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Rivalry between French *-age* and *-ée*: the role of grammatical aspect in nominalization*

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Abstract. This paper will provide an account for the existence of pairs of deverbal nominals with *-age* and *-ée* giving rise to event readings. We first study the argument structure of the bases and of the derived nominals, and establish the general tendencies. We further examine the Aktionsart of the nominalizations and of the verbal bases. We conclude that these levels of investigation are not sufficient to determine the proper contribution of the two nominalization patterns and further demonstrate that the relevant contribution they make is at the level of grammatical aspect. We therefore propose that *-age* introduces the imperfective viewpoint, whereas *-ée* introduces the perfective viewpoint.

Keywords: nominalizations, event and argument structure, grammatical aspect

1 Introduction

In this paper, we will study French deverbal nouns with *-age* and *-ée* which are derived from the same verbal base—a case of nominalization rivalry ignored in the literature. Based on a corpus of event nominal pairs derived from 29 verbal bases (which we selected from the TLFi dictionary and completed with web occurrences), we will provide an account of the existence of such pairs in the language. Two questions immediately arise in light of such cases:

- Is there any linguistic reason for the existence of these pairs?
- Do these nominalizations have a distinctive contribution?

Looking at the interplay between event structure, Aktionsart and grammatical aspect, we will try to sketch an answer to these general questions, and propose that the nominalizations under consideration contribute different grammatical aspect values.

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2 Argument structure of the verbal bases

2.1 All verbal bases selected

We begin by examining two existing hypotheses: (a) the suffix *-age* selects transitive verbal bases (Dubois-Charlier (1999)), and (b) only unaccusative verbs allow *-ée* nominalization (Ruwet (1988)). Examination of the argument structure type of the bases leads us to conclude that there is no clear specialization of the two nominalizations: both can combine with transitive, unaccusative and unergative bases (cf. Legendre (1989) for unaccusativity tests in French). However, some trends and regularities are visible. The transitive base is the primary type selected by both processes that construct N-*age* and N-*ée* pairs:

- (1) couler du bronze 'to cast bronze', couler une cloche, 'to cast a bell'
→ le coulage / la coulée du bronze/ d'une cloche 'the casting of bronze/a bell'

However, nominalizations with both *-age* and *-ée* also select unergative bases (2) and unaccusatives (3).

- (2) CHEVAUCHER 'aller à cheval' 'to ride' → la chevauchée hebdomadaire 'the weekly ride' / le chevauchage sous un soleil éclatant 'the riding under a blazing sun'
(3) ARRIVER 'to arrive' → l'arrivage / l'arrivée de la marchandise, des ouvriers "'the arriving"/ the arrival of the merchandise, of the workers'

2.1 General preferences

When selected by only one of the two nominalizations, there is a general preference for certain bases: *-age* shows a tendency to select transitive bases (4) while unaccusatives are selected by *-ée* (5).

- (4) tourner le film 'to shoot the film'
→ le tournage du film / *la tournée du film 'the shooting of the film'
(5) le fascisme monte en Europe 'fascism grows in Europe'
→ la montée du fascisme/*le montage du fascisme 'the growth of fascism'

On the one hand, the data confirm the arguments of Martin (2008) (that nominalization with *-age* is not limited to transitive bases) and of Legendre (1989) (that *-ée* nouns are not a valid test for unaccusativity). On the other hand, this result determines the argument structure of the verbal bases selected by the two affixes.

2.3 Proposal: highlighting of causation

2.3.1. Transitive bases

Nominalization with *-age* highlights the proto-agent property (cf. Dowty (1991)) of the external argument of the verb (cf. Kelling (2001) and Martin (2008) for an earlier analysis). Our analysis is supported by the different meanings associated with N-*age* and N-*ée* derived from the same transitive verb base (6a) and by neologisms (6b). Nominalization with *-age* underlines the causative sense while with *-ée* it highlights the resultative sense.

