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AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF
FUKUZAWA YUKICHI'S
"A LETTER OF FAREWELL TO NAKATSU"

Translated and annotated
by David Oberman and
Kayano Tomoatsu*

Translator's Introduction

At the end of October, 1870, Fukuzawa Yukichi made a
journey to his home town Nakatsu (中津) in order to take his
mother and relatives to Tokyo. By this time he had already
published the influential 
Conditions in the West (西洋事情) (1866-
1868), and had established Keio Gijuku (慶應義塾) (1868).

Only three years after the collapse of the old regime, Japan
was still in the throes of political confusion. Japanese who hoped
to reform Japan through the diffusion of Western knowledge, were
the target of terrorist acts committed by the remnants of the
xenophobic joi-ron (攘夷論) group. Thus, enroute to Nakatsu, two
assassins unsuccessfully sought Fukuzawa's life.

Having arrived safely in his home town, when the distin-
guished thinker was consulted about reform of the Nakatsu
domain** (中津藩), he proposed that the fief should end its policy
of introducing Western armaments and that instead a school for
Western Learning be established. Furthermore, upon his departure,
he left the letter to the people of Nakatsu which is translated
below.

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The translators would like to thank Professor Matsuzawa of the
Faculty of Law, Hokkaido University, for giving generously of his
time, patience and advice in overseeing this project.

**For an explanation of the term "Han" (domain) see note 7.

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This letter was written prior to the transformation of the political system undertaken by the Meiji government. By 1871, the government had begun to take steps to transform the feudal system into that of a modern centralized state. Class status was being abolished and the abolition of domains and establishment of the prefectoral system was being effected. When Fukuzawa composed this letter, however, the old system was still in force. Thus, in this letter, he continues to use the character 国 to mean both domain and nation. The formula of national independence expressed by Fukuzawa in this letter, i.e. a person's independence → his family's independence → his domain's independence → the nation's independence (一身 → 一家 → 一国 → 天下) was also modified after the domains were abolished in 1871. It became: a person's independence → the nation's independence (一身 → 一国). This formula appeared in the third pamphlet of Gakumon no Susume (学問のすすめ) (1874), and became a famous catch-phrase in his writing.

Fukuzawa's insistence of the urgency of Western Learning was fully developed and integrated into his nation-building theory in Bunmeiron no Gairyaku (文明論之概略) (1875), and in Gakumon no Susume (学問のすすめ) (1872-1876), both of which were published at a time when significant cultural changes were being proposed by the enlightenment movement, especially the Meirokusha (明六社) group.

According to Fukuzawa's remarks in this letter, the government was to act as a representative of the people in protecting their life and property. The family, which was to develop out of the husband-wife relationship, was seen as the foundation of morality. Fukuzawa's thoughts on human relations conflicted with some of the Japanese Confucian ideas about human relations that were prevalent in his day. In this letter he attempts to encourage his readers, who had been raised on Confucianism, to identify with his ideas, by citing Chinese classics and reinterpreting them with idiosyncratic interpretations which would emphasize his own ideas. The germs of many of Fukuzawa's basic ideas, which were to be expounded upon at length in later major works, can be found in this letter.

Although the letter was initially addressed to his fellow countrymen of Nakatsu, individual hand-written copies were made
and immediately circulated widely beyond Nakatsu’s borders. In addition to the hand-written circulation of copies, the letter was printed. At present, we know only of one printing by a publisher in Kanazawa in 1874. There were possibly others, although the places and dates are unknown.

This translation was carried out as follows:
1. Translation of this early Meiji text into equivalent English. 2. Addition of notes to clarify important terms and quotes from Chinese classics, in order to point up the uniqueness of Fukuzawa’s argument.

Because of the method of translation and of the hope that this translation will be the springboard for our future study, the translators put a great deal of energy into understanding Fukuzawa text and into research of Fukuzawa’s intellectual background.

