Kay Pacha

Cultivating earth and water in the Andes

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11. The animated soundscape and the mountain's bones

Henry Stobart

Resumen

Pocos trabajos etnográficos sobre asuntos andinos se dedican al tema del sonido, sin embargo el sonido es un medio sobresaliente entre las expresiones de la animación de las cosas vivas y da mucha importancia a la creación de un sentido de lugar. En esta investigación quiero explorar como la gente de una communidad campesina de ayllu Macha, norte de Potosí, Bolivia, describan, imitan, median, interpretan, y categorizan los sonidos de su paisaje.

El sonido toma un rol muy importante en los diálogos diarios y caléndricos entre la gente de esta communidad y la tierra donde moran. Con conocimiento profundo, sabiduría pronóstica y sensibilidad (y con más o menos consciencia) escuchan y responden al ambiente acústico. Por su parte, se dice que el mundo natural escucha y responde a los sonidos humanos – la gente humana tiene que consolar la tierra con la música. Además, como en otras partes de los Andes, mucha gente piensa que la música toma un rol muy importante en el transformación estacional del paisaje.

La relación íntima entre la música y la regeneración caléndrica de la tierra es todavía más enfatizada en la descripción local de las cañas y ramas utilizadas en la construcción de los instrumentos de viento como 'huesos de los cerros' (jurq'u t'ullu). Parece que esta imagen está ligada con un cuento local y bien conocido que trata de una flauta construida del hueso de un amante asesinado.

Introduction

This chapter explores the sonic background to the music of an Andean community – the soundscape from which music emerges and with which it interacts. I will briefly consider the acoustic properties of the environment and certain natural sounds, but my primary focus will be on local discourses about sounds; how they are categorized, generated and communicated. It is evident from these accounts, and from the very practice of music-making itself, that sound serves as a crucial medium for presenting and representing relationships with the land and in the cultural construction of the landscape.

The 'animated soundscape' of the title brings together the idea of a 'soundscape' with the notion of an 'animated landscape', alluded to in many ethnographies of the Andes.1 Accordingly, the focus shifts away from the almost exclusively visual associations of 'landscape' to a more multi-sensorial approach. Scholarly attention was first drawn to the term 'soundscape' with the setting up of the World Soundscape Project² in 1970 by the composer Robert Murray Schafer and through his influential book The tuning of the world (1977). Schafer and his colleagues' work on acoustic ecologies and soundscape aimed to counteract what they saw as the excessive visualism of the Western tradition. Recent work, however, has taken a more multi-sensorial approach, focusing on the interaction of the senses rather than constructing an antivisualism (Feld 1996: 96, Howes 1991: 6). In this chapter I also wish to emphasize that, although sound is my primary focus and perspective, it is always in dialogue or synaesthetic tandem with other sensory modalities.

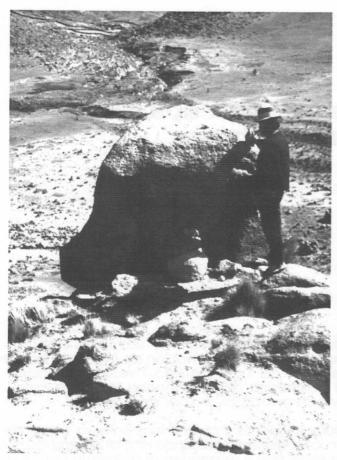


Figure 1. Sounding the bell stones. (Photograph: Henry Stobart)



Figure 2. Jula-jula panpipes are played as 'consolation' for tata wila krus ('father true cross'), and are said to attract frosts and blow the clouds away. Tata wila krus is identified with the large community cross and with harvesting and ploughing the land. (Photograph: Henry Stobart)

In attempting to account for how the Western Apache interact with their landscape, Keith Basso (1996: 55) has described this reciprocating process as 'interanimation'. This word also seems highly appropriate for the case of the Bolivian Andes. Firstly, the Spanish loan word animu is used by my Quechua speaking hosts to refer to the animation of all living things and to sounds, including those which we might describe as music (Stobart 1999). Besides sound, the energy of animu may be expressed in variety of forms, for example visually, as lightning, or kinaesthetically, as the movement of water through the landscape. Thus, animu is not only attributed to humans and animals, as living beings, but also to certain aspects of the landscape and cosmos.

