

MARK JEONG

Banished from the City

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zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
645*

Mohr Siebeck

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645



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The Exilic Ecclesiology of Luke-Acts

Mohr Siebeck

Mark Jeong, born 1987; 2023 ThD in New Testament at Duke University; Lecturer in New Testament at Christ Bible Seminary in Nagoya, Japan.
orcid.org/0000-0003-2334-3308

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To Esther –
Thank you for being my partner in this adventure of faith.
I love you.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AcBib	Academia Biblica
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
ANTC	Abington New Testament Commentaries
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCE	Before the Common Era
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>BHGNT</i>	<i>Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CE	Common Era
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i> (formerly <i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>)
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9 th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
LXX	Septuagint

MPG	J. P. Migne, <i>Patrologiæ Cursus Completus, series Græca</i> , 162 vols., Paris, 1857–66
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> . Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF 1	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>SPhiloA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
<i>TLNT</i>	Ceslas Spicq. <i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> . Translated and edited by James D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Introduction

But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region.¹

Οἱ δὲ Ἰουδαῖοι παρώτρυναν τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας καὶ τοὺς πρώτους τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐπήγειραν διωγμὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Παῦλον καὶ Βαρναβᾶν καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρίων αὐτῶν. (Acts 13:50)

This project began as a study of the phenomenon narrated in the verse above. Specifically, what does it mean for someone to drive out, or literally *throw out* (ἐκβάλλειν) someone from a region in the first century? What are the legal precedents for this, if any? Given that this happens more than once in Acts and at key points in the narrative, what significance does this have for Luke-Acts as a whole? As I delved further into the literature on Acts and the nature of this act in its first-century context, I discovered that what is depicted here is an act of *exile* or *banishment*; Paul and Barnabas are banished from Pisidian Antioch as threats to the welfare of the city. This act – which becomes a *pattern* in the narrative – coheres with similar statements in Christian and non-Christian texts from the period.

Indeed, Christians and others, both in ancient times and continuing today, have often conceptualized their existence using the language of exile or displacement. John Chrysostom, twice exiled from Constantinople, writes in *No Man Can Be Harmed*² to those displaced from their homelands that “thou hast not here a fatherland”; instead, they should “regard the whole world as a strange country” (NPNF 1/9:274). Plutarch, writing in *On Exile* to someone exiled from Sardis, writes that exile is not an evil, since “the soul is an exile and a wanderer,” whose true home is Heaven (*Exil.* 607e).

Situations of exile forced ancient authors to rethink traditional forms of civic life – how could one survive outside of one’s πόλις? What was one’s identity outside of one’s homeland? The situation of exile or displacement led to a proliferation of what Jan Felix Gaertner calls the “discourse of displace-

¹ All English translations of the Bible are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

² The full title is *No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*, or *Quod nemo laeditur nisi a se ipso*.

ment,” in which exiles reimagined their social and civic identities in light of their removal from a πόλις.³

Because civic life was bound up with life in a πόλις, these literary depictions of exile demanded a response or implied some sort of return. As Simon Goldhill writes concerning Nietzsche’s notion of *Heimweh* or homesickness, “In all definitions of exile a sense of return is implicit ... return is structurally integral to the potentialities of exile.”⁴ This “return” is narrated in various ways in the ancient literature – according to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the one thrown out of the city need only look to the coming city (50:1); in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*, the main character, displaced from her home and family, bemoans her fate as an exile in a foreign land (3.8), only to return home in the end. Tim Whitmarsh contends that “the primary association of exile [in Greek literature] is with the pain of separation from home and beloved, a pain that provokes in readers both a sympathetic engagement and a prospective anticipation of ultimate reunion.”⁵ Indeed, as we will see later when we examine the consolations written to exiles in the first century, a basic assumption of these writings was that exile or the loss of one’s home required a solution or some sort of return to cope with the loss.