When this translation was almost finished, the translators had a chance to read a previous translation of the same text “Words Left Behind in Nakatsu” by professor Eiich Kiyooka, in *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Education - Selected Works*. (University of Tokyo Press, 1985)

The translators would like to express their respect for Professor Kiyooka, who has already published a large number of translations of Fukuzawa’s text in English. It is our hope, however, that this translation will be seen as another interpretation of the significance of this text.

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“Man is the highest of creation.” This does not only mean that he is endowed with ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands and feet, and can speak, sleep and eat. Its true meaning is that once one can cultivate virtue according to the way of Heaven, expand the knowledge and experience essential to human beings, deal with various matters and associate with people, devise one’s own independence and provide one’s own household’s livelihood, then one can be called the highest of creation.
Although since antiquity it has mostly gone unnoticed by the Chinese and Japanese, there is a principle called “liberty and freedom” in man’s innate disposition. It may sound selfish to simply say “freedom,” but it is by no means so. Freedom means translating one’s every intention into practice, without obstructing others. When father and son, lord and vassal, man and wife or friends each freely put their intentions into practice without hindering each other; when each establishes his own independence without ruling another person according to his own mind; man’s social behaviour cannot take the wrong direction because the innate human disposition is basically good. If a person commits an indiscretion, exceeding the limits of his freedom, benefiting himself by harming other people; then because he is harmful to society, he should be punished by Heaven, and may not be pardoned by man; therefore you may scorn him, and may punish him, irrespective of his rank or age. As stated above, man’s freedom and independence are important, and when one errs with respect to this principle, one cannot cultivate virtue, cannot develop intellect, cannot keep peace in one’s family well, cannot build one’s domain, and cannot hope for independence of the nation. A person’s family gains its independence only when a person gains his own independence; his domain’s independence can only follow his family’s; the whole nation gains independence only after his domain. Samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants should not disturb each other’s freedom and independence.

The foundation of morality is the husband and wife relationship. After husband-wife come parent-child and sibling relationships. When Heaven created man, at the origin of creation there must have been one woman to one man. Even after tens of millions of years, their ratio has remained the same. Moreover, each man and woman is equally a person between Heaven and earth and therefore there is no reason for a difference in importance between them. If one observes the customs of ancient and modern China and Japan, one man has always taken many women as wives and concubines, and has treated his women like maids or criminals. No one has ever seemed to feel ashamed over such things. Is this not shameful? If a man contemns his wife, his children, in imitation of this, will despise their mother and fail to
Material

respect her teaching. If they do not respect her teaching, then although they have a mother, it is as if they do not. They are no different from orphans. To make matters worse, a man works outside and hardly ever stays home, so there is no-one to educate his children. This makes them all the more pitiful.

It is recorded in *The Analects* of Confucius (論語 Lun-yu) that “There is a difference (別 betsu), between man and wife.” is not intended to mean different treatment. There should be mutual affection between man and wife. If the wife is discriminated against like a stranger, then it will be very difficult to keep peace in the house. Therefore 別 means a distinction: this man and this woman constitute this couple, that man and that woman constitute that couple. It means that distinction is correctly determined by couples. However, in cases where a man supports a large number of concubines, and both the authentic wife and the concubines have children, although they are brothers, they have one father, but different mothers. One can hardly say that there is a distinction between couples in this instance. If one man has the right to marry two wives, then it should be reasonable for a woman, too, to indulge in possessing two husbands. Could any man, if his wife were to love and marry another man, and the one woman and her two husbands lived together in the same house, possibly endure this condition and serve his wife well?

In the *Tso-Chuan* (左伝) it says “trade in one’s wife.” This refers to the practice in which a man would trade in his wife for a short while. Confucius lamented the degeneration of morals in society, and wrote *The Chronicles of Lu* (春秋 Chun-ch’iu), using such terms as “the barbarians” or “Middle Kingdom” and so forth, roundly praising and slandering the people. Yet didn’t he seem oddly unperturbed about the practice of trading in one’s own wife? He did not criticize it at all, assuming lack of concern about this practice. This seems somewhat reproachable to our unenlightened eye. Or is there another way of understanding the phrase “夫婦別有り” in *The Analects* of Confucius? Scholars of Chinese studies must have their opinion on this.

