Professional Bureaucrats

or

Bureaucratic Professionals?¹

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1. Introduction

In order to understand modern organizations models based on rational structures work best. Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, also known as the beginning of modernization, organizations were based on rational standards and relations (e.g. Van Hoof & Van Ruyseveldt, 1996; Van der Loo & Van Reijen, 1997). During this century of growing complexity a new organizational structure steadily gained momentum: *bureaucracy*. This structure, deduced by Max Weber, was based on impersonal and rational standards and procedures. In this way the bureaucratic organization formed a new approach to structuring and controlling the official's behavior, and as a consequence also to analyze organizations.

However, as Weber clearly shows in his work on bureaucracy, several organizational structures can be found in history that are also to a certain extent bureaucratic. This implies that the model can also be useful to understand pre-modern structures. In fact, in an effort to understand pre-modern or early-modern public domains the bureaucratic model is indeed often used. For instance, Van Braam used the model to describe early-modern administrative organizations (Van Braam, 1977). Raadschelders applied the model to the administrative development of four municipalities in the northern part of Holland (Raadschelders, 1990). The model is also used in present times, of which the study of Van der Meer and Roborgh is a good example (Van der Meer & Roborgh, 1993).

Although a typical 'modern' concept, the bureaucratic model thus seems to be helpful for understanding historical administrative structures. However, because of the fact that it nonetheless remains a modern organizational structure, this article assumes that the model is not capable of presenting a round picture of early-modern times. It is often argued that early-modern public service was, according to some,

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loosely organized, because of a lack of formal structures. As a result, behavior of officials was based on arbitrariness (...*). The aim of the first part of this article is to investigate to what extent the bureaucratic model as a way to minimize arbitrariness and hence to structure an official's behavior, is sufficient for describing and understanding how official work was structured. Three questions then are of special interest. Firstly, how can someone become civil servant? Secondly, what behavior is prescribed? Thirdly, is there an exclusion mechanism?

Answers to these questions from a bureaucracy point of view form the starting point of the second part of this article, where we present another institutional approach in order to fill the analytical gaps of section one. We conclude the article with an analysis of the added-value of the combined institutional approaches for analyzing early-modern civil services.

Following Van Braam and Raadschelders, we focus on the local level of public service. We take the local civil service of public safety as case for this article.

SECTION I

2. Bureaucratic framework

Two aspects are central to the concept of bureaucracy; the functioning of the structure, and the position of the bureaucrat within the structure (Weber, 1991). We will discuss the two aspects in this order.

The functioning of the structure is tied to fixed jurisdictional areas. Tasks, duties as well as authority to give commands are linked to these jurisdictional areas. Next to this, continuity of execution is guaranteed. Crucial for this is the impersonal execution of functions. Bureaucracies are hierarchically structured and monocratic. This means that every 'beambte' is accountable to one single supervisor.

For executing functions, training and education are necessary preconditions. To be able to make full use of an employee's expert knowledge "official activity demands the full working capacity of the official" (Weber, 1991, 198). All actions in a bureaucracy are filed, all rules can and must be learned.

According to Weber "officeholding is a *vocation*" (Weber, 1991, 198, italics JvB). With this word Weber pointed at the professional and specialist background that is required for functions in a bureaucracy. Therefore, extensive training became one of the requirements. In order to develop and apply specialist knowledge to the full, bureaucratic functions need to be impersonal. This means that an officeholder can not be the owner of the office, nor can he have any interests that interfere with the interest of the office.

In addition to these professional terms an official function is patterned, or standardized, in several ways. In a bureaucracy, an official is appointed, in contrast to any form of election. In this way an extra guarantee is created for disinterested offices. Related to this are preconditions like tenure for life, fixed salary and patterned careers. As a result of this merit-based system officials can derive social esteem from their position in a bureaucracy.

In summary the bureaucratic model thus contains the following elements (table I, based on Weber, 1991):

Functioning of the structure	Position of the official
1. Fixed and official jurisdictional areas:	1. Vocation:
- regular activities	- expert training is required
- authority to give commands linked to	- execution of the function without
official position	personal interests
- regular and continuous fulfillment of	

duties guaranteed2. Monocratic and hierarchical structure3. Management is based upon written
documents4. Training and education is required5. Full working capacity demanded from
officials6. General rules, which can be learned**1.** Teatures of Bureaucracy (based on Weber, 1991)

These features of the bureaucratic model will now be investigated in dutch earlymodern local public service, more precise the domain of public safety. Therefore the police commissioner is discussed in the next paragraph, based on the bureaucratic features presented above.

