# CISTERCIAN LITURGY AND DAILY PRACTICE THROUGH THE MANUSCRIPTS OF ALCOBAÇA. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS FROM THREE SAMPLE RITUALS\*

### CATARINA FERNANDES BARREIRA\*\*

**Resumo:** Muito recentemente, a liturgia medieval tem atraído a atenção dos investigadores, como uma área que encerra um grande potencial de informações variadas, nomeadamente no que concerne a informações históricas. No caso da liturgia cisterciense e devido à preocupação da Ordem de Cister pela uniformidade de práticas, a investigação parte dos códices litúrgicos que chegaram até nós, mas também tem em conta a legislação saídas dos Capítulos Gerais, uma reunião anual dos abades que tinha lugar em Cîteaux desde a primeira metade do século XII.

Este artigo analisa alguns dos códices litúrgicos e códices de apoio à liturgia que tiveram a sua origem no scriptorium do Mosteiro de Alcobaça, num leque diversificado de fontes que ligam os textos e as orações à performance. O grande objectivo é, através desta análise, mostrar que é possível recuperar, ainda que parcialmente, percursos e orações e usar estas fontes para estudar e contextualizar a identidade litúrgica deste mosteiro cisterciense.

Palavras-chave: Códices litúrgicos; Mosteiro de Alcobaça; Performance litúrgica.

**Abstract:** In recent decades the medieval liturgy has attracted growing scholarly attention as an area with great potential for yielding a wealth of information at a number of levels of historical research. Where the Cistercian liturgy is concerned, due to a preoccupation with uniformity of practice across the Order, investigation not only relies on an analysis of the surviving manuscripts but also on scrutiny of the legislation produced by the Cistercian General Chapter which was convened annually from the first half of the twelfth century.

This paper examines some liturgical books, and books supplementary to the liturgy, which survive from the library of the Monastery of Alcobaça, comprising different sources that connect the text with performance. The main goal is, through an analysis of different liturgical books, to recover (partially) gestures, performances, and prayers and use these sources to study and contextualise the liturgical identity of this Cistercian Monastery.

**Keywords:** Liturgical codices; Monastery of Alcobaça; Liturgical performance.

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<sup>\*</sup> For a more lengthy and exhaustive consideration of the themes considered herein, see BARREIRA, Catarina Fernandes (2019) *Investigating liturgical practice and ritualized circulation in the monastery of Alcobaça. A preliminary view from the manuscripts.* «Cîteaux — Commentarii cistercienses». 70:3-4, 301-326 (forthcoming, 2021).

\*\* Instituto de Estudos Medievais; NOVA FCSH; CEHR UCP. Email: cbarreira@fcsh.unl.pt.

Research fellow in the Institute for Medieval Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University of Lisbon. This study was funded by the Portuguese Science Foundation through a research project Cistercian Horizons. Studying and Characterising a Medieval Scriptorium and its Production: Alcobaça, dialogues between local identities and liturgical uniformity (PTDC/ART-HIS/29522/2017) and also by national funds through the FCT — Fundação para a

In recent decades the medieval liturgy has attracted growing scholarly attention as an area with great potential for yielding a wealth of information at a number of levels of historical research<sup>1</sup>. As Carol Symes states «the study of medieval liturgy is largely dependent on surviving manuscripts sources»<sup>2</sup> and, when crossed with the space where those ceremonies occurred (for example, the monastic precinct) this can provide us more evidence for the liturgical practice. Liturgical manuscripts are an extraordinary source to history because they functioned like repositories of memory for the communities that produced, read, and annotated them, with manuscripts often containing notes about how a particular commemoration was celebrated, or what changed in its celebration, specific practices, and cults resulted from the presence of relics, but also notes of events considered significant for the monastery, e.g., reports of earthquakes, floods or other unusual phenomena<sup>3</sup>.

In short, it may be observed without fear of overstatement that liturgical and related manuscripts are among the most prolific historical sources produced in the monastic environment. Perhaps most conspicuously, their quality as «living» testaments of day-to-day liturgical celebration imbues many with significant potential for revealing the contours of ritual change as various ceremonial elements evolved over the centuries<sup>4</sup>.