Filial piety towards one’s parents is an incontrovertible moral requirement. We must think about our parents wholeheartedly and must practice filial piety sincerely. The Confucian
rule of "three years mourning" to repay three years' nursing infancy is essentially based on calculation. Is it not exceedingly cold-hearted?

There are few people who reprimand a child who does not have filial piety and also reproach parents who do not love their children. As a parent, it is a great mistake to call one's children "Those we have given birth to," and to think as if they are instruments wrought by one's hands and bought with one's money. We must respect them because they are a gift man is blessed with by Heaven. When a child is born, the parents themselves educate it in a united effort; until it is over ten years old, the parents themselves educate it under their care at home, and give it good instruction by means of parental discipline and affection. Once the foundation for schooling has been laid, they place him in a school, to be disciplined by teachers, thus training him to be a full citizen. This is the obligation of parents, and their bounden duty towards Heaven. When a child attains the age of 21 or 22, this is called adulthood, and usually at this age he begins to develop his own ideas; the father and mother can terminate their guidance for him once and for all, let him build an independent livelihood, go wherever he wishes and do whatever he wants. However, because the "way" of parents and children changes neither in their life, nor after their death, a child should practice filial piety, and the parents should not retract their affection. That "terminate their guidance once and for all," mentioned above, only means not disturbing his independence and freedom, even in the Father-Child relationship. A passage from a Western book reads as follows: "After a child achieves adulthood parents should advise their children, but not give them orders." This is an eternally immutable golden rule. Consider these words.

Furthermore, the way of educating children surely includes both instruction and practice; however, imitating is more important than learning from instruction. This is an important lesson: therefore the parents' conduct has to be upright. Even if they preach high ideals, if their conduct is contemptible, the child will not take what his parent preach as his code of behaviour, but will follow their conduct. It will be still worse if the parents' preaching and conduct are both iniquitous. How can we expect this child

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attain adulthood? He may well be even more unfortunate than an orphan. Some parents are naturally good, and recognize the moral duty of loving their children, but they have no idea of the fundamentals of human relations and they just selfishly enjoy having their child obey their wishes. This seems innocent but in fact although they know they should love their child, they have no idea of why or how to do so. Eventually, they will induce their child to fall into the misfortunes of ignorance and lack of virtue, and are therefore sinners who act contrary to the rule of Heaven and the way of man. There are no parents who are not anxious about a sickly child. Having a mind that is not fit for a human being is worse than having a crippled body, but why on earth are they only anxious about the body's weakness and not anxious about the mind's weakness. Should this be called "womanly benevolence" (婦人の仁 Fujin no Jin) or should it be named bestial affection?

Men's minds differ, just as their faces do. As society progresses, evil people increase accordingly; no individual's power is sufficient to protect his security and property. At such a point one institute a system of representative for all the country's people, establishes laws with a view to public utility, and "the law of rewarding the good and punishing the bad," is first put into practice in society.

They name these representatives "government". The head of the government is called "chief of the state," and his subordinates are called "officials." They are indispensable for the maintenance of the country's security and for averting the contempt of other countries. Although the kinds of work in society are many, there is nothing as difficult as directing the government of a country. Because the Way of Heaven is that a person who works receives his reward, the reward should be bigger in proportion to the difficulty of the work. Therefore a man who is under the protection of the government, who benefits from its functioning, should not envy the chief of the state and government officials on account of their high salary. If the laws of the government are just, their salary should be considered reasonable. Thus not only should he not envy them, but he should, accordingly, respect them. The chief of the state and the officials, for their part, should not forget the moral principle of feeding themselves by their own toil.

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and should consider the balance between their endeavors and the salary they earn for them. Maybe the above-mentioned relationship between the chief of the state and government officials, and the people, is what is called the (義 Gi) true relationship between lord and vassal.

