



## The Peasant Papers' Editorial and News-Column Priorities: A Study of Weekly Sindhi Hurryet, 1950-1952

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### Abstract

*This article examines the projection of peasants and rural peoples' problems in editorials and selective news columns published in one of the lead peasants' newspapers Weekly Sindhi Hurryet, Karachi, from 1950-1952. It also unpacks the interplay between the editorials and columns to cover the broader beats and enhance the scope of the newspaper. The study exposes that what were problems of peasants, rural dwellers in the formative years of Pakistan, and how newspaper understudy craftily presented them before the policymakers, politicians, and readers. Findings show through editorials that the performance of the Sindh Government was not up to the marking period of study. However, in the news columns, the crime in rural areas reported higher than other issues. Overall, the tone of the editorials' content is found informative. Although, news columns language inclined towards complaining against the government and its departments.*


**Keywords:** Peasants' Newspapers, Sindh, Weekly Sindhi Hurryit, Sindh Hari Committee

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

Sindhi is one of the oldest languages of the sub-continent spoken by approximately 30-40 million people in southern province Sindh, Pakistan (Rahman, 1999). After Urdu, the Sindhi language is the second largest written and spoken language of Pakistan (SLA, 2010). British invaded Sindh in 1843. At that time, the official language of Sindh was Persian. In 1851, Sir Bartle Frere, a British Commissioner of Sindh, convened an eight members Educational Committee for Sindh (Buglio, 1988). The committee's task was the developing Alphabet for the Sindhi language. It developed Arabic Alphabetical Order for Sindhi language and developed few symbols for different sounds. After the development of Alphabet in the Sindhi language, the publication of books, newspapers, and other printed materials started. The pioneers of journalism in Sindh were the Persian language newspapers. In 1844, the government of Sindh started printing the first English language newspaper, i.e., The Advertiser, under the editorship of W.A. Asterpunch (Ahmad, 2011). The initial period of Sindhi journalism started with the publication of the weekly newspaper "Fawaid-ul-Akhbar" on May 15, 1858, by the government in two languages; Sindhi and Persian (Buglio, 1988). According to Buglio (1988), the complete Sindhi language newspaper was "Sindh Sudhar," published in 1866. The British government also published this newspaper and was popular more than a half-century. The newspaper disseminated the news regarding government policies and events to the local public.

In present-day Pakistan, first, man-made irrigation was started in Punjab, and subsequently, Canal Colonies started in 1885 (Attwood, 1985). However, in Sindh Jamrao Canal's excavation was started in 1889. Jamrao Canal became the first project where land and land-related programme through the Public Works Department (Alam, 2019). It was the first time that water in the area was available for the whole year to assure two crops rather than one crop. Jamrao Canals colonised statistics told that 85% of the land allocated to the nearby landlords, 12% were given to the settlers (out of Sindh) and 2% landlords from other areas of Sindh and on the same conditions 1% allocated to retired army men, capitalists and people of the political consideration. Sukkur Barrage started with a gross command area (8.3 million acres) and cultivation command areas 7.8 million acres. It created hope among the peasants of Sindh. Therefore, the people of diversified ideas formed the Sindh Hari Committee in 1930, along with its other objectives; it is one objective to get maximum agricultural lands for the peasants, along with tenancy Rights (F. Ahmed, 1984).

The purpose of this study is to examine editorials and selective news columns of Weekly Sindhi Hurriyet, Karachi, from 1950-1952. This study is interested to determine the issues highlighted by the newspaper regarding the and the rural people of Sindh during the period of 1950-1952.

## 2) LITERATURE REVIEW

The British government started journalism in Sindh with the publication of Persian language newspapers. In 1844, the government of Sindh started printing its first

English language newspaper, i.e., The Advertiser, under the editorship of W.A. Asterpunch (Ahmad, 2011). The partial Sindhi newspaper was Fawaaid-ul-Akhbar. It was published on May 15, 1858, by the government in two languages; Sindhi and Persian. However, the complete Sindhi language newspaper was Sindh Sudhar, published in 1866. The British government also published it and remained popular for more than a half-century. It disseminated news regarding government policies and events to the local public (Buglio, 1988).