- (6) a. Le montage des briques / la montée des briques 'the lifting of bricks' (cause/result)
 b. @...avec Sarko, on est entré dans l'ère de l'effrayage !
 with Sarko, we entered the age of scaring
 (built on EFFRAYER 'scare' transitive-causative : x CAUSE y is scared)

2.3.2. Unaccusative bases

- (i) **Nominalization with *-age* seems to introduce a semantic participant into the event structure of the base verb which has the proto-agent property external causation.**

For deverbal nouns built from some unaccusative bases, such as ARRIVAGE 'arrival', POUSSAGE 'growth', nominalization with *-age* seems to introduce causation which allows a verbal paraphrase with *faire* 'make'.

- (7) a. l'arrivage des légumes 'the "arriving" = arrival of the vegetables'
 = 'faire arriver les légumes' 'make the vegetables arrive'
 b. le poussage des poils sur le torse 'the growth of hair on the chest'
 = 'faire pousser les poils à l'aide d'une lotion' 'make the hair grow using a lotion'
 c. le levage de la pâte = 'faire lever la pâte'
 'the rising of the dough' = 'make the dough rise'

This is also true for other deverbal nouns with *-age* that have no morphological counterpart with *-ée*, like ATERRISSAGE, which is derived from an unaccusative verb that has no transitive counterpart in French (unlike in English and German).

- (8) a. l'avion a atterri 'the plane landed'
 b. *le pilote a atterri l'avion 'the pilot landed the plane'
 c. l'atterrissage de l'avion 'the landing of the plane'

(ii) Exceptions

But this pattern is not systematic. An *-age* nominal is ungrammatical when the unaccusative V selects an internal argument that cannot be affected by (agentive or instrumental) causation.

- (9) a. la coulée / *le coulage de neige/ de lave 'the flow of snow / of lava'
 b. la couchée / le couchage des réfugiés – la couchée / *le couchage du soleil
 'the going-to-bed of refugees / the setting of the sun'

The contrasts in (9a-b) are explained by the fact that it is not possible to cause the sunset, or to take into account an external cause (other than natural) for the flowing of lava or of snow. Conversely, the examples in (10) are acceptable because it is possible to have an external initiator of the situation expressed by the verb COULER 'flow', and therefore the property 'causally affected' of the proto-patient is present:

- (10) le coulage / la coulée d'eau 'the flowing of water'

We can therefore conclude that in the case of unaccusative verbs that select an internal argument which cannot be affected by causation, the internal argument cannot figure as a participant (y) in the complex event structure in (11).

- (11) [x CAUSE [BECOME y <STATE>]]

In addition, it also allows us to refine the 'agentivity' property of *-age*, proposed in Kelling (2001) and Martin (2008).

2.3.3 Refinement of our proposal

Martin (2008) proposed to extend the 'agentivity' property characterizing *-age* deverbals on transitive bases to account for two unaccusative verbs, ARRIVER 'arrive' and POUSSER 'grow', giving rise to *-age* nouns. However, she neither mentions the

conditions in which this property is neutralized, nor whether these unaccusative verbs are the only ones that may involve "agentivity" when nominalized by *-age*.

Our study reveals several points.

(i) This 'agentivity' property cannot be extended to all the unaccusatives (even those without a transitive counterpart), as in (12).

(12) COULER_[unacc] 'flow' → coulée / *coulage de la lave 'flow / *flowing of the lava'

(ii) An unaccusative verb can be nominalized by *-age* and yet not involve agentivity (13).

(13) PASSER 'pass' → le passage de l'ouragan 'the passing of the hurricane'

(iii) Unergatives (as in 14a) and some transitive verbs in the corpus (15b) are not causative, even if they allow nominalization by *-age*.

(14) a. SAUTER 'jump' → sautage 'jumping' (trampoline)

b. remonter l'escalier 'to climb back upstairs' → le remontage d'escalier 'the climbing back upstairs'

Causation is therefore highlighted by *-age* nominalization in a very particular way. We propose that causation is not directly introduced by *-age* (since certain *-age* nominalizations of unaccusative bases are not causative) but only highlighted when the verb inherently possesses this property. In other words the internal argument must have a proto-P property "be causally affected", which must be specified in the lexical entry of the verb. The proto-P property on the internal argument implies a proto-A property: "x causally affects y". It is conceivable, according to our study, that this lexical property of the verb is only activated through morphological derivation.

3 Aspectual properties

Since the rivalry between nominalizations with *-age* and *-ée* does not seem to be constrained by the argument structure of the verbal base, we continue our investigations by examining the lexical-aspectual properties of the verbs.