The above is an outline interpretation of the social relations between human beings. It is difficult to explain this fully in two or three pages; one would necessarily have to read books, which does not mean only reading Japanese books; one also has to read books from China, India and Western countries. I hear that nowadays groups of scholars establish their own schools of thought which are called "Imperial Learning," "Chinese Learning" and "Western Learning" and maliciously slander each other. This is absurd. Study simply consists of reading letters printed on paper; it is not so difficult. Argument about the merits and demerits of a school of Learning should come after mastering the letters. There is no gain from spending time in useless argument before this. Is it so hard for the human intellect to learn the language of two or three countries such as Japan, China, England, France, etc.? Is it not the shame of a man who does not even know the letters of a particular language to unfairly malign learning of which he knows nothing? When studying, one must think about one's own country's interests, even more than the advantages and disadvantages of each particular school of Learning.

Foreign trade is beginning in our country now, and there are some dishonest fellows amongst the foreigners. Many of them are going to pursue their own gain by exploiting the wealth of our nation and the minds of our people. Nevertheless, we Japanese still propound Imperial Learning or Chinese Learning etc.; we yearn for the old ways and do not rejoice in the new methods; we are not well acquainted with conditions in the countries of the world, and thus invite poverty and stupidity. Would not the foreigners be pleased at this? We must admit that we are ensnared by their plots.

In this situation, what the foreigners would fear is only the Western Learning. Only if people read widely in books from many countries and become well informed about world trends, discuss world affairs in terms of international law, only then will the
Greater Japan truly emerge. This is the reason why I am not concerned with arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of the three schools, i.e. Imperial, Chinese and Western Learning, but with the urgency of developing only Western Learning. I do hope that both the Samurai and the common people of our hometown Nakatsu, too, will henceforth have an enlightened view of things, devote themselves to Western Learning above all other schools of learning, will work for themselves, feed themselves by their own toil without disturbing any man’s freedom, establish their own freedom, cultivate virtue and develop their knowledge, sweep away ignoble hearts and come to comprehend the way to well-being inside one’s family, and to the wealth and power of the nation.

Everyone thinks of their home town; everyone prays for the happiness of their old friends. The time for my farewell draws near, so in haste I have taken my pen, written down the gist of Western books, and left it for my old friends, so that they may consider it some day.

Third year of Meiji, Kogo, on the night of the 27th day of the 11th month, by the tumbledown window of my old house at Rusuimachi in Nakatsu.

Fukuzawa Yukichi

Notes
1. The original phrase meaning “the highest of creation” is 惟天地万物父母 惟人万物靈
   It appears in the Chinese classic 書經、泰誓 (上). It reads as following: “Heaven and earth are the parents of all beings. Man is the soul of all beings,” (i.e. the highest of creation).
2. Fukuzawa’s idea of 天 was a more ambiguous one than the Judeo-Christian concept of heaven. According to Albert Craig, he expressed “the notion of an ultimate force or order” with the character 天. “Whether this order was natural or metaphysical can be debated.” See Albert M. Craig, “John Hill Burton and Fukuzawa Yukichi,” in Kindai Nihon Kenkyu, (Studies of Modern Japan) Vol. 1, 1984, Tokyo: Keio Gijuku Fukuzawa Yukichi Kenkyu Senta.
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3. Kimura Takeshi traces the import of the concept of 天 “freedom” into Japan in Chapter 6, “Jiyu wa itsu nihon ni haitte kita ka” (When did the concept of freedom come to Japan?) *Bunmei Kaika Seinen Nihon no Enjita Hikigeki* (Civilization and Enlightenment: Tragicomedy in Young Japan) Shibundo, 1957. According to Kimura, the modern concept of freedom was first brought into Japan through the official translation of the Dutch word “vrijheid” in the Dutch constitution and civil law in 1843. Until the Japanese word “天” jiyu” was used to mean freedom, it had quite a different meaning. The word was imported from China as one of the cardinal terms of Buddhist doctrine. In its Buddhist sense, it meant a mastery of one’s desires, whether in the seclusion of monasticism or in the midst of everyday secular life, and thus had a positive meaning. When the term became popularized however, it took on negative connotations and came to signify selfishness.

Kimura praises Fukuzawa's translation as the first translation that attached the concept of freedom to the word and freed it from the negative connotations in traditional usage.