Further, Buglio (1988) explored that Mirza Mukhlis Ali started a bilingual newspaper Matla Khursheed in 1860 from Sukkur. It printed one column in Persian, and the other column contained its Sindhi translation. It continued until 1910. The government published another English language newspaper Sindh Official Gazette in 1868. Its policy was to translate essential news stories in Sindhi for local people. After that, Mirza Muhammad Sadiq published the newspaper “Akliyal” in 1870 from Karachi, and it survived for five years. However, the first privately owned newspaper was Moeen-ul-Islam, published in 1888 by Mirza Muhammad Sadiq, a famous journalist at that time (Ahmad, 2011).

In 1890, Sadhu Heeranand and Diyaram Gadumal founded the first Sindhi language magazine, Saraswati. Later, Chandaryani edited it (Ahmad, 2011). Shams ud-din Bulbul started Aftab, a weekly newspaper in 1895. Sadhu Heeranand published Patrika a weekly newspaper the same year. During this time, Sindhi weekly from Sukkur, KhairKhuwah from Larkana, Musafir from Hyderabad and Larkana Gazette published from Larkana. Shams Ud-din Bulbul and Tehalram Molchand were the editors of these newspapers (Buglio, 1988).

Furthermore, Buglio (1988) elaborated that popular newspapers and magazines include weekly Parbhat by Laikhraj Tilokchand in 1896. Sheikh Muhammad Suleiman published the weekly Al-Haq in 1899; Sindh Miscellany in 1901 published from D.G College in Karachi. Main magazines include Jaut from Hyderabad by Parmanad Mewaram, Akhbar-e Taleem in 1902 by the Ministry of Education, Government of Sindh, Rasal-e Madras by Sindh Madrassahtul-Islam with its editor named Allah Bux Abujho and weekly Akhbar-e Mata by Taularam Balani in 1905 from Hyderabad (Ahmad, 2011; Buglio, 1988)

The first complete Sindhi daily newspaper Sindhwasī started in 1908 under the editorship of Kanwal Singh (Ahmad, 2011; Buglio, 1988). This newspaper continued publishing until 1929. In February 1909, Dharam Singh initiated Zameendar Gazette in 1910. During the same year, Tekchand Gokhlani started publishing Wapar Samachar. Both newspapers published from Shikarpur which was a trade hub. Wapar Samachar was the first newspaper to be dedicated to business news.

The year 1911 was considered as the start of the second era of Sindhi media (Ahmad, 2011; Buglio, 1988). Ahmad (2011) mentioned that Bhaskar started publishing from Hyderabad twice a week by Maharaj Lokram Sharma who was a nationalist. Because of newspaper editorial policies, authorities sent him to jail, and his newspaper stopped publishing. Again, he started publishing Weekly Hindu in

1924 which later became a daily. After moving to Karachi, this newspaper continued publishing until 1947 as Daily Hindustan. This newspaper was the lead promoter of the All India Congress (Ahmad, 2011). During the partition of India, Mr. Sharma migrated to Bombay, and the newspaper continued publishing for 45 years from there. Another daily newspaper, Hind Wasi, was started by Jaitmal Parasram from Hyderabad. Al-Amin started publishing twice a week from Hyderabad during the same year, under the editorship of Raees Ghulam Muhammad Bhargari. Weekly Kaisri used for campaigning against the British government was published in 1916 by Swami Govind Aanand. Baldev Tarachand started Daily Sauraj and Weekly Jangi in 1918. Daily Al-Waheed Sheikh, under the editorship of Abdul Majeed Sindhi, started in 1920, fought for the rights of Muslims in Sindh, continued publishing till 1957. Sheikh Abdul Majeed Sindhi, Qazi Abdur-Rehman, Jai Ramdas Daulatram, Dr. Chohtram Gadwani, Vishnu Sharma, Jhamat Mal, Professor Ghansham, Heeran and Karamchand and Kamla Heeranand were the people who fought for rights of press and people and the government several times arrested them.

