

## ARMS AND ARMOUR ANALYSIS OF A JUDAS MACCABEUS' MINIATURE IN THE PŁOCK BIBLE

Iconography is one of the main sources of knowledge about our past (Janowski 2009, p. 111). In studies on arms and armour the most often used categories of iconography are numismatic and sigillographic sources, together with works of art, e.g., paintings, sculptures and illuminated codices (*Ibid.*, p. 111). This category of sources lets us observe different kinds of arms and armour together, often also with their owners (Nadolski 1994a, p. 23; Glinianowicz 2008, p. 61). Using iconography, however, is not free of danger. For many reasons such sources have various reliability (Kajzer 1976, p. 8; Glinianowicz 2008, p. 61). Furthermore, they pose problems with identification of materials used to produce weapons (*Ibid.*, p. 40). That is why we have to study them with caution (Nadolski 1994a, p. 23).

These remarks also concern *The Płock Bible*. This important early medieval codex is now in possession of the Diocesan Museum in Płock.<sup>1</sup> The *Bible* had not been studied in detail until 1993, when a dissertation by Rev. Ryszard Knapiński was completed (Knapiński 1993, p. 22–27). The codex was written in the second quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and came to Płock probably thanks to Bishop of Płock Alexander of Mallone (1129–1159) (*Ibid.*, pp. 12–13). The place where the *Bible* was written is unclear. R. Knapiński considers the text, the main initials and some illuminations as a product of the Meuse region. The rest of miniatures, especially those which show characters might have been painted in Płock (*Ibid.*, pp. 237–248). Among many of them there is one

which presents Judas Maccabeus together with his arms and armour.

Before we start to analyze his weapons, a short note about who he was must be made. Judas was one of the sons of Mathattas (a Jewish priest). He was also one of the leaders in the war against the Syrian Seleucids in 165–160 BC (Krawczyk 2008, p. 23). Later on his name was passed along the entire dynasty which ruled Judea between 166 and 37 BC (*Ibid.*). The word Maccabeus was his soubriquet which he received for his bravery in the conflict (*Ibid.*). There are several theories explaining a meaning of his soubriquet. One of them says that the word Maccabeus came from a Hebrew term *maqqaba* – hammer (conqueror of the enemies) (Knapinski 1993, p. 222; Krawczyk 2008, p. 23). According to another one the word Maccabeus was related to another Hebrew word *maqab* – to nominate. Maqqabjahu could therefore be translated as chosen by God (Krawczyk 2008, p. 23). It is not surprising to see Judas as a knight/warrior in medieval iconography, because he was always seen as a *miles christianus* – defender of faith (Knapiński 1993, p. 223).

His image in *The Płock Bible* is placed in the right upper corner of chart f.181r (Fig. 1). The character stands between two columns of a simple arcade. As mentioned above, he has a rich set of arms and armour (Fig. 2). His body is covered with long scale armour with a hood and sleeves. There is a helmet on his head. Judas holds a spear in his right hand and a kite-shaped shield in his left hand. A sword in a scabbard hangs at his left side.

We start our analysis with his armour. It is considerably long and reaches the knees of Judas. It resembles a long tunic. It also has long sleeves and

<sup>1</sup> I render thanks to Rev. S. Ceglowski, Director of the Diocesan Museum in Płock for making *The Płock Bible* available for my study.



Fig. 1. *The Plock Bible*. Chart f.181r. (Photo: Diocesan Museum in Plock)

an added coif which covers Judas' head. The entire tunic is covered with small scales (Figs. 2, 3). This kind of armour was always made of small scales riveted (but only from one side) to a leather or fabric base.<sup>2</sup> Scales were arranged in such a way that a free end of an upper one overlapped the two below. (Blair 1959, p. 16; Kirpičnikov 1971, p. 17; Nadolski 1994b, p. 67). This type of defensive equipment was known since the Bronze Age (1500–1200 BC) in