In this study, I examine those places in Acts where members of the fledgling movement are either banished or forced to flee – both forms of exile in the first century. When read in light of the broader narrative of Luke-Acts and the contemporaneous literature on exile, I argue that the author presents the church as a community of political exiles who face rejection from the cities of the Roman Empire.⁶ This narrative displacement prompts a response or solution, which in Luke-Acts is found in the community itself. Unlike other early Christian texts, which spoke of the church in exile from heaven or awaiting a city to come, Luke-Acts portrays the church itself as this “new city” that becomes a refuge for the displaced believers. Furthermore, exile or homelessness in Luke-Acts is not a problem requiring an otherworldly solution, but a part of the new way of life engendered by the proclamation of the gospel – it is a core part of following the way of Jesus, who himself is exiled from Nazareth in the Gospel of Luke.

³ Jan Felix Gaertner, ed., *Writing Exile: The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁴ Simon Goldhill, “Whose Antiquity? Whose Modernity? The ‘Rainbow Bridges’ of Exile,” *Antike und Abendland* 46 (2000): 4.

⁵ Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance*, *Greek Culture in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 222.

⁶ Throughout this work, I refer to the writer of Luke-Acts as “the author” or “Luke.” I do so for the sake of convenience without making any claim regarding the author’s identity.

Methodology

The primary methodology to be employed is literary criticism. By that, I mean a careful, contextualized reading of Luke-Acts that attends to the form and content of the entire narrative. Because Luke-Acts is – before anything else – a narrative, understanding its theology (specifically its *ecclesiology*) will require attending to its narrative shape and development. Unlike other studies that focus on one aspect of Acts (e.g., the speeches) to uncover its theology, I will argue – along the lines of Beverly Gaventa in her article “Towards a Theology of Acts” – that the theology of Acts cannot be understood apart from the narrative itself.⁷ While literary theory will not stand at the forefront of the study, I will comment more explicitly on literary theory when doing so provides clarity. For example, I may highlight the difference between narrative scenes and narrative summaries when considering the verses where Paul is banished from a city. Also, the importance of place or setting in a narrative will play a role in my reading of Jesus’ exile from Nazareth in Luke 4.

This reading of Acts will be a *contextualized* reading, by which I mean a reading that seeks to understand Acts in its late first-century context. This is especially important when talking about exile since the study of exile in the New Testament has primarily focused on Israel’s exile without an adequate understanding of the socio-historical and literary reality of exile in the first century. I will primarily read Acts alongside the consolatory literature of Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, Musonius Rufus, and Favorinus. These texts address the problem of exile from different perspectives, but they all address the common themes of the loss of one’s homeland, the loss of possessions, and the loss of free speech or *παρρησία*. These common themes will frame our discussion of the solution to exile presented through the narrative. Before I present an outline of my study, I will answer a basic question that is fundamental to this work: What is exile?

For the purposes of this study, I use the term “exile” to denote either the act of banishment, forced displacement, or flight for political reasons, *or* a person who is banished, displaced, or forced to flee. In Greek, the verbs ἐκβάλλειν, ἐλαύνειν, ἐξορίζειν, ὀρίζειν, and their variants mean to throw out, banish, or expel someone from a place. In political contexts, they are often used with the genitive τῆς πόλεως or ἐκ τῆς πόλεως to mean banishment from

⁷ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading,” *Union Seminary Review* 42.2 (1988): 146–57.

a city.⁸ The verb φεύγειν and its cognates mean “to flee,”⁹ and are related to the noun φυγή, which means “flight” or “exile.”¹⁰

In the next chapter, I explain how my study examines the phenomenon of exile as a *political* act in the text of Acts, and not as a theological idea arising out of Israel’s exile. Much of the scholarship on exile in New Testament studies focuses on exile as an ongoing reality in the minds of Second Temple Jews.¹¹ While scholars debate the merits of this interpretive lens,¹² my study focuses instead on exile as banishment or displacement from a city for being a perceived threat to the city’s welfare.

Outline of Chapters

To show how the author presents the church as a community of political exiles who find their home in the church, my study proceeds as follows: In chapter 1, I begin by defining the term “political exile.” This helps differentiate my approach from scholars who use the notion of an “ongoing exile” as an interpretive lens for the NT. By showing how exile from a city has a long interpretive history in Greco-Roman literature as a significant political act, I can prepare the way for our reading of exile in Acts. I also expound on the consolatory literature on exile written contemporaneous to Acts to underscore the ways philosophers offered various solutions to the trauma of exile.

