

**THE FIRST TURKISH SOCIOLOGIST TO PROPOSE  
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ccan@sinop.edu.tr***ORCID ID:** [orcid.org/0000-0001-6391-3067](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6391-3067)**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to reveal the relation between Prince Sabahattin's private enterprise idea and today's studies on the sociology of entrepreneurship.

**Method:** Data and other information were gathered through literature review.

**Findings:** Prince Sabahattin, who was a Young - Turk, is accepted as the first person to realize that social and economic changes are fulfilled by the entrepreneurs in the Ottoman Empire. Contrary to the many other intellectuals, Prince Sabahattin thinks that the role of institutional transformation is not enough in for social and economic development. His key concept explaining this transformation is private enterprise [*teşebbüs-i şahsi*]. In short, he emphasizes the role of social values and norms on entrepreneurial activities and the negative effects of restrictions on individual freedom in terms transformation of society.

**Results:** Finally, it is suggested that the starting point of studies about sociology of entrepreneurship in Turkey should be based on Prince Sabahattin's private enterprise and decentralization thought.

**Keywords :** Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, sociology of entrepreneurship, prince sabahattin, private enterprise, decentralization.

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## BİREYSEL GİRİŞİMİ ÖNEREN İLK TÜRK SOSYOLOĞU: PRENS SABAHATTİN<sup>2</sup>

### ÖZ

**Amaç:** Bu çalışmanın amacı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun son döneminde yaşamış bir aydın olan Prens Sabahattin'in teşebbüs-i şahsi düşüncesi ile günümüz girişimcilik sosyolojisi çalışmaları arasındaki bağlantıyı ortaya koymaktır.

**Yöntem:** Veri ve diğer bilgiler alanyazı taraması yapılarak elde edilmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Prens Sabahattin'e göre, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Batı medeniyetine sadece köklü bir zihinsel dönüşümle ulaşabilir. Bu zihinsel dönüşümü açıklayan temel anahtar kavram ise “teşebbüs-i şahsi” dir. Prens Sabahattin'in bize miras bıraktığı temel tez özetle şudur: Bireyin girişimsel aktivite içerisinde bulunması toplumsal değerler ve normlar tarafından belirlenir ve bireyin özgürlük alanını kısıtlayan toplumlarda köklü bir dönüşüm meydana gelmesi mümkün değildir. Şaşırtıcı bir biçimde Prens Sabahattin'in bu tespitleri günümüz Türkiye'si açısından da belirli bir geçerliliğe sahiptir. Keza girişimciliğe yönelik pek çok çalışmada Türkiye'de girişimci ruhun halen yeterli ölçüde gelişmediği sıklıkla ifade edilmektedir.

**Sonuç:** Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki girişimcilik sosyolojisi çalışmalarının başlangıç noktasının Prens Sabahattin'in teşebbüs-i şahsi düşüncesi olması gerektiği ifade edilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Girişim, girişimcilik, girişimcilik sosyolojisi, prens sabahattin, teşebbüs-i şahsi, adem-i merkezîyetçilik.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The theories and concepts of business and administration generally emerge in western world. Correspondingly two basic epistemological trends are used widely in and out of western world. First trend suggests that western theories and concepts should be

<sup>2</sup> Bu çalışma, 12-14 Mayıs 2016 tarihleri arasında Bişkek'te düzenlenen “7. Uluslararası Girişimcilik Kongresi”nde Dr. Sezen ÖZEK ve Dr. Candaş CAN tarafından sunulan “Girişimcilik Sosyolojisi Literatürü Üzerine Bir Analiz” ve “Türkiye'nin İlk Girişimcilik Sosyoloğu Prens Sabahattin” adlı tam metin bildirilerin birleştirilmiş ve Dr. Serdar YENER'in katkılarıyla geliştirilerek İngilizceye çevrilmiş halidir.

used as they are. But this approach has some disadvantages. For instance, it ignores the idea that western theories and concepts are history and culture specific therefore they can only explain western society structures (Sezer, 1997: 42). The other trend suggests that culture specific theories and concepts should be introduced in order to substitute western specific theories and concepts. The disadvantage of this approach is the probability of scientific paradigm's disengagements between western and out of western. The second approach should keep the balance between universalism and localism. Accordingly in this study while we were criticizing to use western origin entrepreneurship theories and concepts at the same time in a related vein we also tried to track local ideas about entrepreneurship in general. With this aim we tried to keep the relation between western resources and local theoretical heritage.