3. Bureaucratic structures: the function of sheriff

Sheriffs were responsible for public safety at the local governmental level. Guarding public safety was one of the tasks of the stadtholder at the provincial level, the sheriff, as local representative of the stadtholder in the old monarchical system, combined the tasks of what nowadays is called public prosecutor and police commissioner at the local level in the cities. He had a direct responsibility to the stadtholder (not always to the city!) (e.g. Fruin, 1922; Fockema Andreae, 1969). The sheriff made new rules ('costuymen' or 'keuren'), arrested offenders of these rules and was also responsible for the execution of sentences, for which in some cases for instance an executioner had to be hired. In some cities, the distinction was made between higher-sheriffs and lower-sheriffs. Lower-sheriffs were only allowed to prosecute offenders of less significance. In rural areas the function title of the sheriff was different, as his function was comparable to that of the higher-sheriff. Some villages had their own lower-sheriff. The smaller villages neither had a higher- nor a lower-sheriff, and were

part of the jurisdiction of the regional bailiff. The focus of this article is on sheriffs in the cities.

In accordance with bureaucratic standards the sheriffs were appointed on the grounds of contracts or 'ambtsbrieven'. To analyse the function of bailiff we studied 28* contracts from different cities, all situated in the province of Holland. We incorporated two cities that were part of the private domains of the prince of Orange: Veere and Buren. This makes it possible to draw conclusions on differences between cities with direct relations to the stadtholder and 'free' cities. The other investigated cities are Delft, Enkhuizen, Haarlem and Leiden. Because of the great similarities in the contracts we can argue that the sample we used is representative for at least the cities of Holland during the period 1640 - 1770. The reason for starting the analysis with letters of 1640 is a pragmatic one: the archives did not provide older contracts. The end of the period is chosen because of political reasons, the end of the eighteenth century is famous for its revolutions. In this period dutch government also started to destabilize. In order to keep this factor out of the analysis, 1770 is chosen as the last year of the period. We will now discuss the bureaucratic dimensions mentioned in the 'ambtsbrieven'.

3.1 Formal authority

Every letter begins by with mentioning who is in charge of the appointment, next to who is responsible for the announcement. Most letters start with the sentence 'De Staaten van Holland en Westvriesland'² etcetera. In almost all letters the estates thus announce the appointment. In the periods when, for political reasons, no stadtholder

² The Estates of Holland and Westvriesland

was appointed the estates were also in charge of the appointment. In the letters of the other periods the Prince of Orange is the formal authority referred to.

The letters also recall the procedure of appointment by referring to the fact that the appointed person is nominated by for instance the estates. Apparently, other authorities had a strong advisory role in this procedure.

3.2 Personal qualities

The contracts describe the type of official that is to be appointed, in the following words: "een ander bequaam en gequalificeert persoon daertoe werde gecommitteerd" (NA, H&W-V). The words bequaam and gequalificeerd, litteraly "skilled" and "qualified" can have several meanings. Of course 'skilled' can refer to skills, like in a craft, 'qualified' can have a similar meaning. However, qualified can also refer to earlier achievements that qualify someone for the position. We will return to this point later.

The contracts elaborate on the skills extensively. In contrast to other parts of the contract, these passages show a lot of variation. Therefore we grouped the terms that were used in the contracts into three categories: values, knowledge and character. The several categories are presented in the table below.

Values	Oprechtheyt / Waerheyt (sincerity)
	Vroomicheyt (religiosity)
	Getrouwheyt (loyalty)
Knowledge	Ervarentheyt (experience)
	Wysheyt (wisdom)
Character	Diligentie (diligence)
	Naerstigheyt (assiduity)
	Ernstigheyt (seriousness)
	Kloeckheyt (bravery)
	Wackerheyt (alertness)
Table II Categorisation of the sheriff's skills	

This overview shows on the one hand that qualifications in terms of values, knowledge and character were used. On the other hand one can criticize these qualifications for being too general, especially in the knowledge category.