In chapter 2, I consider what Second Temple Jewish and early Christian authors wrote about exile and displacement. By examining the terms used in Greek and Hebrew, I highlight how the language used for the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles differs from the political exile which is my focus. I further demonstrate how both Jewish and early Christian authors conceptualized their identity in light of the loss of their home in exile. Related to this, I discuss the issue of citizenship in Philo’s works to show the kinds of strategies some groups used to imagine new forms of belonging in situations of displacement.

⁸ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81, which recounts how the Jews during Tiberius’s day “were banished from the city” (ἠλαύνοντο τῆς πόλεως).

⁹ BDAG, s.v. “φεύγω.”

¹⁰ LSJ, s.v. “φυγή.”

¹¹ Cf. Nicholas G. Piotrowski, “The Concept of Exile in Late Second Temple Judaism: A Review of Recent Scholarship,” *CurBR* 15.2 (2017): 214–47 for an overview of the scholarship.

¹² Perhaps no other scholar has done as much as N. T. Wright to popularize the idea of an ongoing exile as an interpretive lens for the NT. For critical engagement with Wright’s thesis, cf. the essays in James M. Scott, ed., *Exile: A Conversation with N.T. Wright* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

In chapter 3, I turn to the book of Acts and examine the scenes where members of the church are exiled or forced to flee because of their message. By analyzing the language used in these scenes, I argue that this exile becomes a pattern which characterizes the church in Acts. Furthermore, I show from Stephen's speech in Acts 7:1–53 how the identity of God's people as exiles and migrants is rooted in the experience of the patriarchs, such as Abraham and Moses.

The identity of the church as a community of exiles leads to the question – where then does the church find its home? What answer does the narrative provide for the trauma of exile? In chapter 4, I begin to answer these questions by arguing that in Luke-Acts, this exilic way of life which characterizes the church in Acts is a form of discipleship in the way of Jesus. I do this by showing how the Lukan Jesus is also exiled from his hometown in Luke 4:29 before beginning his journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, he calls on those who would follow him to leave their families and promises a new family for those oriented around the word of God (8:21).

The fulfilment of this promise brings us back to Acts in chapter 5, where I show how exile is not only a form of discipleship, but entrance into a new form of political community. I contend that the author depicts the church as a new πόλις for the displaced believers by comparing the depiction of the early Christian community in Acts 2 and 4 with extrabiblical speeches addressed to cities. The church thus becomes a new home for the believers when what is lost in exile – possessions, family, friends, etc. – is regained in the concrete Christian communities spread across the Mediterranean. This is especially clear from Acts 20–21, where Paul finds refuge, hospitality, and friendship among the churches of the Aegean. Finally, in the conclusion I summarize my findings and offer some implications and avenues for further research.

Chapter 1

Exile in Greece and Rome¹

Toward the end of the first century CE,² the citizens of Tarsus were facing a crisis. The city was in a state of discord, with the council set against the assembly, and the youth at odds with the elders. The situation worsened to such an extent that Dio Chrysostom wrote that “if one were to run through the entire list of citizens, I believe he would not discover even two men in Tarsus who think alike” (Or. 34.20). The citizens of the city blamed their situation on a guild of linen-workers, whom they regarded as “outside the constitution” (ἔξωθεν τῆς πολιτείας, 34.21). Dio writes that if these linen-workers are indeed the cause of insurrection and confusion (στάσεως ... καὶ παραχῆς), the citizens should “expel them (ἀπελάσαι) altogether and not admit them to [their] popular assemblies (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις).” As non-citizens, these linen-workers were regarded as outsiders, and thus stood aloof from the common interest of the city (τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος). According to Dio, nothing greater than this situation could raise strife (στάσιν) and disagreement (διαφοράν, 34.22) in the city.

Dio’s speech to the Tarsians, one among many that addressed the problem of στάσις in a city, highlights a common problem in the cities of the Roman Empire.³ Various solutions were offered, including the exile or banishment of political troublemakers. In this chapter, my aim is to clarify what it means to

¹ Parts of this chapter are excerpted from an article I published in *New Testament Studies*. It is reprinted with permission by Cambridge University Press. Mark Jeong, “The Collapse of Society in Luke 23: A Thucydidean Take on Jesus’ Passion,” *NTS* 67.3 (2021): 317–35. © The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press.