ancient Syria and the Middle East (Żygulski 1975, p. 36; Kwaśniewicz 1990, p. 168; LaRocca 2004, p. 43). In Europe it appeared during the Roman Period (Stefańska 1964, p. 99; Bruhn-Hoffmeyer 1982, pp. 125–126). It was in use in Eastern Europe until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (Stefańska 1964, p. 99; Bruhn-Hoffmeyer 1982, pp. 125–126; Kwaśniewicz 1990, p. 168; LaRocca 2004, p. 43). Some scholars have assumed the eastern origin of scale armour which came to Europe probably via Byzantium (Nadolski 1994b, p. 67; Bruhn-Hoffmeyer 1982, pp. 125–126).

Unfortunately not many medieval types of armour survived until present (Kajzer 1976, p. 39). The same concerns early medieval scale armours. We know hardly any examples of such armours. Few singular scales were discovered in early medieval Rus' (Kirpičnikov 1971, p. 17). One, probably an early

<sup>2</sup> Based on the discussed miniature one cannot say for sure that Judas in *the Plock Bible* wore scale armour. It is worth to note that in the early medieval iconography mail armour was shown in the same way (see Ashdown 1909, pp. 67–80). A hood or a coif worn by an armed man under a helmet or attached to it suggests that this is rather a chain mail armour. However, in the case of the coif the use of scale armour seems to be possible.





Fig. 2. *The Płock Bible*. Image of Juda Machabeus (Photo: Diocesan Museum in Płock)

medieval scale armour, is displayed at the Museum of Alava in Vitoria, Spain (Bruhn-Hoffmeyer 1982, p. 126). Fortunately iconographic sources are more helpful. Among them we can find many fine examples of scale armour. The earliest depiction of the early medieval scale armour comes from the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century. Among them are, e.g.: *Goliath* (?), *Smyrna Octateuch*, Byzantium – 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> c.; *Herod's Guards* in the *Golden Gospel of Echternach*, Lower Lorraine – c. 1040; *Pharaoh's Army* in the *Exulted Roll* from Gaeta, southern Italy – 11<sup>th</sup> c.; *Count Guy* in *The Bayeux Tapestry* – the late 11<sup>th</sup> c., chart f.88v in *The Atlantic Bible*, southern France – late 11<sup>th</sup> c. (Nicolle 1999, pp. 51, 114, 169, 254, fig. 288g, 416, 674a,b; *Idem* 2002, p. 315, fig. 41a, 43).

Scale armour can also be found in 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> c. sources, e.g.: *Defenders in the Siege of a city*, carved reliefs in the Church of S. Nicola, Bari, Italy – the early 12<sup>th</sup>; a relief carving in the Church of St Gilles, St Gilles du Gard, France – c. 1145; *Egyptians flee into Asqalon* and *Defeat of Turks outside Antakya* – eighteen century drawings of lost early or mid-12<sup>th</sup>



Fig. 3. *The Płock Bible*. Helmet and scale coif which covers Judas' head (Photo: Diocesan Museum in Płock)

century stained glass windows illustrating the First Crusade – St Denis, Paris, France; a carved relief from *Porta Romana*, Milan, Italy – 1167; a seal of Bogusław I Duke of Pomerania-Szczecin – 1170; a coin of Bolesław I the Tall, Duke of Silesia – c. 1190; the Tapestry from Baldishol, Norway – c. 1200; relief carvings from the Church of St Trophime, Arles, France – the early 13<sup>th</sup> century; soldiers from the facade of the Reims Cathedral – the first quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; a seal of Henryk I the Bearded, Duke of Silesia – 1230–34; *Abraham*, a wall-painting in a crypt of the Cathedral in Anagni, Italy – c. 1250–55; *The arrest of Jesus*, in an Armenian manuscript – c. 1270 (Laking 1920, p. 42, fig. 50; Kajzer 1976, p. 88; Wawrzonowska 1976, p. 16, Plate I:8; Wybranowski 1987, p.156; *From Viking...* 1992, p. 195, fig. 5; Piech 1993, fig. 37; Nicolle 1996, p. 137; *Idem* 1999, pp. 27, 117, 208, 219, 229, 256, 335, 345, fig. 298a, 557, 578g, 613a, 680d-e, 930, 953; Świątkiewicz 2002, p. 98, pl. XXIII:5; Marrucchi, Belcari 2010, p. 302, fig. 6).