Secondly and from a more objective perspective, Basso (1996: 55) has related interanimation to 'the fact that familiar places are experienced as inherently meaningful, their significance and value being found to reside in (and, it may be seen to emanate from) the form and arrangement of the observable characteristics'. This is also undoubtedly true for my Bolivian hosts, although the implicit visualism implied by the words 'observable characteristics' is unfortunate and probably not intended by Basso. Indeed, as Steven

Feld (1996: 97) has remarked, 'places are as potentially reverberant as they are reflective, and one's embodied experiences and memories of them may draw significantly on the interplay of that resoundingness and reflectiveness'. Fusing acoustics and epistemology, Feld has coined the term 'acoustemology' to highlight the potential importance of acoustic knowing - of making sense of experiences though the acoustic dimension.

Feld (1996: 107-8) demonstates how, among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, this knowing through sound is expressed in musical discourse. For example, many of the same words are used to describe both the shaping of sound in music and the movement of water through the landscape. Similarly, the aesthetic for a dense overlapping musical style is related to the acoustic ecology of the Kalulis' rainforest environment in which sounds never synchronize. Thus, instead of synchronizing their voices, Kaluli sing the same words and melody just behind the leading voice, to create a dense overlapping effect, called *dulugu ganalan* 'lift-up-over sounding' (Feld 1996: 100-1).

The idea of acoustic knowing is also the starting point for this essay, although the acoustic ecology of the



Figure 3. Flute constructed from a condor wing bone, locally called kuntur pinkillu ('condor flute') or quri pinkillu ('golden flute'), shown with the drum and beater with which it is played by a single man as a 'pipe and tabor'. Ayllu Macha, northern Potosí, Bolivia. (Photograph: Henry Stobart)

high Bolivian Andes contrasts radically with the rainforests of the Kaluli and those of nearby Amazonia. Rainforests typically hum to the constant sounds of birds, insects and flowing water, and the reflective quality of the vegetation gives the acoustic impression of enclosed intimacy. However, in the open, treeless environment of the high Andes, sounds tend to dissipate, as though swallowed up by the enormity of the landscape. Perhaps as a form of acoustic compensation, most rural music of the high Andes is highly dynamic in nature. Gentle, reflective and meditative forms, such as the lullaby, are rare. Music tends to be concerned primarily with animating situations, people or places rather than creating a meditative atmosphere or inducing sleep.

The contrasts and continuities between the soundscapes and musics of the high Andes and Amazonia is a theme which I intend to develop elsewhere. Here, however, I wish to focus on the presentation of the highland soundscape in local discourse. First, I shall consider the landscape as the sounding body of the earth and explore the sounds of the wild fauna which inhabit its margins. Then I shall consider how music is used to motivate the seasonal transformations of the landscape, and approached as an expression of the landscape.

The animated soundscape

My Andean hosts personified numerous features of their local landscape as animate beings with human-like emotions, desires and actions. For example, cultivated plots of land were referred to as 'virgins' which give birth to foodcrops but which also, if angered, may 'grasp' a person and make them ill. Similarly, a nearby rocky peak is referred to as San Francisco Qalawalaychu, 'St. Francis Rolling Stone', who is compared to a roaming young man with an insatiable sexual appetite.

Whilst these personifications are locally specific, reflecting an intimate knowledge of the landscape, embodied histories and local identities, they are also translocal and refer to powers, social relations and experiences from well beyond the community boundaries. For example, the high pass or apachita leading to the neighbouring valley is particularly feared and noted for its silence (ch'in). Evil-doers (malientes) and thieves (suwas) from the towns were said to lurk there, and causes of illness and misfortune, collected by healers in rainbow-coloured balls of wool, are left to be consumed by the demons that reside there. Outside powers and knowledge are also reflected by the sapiri, a nearby mountain peak which, in a seemingly contradic-

tory way, is at the same time powerfully associated with local ancestral identity. In the form of a condor, the *sapiri* is sometimes called down to speak at shamanic sessions and specified to speak in Spanish, or other languages not understood by my Quechua speaking hosts. The *sapiri* appears simultaneously to reference celestial forces, such as *luriya* ('glory') and *Santiago* (St. James/lightning), and external political powers such as the State, national legal system and distant nations.³

The transformations of the animated landscape are intimately related to those of the celestial bodies, especially the sun and moon. For example, during the nights of full, or 'dead', moons the mountains are said to 'wander around' (purin) and to mate with one another. At these times, I was told, the illa and samiri rocks on the peaks make sounds like mating llamas and bulls. On these same nights bell stones are said to resound kalan kalan of their own accord. But at other times, it was explained, the mountains are asleep, still and silent.