Actually discussing the entrepreneurship means discussing the history of social and economic transformation. It can be argued that entrepreneurs have the ability to design and transform the economic and social structure of the societies (Bruton et al. 2008: 3).<sup>3</sup> Present structure which is based on market economy is the output of private entrepreneurs' activities and it is renewed by activities of private entrepreneurs (McMullen and Warnick, 2015: 188). Therefore, studying entrepreneurship leads to further studies about the role of entrepreneurship in other sciences like economy, business, sociology, psychology and politics.

Entrepreneurship literature basically hosts three different views in psychology, economics and sociology literature (Simpeh, 2011: 1; Bula, 2012: 81). While psychology points out the drives which push individuals to entrepreneurship, economics studies entrepreneurship on the basis of income and profit. Finally sociological view focuses on the network of relations in society which forms a suitable environment for entrepreneurship (Aytac ve Ilhan, 2007: 102- 105). Thus, economical, psychological and

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<sup>3</sup> At this point Schumpeter's concept of "creative destruction" should be mentioned. According to Schumpeter entrepreneurship, which transforms the old and useless resources into new and more productive materials, invalidates the day-olds capital tools and investments (Drucker, 2005: 111).

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sociological approaches and their different combinations are used to define concept of entrepreneur.

While in economics entrepreneur is defined as the person who gathers manufacturing factors in order to create more value than the past, in psychological view, entrepreneur is defined as the person who tries to get something, reach somewhere, succeed and take charge of something which belongs to others (Hisrich and Peters, 2002:9). Meanwhile from sociological view entrepreneur is defined as the trustworthy person who has a position and dignity in society (Top, 2006:6).

When analyzed within historical progress entrepreneur is seen as the person who undertakes the manufacturing projects of feudal system without taking personal risks in medieval (Ercan ve Gokdeniz, 2009: 61). In mercantilism entrepreneurs got stronger with the help of profits they got through trading. Besides, in physiocracy entrepreneurs used agricultural manufacturing methods in order to realize self-interest (Marangoz, 2016: 6-7). Today since entrepreneur is defined as the person who sets a new balance or turn the scale of present balance accordingly, it can be said that economical progression depends on private entrepreneurship (Guney, 2015: 23-28).

In this sense the entrepreneur who manages the projects with undertaking manufacturing factors in medieval turned into trader in mercantilist age. Then s/he became a person who rented land and engaged in agriculture in physiocracy age and turned into private entrepreneur today after progressing in classical age. Hence, the concept of entrepreneur evolved from a person who doesn't take any risk to the person, who is a risk taker in psychological approach. On the other hand while in the past even his presence was unknown today entrepreneur evolved to a position that s/he has a social effect, innovative and creative in the sociological approach.

Literary the concept of "entrepreneurship", as a word it was first used in medieval times and derived from the word "entreprende". In medieval times entrepreneurship was used to express as "undertaking" (Marangoz, 2016: 41-42). According to Richard Cantillon, the first person who used the concept in

economics, entrepreneur is a person who economically changes the products to get profit at uncertainty. Jean Baptiste Say's definition is the first to emphasize the managerial and leadership dimension of entrepreneurship (Guney, 2015: 17-18). Many scientists who define entrepreneurship like Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Alfred Marshal and Max Weber present a combined form of psychological approaches which emphasize production and delivery functions.

First definitions of entrepreneurship mainly represent a combined form of economical and psychological views. According to Cantillon, who is one of the first users of the word, entrepreneur is the person who takes risk in order to gain. While Schumpeter emphasized the innovative and creative side of entrepreneur in his study of "The Theory of Economic Development", Drucker defined entrepreneur as the main provider of asset to the resources (Drucker, 2015: 12). Consequently, thinking quickly, working in unclear situations, having high success desire, having strong instinct being a good observer, being creative, having high analyzing capability, setting interpersonal relations, having high degree of tolerance, being flexible, having cogency, being energetic, having self-confidence, reaching resources with using network, managing human resources efficiently, are seen as the main common features of entrepreneurs (TUSIAD, 2003: 1- 2; Mirze, 2010: 37).