3.3 Governmental authority and tasks

The contracts are clear about the function of sheriff. In every contract the function is described as giving the official 'volcomen magt, autoriteyt en sonderlingh bevel', referring to *full power given to the sheriff. The contract states that this authority belongs to the 'staet ende officie van schout'. This distinction is interesting, since it divides the function of sheriff into two spheres: a sphere of office (tasks and duties) and a sphere of status. Formal authority then can be used to carry out the duties; these are threefold:

- firstly, the sheriff has to protect the honour and the rights of 'us', which refers to the official body responsible for the appointment. Depending on whether there is a stadtholder this refers thus to the stadtholder or the Estates of Holland and Westvriesland;
- secondly, the sheriff was responsible for the protection of "the good" and detention of offenders;
- thirdly, the sheriff had to administer justice, together with the *schepenen* (aldermen), who were in fact the judges. Therefore the sheriff was assigned to urge the schepenen to reach verdict.

In summary the duties can be summarized in three roles: (1) representative of higher authority; (2) police officer; (3) public prosecutor.

3.4 Salary

One mechanism of financial compensation can be found in every contract: the deal that the sheriff gets a part of the fines he levies, only the percentage varies. Agreements on this had to be reached with the 'Camere van Reeckeninge'.

In return for this 'performance related salary' the sheriff had to pay a sort of rent each year, this was called 'recognitiegeld'. Only the contracts from the period 1672-1702 lack this obligation.

On the financial topic the contracts of Haarlem included an extra passage. It ordered the new sheriff to accept the servants of the predecessor and pay their salaries. In bureaucratic terms this is quite interesting, because this means that the sheriff's assistants were personal servants, payed for by the sheriff instead of the city.

Every year, the sheriff had to present his accounts to the Camere van Reeckeninge, together with all the evidence. Then the salary of the sheriff was calculated, based on the total sum of fines.

3.5 Oath and recognition

To formally seal the appointment of sheriff, the candidate had to take an oath, administered by the formal authority. Depending on whether there was a stadtholder, the oath was administered by the stadtholder or the Estates of Holland and Westvriesland. In return, the formal authority ordered the other local governmental officials to recognize the new sheriff and to support him in the execution of his function. The sheriff had to behave according to his instructions. For these instructions some contracts refer to an old instruction that dates from April, 20th, 1582

(NA, H&W-V, nr 1799 & 1801). Apparently, instructions did not change during this period, and, as stated earlier, neither did the contracts.

3.6 Bureaucratic sheriffs?

In the previous paragraphs we discussed the contracts, or ambtsbrieven, of sheriffs in Holland, during the period 1640 - 1770. Based on the investigation of these contracts, we can conclude that the function seems remarkably well structured. For some 130 years, the procedures were not changed, except for the role of the stadtholder that was substituted for the Estates of Holland and Westvriesland during two periods. Apparently these procedures were not widely debated.

At first sight, the sheriff's function resembles many bureaucratic features. We will discuss the function here following the three questions on (1) selection and appointment; (2) rules of conduct and (3) exclusion posed earlier.

The first question is about how to get *recruited*. According to the contracts a nomination by the highest power is required to gain a governmental function. This nomination is based on the extent to which someone is 'gequalificeert' (qualified) and 'bequaam' (skilled). The term qualified differs from skilled, qualified referred to a person's social and political position. Membership of the city council, *Vroedschap*, was seen as a 'harde qualiteyt' (**). This means that membership of the Vroedschap as well as certain skills played a role in the procedure of nomination. Merit then not only means expertise, but points also at membership of a central governmental body.

The contract then points at certain values; knowledge and character. This can be seen as an elaboration of the merit principle. The oath seals the membership, the official swears he will be loyal to his superior. The *rules of conduct* described in the contract are found in the description of the function. The task is threefold: firstly the sheriff has to protect the power of the highest authority, secondly, he has to arrest offenders of the law and thirdly, he has to take care of the prosecution of offenders. For all of his tasks the sheriff is held accountable, the accountability regime is explained in the contract, as well as the status guideline attached to the function. The exact way how to execute the function is not mentioned in the ambtsbrieven.