Among these examples, the closest analogies to the scale armour of Judas Maccabeus are the depictions found in *The Atlantic Bible*, the Carved Relief from *Porta Romana*, the seal of Bogusław I Duke of Pomerania-Szczecin, the Tapestry from Baldishol and the seal of Henryk I the Bearded. Their chronology falls between the late 11<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These analogies confirm the opinion of students of arms and armour that the armour in the shape



Fig. 4. *The Plock Bible*. Judas' kite-shaped shield  
(Photo: Diocesan Museum in Plock)

of a long tunic was mostly worn in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Such armours with coifs were also in use in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Blair 1959, p. 27; Kajzer 1976, p. 89).

Apart from his armour, Judas also wears a conical helmet (Fig. 3). Its construction is complex. Based on the miniature, we can say that it was made of four segments (2 are visible). Those parts are probably fully bounded with a circular rim and a few bands. The helmet is also equipped with a schematically depicted nasal. This type of helmet is very often called frame- or segmental helmet (Nicolle 1995, pp. 85–86; *Idem* 1999, p. 147). According to A. N. Kirpičnikov (1996, p. 23), conical helmets were pan-European weapons. Their frame/segmental variants came to Western Europe from Byzantium (Vogt 2006, *passim*). Helmets built up of segments and bands are known from the late-Roman and Migration Periods and they are in use until the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Laking 1920, pp. 45–54; Blair 1959, p. 25; Żygulski 1975, p. 33; *The Bayeux...* 2004, p. 222; Vogt 2006, pp. 46–63). As it was in the case of scale armour, we also have scarce archaeological evidence for such kind of helmet. Among them it is worth to mention a conical helmet built up from segments, which was found in Northern France (the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century) (Laking 1920, p. 45, fig. 59:a-b). More evidence for



Fig. 5. *The Plock Bible*. One simple mount – a holder – on the visible part of the shield (Photo: Diocesan Museum in Plock)

the use of such kind of helmets is again known from iconographic sources. Among many of them the finest examples are: *The Bayeux Tapestry* – the late 11<sup>th</sup> c.; *David and Goliath* from a German manuscript – 1148; the carved Relief from *Porta Romana*, Milan, Italy – 1167; the seal of Bogusław I Duke of Pomerania-Szczecin – 1170; a seal of Kazimierz I Duke of Pomerania – c. 1180; a stained glass window from the Cathedral in Canterbury, England – the late 12<sup>th</sup> c.; *Guards at the Holy Sepulchre* – a wall painting from the Hermitage of San Baudelio de Berlanga, Spain – the late 12<sup>th</sup> c.; an armed man in the *Release of St. Peter* scene from the *Plock Door* – c. 1152–1154; a seal of Leszek I the White, Duke of Poland – 1229; the seal of Henryk I the Bearded, Duke of Silesia – 1230–34 (Walicki 1971, p. 638, fig. 1144; Kajzer 1976, p. 139, fig. 1:3, 27:a; Wawrzonowska 1976, p. 19, pl. II:5; Poppe 1983, p. 31, 47; Wybranowski 1987, p. 156; Piech 1993, fig. 37; Nicolle 1999, pp. 51–54, 66, 150, 174, 219, fig. 97af, 149c, 374, 435, 578g; Świątkiewicz 2002, p. 98, Plate XXIII:5, 7; *The Bayeux...* 2004, pl. 18, 21, 22, 23; Świechowski 2006, pp. 199–311; Marrucchi, Belcari 2010, p. 302, fig. 6). This short survey demonstrates that conical and segmented helmets were still popular in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

To finish the discussion of Judas' defensive equipment we must also discuss his shield. The kite-shaped shield (Fig. 4) is depicted from its rear side. This is why we do not know whether there is a shield-boss on the front side or not. There is one simple mount – a holder – on the visible part of the shield (Fig. 5). The shield is painted blue, which might suggest that the artist depicted a weapon coated in coloured canvas.