Such descriptions suggest an analogy between the earth and a living body. Fluids and energy constantly flow inside living bodies, but whilst at rest and asleep the external impression is of silence. When the body awakens and 'walks', as in the case of the mountain peaks during nights of full moons, sound is released. This idea is beautifully expressed in the story of the origin of the bell stones – large rocks found on the mountain side above my host hamlet which, when struck with a stone, produce a resonant bell-like tone (fig. 1).

The story of the origin of the bell stones concerns a wager between God, with his black cockerel, and *Supay*, with a red one.⁴ The action takes place at the end of the primordium, when the world was lit only by the moon. It was agreed that, when God sent up the sun for the first time, the owner of the cockerel which crowed first would be the winner. In the story God's black cockerel crowed first and *Supay*, the loser, immediately entered a rock, the bell stone(s), which remains to this day.

The resonant sound of the bell stones, like that of musical instruments, was specifically related to *Supay*. The resonance derives from his animation and inner presence where he continues to be 'trampled' down by God. Thus, the bell stones are not presented as inert objects, but suggest living bodies animated from within. Unlike other stones, these rocks were said to contain *animu*, the animate quality attributed to all living beings. As in many other Andean stories, transformation into stone seems to have the effect of storing up, rather than losing, the potential for animation. As Rosaleen Howard-Malverde (p. 234, this volume) also observes, lithomorphosis 'neutralizes energies and stores them up for future use'.

There is a strong sense that with his containment in rock, Supay's red cockerel is still waiting to crow. Its initial failure to crow is now translated into creative potential for future sound and, in particular, music. This story appears to inform, or draw upon, a wide-spread tradition in the southern Andes of sacrificing, or

invoking, a red cockerel before important musical performances, or of spilling its blood onto new instruments to ensure that they sound well. A friend also related the resonant sound of a local guitar (*kitarra*) to the Red Cockerel Rock of Churikala, 5 specifically referring to the instrument's sound as *animu*.

The bell stones are also described as representing the 'whole mountain' (jurq'u intiru), which suggests that they are thought of as a microcosm of the earth. This is also implied by the observation that the 'bells of the inner earth', Supay's realm, which are comparable with 'our own' church bells. Thus, the idea of the earth as a living body which, in the same way as other bodies, may express its inner animation or sentiments through sound is vividly portrayed by the bell stones.

The notion of an animated earth full of potential sound was again emphasised by descriptions of the *sirinus* or 'sirens', whom my hosts said are the source of all music and classed as a form of *yawlu* ('devil'). It is common belief in several parts of the southern Andes that the *sirinus*, who are typically said to live in waterfalls or springs, can be visited late at night to collect powerful new tunes or to magically tune musical instruments. In several places people have described how the deep booming sounds of water *booo boooooo* at a waterfall may give rise to a new melody, entering the head like a dream, or falling under an instrumentalist's fingers.

In a description evocative of the circulation of fluids in a living body, my host described how the *sirinu* pass through the narrow passages inside the earth and emerge from the gullies 'like water'. Through the persona of the *sirinu*, the animated landscape is thus portrayed as a primary source of musical sound and imagination. In turn, the various forms of music played by humans are ultimately presented as expressions of the earth and landscape rather than originating from human creativity.

Listening to the soundscape

The various animated features of the landscape were referred to in terms of a social group, the *muntu jurq'us* ('mountain world'), which parallels human society. Humans are seen in many ways as dependents of these powerful named beings of the landscape, which are said to provide mountain grasses for the herds to graze and to give birth to the foodcrops. These personified aspects of the landscape are remembered daily during coca chewing, receive animal sacrifices during feasts and are given complex ritual offerings by most families at each full moon.