3.1 Aspectual properties of the verbal bases

Our corpus analysis shows that *-age* and *-ée* nominalizations are not sensitive to the lexical-aspectual class of their verbal bases, since they can select bases from all the aspectual classes except for pure states: activities (15), accomplishments (16), and achievements (17).

(15) POUSSER 'push' ACT → deux heures de poussage / de poussée (naissance)
two hours of pushing / of push (delivery)

(16) PESER (tr) 'weigh' ACC → pesage / pesée de l'enfant 'the weighing of the baby'

(17) ARRIVER 'arrive' ACH → l'arrivage du navire / l'arrivée du navire
'the "arriving" / the arrival of the ship'

3.2. Aspectual inheritance vs. aspectual shift

The application of the set of tests for French nominalizations elaborated by Haas *et al.* (2008) to the *-age* and *-ée* pairs allows us to conclude that the two constructions

have different lexical-aspectual values, which they generally inherit from the verbal bases, but which can also be the result of an aspectual shift induced by nominalization.

3.2.1. Aspectual inheritance

Activity verbs can give rise to activity nominals with *-age* and *-ée*, as shown by the fact that these nominals reject the structure *un N de x-temps* 'a N of x-time' in (19a), excluded for ACT nominals (Haas *et al.* (2008)). Accomplishments give rise to Durative Culminative Occurrences (DCO, following terminology and tests from Haas *et al.* 2008). This is indicated in (19b) by the fact that the corresponding nominals appear in 'x time of N'. There are also achievements that give rise to Punctual Occurrences (PO, 19c). Contrary to ACT nominals, DCO and PO nominals appear in the subject of *a eu lieu* 'happened'. DCO nominals, but not PO nominals, can be the subject of *a duré* 'lasted' and appear in *en cours de* 'in the process of' N.

- (18) a. V ACT → N ACT
 CRIER (unerg.) 'shout' :
 Il a crié pendant une heure/ #en une heure
 He shouted for an hour / #in an hour
 → une heure de criage / # un criage d'une heure
 an hour of shouting / #a shouting of an hour
- b. V ACC → N DCO
 plumer un volatile → pendant le plumage des oies/ entre deux plumées d'oies
 'to pluck a bird' → 'during the plucking of geese / between two pluckings of geese'
- c. V ACH → N PO
 ARRIVER 'arrive' (unacc.) :
 le train est arrivé à 20h00 → l'arrivée du train à 20h00
 the train arrived at 8p.m → the arrival of the train at 8p.m.

3.2.2. Aspectual shift

Haas *et al.* (2008) added a new category of deverbal nouns: Durative non-Culminative Occurrences (DnCO). The DnCO MANIFESTATION 'demonstration' is derived from an activity verb MANIFESTER 'demonstrate' but successfully passes the test 'subject of *a eu lieu* 'happened' (which excludes activity nominals). DnCOs differ from other Occurrences (DCO, PO) in not being culminative; that is, if the process denoted by the noun is interrupted, we can nonetheless assert that the denoted event took place (*e.g.*, the manifestation has been interrupted → they manifested, vs. the delivery has been interrupted → # she gave birth)

Consequently, there are cases in which the aspectual value of the base is shifted in the nominalization process. Such cases include (i) activity bases which derive DnCOs (19a-b), as shown by their ability to appear with *pendant* 'during'; (ii) achievement bases giving rise to DCO (instead of PO), which can take *en cours de* 'in the process of' in (19c).

- (19) a. V ACT → N DnCO (for *-age* and *-ée*):
 traîner la quille 'to drag the keel'
 → pendant le traînage/ pendant la traînée 'during the dragging / during the "drag"'
- b. V ACT → N DnCO (for *-ée*):
 chevaucher pendant deux heures (activity) 'to ride for two hours'
 → le jour de la chevauchée (DnCO) 'the day of the ride'

c. V ACH → N ODC (for *-age*)

ARRIVER 'arrive' (ACH)

→ 5173 tonnes (de céréales) étaient en cours d'arrivage par camions

'5173 tones (of cereals) were in the process of arriving by trucks'

These results show that the two nominalizations *-age* and *-ée* are not tied to specific lexical-aspectual values. However, in the case of *-age*, we can remark that the shift goes in the direction of durativity (as in 20c), whereas in the case of *-ée*, the shift is associated with terminativity. Nonetheless, the Aktionsart of these nominals seems to be insufficient in distinguishing their properties. In the following section, we will show that the distinguishing factor is in fact their contribution on the level of grammatical aspect (viewpoint – Smith (1991)).