Based on the contracts it is hard to tell whether any *exclusion mechanisms* played a role. Of course the criteria to gain entrance to the system also worked as an exclusion mechanism, but the contracts do not make clear how and why someone can be excluded from the function while in function (except of course for the expiration of the legal term). Misconduct could lead to dismissal, as we know from other sources. This was however a tough procedure, especially during the first year of a term (e.g. Haarman, 1925).

In conclusion it can be stated that an extensive bureaucratic structure existed at least around the function of sheriff. It contained mechanisms of accountability, and also selection based on merit was incorporated. However, the meaning of the term merit was rather broad, compared to the later meaning the word got in the bureaucratic model when it referred to expertise or specialism. Because of the role of nominations, functions were part of political spheres, or networks, where advice of stadtholders, noblemen or rich merchants dominated. Because of the fact that the reward system is comparable with what Weber calls a prebendal system (cf. Weber, 1991, 207), public functions were profitable and thus sought-after. However the fact that there is an extensive bureaucratic structure, still the position of the official is rather loosely organized. Therefore, we will focus on the same questions of appointment, behavior and exclusion to see whether other structures played a role too. We will especially focus on the role of influential noblemen and merchants, in terms of local networks. These networks were formed around public, governmental, functions and perhaps decisive in questions of selection for and execution of public functions. We will analyze this in terms of professionalism, because this concept deals with self-organizing groups based on a profession all members of the group share. In the next paragraph we will elaborate on the concept of professionalism, paragraph five will discuss early-modern local government in terms of professionalism.

SECTION II

4. Professionalism

In the literature, professionalism is vaguely defined as occupational features of a closed group of specialists who "apply abstract knowledge to particular cases" (Abbott, 1988, 8). The idea of closed groups and the notion of abstract knowledge can be found in almost all publications of professionalism (cf. Wilensky, 1964; Larson, 1977; Noordegraaf, 2004; Freidson, 2001). All other aspects remain issues for debate. In general, professionalism can be regarded as an institutional mechanism, in addition to mechanisms like the market and management. The market is characterized by consumer control, where managers steer organizations. The profession is a more horizontal mechanism, as professionals steer and control each other (Freidson, 2001, 12).

The profession thus regulates *control* of a group of specialists or experts. Next to this it also regulates *content*, by means of training, education and exams. These two components thus form the core of professionalism: content and control (Wilensky, 1964; Noordegraaf, 2007). This institutional mechanism for content and control of the profession then is embodied by an *autonomous association*, which will guard the borders of the jurisdiction and prescribe what *abstract knowledge* is obliged to enter the professional status. The association can also take care of *educational programs*, or at least be partly responsible for training programs organized by an academic institute. This underscores the influence of associations in the composition of knowledge bases, as fundamental knowledge about diagnosing a case and taking correct desicions (Parsons, 1939).

Setting up an association that arranges training programs and examines candidates can be seen as a way to secure quality *ex ante*. A profession also has *ex post* measurements. The association for example often has a *code of ethics*. Some professions even combine this code with *rituals* like taking an oath. The association also has the power to *sanction* its members. In extreme cases it can officially ban individuals from the profession.

Often, professions are specialist occupations. Weber's statement on officeholding as a vocation thus can be seen as a professionalist claim, aimed at content more than at control. Officeholding suggests a decent education and certain expert knowledge. In addition to this, full-time work-capacity of an individual is necessary for the job. However, in terms of control, professions have a different approach. Professions, in summary, are characterized by their boundaries that are framed in terms of control and content. 'Control' points at the autonomous position of the association in the jurisdiction of the profession, and in an individual sense it has to do with who is and who is not a professional. The aspect of 'content' relates to the body of knowledge of the profession and of course to the educational program.

In the next paragraph early modern local government, of which the sheriff was part, will be analysed through the lense of professionalism. Can we speak of an associational network that controlled public functions, in terms of content and control?