One of the principal offerings to the landscape is made in the windy month of August, when the earth's 'mouth' is said to be 'open' (simi kichasqa). In this ritual, which is called asintu ('seating'), a ram is sacrificed, cooked and eaten. Throughout the ceremony wedding music is performed explicitly to mark the marriage of the male mountain peaks (qullus) to the female fields (wirjin), in preparation for the forthcoming planting season.

The success of harvests and abundance of pastures is widely attributed to the quality of relations between the human and mountain worlds. Failure to supply appropriate offerings was said to be likely to cause the mountain to enter the body of the guilty person, causing them to sicken. Revenge, might also take the form of wild animals sent to devastate the guilty family's herds.

These wild creatures were said to belong to the 'mountain world', whose lord takes the form of the condor (mallku). In the same way as domestic animals help people in the human world, certain equivalent wild animals, I was told, help the mountain lord in his daily tasks.

The various wild creatures of the mountain are shy, difficult to see and mainly manifest themselves to humans through sound rather than sight. As part of the mountain world they were said to possess special knowledge outside the realm of humans. Many species, I was told, can predict or announce events affecting the welfare of humans, their voices serving to communicate between the mountain and human worlds. For example, as in many other parts of the Andes, to hear the mating cries of foxes in September and October is taken as a prognosis for a good harvest. Their silence, however, is taken as the sign of a poor year.

I spent several days recording imitations of sounds from the local environment and discussing their categorization with my host and his elder brother. Their detailed knowledge of the local fauna and their sounds was impressive, and considerably greater than my own of British wildlife. However, such awareness is hardly surprising as most members of this community spend

Table 1. Domestic and mountain helpers

<u>Human helpers</u>	Mountain lord's helpers
llama (llama)	vicuña (wikuña)
donkey (wurru)	viscacha (wiskacha)
cockerel (kallu)	eagle (anka)
chicken (wallpa)	black/white eagle (qarqañu)
dog (alqu)	skunk (añathuya)
cat (misi)	puma (titi michi)

almost every day outside working in the landscape, whether pasturing animals or cultivating the fields. These recordings and discussion revealed that the majority of the local names for wild species are onomatopoeic and directly associated with the semi-verbal mimicry of their call or other characteristic sounds (see table 2).

It is unlikely that all these names are truly onomatopoeic in origin, but usually an onomatopoeic relationship between the name and associated sound was assumed. Wild fauna (khurus) were specifically stated to be ukhu, meaning 'inside', emphasizing their link with the hidden inner mountain world. However, domestic species (uywa) were said to belong to 'God's side' (tiyusninchis laru) and, unlike the sound-associated names of wild species, none of their names sounded, or were considered, onomatopoeic. Rather, individual llamas and cattle tended to be categorized according to the colour of their fleeces. For example, allqa 'dark brown or black and white', chumpi 'brown', or chiqchi 'dappled'.

This auditory/visual contrast in naming, where domestic species are literally 'looked-after' and wild species are heard but rarely seen, emphasizes the intimate link between wild fauna and the inner mountain world, as a source of sound. People listen out for the sounds of these wild creatures as fragments of knowledge from the hidden mountain world where, according to myth, Supay continues to be imprisoned and 'trampled', as though silenced. As I have already suggested, this notion of the earth as essentially silent on the exterior, but animated with potential sound within, is perhaps linked to the acoustic ecology of this high, open and treeless Andean landscape in which sounds tend to dissipate.

Whilst the acquisition of new melodies was often attributed to *satanas* or *sirinus* who are classed as forms of *Supay* or 'devils' (*yawlus*), I did not encounter descriptions of any direct correlations between the sounds of wild fauna and those used in musical performance.¹⁷ However, a direct link was made between the cries of llamas and the sounds of *pinkillu* flutes. The vibrant flute timbre *tara* was associated with mating noises, whereas the thin, clear flute timbre *q'iwa* appears to be linked with the high-pitched wailing of hungry llamas (Stobart 1996: 478-80). Whether these associations with the sounds of domestic rather than wild animals are significant and part of a wider pattern relating to distinctions such as *ukhu* ('inside') and *tiyusninchis laru* ('God's side') is unclear.