According to Bughio (1988) and Ahmad (2011), other popular newspapers and magazines of this era were: Weekly Shikarpur in 1922 by Sachanand, Sindh Zameendar in 1922 and Sitara-e Sindh from Sukkur by Pir Ali Muhammad Rashidi, Weekly Muslim in 1924 by Muhammad Hashim Mukhlis from Mirpur Khas. Other weeklies, Noor Islam and Mirpur Gazette in 1924 by Gard-Nomal, Weekly Al-Hanif of Shikarpur in 1924 by Karim Bux Taanwari during 1924, Diyaram Gadumal College, Hyderabad's magazine Phulaili, Weekly DaishMitar in 1927 by Khaimchand, Daily Matar Bhoomi and Daily Hindu Sansar in 1927 were newspapers are familiar during this period.

In 1928, Daily Sansar Samachar from Karachi, Weekly Al-Hizb, Weekly Rahnuma, Weekly Fernier Gazette of Jacobabad, Weekly Khadimul-Islam of Hyderabad by Maulana Khair Muhammad Nizami, Weekly Dawat-e Islam of Sukkur by Dr. Muhammad Yameen and Weekly Paisa Akhbar of Shikarpur were some famous newspapers (Ahmad, 2011; Bughio, 1988). Further, Weekly Azad Karachi, Daily Qurbani of Shikarpur, under the editorship of Maulana Abdul Karim Chishti, which was later shifted to Karachi when G.M. Syed bought it from Maulana Chishti in 1945 and Pir Ali Muhammad Rashidi joined it as the editor of this newspaper. Later, during 1948, Ayub Khuro, Chief Minister Sindh, shut down this newspaper. Maulana Khair Muhammad Nizamani, Hafiz Khair Muhammad Auhadi, and Mir Muhammad Shah were among the editors of this newspaper (Ahmad, 2011; Bughio, 1988).

Ahmad (2011) and Bughio (1988) listed more than a dozen weeklies published from Karachi, Hyderabad, Larkana, Sukkur, and other district headquarters. Both scholars have mentioned that Haari Haqdar. Comrade Hyder Baksh Jatoti joined it, he issued Weekly Hari Haqdar to raise the voice of peasants, and enhance the objectives of Sindh Hari Committee (Jawed, 2013). It was eight paged paper. However, later, several pages were added to give more space to issues or specific cases. It was primarily Sindhi weekly, but some of its articles addressed to the government officials or having the national importance started into the English language. The newspaper continued from 1947 to 1969. Its life span is 22 years,

although it remained closed, or it was banned occasionally. The nature of editorials, articles, and news coverage splits magazine's life into two spheres. Its part one (1947-1954) focuses on Hari (Peasant) and Sindh Government.

The matter related to Haris focuses on their awareness, education, and organisational issues. In the same columns, the editorial staff highlighted the atrocities of landlords. It is the second part (1954-1969) covered the politics of one unit, language issues, martial law, and land distribution. The paper was bilingual, Sindhi, and English. The policy-related matter appeared in English. For instance, an editorial Hari Haqdar.<sup>1</sup> In the same decade, Mr. Allauddin Samo started Weekly Sindhi Hurryet from Karachi. He was also associated with the Sindh Hari Committee. The news beats and news that appeared in the news-columns were the same.

### Role of Media Societal Problems in Sindh, Pakistan

During the short history of 72 years, the press in Pakistan has played a vital role in eradicating societal problems. Though in 72 years, the country has faced a dictatorship, and it has influenced the media too. Most of the rulers, the dictators or elected representative tried to chain the media in the country. Instead of that, the media has played a significant role in creating awareness about social problems in public.

Further, in Pakistan, the broadcast media has remained in full control of the state. Though, the state-owned Pakistan Television (PTV) Corporation and Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) have to broadcast the government-supported opinion about the political issues. However, these media channels have played a critical role in discussing other social and societal problems through entertainment and awareness programmes. However, the press in Pakistan has enjoyed a bit more freedom, because ordinary people have remained part of the publishing business of the printing press. The government was less dominant in print media as compared to electronic media.

Nonetheless, the dominance of the government ended after the creation of the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) with a Presidential Ordinance in 2002 by the dictator Pervez Musharaf. The creation of PEMRA and relaxation in the license issuing process gave birth to a significant number of satellite television channels, newspapers, and FM radio stations. At that time, media got more freedom, and social and political issues got access to all types of media channels.