5. Professional sheriffs

In paragraph three we sketched the organizational structure of early-modern local government. For the sake of the argument, we have to expand this description a bit more. We already discussed the executive committee, consisting of burgomasters, aldermen and the sheriff. In addition to this governmental body, the Vroedschap functioned as a council; the board required the Vroedschap's approval for their decisions. The Vroedschap was in charge of the nominations and appointments of the burgomasters. Nominees for the function of burgomasters were almost always members of the Vroedschap. In this way, the Vroedschap was in control of the burgomasters. The burgomasters were in charge of literally 'giving away' several public functions in the city. Appointments for other public functions were decided upon by the Vroedschap. Because of the power the Vroedschap had in recruiting and appointing the burgomasters and several other public functions, they controlled almost all appointments in public functions in the cities. This made the Vroedschap a very powerful recruiting body.

The Vroedschap traditionally was a board of wise men; the first part of the word Vroedschap literally refers to wisdom. A Vroedschap-resolution of Rotterdam (December 29th, 1615) for example mentions that the Vroedschap selects its members

(among other factors) out of a grasp of the wisest and experienced persons. In this sense the Vroedschap can be compared to for instance the senate in ancient Rome. Idealtypically, the board consisted of wise men who were able to decide upon issues regarding their city and the fulfillment of the city's public functions. The most important functions were given to members of the Vroedschap, for the less important functions membership of the Vroedschap was not a precondition.

In the sense of professionalism, the Vroedschap thus refers to both pillars: content in terms of wisdom (knowledge, expertise, experience) as a precondition for membership of the Vroedschap; control in the sense that the Vroedschap decided on the fulfillment of public functions. Therefore the Vroedschap's function in city government is not restricted to co-decisional competences or advisory tasks to other bodies (e.g. committee of burgomasters). The Vroedschap is positioned at the very root of city government. It decides on inclusion and exclusion in the public bureaucratic structure, based on their own conditions. Therefore it can be regarded as an associational, professional, network.

The Vroedschap counted a limited number of members. The maximum depended on how many members the Vroedschap allowed, which was different in each city and varied broadly from twenty to 40 members. The Vroedschappen not only decided on the number of members, they also chose their own members: members of the Vroedschap were appointed by co-option, which meant that the Vroedschap itself controlled its composition.

To become member of the Vroedschap one had to fulfill several conditions. Only the richest, most respectable and wisest persons could become member of the Vroedschap (Bossaers, 1996; 46). In many cities this meant that no member of the Vroedschap was younger than 27 (e.g. Rotterdam) or 30 (e.g. Enkhuizen) years old.

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In some cities the criterion of the protestant religion was added, next to the fact that one had to have the status of citizen (poorter) for at least five years. Apparently the Vroedschap itself could change rules regarding its membership, as for example resolutions from the city of Rotterdam show (Unger, 1892). The Vroedschap thus was in charge of the rules they applied to their candidate-members.

The core of the associational network thus applied certain conditions. Around this core a second layer of potential members picked up the less important functions, to gain experience in public functions. The Vroedschap decided upon distribution of these functions. These functions were for instance governor of orphanages or hospitals.

Experience in lower public functions seems to be an important asset for becoming a member of the core. Prak distinguishes a pattern in the regents' careers and states that there are two critical points, of which membership of the Vroedschap is the first one (Prak, 1985; cf. Kooijmans, 1985). The patterns in the functions that precede membership of the Vroedschap can be interpreted in two different ways. One might think of these functions as less important and therefore not of interest for the core group of the local gentry. However, one might also look at these functions as a way to gain experience. This is at least a convincing point for the last function one fulfills before entering the Vroedschap: schepen (Prak, 1985; Bossaers, 1995). This function is at the centre of local government and perhaps a good position to show of for the Vroedschap members. These potential members of the Vroedschap can thus be seen as the second layer of the associational network; the core's antechamber.

Several studies on local elites show that these minor functions were *given* to members of important, rich, families. Selection thus was based on membership of one of the dominant families in the local elite network. However, because of the rule that

restricted membership of the Vroedschap to one affiliate per family, potential new members sometimes had to wait until his direct relative resigned from the Vroedschap. This is why some potential members had to fulfill minor functions for quite a long time.

Once a member of the Vroedschap, a career in local government was highly possible. The second critical point in a public career then was the function of burgomaster. This function could help getting functions outside the city, for instance waterboards, the VOC or functions in the estates of Holland and Westvriesland or even the General Estates. For the higher local public functions the Vroedschap thus was the key to success. Nominating someone from outside the Vroedschap for important functions was very rare. Without this membership, a public career thus ended at the highest function for which membership of the Vroedschap was not required: schepen (Prak, 1985).