The listening landscape

Not only do humans listen to and interpret their soundscape, but the mountain world is also thought to listen to and respond to the sounds of humans — it is maintained that humans must 'console' the landscape with music. Little music is performed in this Andean community outside the context of feasts, which occur some seven to eight times a year and which may last anything from a few days to well over a week. During these times music is played almost continuously and the soundscape is transformed from predominant si-

Table 2. Names and imitated sounds of wild fauna

Sound	Local name	English gloss	Type of sound	
jukuu-kututu	juku	owl (sp. buho)	waqan	('cries')
pis pis ⁸	pisarqa	partridge	phawan	('flies')
ch'ik ch'ik	ch'iki	(stonechat?)	waqan	('cries')
yaka yaka	yaka-yaka	bird	waqan	('cries')
ch'us ch'uss	ch'usiqa ⁹	owl (sp. lechuza)	waqan	('cries')
luru luru	luru	parrot	chaxwan	('chatters')
kili kili	kili-kili	bird	waqan	('cries')
jurr jurr	jurk'uta¹º	type of dove	waqan	('cries')
puku puku	phuku-phuku	small dove	waqan	('cries')
chiuw	chiwanki ¹¹	bird	waqan	('cries')
ququu	ququti	valley bird	waqan	('cries')
uli uli	uli-uli	valley bird	waqan	('cries')
q'irq q'irq	qarqañu	pied eagle	waqan	('cries')
wish wish	waychu ¹²	bird	silwan	('whistles')
wis wis	wiskacha	viscacha	silwan	('whistles')
aka akka	atuq ¹³	fox	waqan	('cries')
jurun jurun	jurun	[mongoose]	waqan	('cries')
ch'aj ch'aj	ch'ajchari	large rodent	waqan	('cries')
pikaltal	pikaltal	small toad ¹⁴	waqan	('cries')

lence to almost constant sound. It is principally young unmarried people who are expected to provide the music. Elders rarely comment on performance quality, but failure to provide *kunswilu* ('consolation') as music – even when exhausted and almost too drunk to stand – is severely criticized.

Through the course of the year and changing seasons the acoustic ecology of the landscape and soundscape transform. Humans directly participate in this transformation with musical performance, as if attempting to guide or impose order on the untidy and often unreli-

able experience of nature. *Jula-jula* panpipes are played in the month of May at a feast associated with harvest and autumn ploughing (fig. 2), and *sikura* panpipes during the patronal festivals in September. Both these forms of panpipes are said to blow the clouds away, thereby discouraging rain. In the same way as the mandolin-like *charango*, which is played throughout in the dry winter months, these panpipes are also said to attract frosts.

The start of the heavy rains is associated with the beginning of November and from this time pinkillu

flutes and the colourful kitarra — decorated with the images of growing crops — begin to be played explicitly to attract the rain and stimulate the growth of vegetation. These instruments continue to be played until the end of Carnival in February or March, when it is maintained that the rains should cease so that the fields dry out and crops mature ready for harvest.

As in many other parts of the southern Andes, through its influence on the weather, musical sound is implicated in the annual transformation and regeneration of the landscape. However, it is important to note that through the influences of modernization, education and mass media, in many places seasonal distinctions in musical performance are increasingly considered irrelevant and are disappearing. Do such changes, I wonder, reflect a more fundamental disenchantment with the landscape, or perhaps its cultural reconstruction?

The mountain's bones

For my Andean hosts, musical performance remains intimately linked with the calendrical regeneration of the landscape. This was vividly expressed by an elderly man who referred to the canes and wood used to construct wind instruments as the 'mountain's bones' (jurq'u t'ullu). Such an image again suggests the idea of the earth as a body, but also that through musical performance the whole body of the landscape is made to resound. There is a sense that the music played on these instruments is an expression of the landscape itself, rather than that of the players who primarily serve as vehicles. As I noted above, all music is attributed to the sirinus who communicate powerful new melodies to humans, from within the earth. Thus, the melodies played as consolation by humans are typically presented as the voice of the landscape rather than as human creations.

The idea that music played on the 'mountain's bones' expresses the sentiment, pain and sacrifices of the animated landscape is suggested by the well-known local story: pinkillu pisarqa chakimanta 'the partridge leg flute'. Many variants of this tale of the singing bone are found in the Andes and Europe alike. 18 Furthermore, many types of flutes continue to be made from bird or animal bones (see fig. 3). The local version of the story concerns a young man who meets and brings home a beautiful partridge woman. Next day, while he is out working, his parents discover the partridge, wring its neck and cook it. On his return the young man is heartbroken to discover the fate of his lover and fashions a flute from her leg bone. When the flute is played it sings the sad story of how the partridge girl was murdered and cooked.