Fukuzawa had been particular in his choice of the word “天 jiyu”. In Seiyo Jiyo Shohen (Vol. 1, 1866), he stated that there was no appropriate Japanese word for “freedom” or “liberty”, and explained the meaning of these words as “one's self-determination or self-fulfilment while not obstructing others.” There, (Fukuzawa Yukichi Senshu Vol. 1, p. 103-104) he explains that anyone should have the freedom of being allowed to choose his vocation as a samurai, peasant, artisan or merchant. Fukuzawa, in his letter to the people of Nakatsu, stresses the need for everyone, whether high or low born, to exercise their innate capacity for learning, provided they did not obstruct the freedom of others.
4. This mention of the 君臣 Kunshin lord-vassal relationship seems to imply that Fukuzawa supposed that some aspects of the feudal system, i.e., the lord-vassal relationship, and the “daimyo” system of rule would continue to exist even under the Meiji government at this time Meiji III (See note 7). He tried to change the implication of this relationship (See note 17).

After the clan system was abolished and the lord-vassal relationship lost its authority in Meiji IV, Fukuzawa openly argued that human nature is not disposed to this type of relationship. See also Fukuzawa Yukichi, Bunmeiron no Gairyaku, (文明論之概略), Iwanami Bunko 1962 p. 59-60.

5. These four relationships are four of the “五倫 gorin” Confucian relationships. The fifth, not mentioned here, is the relationship between older and younger, (長幼) choyo. See Legge, The Four Books.

6. “When one does not rule another according to his own mind.” Fukuzawa elaborates on this theme in Gakumon no Susume, An Encouragement of Learning (学問のすすめ), in the first and eighth pamphlets.

7. The character 国 as used here, is obviously a unit between that of the family and that of the state. The only feasible meaning is domain (藩 han). The word han has been translated variously as domain, fief or clan. The term refers to the area of land entrusted to a Daimyo by the Tokugawa shogunate and to its military, administrative and fiscal superstructure. Before the abolition of the domains and the establishment of the prefectural system, the han was not usually called “han” but “kuni”. The use of this word kuni is another indication of Fukuzawa’s supposition of the continuing existence of some aspects of the feudal system. See also Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshu, Vol. 17, p. 63, for Fukuzawa’s letter of Meiji II to Matsuyama Toan in which he used both kuni (国) and han (藩) to mean the han unit.

The same hierarchical ordering of these units (domain → state) appears in Sakuma Shozan’s Seikenroku “I, after twenty realized that I am related to my domain, after thirty, to Japan, and after forty to the world.”

8. A parallel to this formula can be found in 大学 The Daxue. The Chinese text reads as follows:
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欲明明德於天下者，先治其國。欲治其國者，先齊其家。
欲齊其家者，先脩其身。欲脩其身者，先正其心。

James Legge's translation of this passage, in James Legge, *The Life and Teaching of Confucius* (London: Trubner, 1875), p. 266, reads as follows: “The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their own States: Wishing to order well their States, they first cultivated their persons, Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts”.

Although the formula is the same, the content is not, however. In 大学 The Daxue, the stress is on how to create the ideal ruler by developing one's own heart, etc., whereas Fukuzawa stressed the creation of independent individuals, who would thus constitute the ideal nation. The source for Fukuzawa's content is probably Wayland's *The Elements of Moral Science*. Fukuzawa had read *The Elements of Moral Science* in the first year of Meiji and used it in classes in Keio Gijuku. See *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshu*, Vol. 1, p. 48.

In Meiji II, in a letter to a friend in Wakayama, Fukuzawa first wrote “A person’s family gains its independence only when a person gains his independence; his han’s can only follow his family’s and then that of the empire will follow it. *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshu*, Vol. 17, p. 64-65. In many respects the contents of "A Letter of Farewell to Nakatsu" correspond quite closely with certain sections in *The Elements of Moral Science*, especially "The nature and duties imposed by the marriage contract" (p. 312ff); "Mutual affection between man and wife," (p. 315); "the duty of parents to support and educate their children,” (p. 318-329); "the duties of children, including filial affection,” (p. 330-335); "the parts and forms of a government and the duties of its officers,” (p. 358-361). The chapter "The Duties of Citizens" (p. 363-368) of *The Element of Moral Science* must be the source of Fukuzawa’s social contract theory which developed in the sixth and the seventh book of “Gakumon no Susume” (1874) （学問のすすめ）.