The features which are thought to be belonging to entrepreneurs reveal the outcomes of entrepreneurship process rather the reasons. In other words, it is mostly accepted by the social scientists that the individuals' perceptions are mainly shaped by the society (Van Dijk, 1990). But this trend of defining entrepreneurship focuses only on the individual and this thought seems to ignore the relation between the individual and the social context. This point of view leaves some questions unanswered in micro and macro levels: "Why is courage to take risk higher in some societies and lower in others?" and "Which social factors predict entrepreneurship in same society?" At this point, sociological view about entrepreneurship searches for answers. As Ruef and Lounsbury (2007) stated, contrary to the economical and psychological views sociological analysis shows that entrepreneurship cannot be understood properly without

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the socio- cultural context. Thornton et al. (2011) tried to prove this theory in their article of “Socio-cultural factors and entrepreneurial activity: An overview”. They emphasize the need for handling entrepreneurial activity and socio-cultural factors as a whole.

Today especially in western societies qualitative and quantitative studies which are pursued in frames of the subdiscipline aimed to search answers for these questions. But at this point it must be known that just the sociological view cannot provide satisfying explanations about entrepreneurship. Because as mentioned below, entrepreneurship needs to be studied through a multi-disciplinary view. In this context a research about entrepreneurship, which ignores the role of sociology, might be inadequate in explaining the dynamics which form entrepreneurship in society. This suggestion also embodies the main argument of Thornton’s (1999) study of “The Sociology of Entrepreneurship”. Thornton is presenting a multi-dimensional model which focuses on individuals, organizations, markets and environment in order to analyze entrepreneurship.

Accordingly, intended aim of this research is to contribute to the area in Turkey through Prince Sabahattin, who is accepted as an Ottoman intellectual, in a historical and intellectual meaning. First of all, approaches about the area are mentioned then the relation between Prince Sabahattin’s private entrepreneurship thought and sociology of entrepreneurship will be touched.

## **II. Basic Assumptions of Sociology of Entrepreneurship**

Since the theory of entrepreneurship became predominating especially after the mid of 1990’s when it became predominating, it has been widely criticized as it ignores sociocultural factors. Criticism over theory of entrepreneurship indirectly introduced sociology of entrepreneurship which took a wide attention from social scientists in their researches.

Sociology of entrepreneurship studies the social process, social context and social effects of entrepreneurial activities (Ruef and Lounsbury, 2007: 1). Max Weber is said to lay the foundations of the subdiscipline (Thornton, 1999: 21; Ruef and Lounsbury, 2007: 3-9; Reynolds, 1991: 57). Max Weber, in his study of “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” blows up the idea of the modern

capitalism in the west and the Protestant division (Weber, 2011: 23-34). Weber; emphasizes that the idea of protestant belief especially Calvinism supports the behavior of hard working, thrifty, planned and balanced personality. He claims that as a result of these behaviors individuals get wealthy and feel peaceful (Reynolds, 1991: 57).

Weber bases the occurrence of industrial capitalism on a radical transformation which takes part in religious and ideological area. The main reason which provides this transformation is believed to be a protestant special worldly asceticism. According to Weber world asceticism objects the enjoyment of having possession and constraints luxury consumption. Besides he kept the idea of profit out of the traditional psychological prohibitions. Not only he legalized the idea of profit-making but also he proposed the profit-making or profit- seeking as a God-blessed activity (Weber, 2011: 142).