3.3. Grammatical aspect in nominalizations

Given the existence of these pairs of nouns, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the two nominalizations correspond to different ways of conceptualizing events: focusing on the event as a whole (closed) in the case of *-ée*, or, in the case of *-age*, focusing on the ongoing process or on an internal phase of the event denoted by the verbal base. Thus, *-age* introduces the imperfective aspect, while *-ée* introduces the perfective aspect. The difference should therefore be situated on the level of grammatical aspect (viewpoint), which usually shows up in the verbal domain in French. In this light, we propose the following account of the pairs:

(20) Proposal: With the same verbal base (tr., unacc. and unerg.) *-age* and *-ée* contribute grammatical aspect introducing an imperfective vs. perfective value

3.3.1. Series of arguments supporting this semantic difference

The first argument is provided by the semantic difference between the two nominalizations, which is highlighted by the following distributional tests.

(i) Event nominals with *-ée*, but not with *-age*, can appear with the preposition APRÈS 'after', which requires a perfective event as its complement, exactly as in the case of (finite and non-finite) complement clauses.

(21) a. ??après l'arrivage de la marchandise / après l'arrivée de la marchandise
'after the arriving of the merchandise / after the arrival of the merchandise'

b. après être arrivée, la marchandise a été vendue
'after being arrived, the merchandise has been sold'

(22) a. ??après le pesage du bébé / après la pesée du bébé 'after the weighing of the baby'
b. après avoir pesé le bébé 'after having weighed the baby'

(ii) Event nominals with *-age*, but not with *-ée*, can appear as object of INTERROMPRE 'interrupt' (23), or as subject of PROGRESSER 'progress' (24).

(23) L'arrivage / ??l'arrivée des ouvriers a été interrompu(e) par un convoi de police
'the arriving / the arrival of the workers has been interrupted by a police crew'

(24) Le perçage / ??la percée du tunnel a progressé.
'the drilling / the "drilling" of the tunnel progressed'

(iii) The two nominalizations have different meanings (namely 'process in development' with *-age* and 'whole process' with *-ée*), when they appear as objects of FILMER 'to film' (25) or SURVEILLER 'supervize' (26).

(27) a. J'ai filmé le pesage du bébé (le déroulement / une portion du procès)

- I filmed the weighing of the baby (the development / a phase of the process)
 b. J'ai filmé la pesée du bébé (la globalité de l'événement : début, milieu, fin)
 I filmed the weighing of the baby (the whole event: start, development, end)
- (28) a. J'ai surveillé l'arrivée des marchandises (le déroulement du processus)
 'I supervised the arriving of goods' ('supervise the process')
 b. #J'ai surveillé l'arrivée des marchandises (épier, guetter, attendre)
 'I supervised the arrival of goods' ('look for, wait for the arrival')

(iv) pluractionality of *-age* as manifestation of its imperfectivity value

Another argument for imperfectivity in the case of *-age* nominals is their pluractional meaning. Recall that in the literature on pluractionality, pluractional markers are defined as imperfective (iterative or habitual) aspectual operators (*cf.*, Van Geenhoven (2004)). Nominalizations with *-age* involve a pluractional meaning which conflicts, in the case of achievement verbal bases, with the cardinality of the internal argument, thus explaining the contrasts in (29) and (30).