² The dating of this oration is uncertain. See Anthony R. R. Sheppard, “Dio Chrysostom: The Bithynian Years,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 53 (1984): 172–73; Christopher Prestige Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Loeb Classical Monographs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 136, for a chronology.

³ While we only have four speeches of Dio’s written on ὁμόνοια or concord (the opposite of στάσις), C. P. Jones writes that “Dio’s four speeches on concord are the fullest evidence that survives for the meaning of a word central to Greek political life. They presumably resemble hundreds of addresses on the same topic now lost, or never written down, for every right-thinking politician was expected to strive for harmony within and between cities.” Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, 94.

be a political exile in the first century. To do so, I will first clarify what I mean by “political” by providing an overview of the goal of politics in the first century before situating the phenomenon of exile within this broader field of ancient politics. Then, I will show how exile – a means to ensure the welfare of a city – also became a means by which philosophers reimagined a new form of political belonging or community.

1.1 The Goal of Politics

Contemporary discussions about “politics” in the New Testament tend to focus on the relationship between the church and Rome – is the church innocent or guilty before the Roman Empire? Do the New Testament writings, particularly Acts, evince a pro or anti-Rome stance?⁴ These questions, while worthy of study in their own right, are far from the concerns of those engaged in politics in the first century.

In his *Precepts of Statecraft*, Plutarch writes that “the greatest and noblest function of what may be called the art of statesmanship” is “to see to it in advance that factional discord shall never arise (μηδέποτε στασιάζωσι) among [competing factions in a city]” (824C) and for the statesman “always to instill concord (ὁμόνοιαν) and friendship (φιλίαν) in those who dwell together with him and to remove strifes, discords, and all enmity” (824D). In this passage, Plutarch is echoing what other philosophers before him held to be true of politics: The goal of politics is the well-being of the πόλις, which above all means the attainment of ὁμόνοια or “concord” and the removal of στάσις or “civil strife.”

These two concepts – ὁμόνοια and στάσις – were held to be polar opposites throughout much of Greek history; one was the greatest good, and the other the greatest evil. In a speech addressing the civic unrest between the cities of Nicomedia and Nicaea in Bithynia, Dio Chrysostom writes, “But I want to break up my address, and first of all to speak about concord (ὁμονοίας) itself in general, telling both whence it comes and what it achieves, and then over against that to set off strife (στάσιν) and hatred (ἔχθραν) in contradistinction to friendship (φιλίαν)” (Or. 38.8). He goes on to say that “concord (ὁμόνοιαν) has been lauded by all men always in both speech and writing. Not only are the works of poets and philosophers alike full of its praises, but also all who have published their histories (ἱστορίας) to provide a

⁴ For a summary of views on Luke’s politics, see Steve Walton, “The State They Were In: Luke’s View of the Roman Empire,” in *Reading Acts in the Discourses of Masculinity and Politics*, ed. Eric D. Barreto, Matthew L. Skinner, and Steve Walton, LNTS 559 (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 75–106.

pattern for practical application have shown concord to be the greatest of human blessings” (38.10). When Dio mentions the poets and philosophers, he is alluding to the rich tradition of Greek reflection on *ὁμόνοια* and *στάσις*. Indeed, to understand these concepts, which were ubiquitous in the cities of the Roman Empire, requires that we briefly consider their history in Greek political thought.

1.1.1 *Homonoia as the Greatest Good*

A. R. R. Sheppard writes that since the 5th/4th centuries BCE, “*homonoia* (concord) was seen as having two complementary aims: the avoidance of the evils of civil strife (*stasis*) and the preservation of national solidarity in the face of any external threat.”⁵ In a speech delivered to the citizens of Prusa in the first century CE, Dio Chrysostom writes concerning *ὁμόνοια*,