Weber's suggestions about business and profit which are mentioned above underlie and serve as a reference to researchers in the entrepreneurship today. Because Weber suggests ideal type which symbolizes the entrepreneur whose thought of entrepreneurship is developed by the social value and norms. In this sense Weber can be described as the first sociologist of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is studied in areas like social value and norm chain, family, friends and peers groups, gender and ethnicity. The subdiscipline reveals the role of environmental factors on developing entrepreneurship. Within this context, contributions of The Environmental School of Thought to the subdiscipline is an undeniable fact. The environmental school of thought which presents a macro view in entrepreneurship area brings environmental factors to light (Ilhan, 2003: 64).

The sociology of entrepreneurship provides a multidimensional point of view to the studies about entrepreneurship. In other words other than psychological theories which focus on just individuals and economic theories which emphasize just manufacturing factors, the sociology of

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entrepreneurship tries to figure out the relation between individual's entrepreneurial behaviors and environmental factors. But observing or expressing just macro level sociological factors serve no purpose in the subdiscipline studies. For instance if you accept the idea that an entrepreneur is designed according to the common culture of a society you must also explain that why conditions of some societies are suitable for entrepreneurship and some are not.

Therefore the idea of focusing on micro level sociological factors when studying and predicting sociological factors of entrepreneurship seems appropriate. It is also one of the aims in the subdiscipline studies. The empirical study on SMEs of Lussier and Corman (1995: 6) proves this suggestion clearly with its results. According to their research most of successful entrepreneurs' parents are also themselves entrepreneurs. The research exhibits the role of family factor in the development of entrepreneur.

The researches which can be assessed in the area of the sociology of entrepreneurship generally reveals a culture focused on research frame. For instance in research of Gunay and Goktan (2011) the relation between entrepreneurship and national culture is studied. In their research which is conducted within frames of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, they observed that high in individualistic, masculinity and avoiding ambiguity positively and significantly affects macro level entrepreneurship.

It can be said that there has been enough historical and intellectual items and data to study the sociology of entrepreneurship in Turkey sociology of entrepreneurship it is not developed as requested. Especially Prince Sabahattin's private enterprise idea stands as the first effort of studying entrepreneurship with sociological dimensions in Turkey. Within this frame it can be said that Prince Sabahattin is the first in Turkey. Although the private enterprise idea was announced hundreds of years ago still it has a strong validity especially in sociology of entrepreneurship in Turkey with its explanation of society and individual relations.

### **III. Intellectual Resources of Prince Sabahattin**



Prince Sabahattin who was born in 1879 in İstanbul, received a modern and good education since his father was General Mahmut who was minister of justice and his mother was Princess Seniha who was sister of Abdulhamit II in Ottoman Government. He received private education in his father's mansion and learned Arabic, Persian and French in his childhood (Kocak et al., 2012: 3).

Prince Sabahattin stood against the idea of Ahmet Rıza and played a leading role in the First Congress of Ottoman Liberals which was held in Paris in 1902 (Zurcher, 2004: 133). While he was trying hardly to gather Young Turk Movement in Paris he caused the end of the movement when he tried to add the idea of decentralization to the Young Turk Movement program. After the Young Turk Movement was over he founded the society of Private Enterprise and Decentralization (Aksin, 2013: 360). He was sentenced to death after the 31 March Incident which was ended with dethronement of Abdulhamit II and he had to flee abroad. Though he was back in the country after World War I, he had to go abroad again when members of dynasty were got deported and he died in Switzerland in 1948 (Kilic, 2010: 2-3).

Like many other intellectuals of the time, Prince Sabahattin was influenced by western origin ideologies and theories and thought about their practicability on Ottoman Society. Prince Sabahattin mostly adopted the discipline of Le Play School, which was accepted as an alternative to Durkheim Discipline.

Prince Sabahattin was said to be influenced by the thoughts of Edmond Demolins who was a member and student of the Le Play School and interested in educational problems (Zurcher, 2004: 37-38). Le Play who was a mining engineer combined disciplines of geology and sociology and studied society within frames of inductive social structure analysis (Bayraktar, 1997: 52). Prince Sabahattin learned the requirements of Anglo-Saxon type individualistic education and his thoughts about politics and economics were shaped according to this discipline (Kocak et al., 2012:432). According to Prince Sabahattin in order to reach a nationwide development social structures should be studied extensively by social sciences rather than implementing instant reforms. He insisted that social studies on structures of

society should be conducted within an inductive method. Social syntheses should follow a couple of analyses. As a matter of fact, all reforms which had been implemented up to this time were conducted in an unplanned, superficial and dogmatic style without comprehensive observing (Bayraktar, 1997: 56).