- (29) *l'arrivage d'un légume / OK des légumes, de la marchandise
 'the arriving of a vegetable / of vegetables, of the merchandise'
- (30) *le tuage d'une mouche / OK de mouches 'the killing of a fly / of flies'

Similar tests have been used crosslinguistically in the domain of verbal aspect for West Greenlandic in Van Geenhoven (2004) and aspectual periphrases with *andar* in Spanish by Laca (2006). Pluractionality has been also documented for Romanian Supine nominalizations by Iordăchioaia & Soare (2008), Alexiadou & al (2008). In (31), the supine derived from 'kill' is ruled out when combined with a singular argument:

- (31) ucisul *unui jurnalist / jurnaliștilor de către mafia politică [Romanian]
 'the killing *of a journalist / of journalists by the political mafia'

3.3.2. Extension to nominalizations with *-age/-ment*

Our proposal, according to which *-age/-ée* introduce an opposition at the level of grammatical aspect, allows us to reconsider the treatment of nominalization with *-age/-ment* put forward in Martin (2008). Martin (2008) explains the contrast in (32b) through the fact that *a pedestrian* is not an incremental Theme.

- (32) a. Pierre a écrasé une banane/ un piéton
 'Peter crushed a banana / ran over a pedestrian'
- b. l'écrasage d'une banane / # l'écrasage d'un piéton
 'the crushing of a banana' / "the running over of a pedestrian"
- c. l'écrasement d'un piéton "the running over of a pedestrian"

If our proposal for *-age/-ée* pairs can be extended to *-age/-ment*, more precisely, if nominalization with *-ment* can be considered as highlighting the global event, then the contrast in (32b) - (32c) is predicted¹. In pairs, *-age* nominals denote an ongoing event, so in (32b), *écrasage* cannot take *a pedestrian* as an argument, because *run over a pedestrian* denotes a punctual event (an achievement), and cannot be conceptualized in its development, but only as a global (closed) situation.

¹ These examples would also involve, for *-age/-ment* pairs, an interplay between the Aktionsart of the verb and the grammatical aspect of the nominalization, which may *a priori* not hold for *-age/-ée*.

4. Confirmation and extension of the proposal: transitive-unaccusative verbs; transitive verbs and unaccusative verbs

4.1. Selectional restrictions on the nominalization of transitive-unaccusative verbs

Our proposal is further confirmed by selectional restrictions on these nominalizations in the case of transitive-unaccusative verbs (see also Martin 2008 for *-age/-ment*). As shown in (33), *-age* selects the transitive base whereas the unaccusative base is selected by *-ée*.

- (33) a. Marie a percé son abcès > le perçage de l'abcès.
 'Mary burst her abscess / the bursting of the abscess'
 b. Son abcès a percé > la percée de l'abcès /vs. #le perçage de l'abcès
 'Her abscess burst / the bursting of the abscess'

(i) Proposal: Given that *-age* conceptualizes the situation type denoted as ongoing, then it is expected that *-age* selects the event structure involving the initiator (or the volitional causer) of the ongoing process: the complex one (transitive pattern) where figures the initiator, x, whereas *-ée* will select the simple one (unaccusative pattern):

- (34) PERCER 'to burst'
 a. [x CAUSE [BECOME y <BURST>]] for (35a) → PERÇAGE
 b. [BECOME y <BURST>] for (35b) → PERCÉE

(ii) Account of these selectional restrictions for *-age* vs. *-ment* deverbals of transitive-unaccusative verbs by Martin (2008). According to Martin (2008) [Property 1], for GONFLER 'inflate, blow' (transitive-unaccusative verb), *-age* deverbals are built on the long eventive chain of the verb (the transitive pattern) : *gonflage du ballon par Pierre*, while *-ment* deverbals are built on the short one (the unaccusative pattern) : *gonflement du ballon* 'the inflation of the balloon'. This distribution is correct, but, as noted by Martin (2008) herself, *-ment* deverbals can also be built on the long eventive chain of the alternating verbs (*gonflement du ballon par Pierre* 'the inflation of the balloon by Pierre'). This casts doubts on the exploitation of the notion of length eventive chain for explaining the selectional restrictions.

4.2. Transitive-unaccusative and transitive bases selected by both *-age/-ée*

If *-age* and *-ée* respectively introduce imperfective and perfective grammatical aspect, the selectional restrictions in the case of transitive-unaccusative verbs follows naturally : *-age* is predicted to select only the complex event structure because it contains the initiator of the denoted situation type (35a) – transitive pattern ; whereas *-ée* will select the simple event structure ((35b) – unaccusative pattern)² :

- (35) a. [x CAUSE [BECOME y <STATE>]] b. [BECOME y <STATE>]]
 // -age // -ée

Because *-ée* presents the situation as closed, we predict that *-ée* can also select a complex event structure including the initiator (35a) in case of transitive –

² In this event structure, the slashes note the portion of the event highlighted by the each nominalization.

unaccusative verbs, then also accounting for *le gonflement du ballon par Pierre* ‘the inflation of the balloon by Pierre’ exactly as for transitive base verbs of our corpus selected by both nominalizations.