For truly it is a fine thing and profitable for one and all alike to have a city show itself of one mind (*ὁμογνώμονα ὀρᾶσθαι*), on terms of friendship with itself and one in feeling (*συμπαθῆ*), united in conferring both censure and praise, bearing for both classes, the good and the bad, a testimony in which each can have confidence. Yes, it is a fine thing, just as it is with a well-trained chorus, for men to sing together (*συνᾶδειν*) one and the same tune, and not, like a bad musical instrument, to be discordant, emitting two kinds of notes and sounds as a result of twofold and varied natures. (48.6–7)

When a group exhibited *ὁμόνοια*, its members were not only of the same mind, but also worked together (note the multiple *συν-* words). Another aspect of *ὁμόνοια* which we find repeated in the literature was the recognition of shared possessions or having things in common. In a speech delivered to the cities of Nicomedia and Nicaea, whose leaders were fighting over petty titles, Dio Chrysostom writes that the attainment of *ὁμόνοια* entails “sharing in things which are good (*κοινωνίαν ἀγαθῶν*), unity of heart and mind (*ὁμοφροσύνην*), rejoicing of both peoples in the same things” (Or. 38.43). Addressing the men of Nicomedia, he says, “Nicaea can be yours and your possessions theirs” (38.44).

This connection between *ὁμόνοια*, common possessions, and the welfare of a city goes back to Plato’s vision of the ideal city in his *Republic*. At the end of book 1 of the *Republic*, Plato’s Socrates asks Thrasymachus whether a city or any other group intent on injustice could achieve anything if they wronged one another. Thrasymachus agrees that they could not, and Socrates goes on to explain that “injustice surely breeds hatred, dissension (*στάσεις*), and fighting among people, whereas justice brings concord (*ὁμόνοιαν*) and friendship (*φιλίαν*)” (351d). Socrates is arguing here that part of the nature of

⁵ Anthony R. R. Sheppard, “‘Homonoia’ in the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire,” *Ancient Society* 15 (1984): 229.

injustice is disharmony or the inability to cooperate, whereas justice entails *ὁμόνοια*. Socrates's solution to the problem of *στάσις* involves a society in which the guardians will have wives and children "as something shared with their friends" (423e). He goes on to say that "these women shall all be the common property of all the men ... Their children too shall be held in common and no parent will know his or her offspring, nor any child his or her parent" (457d). The point of this system is to limit competition between the members of the city, and whatever the merits of his vision, the rhetoric of "common property" became closely connected with *ὁμόνοια*.⁶ As Aelius Aristides says to the *Koinon* or general assembly of Asia gathered at Pergamum, "But where men believe that possessions belong to all in common, they also have a common point of view about them" (23.65).⁷

This emphasis on *ὁμόνοια* or unity hearkens back to a Classical Greek civic ideal which viewed the *πόλις* as a body. This body politic, in order to be a good *πόλις*, must maintain an organic unity. Benjamin Gray writes that such a *πόλις* was understood to be "a community of participatory, virtuous citizens, united in solidarity and political friendship through civic education, shared civic ideals, and collective civic practices and laws."⁸ Within this paradigm, "the good citizen should ... devote himself to the welfare of his polis and its institutions and culture."⁹

In the first century, while the politics of the city had undergone significant change with the arrival of the Roman Empire, the rhetoric of *ὁμόνοια* and civic unity remained an important part of the political life of cities throughout the empire. Writing on the similarities and differences between the political life and culture of the classical and imperial periods, Giovanni Salmeri explains,

the bywords in political debate were no longer so much *eunomia* and *isonomia*, featuring the concept of equality, as *homonoia* and *eutaxia*. These are terms more suited to serve political prospects of containment rather than expansion, and they seem perfectly appropriate to the need the notables had to maintain order in their centres and avoid Roman intervention.¹⁰

⁶ The relevance of this notion for this study will become clear when we survey the passages in Acts where the early Christian community had all things in common.

⁷ All translations of Aelius Aristides are from Charles Allison Behr, *The Complete Works*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

⁸ Benjamin D. Gray, *Stasis and Stability: Exile, the Polis, and Political Thought, c. 404–146 BC*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 22.

⁹ Gray, *Stasis and Stability*, 22.

¹⁰ Giovanni Salmeri, "Reconstructing the Political Life and Culture of the Greek Cities of the Roman Empire," in *Political Culture in the Greek City after the Classical Age*, ed.

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