Members of the Vroedschap were appointed for life. Only extreme situations, like misconduct, could lead to exclusion. Moving to another city also led to resignation from the Vroedschap. Of interest for this paper is the fact that the Vroedschap itself could decide on someone's membership. In this way the Vroedschap was completely in charge of its own composition, in terms of inclusion as well as exclusion.

In summary we showed that the Vroedschap can be regarded as a central body when it comes to appointing public officials. The Vroedschap's function as associational network leads to connections with its affiliates that easily undermine the bureaucratic structure. Next to selecting and appointing officials, the Vroedschap also played a role in the development of public officials, by patterning the careers. In this way they

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created professional content, in terms of experience. In terms of exclusion the role of the Vroedschap is unclear. The explicit right to exclude its members was not delegated to the Vroedschap.

All this brings us to the conclusions of this article. In the last paragraph we will combine the two approaches and their results. We also discuss the added-value of their combination.

6. Conclusion

As showed in the above sections, professionalism as well as bureaucratic structures can be found in early-modern local government. It is showed that a city's sheriff worked in a structure that is to some extent comparable to the Weberian bureaucracy. Next to this we presented the local Vroedschap as a professional network, responsible for appointment or nomination as well as development of local functionaries, of which the sheriff is an example.

Apparently both institutional structures apply for early-modern local government. This has implications for understanding these governmental structures and positions of officials within these structures.

Bureaucratic structures, as we have seen, aim at a certain disinterestedness. The expert-knowledge is used for the tasks and interest of the organisation only. The vertical organization leads the officials, who have to obey the rules of the hierarchy. For professionals this is obviously not the case. Their horizontal orientation of peer control leads to another tension when working in a bureaucratic structure. Tensions between the bureaucratic and professional model are much discussed in modern literature (e.g. Reissman, 1949; Goldberg et al. 1965; Simon, 1976): the models share the emphasis on expert knowledge, however, a bureaucrat identifies himself with the bureaucratic structure where the professional derives his identity from the professional group he is part of. Because of this, tensions between the two structures can arise.

In the early-modern local government case we discussed, the same might be the case. The professional approach of the Vroedschap shows that this body is more than the centre of the elite. Of course professionalism and elitism overlap, but the professional approach includes content as well as control. The Vroedschap selects its members, not only based on symbols, it also takes content related arguments like religion, wisdom and experience, into account. Therefore, the Vroedschap can be seen as an associational network. To be more precise, the Vroedschap combines an occupational network because it controls public occupations, and a social network that plays a role in inclusion and exclusion mechanisms.

Appointment in the structures of early-modern local government appears to be following bureaucratic rules. However, the nominations for these functions are decided in the associational networks. Therefore, analysis of the working of local government based on the bureaucratic model only tells us half of the story. Around these structures a boundary is guarded by an associational network, that controls entry and content. The scheme below shows the bureaucratic structure surrounded by an associational network.



Scheme I Associational and Bureaucratic structures interrelated

The scheme shows how the mechanism works. For the important functions members of the Vroedschap are recruited, the minor functions are fulfilled by 'members' of the second layer, selected by the Vroedschap.

Therefore, analysis of early-modern local government based on a combination of the bureaucratic and professional structure seems to be fruitful. It accepts the presence of early bureaucracy-like aspects in combination with a more content and control related form of elitism.

This leads to other interesting questions on tensions between bureaucratic and professional structures, and of course one might question the tension itself. It is reasonable to argue there is a tension, because of the different orientations of the two models. These are questions that still play a role in professionalization literature on loyalty today. Finding a way into bureaucracy via an association that functions like a gate keeper immediately reminds us of the American spoils system, where important administrative functions were politically linked to the winner of elections. In this case, the same loyalty problem occurs.

Instead of rational procedures carried out by bureaucracy itself membership of the Vroedschap leads to an official position. The difference however is that the Vroedschap is part of the governmental system and appears to select based on substantive arguments. In that case an interesting figure can be deduced: a professional association at the helm of a bureaucratic structure steering and reproducing public functions.

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