Kite-shaped shields came into use at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> (or even the late 10<sup>th</sup> century) and lasted until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when their shape evolved into different forms. The earliest images of such shields are known from France, Spain and Italy (Dziewanowski 1935, p. 73; Nadolski 1954, p. 76; Żygulski 1975, p. 42; Nadolski 1994b, p. 62; Nicolle 1995 p. 83; *The Bayeux...* 2004, p. 224; Janowski 2009, p. 127). This type of shield was quite large, being 1 – 1.2 meter high (Nadolski 1954, p. 76). It is very difficult to find kite-shaped shields which survived until present. They were made of organic materials which do not preserve well (*Ibid.*, p. 79). The author knows only one preserved kite-shaped shield. It was found in the early medieval stronghold in Szczecin, Poland. It is dated to between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century (Uciechowska-Gawroń 2003, p. 188, fig. 6). As opposed to archaeological finds, early medieval iconography is abundant in depictions of kite-shaped shields. There is no room to mention them all, so we limited the list of analogies to some selected examples. Kite-shaped shields were represented in early medieval sources since the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, e. g., in: Gospel, Duchy of Brittany – the late 10<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Utrecht Psalter*, Wessex – the early 11<sup>th</sup> c.; *Herod and Massacre of Innocents* from the *Evangelistarium* – *Codex aureus Pultoviensis* – the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.; coins of Bolesław II the Generous, King of Poland – the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.; *The Bayeux Tapestry*, southern England – the late 11<sup>th</sup> c. (Suchodolski 1962, p. 126; Walicki 1971, pp. 258, 533, fig. 786; Nicolle 1999, pp. 22, 51–54, fig. 1, 97, 98:d; *The Bayeux...* 2004, pl. 8; Świechowski 2006, p. 287).<sup>3</sup>

Most of them are, however, noticeable in iconography of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup>

century, e. g. in: *David and Goliath* from a German manuscript – 1148; the *Gebhard Bible*, Hungary or Germany – the mid-12<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Release of St. Peter* scene from the *Płock Door* – 1152–1154; *Three Marys at the Grave* and the *Capture of Christ* from the *Evangelistarium*, Kruszwica, Poland – 1160–1170; a carved relief from the *Porta Romana*, Lombardy – 1167; the Royal Chalice from Trzemeszno, Poland – 1180; Scene X from the Gniezno Door – the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 12<sup>th</sup> c.; The Baldishol Tapestry, Norway – c. 1200; coins of Henryk I the Bearded, Duke of Silesia – c. 1200; Knights in quest of the Holy Grail from the painted frieze of knights, the Skibet Church, Denmark, c. 1200; seals of Leszek the White, Duke of Sandomierz and Duke of Poland – 1210 and 1229 (*Drzwi Gnieźnieńskie...* 1956, p. 48; Walicki 1971, pp. 180, 549, 638, 648, fig. 851, 1144, 1175; Kajzer 1976, p. 139, fig. 27:a, cat Nos. 3 and 4; Wawrzonowska 1976, p. 22, pl. I:13–14; Poppe 1983, pp. 31, 47; Dobrzeniecki 1991; *From Viking...* 1992, pp. 195, 214, fig. 5, 7; Nicolle 1999, pp. 174, 219–220, 313, 345, fig. 435, 578, 581:d,k, 835:a-h, 953; Augustyniak 2000, pp. 29, 83, 97; Świechowski 2006, pp. 199–325, 334).<sup>4</sup>

As it was demonstrated above, kite-shaped shields may have appeared in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century but their occurrence was mostly visible in the 11<sup>th</sup> and especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century this type of shield commenced to disappear.