(36) rentrer les vaches ‘to bring in the cows’: [x CAUSE [BECOME y <PLACE>]]

(37) a. La rentrée des vaches ‘the bringing in of cows’

b. @ *j’ai effectué* la rentrée des bêtes ‘I did the bringing in of the animals’

c. [x CAUSE [BECOME y <PLACE>]]

//////////////////////////////////// -ée

(38) a. Le rentrage des vaches ‘the bringing in of cows’

b. @ opération rentrage des vaches *avec une voisine qui n’y connaît rien*

‘the operation of bringing in the cows with a neighbour who knows nothing about’

c. [x CAUSE [BECOME y <PLACE>]]

.....//////////////////////////////////// -age

For transitive-unaccusative verbs, *-ée* can also select the complex event structure, but *-age* can only select the complex one, because of their respective grammatical aspect values.

4.3. Nominalization of unaccusative verbs without transitive counterparts

Our proposal makes the following prediction: because these unaccusative verbs have a simple event structure [without an external initiator (x)] they will only be selected by *-ée* (39). The prediction is borne out: (40c) vs. (40b) :

(39) PERCER₂ émerger ‘to emerge’: [BECOME y <émergé>]

(40) a. @ les fleurs ont percé / l’entreprise a rapidement percé (PERCER₂ émerger)

‘the flowers “broke through” / ‘the enterprise broke through’

b. # le perçage des fleurs / # le perçage de l’entreprise

‘the “breaking-through” of the flowers’ / ‘the breaking through of the enterprise’

c. @ la percée des fleurs / la percée de l’entreprise

‘the “break-through” of the flowers’ / ‘the breaking through of the enterprise’

Our proposal then covers the distribution of patterns that Martin (2008) treats in terms of length of the eventive chain, but it goes further: (i) by proposing a principled reason for this distribution : because N *-age* denotes an ongoing process (so a portion of it) – imperfective view point – it highlights the initiator of the situation denoted by the verb, involved in the ongoing process; (ii) by accounting for the fact that the complex event structure is not only combinable with *-age*, but also with *-ée* (and also with *-ment* examples of Martin (2008)). The same proposal (i.e. (21)) allows us to account for the selectional restrictions in the case of transitive-unaccusative verbs (*-age* selects the transitive one, *-ée* selects the unaccusative one) but also to predict the nominalization of ‘pure’ unaccusative verbs.

5. Conclusion

By comparing the properties of *-age* and *-ée* in pairs, we have shown that these nominalizations encode different values of grammatical aspect, e.g. imperfective vs. perfective, in other words that there is a complementary distribution.

The originality of the proposal consists in the existence, in the nominal domain, of this level of grammatical aspect, normally reserved to the verbal domain in French. We support our proposal by specific tests devoted to nominalizations.

- Consequently, the various properties associated with *-age* nominals in the literature (e.g., agentivity, incrementality, length of the eventive chain) follow from our general proposal that *-age* and *-ée* convey different grammatical aspectual values.
- The other properties we studied also fall under this proposal, namely the fact that nominalizations with *-age* and *-ée* can select all types of bases, but *-age* exhibit preference for transitive bases, whereas *-ée* for unaccusative ones. Correlatively, *-age* nominals built on unaccusative bases reveal a part of the argument structure of the verb, which is invisible to syntax. Moreover, in spite of the general inheritance of the lexical aspectual value of the base verb in the deverbal nouns, there is also aspectual shift, reflecting durativity in the case of *-age* and terminativity in the case of *-ée*.
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- The next step of our research will be to test the hypothesis of the existence of grammatical aspect to the whole *-age* / *-ée* corpus. We hypothesize that generally the grammatical aspect oppositions are encoded in pairs (*-age/-ée*, *-age/-ment*, etc) but they can be lexicalized by a single nominalization rule, when pairs are not available.

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