Furthermore, the careful analysis of the literature shows that there are not many studies about the media's role in social and societal problems in Pakistan. Though, the studies have mostly media and nationalism (Sabir, 2011), freedom of the press (Ricchiardi, 2012; Siraj, 2009), national security (Hussain & Sultan, 2008), political socialisation (Ali & Fatima, 2016; Anwar & Jan, 2010), dissemination of agricultural information (Butt, Sahi, Ch, & Muhammad, 2016; Irfan, Muhammad, Khan, & Asif, 2006), India and Pakistan affairs (Khan, 2013; Sajjad, 2015), war on terrorism (Mahmoodi, Suhaib, & Razzaq, 2015; Qadir & Alasuutari, 2013; Tariq

Adenwala, 2013), media ethics (Ashraf, 2014) and coverage of election campaigns (J. Ahmed & Hussain, 2016; Asad, Noor, & Jaes, 2019).

Moreover, there are some studies about media coverage about social problems such as gender-based violence (S. Ahmed, 2014; Asif, 2011; Yasmin, Sohail, & Mangrio, 2015), crime incidents (Shah, Elahi, & Saeed, 2019) and education (Jumani, 2009). These scholars conducted most of the studies about the above issues. Though being a developing country of 220 million, Pakistan faces many social issues such as poverty, illiteracy, terrorism, food and water crisis, population growth, inadequate health facilities, internal and international migration, and discrimination of gender. However, not many studies about media coverage of issues examined in the literature.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine editorials and selective news columns of Weekly Sindhi Hurriyet, Karachi, from 1950-1952. This study focuses on the research question that “what type of issues peasants and rural people of Sindh “Weekly Hurryet” highlighted in its content from 1950-1952.”

### **3) RESEARCH METHOD**

The researchers have selected quantitative content analysis as an approach for data collection. The researchers chose The Weekly Sindhi Hurriyet for analysis based on its declared, clients, availability of back issues, and un-interrupted publication. However, the selected period of the study is from 1950-1952, because it was formative of the newly created county. Hari Haqdar, a weekly Sindhi newspaper, was the organ of the Sindh Hari Committee (Sindh Peasants’ Committee); it came out from Hyderabad Sindh. However, its frequency was irregular. Some of the primary reasons were a shortage of financial issues. However, the principal reason was to continue arrest and cases against the persons who issued it. Thus, Weekly Sindhi became the only representative of Sindhi peasant to raise their problems through news-columns and editorials.

Further, the selected methodology’s conceptual addressed two parts: editorials and news-column. The editorial’s content analysis based on (a) categorisation of the editorials by subject-matter (b) labeling of the editorials’ content based on stated and implied meaning. The second part of the conceptual methodology analysed the news-column subject matter, nature, and communicative message stories, where nature is determined. However, both conception parts of the methodology show the appearance of themes in percentages, along with several years.

#### 4) FINDINGS

Table.1: Weekly Sindhi Hurryet's Editorials Categorised by the Subject-Matter

Subject Matter	1950	1951	1952
Sindh Government	56%	55%	58%
Rasai	3	2	0
Hari Tahreek	7	6	8
Kazi Fazullah	5	4	6
M Ayub Khuhro	8	7	9
Education Department	4	3	5
The land grant policy	4	8	6
Sindhi Language	2	0	1
By-election	0	0	4
Total N	87	85	97