Offensive weapons of Judas consist of a spear (Figs. 6–8) and a sword (Fig. 9). The spear is held in the right hand of the hero. We can see the whole construction of the weapon. It has a massive spearhead in the shape of a cone with a circular base (Fig. 7). The author does not know any similar spearheads in the archaeological material. Iconography is not

<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it is worth to note that kite-shaped shields were also represented in other early medieval iconographic sources dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, e. g., *Herod's Guards* from the *Golden Gospel of Echternach*, Lower Lorraine – c. 1040; *Pharaoh's army* from the *Exultet Roll* from Monte Cassino, Italy – 1075; *St Michael*, a carved relief from the tympanum of Minster, Southwell, England – the 11<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Farfa Bible*, Catalonia, Spain – the 11<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Roda Bible*, Catalonia, Spain – the 11<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse* – the late 11<sup>th</sup> c.; *The Atlantic Bible*, southern France – the late 11<sup>th</sup> c.; carved capitals in the Church of Ste Foy, Conques, France – 1087–1119; carved capitals from the church in St Nectaire, France – the late 11<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Martyrdom of St Felix of Aquileia*, a decorated front of a portable metal altar, Abdinghof, Germany – c. 1100 (Nicolle 1999, pp. 51, 113–114, 128–129, 147, 169, 170, 255, fig. 96, 286, 288–289, 321–322, 363, 416, 421, 678).

<sup>4</sup> Other iconographic sources shown kite-shaped shields dated to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century are: *Herod's guards*, wall-paintings from the Church of St Botolph, Hardham, England – 1100–1110, the ivory cover of the *Queen Melisende's Psalter*, Palestine – the early 12<sup>th</sup> c.; *Siege of a city* from carved reliefs from the Church of St. Nicola, Italy – the early 12<sup>th</sup> c.; a fragment of a copper-alloy pyx, England – the early 12<sup>th</sup> c.; the Reliquary of Children of St Sigismund, the Abbey of St Maurice, Valais, Switzerland – c. 1130; carved reliefs from the Abbey church, Andlau, France – c. 1130–1140; carved capitals from the Cathedral in Parma, Italy – 1150–1170; *Virtues* from the Troyes Casket, England (?) – 1170; a stained glass window from the Cathedral in Canterbury, England – the late 12<sup>th</sup> c.; a carved doorway from San Miguel de Uncastillo, Spain – the 12<sup>th</sup> c.; the *Bible of King Sancho*, Navarre, Spain – 1197; the *Book of Matins* from Santo Domingo de Silos, Spain – the 12<sup>th</sup> c. (Nicolle 1999, pp. 60, 62–63, 66, 130, 133, 153, 172, 209, 220, 277, 256, fig. 127, 133, 137b, 149:c, 326:b, 337:c, 386:a-b, 429c, 560, 581:d,k, 680:a-c,l, 729).

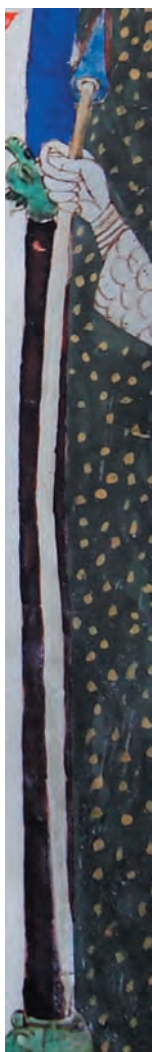


Fig. 6. *The Płock Bible*. Judas' spear  
(Photo: Diocesan Museum in Płock)



Fig. 7. *The Płock Bible*. Massive spearhead in the shape  
of a cone (Photo: Diocesan Museum in Płock)



Fig. 8. *The Płock Bible*. Ferrule  
of Judas' spears (Photo:  
Diocesan Museum in Płock)



Fig. 9. *The Płock Bible*. Scabbard finished  
with a yellow chape (photo: Diocesan  
Museum in Płock)

of much help in this case, either. Only three similar depictions of spearheads were identified. They came from: the *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, Spain – 1091–1109; the *Arca Santa*; a decorated metal plaque from Asturia, Spain – 1175; a carved sarcophagus in the Monastery of Nuestra Señora de Irache, Estella, Spain – the late 12<sup>th</sup> – the early 13<sup>th</sup> c. (Nicole 1999, pp. 146–148, 152, fig. 360h, k, 665c, 680g). In the light of such a small number of analogies we can also regard the spearhead from *The Płock Bible* as a figment of the artist.

