally sensitive environments to ensure the successful implementation of multicultural education. This contributes to the development of students with intercultural awareness and competence and creates an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Therefore, the development of education administrator development strategies that are tailored to the realities of multicultural in the Greater Khingan Mountains region is particularly important to facilitate the implementation of multicultural education in the Greater Khingan Mountains.

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