The central theme of this story concerns the way in which the bone flute expresses the suffering and death of the body from which it was fashioned, and in which the flute is made and played as 'consolation' for that sacrifice. It is no coincidence that the partridge's sacrifice involved the creation of human food and that this process is expressed in the form of musical sound. Similarly, the music played by my hosts on the 'mountain's bones' as consolation, acknowledges and ex-

presses the suffering and sacrifices made by the animated landscape for the welfare and sustenance of humans.

In this rural community of the Bolivian Andes, the landscape is presented as a sentient being, which through the voices and movements of, for example, the wild fauna of the 'mountain world' communicates its emotions and intentions to humans. The idea of the 'mountain world' as a living and resounding body, animated from within, is further expressed in the story of the bell stones. The contrast between perpetual inner sound and external silence is suggested through the image of these stones as bounded bodies which enclose energy in the form of potential sound - the red cockerel waiting to crow. Only at certain significant moments, such as during full moons, is this enclosed sound released to the exterior and made audible. The image portrayed is thus one of constant inner sound or animu - the energizing quality of living beings contrasted by an essentially silent external world.

This contrast between inner sound and a silent exterior seems particularly relevant when considered in the context of the acoustic ecology of the open, treeless environment of the high Andes, where sounds tend to dissipate, as if consumed by the landscape. From such a perspective, each sound made audible becomes significant as the expression of the inner state of a sentient being. This puts a rich gloss onto the meaning and expressive potential of sound, emphasising both the 'interanimating' relationship between my hosts and their soundscape, and the way places are known in part through their acoustic dimension.

Notes

- See for example Dransart (1997: 85). Many other ethnographies imply a similar idea using such expressions as 'mountain spirit', 'nature spirit' or 'sacred landscape' (e.g. Sallnow 1987: 129-30).
- Based at Simon Frazer University, Canada.
- ³ Similarly, Sallnow (1987: 130) notes that peasants of Qamawara (Cusco, Peru) describe the local mountain/nature spirits (apu) in terms of the 'primordial forbears of the people of the community' whilst simultaneously relating them to the *mestizos* of neighbouring towns who, like the apus, hold sway over peasant life and destinies.
- ⁴ The name *Supay* and *yawlu* (Spanish *diablo* 'devil') are almost interchangeable, but the associations tend to be more generative and creative than the European counterpart.
- ⁵ A rural village, some 25 miles away.
- Constance Classen (1993: 70-72) has also recognized parallels between the flow of blood and water in her discussion of sound in the Andes.
- Compare native North American traditions such as spirit quests, where individuals acquired new melo-

- dies through fasting and extended solitary contemplation of nature (Merriam 1967).
- ⁸ Sound of wings.
- ⁹ The *ch'usiqa* owl was said to sleep in the church and to 'carry-off' (*apan*) the souls of recent dead from the cemetery.
- In some regions, the blood of the *jurk'uta* is used as a cure against epilepsy (Herrero and Sanchez 1983: 116).
- According to Berg (1990: 50) quoting Ochoa (1974: 2) the cry of the *chiwanku* (*Turdus chiguanco*) is interpreted as a prognosis of frost.
- The song of the *waychu* was compared to wind (*wayra*).
- Surprisingly the sound of the fox's bark was directly linked with its name, the two made to sound very similar.
- ¹⁴ pikaltulti jamp'atu a small toad found in the valleys.
- See also Flores Ochoa (1986) and, for historical examples, Urton (1981: 187).
- lamas, have been introduced from Europe and in many cases use Spanish derived names. Exceptions to this include *usha* 'sheep', *wallpa* 'chicken', *alqu* 'dog', and *misi* 'cat'. However, cats and dogs are considered highly ambiguous and do not tend to be classified as *uywa* ('nurtured ones').
- Unlike, for example, among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea where the melodic contour of wept song is based on pitch series sung by the *muni* bird (Feld 1990: 31-33).
- For other Andean variants of the story of the singing bone see Lara (1978: 138 under Machaypuytu) and Randall (1987: 157).

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