The spearhead is mounted on the top of a long wooden shaft, which is of the same size as Judas. On the other end of the shaft there is a ferrule (Fig. 8). Metal ferrules of spears are well represented in Polish archaeological sources. They were discovered i. a. in: Lake Lednica (3 specimens), Strzeszewo-Kuliski, Dziekanowice, Młodzikowo, Pokrzywnica Wielka and Ostrów Lednicki. They are dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Tokarski 2000, p. 87, Plate VII:7, 8; Górecki 2001, p. 136; Rutkowski 1906, p. 40;

Wrzesiński 1989, p. 126; Leciejewicz, Łosiński 1960, p. 111; Rauhut, Długopolska 1971, p. 322; Wrzosek 1961, p. 259). Some examples are also known from iconography, e.g.: the *Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, Spain – 1091–1109; the *Homilies from Santo Domingo de Silos*, Spain, the 11<sup>th</sup> c., *Crucifixion* from the *Exultet Roll*, Benevento, Italy – the 12<sup>th</sup> c. (Nicolle 1999, pp. 146–147, 263, fig. 360e–h, l, 362, 699e). As it can be seen, the depiction of metal ferrules of spears in the 12<sup>th</sup> c. is confirmed by both archaeological and iconographical sources.

The sword is not completely visible (Fig. 9). Its hilt is beneath the shield and its blade is inside the scabbard. The only thing we can say is that the blade is quite broad. The scabbard is painted brown which can suggest that this element was made of or covered with leather. The end of the scabbard is finished with a yellow chape. Its colour may mean that this element was cast of copper alloy. Early medieval scabbards were made mostly of organic materials and they usually did not survive until present. Sometimes scab-

bards ended with metal chapes (Nadolski 1954, p. 34; Janowski, Kurasiński 2009, p. 83–84). The main function of the scabbard was to protect the sword blade against corrosion and other damages (*Ibid.*, p. 74). Scabbard-chapes made of copper alloys are well represented in archaeological materials. Over a few hundreds of them dated to between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century were found in Central, Northern and Eastern Europe. Some examples were also noted in southern parts of Europe (*Ibid.*, p. 84). Very few scabbard-chapes are known from the iconography of the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> century (*Ibidem*, p. 85). Just a few of them look similar to the one depicted in *The Plock Bible*. They are known from: the *Army of Hai* in the *Maciejowski Bible*, Paris, France – c. 1250; an ivory jewellery case from Köln, Lower Lorraine – the late 12<sup>th</sup> c.; ivory chessmen, southern Italy or Sicily – the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (Nicolle 1999, pp. 35, 174, 251, fig. 49g, 433b, 667b). Both archaeological and iconographical analogies confirm the existence of similar

chapes in the 12<sup>th</sup> c. It is worth saying that chapes which are similar to that on Judas' scabbard were also dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> c. by A. Geibig (Geibig 1991, p. 109, fig. 29:20).

As we can see, the miniature with Judas Maccabeus offers an interesting set of arms and armour. But what are the conclusions of this analysis? The first idea which comes to mind is that we have another source which contributes to our knowledge about early medieval arms and armour. It is particularly valuable, as we do not have many preserved early medieval armours, helmets and shields. Of course, in some cases, such as the spearhead, it was hard to classify it and we must be aware of possible stylistic conventions and invention of the artist. Offered analogies demonstrate that both defensive and offensive weapons correspond to those used in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This means that we can successfully use the miniature from *The Plock Bible* as a comparative material in studies of arms and armour from this period.

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