According to Prince Sabahattin defining relations and differences of social institutions and components is the first and the most important phase of the reform process. In this context, not only he rejects the idea that religion is the main reason of underdevelopment but also he suggests that religion would transform according to direction of progress like other social institutions (Bayraktar, 1997:57). That is to say, Prince Sabahattin emphasizes individual based social structure and suggests that individual based transformation would be sensed at social levels.

According to Prince Sabahattin, entrepreneurial individuals are the main compeller of social progress. To achieve this goal, all social institutions, family, school etc. should move around a common education system. According to Prince Sabahattin, having personality of entrepreneurial, self-confident, liberal traits would transform the institutions of society (Bayraktar, 1997: 58).

As mentioned above, Prince Sabahattin, mostly with the influence of Le Play School, refers entrepreneurial individual as the main dynamic of social and economic progress. Though this determination is seen as valid, it is interesting that it was said about 100 years ago in a different situation. Within this framework, his observations hold importance with regard to the sociology of entrepreneurship.

#### **IV. The Private Enterprise Idea of Prince Sabahattin**

Ottoman intelligentsia of 20th Century focused on institutional transformation rather than intellectual transformation and they tried to progress with implementing westerns type institutions. But still a small number of intellectuals like Prince Sabahattin regarded transformation of the perception of individuals as the only way to the modernization. As it was mentioned, Prince Sabahattin suggests the idea of modernization which is based on

individualism and insists on a kind of administration which promotes private enterprise (Unal ve Kavuncuoglu, 2015).

He explained the idea of private enterprise extensively in his book "Türkiye Nasıl Kurtarılabilir?" [How Can Turkey Be Saved?]. In his book he asks the question: "Why is the East underdeveloped after a short period of rise, while West is wealthy and developed?" (2007: 394). He answers these questions as "...Because while the Eastern institutions have collectivist structures, West has a more individualistic society structure."

According to Prince Sabahattin like other eastern societies Ottoman society has collectivist characteristics and collectivist structure of Ottoman Society constitutes an obstacle to the development of entrepreneurship in Ottoman Government. For him collectivist thought in family, society and government surrounds the individual and decreases entrepreneurial desire. Likewise Prince Sabahattin regards the structure of western society which is composed of liberal and activist individuals, as the main reason of their development. However, he thinks that the idea and practicing of just imitating western institutions would remove Turkey from the West (Sabahattin, 2007: 394-395).

Raising individuals who have entrepreneurial personalities in economic, social, political and administrative areas is the only solution for national progressing for Prince Sabahattin (Berber, 2011: 219). Actually it seems that he presented a multidimensional development model in every meaning and the only way for increasing national wealth is private enterprise and the predictor of private enterprise is decentralization. He explained centralization as restricting liberties, the authority of minority on majority and removing the private enterprise (Bayraktar, 1997: 35).

In this context, Prince Sabahattin revealed two interesting key points which are argued in the subdiscipline in his determinations about Ottoman Society. One of them is that he attributes the emergence of entrepreneurial individual to social value- norm-institution chain as mentioned in the other studies in the subdiscipline. He figured out the impossibility of emergence of entrepreneurial individuals the in Ottoman Society at that time.

Second point is that, he emphasized the inseparable characteristics of Private Enterprise and Decentralization idea (Guler, 2000: 15) as he assesses the individuals elbow room with regards to governmental management idea. When you assess his ideas within his time (100 years ago) obviously he presented an excessive vision as even in today studying the subdiscipline within social value- norm-institution context is uncommon. Consequently, entrepreneurial individual is defined through social and administrative structure in Prince Sabahattin’s private enterprise idea.

As for Prince Sabahattin, private enterprise thought can be adopted in schools. He thinks that since Ottoman education institutions raise individuals with civil servant mindset they should be reorganized in British style. Also Prince Sabahattin emphasizes that students who are sent to Europe should internalize individualism and become productive individuals. (Ergun, 2009:1-9).