Table 1 covers three years (1950, 1951, and 1952), and common themes that frequently repeated were nine. Thus, in the year 1950, the total number of the editorial was 87, and most dominant them was Sindh Government (56%), second in line was Muhammad Ayub Khuhro (8%), and third, in the queue was Hari Tahreek (7%). The same trend also continued in the year 1951, wherein a total of 85 editorials authored written, and Sindh Government's presence was (55%), afterward there were editorials about the land grant policies (8%), and the last one was Ayub Khan (7%). Similarly, in the year 1952, total editorials were 97, and out of it, 58% was about Sindh Government, and the second theme was Muhammad Ayub Khuro (9%), and the last theme was Hari Tahreek (8%). In sum, Table 1 shows that in three years, Sindh's politics, according to editorial policy, fall into nine themes, and dominant were Government of Sindh, Muhammad Ayub Khuhro, and Hari Tahreek. The chosen themes reveal the poor performance of the Sindh Government regarding the protection of Sindhis interests, Muhammad Ayub Khuhro is criticised for supporting landlords' interests, and influence the by-elections. However, the weekly praised the ideas and role of Hari Tahreek (peasants' movement) in a broader context. These themes, at another level it also indicates the politics of those times, when Pakistan was in search of its constitutional identity and came up with the constitutional frame to suppress the provincial differences. Thus, it opted for a centralised system (Waseem & Hayat, 1997), and promoted the colonial administrative system to suppress the identities of the federating units and halted the cultural promotional activities. Thus, provinces kept away from the center. These years are formative phases. Table 1 shows the nine themes. However, their frequency in terms of respective each year, and collective years is different. It must be noted that years (1950, 1951 and 1952) were most important in the political history of Pakistan. In this period of the time, the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League failed to provide the Constitution to the people of Pakistan, the settled issues among federating units, and the federation. On the other hand, the civil-military bureaucracy established itself as an important partner in power. Therefore, from 1947 till the first decade, the government in power failed to serve the people and remained active to explore loopholes to retain the political power (Sayeed, 1960). Therefore, most newspapers editorials, including Weekly Sindhi Hurryet's

editorials highlighted the weak administrative system, political power gripping fight among politicians of Sindh as well as Pakistan.

Table.2: Editorials' Content, Messages, and Meaning (stated and Implied)

Editorial Content	1950	1951	1952
Informative	25%	30%	43%
Emotional Words	26	23	18
Ideological arguments	10	8	6
Active statement / open meaning	12	16	10
Passive statement/ implied meaning	15	14	17
Total N	88	91	94

Table.2 shows the editorial contents; there are five areas. However, in 1950, 1951, and 1952 years. The editorial in each year aimed to inform readers. The theme in terms of coverage spread with 25%, 30%, and 43%. It is so because the main clientele was peasants. Thus, it intended to inform its reader, and coupled up to the information with the usage of emotional words. The editorial starts with a powerful statement, showing the editorial standing of the paper, and the majority ended with the implied meaning. However, the usage of ideological arguments was 10%, 8% and 6% in the years 1950, 1951 and 1952, respectively. Table 2 shows that editorial contents fall into five categories. The first two categories (Informative and Emotional) refer to the placement of words, and technically it falls into awareness-raising text, and it addresses the clientele of the paper i.e., peasants. In sum, these two categories pinpoint opportunities and threats regarding the Sindh as well as Pakistan Government's land distribution policies, agriculture, and irrigation related projects and schemes. Interestingly, the third theme talks about ideological arguments. Generally, this theme is directly linked to the policy of the paper (Richardson, 2006). The active, as well as passive statements, pinpoint how statements in terms of ideology, priority, and issues are framed (Reah, 2002). The politicians and active workers issued these statements. One of the common contours of all these statements direct towards the parties' manifesto, the charter of demands, and political discourse of those times. The initial decade of Pakistan after patrician was the decade of directionless, where the Pakistan Muslim League most of the time was trying to secure political power. Resultantly, the civil-military bureaucracy exploited the politicians' immaturity. Table 2 portrays the broader political context of those times.

Table.3: News Columns: Themes and Nature of the story, with stated and implied meaning

News Title/Theme	Nature	1950	1951	1952
The youth of Sindh	Appeal	1%	0%	0%
Abolish Zamindari	Demand	8	6	9
Atrocities of Police	Warning	10	7	10
Revenue Department	Complain	12	13	12
Education Department	Informative	7	6	5
Rural crime	Complain	15	16	14
Tribalism	Warning	2	0	0
Hari Tahreek	Informative	9	7	10

Rehabilitation of Migrants	Appeal	10	8	6
Ejection of Sindhi Hari	Warning	15	16	13
Land grant policy	Informative	7	4	6
Total N		97	83	85

Table.3 shows the themes, where the reporters have filed their stories. In total, there are eleven themes, and a number of the similar nature of these themes is also the same. Most reports filed from the field were of rural crime (cattle theft, stealing and stealing of grains, forcefully diversion of irrigation water, or grazing over another person's lands). Its presence was 12%, 13% and 12% in the years 1950, 1951 and 1952. The nature of the report is of the complaining. However, the appearance of the revenue news in subsequently sated years in 12%, 13%, and 12%, and its nature complains about the department and its functionaries.