9. Cf. *Political Economy, for use in schools and for private instruction* p. 2. “It is a rule of human nature for the man and woman to associate themselves by marriage in a permanent union". *Political Economy* was another book read by Fukuzawa at this time. Seiyo Jijo Gaihen is a translation of *Political Economy*. See also the introduction to Seiyo Jijo Gaihen, in *Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshu*. Vol.

11. Legge's interpretation of this phrase runs as follows: “The legendary Emperor, Shun 舜, told his minister of instruction, Hsieh 契, that there should be “between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions” (The Four Books p. 630). Tsuda Mamichi, one of the Meirokusha scholars, argued that the word 別 meant that the wife's sphere is within and the husband's outside the home, after he returned from a journey to China where he saw the people's social life-style. See Tsuda Mamichi's essay on “The Distinctions between Husbands and Wives,” Meiroku Zassi (Transl. William Reynolds Braisted) p. 277-279. Fukuzawa's interpretation of the phrase 夫婦有別 in this letter, is an exceptionally colourful one, as he distorts the meaning to suit his purpose in criticizing the custom of possessing concubines or second wives. In Bunmeiron no Gairyaku, however, he adopted the orthodox interpretation, adding that man and wife should not be so familiar with each other as to create a dishonorable situation. Bunmeiron no Gairyaku p. 116.

12. The Chun-ch'iu 春秋 Chronicles of Lu, one of the five classics (五經 Wu ching), was a compilation and editing of Chinese historical materials, traditionally attributed to Confucius. There were three books written about this. One was the tso chuan 左傳, abbreviation of chun ch'iu tso shin chuan 春秋左氏傳, which contained historical records of China from B.C. 481. It was a record of internal wars and wise sayings by the kings and generals of these warring states.

13. (“The barbarians” 夷狄 or “Middle Kingdom” 中華.)


15. This “quotation” appears to be a paraphrasing of a passage or passages in Wayland's The Elements of Moral Science and/or Chamber's Political Economy.
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16. See the section “Huai Yin Hou Zuan 准陰侯傳” in Shi ji 史記. Huai Yin Hou criticizes King Xiang of China in this section. He was polite to everyone, shed tears for the sick and gave them his own food, but would not give land or status to his own brave warriors. This was called the jin of woman 婦人的仁 and was an undesirable kind of jin.

17. Fukuzawa’s mention of the “義 君臣 Gi” Kunshin, or the relationship that should exist between lord and vassal, in connection with the Chief of the State and government officials, is a tactical one, to help his readers identify with his suggestions. According to Mencius (The Four Books, p. 630) the Kunshin governor/governed relationship involves “義 Gi”, but as Fukuzawa saw it, this was a simple exchange of security for salary, and did not involve a moral obligation. See An Encouragement of Learning, transl. David A. Dilworth and Umeyo Hirano (Tokyo: Sophia University Press), p. 174ff. The obligation, according to Fukuzawa, should henceforth be understood as towards one’s vocation, not towards one’s ruler or emperor.

18. See note 15.

19. This term, Kogo 甲午 combines two systems for counting years. The first character, 甲 (kanoe), is the name given the seventh year of the ten year system. The second character, 午 (uma) is the year of the horse, the seventh of the twelve horary signs. Although the reading “Kanoeuma” appears in the text used, Fukuzawa Yukichi Senshu, the translators feel the reading Kogo more likely to have been the one Fukuzawa would have used.

THE TEXT FOR THE TRANSLATION

“Nakatsu Ryubetsu no Sho” Fukuzawa Yukichi Senshu Vol. 9 (Iwanami Shoten 1981) p. 5-11

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***Chinese Classics

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