As mentioned above Prince Sabahattin’s determinations for Ottoman Society are still valid for today’s Turkey. In many studies it is expressed that entrepreneurial culture is not developed in Turkey as expected and offered solutions by public authorities and NGOs. But in most of these assessments mostly focused at entrepreneurial individual and sociocultural factors are generally ignored. As it is emphasized in this research, we propose that first to do in Turkey is studying entrepreneurship in the subdiscipline with starting the idea of Prince Sabahattin.

Consequently after determining theoretical framework of the sociology of entrepreneurship, it should be revealed that how social values and norms influence entrepreneurship. For instance determining the origins of “profit” concept, which is one of the main constituents of entrepreneurship, can be understood only in an environment where the subdiscipline is theorized.

**Result**

*The sociology entrepreneurship* is drawing attention as an ever developing discipline in the western world. In brief, the subdiscipline tends to view entrepreneurship from a social dimension. In Turkey studies about entrepreneurship generally focus

on individual and ignore the role social dynamics which constitutes the individual.

But there are a lot of researches, data and samples which make us think that entrepreneurship is primarily a social phenomenon. In this sense, it is emphasized that a study of the subdiscipline can be gathered from Prince Sabahattin's ideas. Because he proposed important ideas which are still valid in the subdiscipline after more than 100 years. It is remarkable that he presented the significant relations between social values, norms, institutions and private entrepreneurship. Prince Sabahattin's "Decentralization" idea was seen as a threat to structure of Ottoman Government by Abdulhamit II. Decentralization may lead in splitting of government according to Abdulhamit II (Toros, 1978). Also some of his activities like Young Turks' Assembly in 1902 in Paris got reactions of Abdulhamit II. His close relations with Young Turks made him known as enemy of state by Abdulhamit II. Also his father General Mahmut played great role in rising grudge of Abdulhamit II for Prince Sabahattin. As for us and other developed samples Prince Sabahattin's Private Enterprise and Decentralization theories could be regarded as rational and useful for Ottoman Government. Because individualistic type of entrepreneurship in these developed countries presented in 19<sup>th</sup> century firstly in world. Experiences since 19<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to development to these countries. As for Prince Sabahattin Ottoman Government needs these kind of dynamics which decrease government share and effect on society. According to Prince Sabahattin these kind of dynamics can be gained through Private Enterprise and Decentralization process.

Other nations' freedom movements in his age are regarded as another point of view in explaining decentralization thought of Prince Sabahattin. These kind of movements also hosted individualistic roots in this age. The effect of individualism was sensed in all areas of life. Economics was one of these areas. According to Prince Sebahattin The freedom movements and individualism in Ottoman government could not be eliminated but could be used through fare of Ottoman Government like as entrepreneurship. Private entrepreneurship and decentralization can be one of this ways.

Entrepreneurs are seen as the propellers of economic development (Kritikos, 2014) which is regarded as the most important part of the social development (Puthenkalam, 1996). This suggestion has been introduced by many sociologists and economists like Marx and Schumpeter. Accordingly we also accept its validity in Turkish society with references to Prince Sabahattin. Because many other countries which are in a modernizing phase like Turkey lack enough entrepreneurs in order to progress. Within this context these modernizing countries need culture specific researches in the subdiscipline more than modernized western countries. We tried to question local resources of the subdiscipline with a culture specific mean. Consequently we tried to relate researches about the subdiscipline in Turkey to Prince Sabahattin's ideas. Within this context, we tried to contribute to the area of the subdiscipline with Prince Sabahattin's ideas by regarding him as the first sociologist of entrepreneurship in Turkey.

As a result it can be said that there are also other theoretical materials about the subdiscipline other than Prince Sabahattin. Especially studying on pre-modern philosophers like Yusuf Has Hacıp, Farabi, Nizamulmulk, Ibn Khaldun, who represent important ideas about the subdiscipline and modern day philosopher Sabri Ulgener who is another resource with his studies on "mentality" may reveal important materials about the subdiscipline.

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