On the other hand, the second theme is about the atrocities of the police department, and the overall nature of reporting is the warning that suppressers would lodge complain or approach the higher authorities. The frequency of the theme in the years 1950, 1951, and 1952 is 10%, 7%, and 10%. These findings imply broader categories of agricultural problems. These fall into groups, one is associated with the politics of Sindh as a province, and another set of news items highlights the peasants' issues, which are related to landlord-peasant problems, police atrocities, and landlords cruelties. Thus, its news-columns files stores and editorials portray its rural peoples' representative newspapers. Table 3 has portrayed six types of news items. On the other hand, these titles of news items show that the prime purpose was of these news types was to involve the interest of a considerable number of people into local news. On the other hand, academically, such types of news items play an important role in raising the peoples' interest in public issues (Schramm, 1949). On the other hand, these news titles suggest that these issues were prevailing in rural Sindh (Pakistan), and it also reveals that how Weekly Sindhi Hurryet responded to them. However, such type of reporting is important, and its trustworthiness in the eyes of readers is associated with reliable sources (Fogarty, 2012). In the case of Weekly Sindhi Hurryet, the sources of news items were journalists filed reports, press statements of the politicians and political workers, the Sindh Governments' notifications and letters written to the editor of the newspaper. Therefore, in a short period, Weekly Sindhi Hurryet became the most reliable newspaper of rural dwellers.

## 5) CONCLUSION

The emergence of Sindhi media is associated with the socio-political and economic development of society. In addition to that, it also linked with the advancement of the press industry. Likewise, editorial and news-columns subject matter are deeply rooted in the political scene of Sindh, Pakistan.

The content analysis gives the impression that in the early phase of Pakistan, the Sindh government was attentive to meet the expectation of rural people in terms of the provision of the services. However, it failed to meet the aspirations of Sindh's peasants, especially in the areas of the land distribution policies, agriculture,

and irrigation projects and schemes. However, Weekly Sindhi Hurryet, under its pro-peasants' policy highlighted that how the Sindh Government's directionless policies and non-focused programme are offering nothing to the general masses of Sindh Province. In this earlier phase of Pakistan, the ruling government of Pakistan Muslim League remained active in petty issues. Thus, the strategic political void tempted civil-military bureaucracy to occupy it.

Results, according to the newspaper's editorials, show that Weekly Sindhi Hurryet editorials addressed and news columns under different headings to the Sindh government. The findings show that during three consecutive years, the performance of the Sindh government was not up to the mark. However, the construction of the sentences gave a sense of a complaint against the representatives of the Sindh Government. Further, findings in the area of news columns of Weekly Sindhi Hurryet report that the maximum number from various districts of Sindh was rural crime. In this category, most dominant crimes were cattle theft and diversion or excess use of irrigation water. The rural crime, especially theft of cattle in Sindh has a long history. It remained a top most crime in pre-partition and post-partition Sindh. Its roots are in socio-culture, settlement, and geographical realities of Sindh (Broadhurst, Shah, Nabi, & Orakzai, 2011). Likewise, irrigation water, its distribution, and forcefully taken away or directed irrigation water by the powerful landlords was an issue in rural areas, where weak, unorganised people suffered. On the other hand, controlling the irrigation water became the political tool of the governments in power for getting support from the rural people. In this political maneuvering, the official from the irrigation, revenue and agriculture departments played the role of facilitation (Rinaudo, 2002).

Furthermore, findings show that the tone of the news-editorial is informative and educative. Finally, government services did not focus on addressing the problems and grievances of the peasants. On the other, the weekly regularly reported the crime in rural areas. Thus, themes of the editorial and news columns published Weekly Sindhi Hurryet from the rural areas also complement each other. The study reveals that in the early phase of Pakistan, the performance of the government was not up to the mark. Pakistan from its inception failed to address its strategic issues. The case in point is formulating the constitution, setting the people-centered economic policies, and resolving the issues among the federating units and the central government. These mishandling important political issues paved the way for the non-democratic forces and non-representative factions in the politics of Pakistan, and it is still handling it. All successive governments of Pakistan's approaches remained shortsighted and temporary. Therefore, citizens will suffer more in the coming years.

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