Where the Cistercian liturgy is concerned, due to a preoccupation (or an obsession) with uniformity of practice across the Order, investigation not only relies on analysis of the surviving manuscripts but also on scrutiny of the legislation produced by the Cistercian General Chapter<sup>5</sup>. Held annually in Cîteaux since the first quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the General Chapter created various guidelines for observance by all the Cistercian houses, as well as sanctions to be imposed on abbots and members of the community who did not comply with the Cistercian norms<sup>6</sup>. It was «a true supra-national assembly»<sup>7</sup> which implied the presence of the abbots of all Cistercian monasteries (or their representatives). From the beginning, attendance at the General Chapter was obligatory, apart from the reasons of serious illness. Transgressions, conflicts, financial mismanagement, and exterior relations, were some of the main issues debated at the General Chapter. From these annual meetings held in September written texts ensued — the *Statuta Capitulorum*<sup>8</sup> — that provide a wealth of evidence. They contain a variety of information about the monasteries and the norms that were implemented.

The Monastery of Alcobaça was founded by Clairvaux around 1153<sup>9</sup>. As was common with Cistercian houses, it's probably that the manuscripts necessary for the functioning of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> HUGHES, 1982; VOGEL, 1986; PALAZZO, 1998; GITTOS, HAMILTON, 2016; BERGER, SPINKS, 2016.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> SYMES, 2016: 239.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> BARREIRA, FARELO, 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> BARREIRA, 2021 (in press).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> LEKAY, 1978: 4-29; AUBERGER, 1986; FALMAGNE, 2000: 195-222; McGUIRE, 2012: 87-100; FALMAGNE, STUTZ-MANN, TURCAN-VERKERK, 2018: 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> WADDELL, ed., 2002.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> MARQUES, 2016: 140.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> CANIVEZ, 1933-1935: vols. I, II e III.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> GOMES, 2000: 27-72.

monastic life, in the first years of the community, would have been supplied by the mother abbey or borrowed by mother abbey to be copied, but unfortunately, they did not survive. The Monastery's *scriptorium* likely started production during the last ten to fifteen years of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the *scriptorium* remained active until at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>. Despite some losses, when compared to other Cistercian libraries, Alcobaça's library is one of the most impressive that survived to the present day and certainly one of the most important monastic collections in Europe. It holds around 467<sup>11</sup> codices, mostly produced in the abbey's *scriptorium* between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

So, this article examines some liturgical books, and books pertaining to the liturgy<sup>12</sup>, which survive from the library of the Cistercian Monastery of Alcobaça between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, comprising different sources that connect texts with performance (see Table 1):

- 1. *Breviaries* and *Missals*, among other liturgical books, containing almost all of the texts, prayers and formulas necessary for the daily liturgical practice, this is, for the commemoration of the divine office and the mass.
- 2. Liturgical books such as *Processionals, Rituals* (and composite books like *Collectar-rituals*), containing texts, prayers and formulas, but also clues/indications as to what to do, where and when to do it<sup>13</sup>.
- 3. Included in this category are *Usages*, in this case the fifteenth-century Portuguese translation of the *Ecclesiastica Officia*<sup>14</sup> produced at Alcobaça, a text forming part of the *Liber Usuum*<sup>15</sup> and *Ordinaries of the Divine Office*, carefully describing the liturgical feasts, setting rules, usages and proceedings in the commemorations<sup>16</sup>.

Under this approach, inquiry pivots on three essential questions: can performances and gestures can be (partially) recovered and reconstructed through analysis of these different sources? Can they be placed in the monastic precinct? And, is it possible to use these sources to study (local) liturgical identity? To answer this, this article will focus on three examples.

A brief note to highlight that most of these codices have additions, which contain very important information not only related to the long-time of use of the books but also in terms of their cultural significance for this Cistercian community through centuries<sup>17</sup>. The additions also testify the book circulation between male and female monasteries<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> BARREIRA, 2017b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> NASCIMENTO, 2018: 283-284; BARREIRA, 2017c: 251.

<sup>12</sup> PALAZZO, 1998: 174.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> BARREIRA, 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 47-48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> BARREIRA, 2016.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> BARREIRA, 2018b: 189-213.

<sup>18</sup> BARREIRA, 2018b: 189-213.

**Table 1.** List of manuscripts used in this article

Ref.	Type of manuscript	Date	
BNP. Alc. 252	Missal	c. 13	
BNP. Alc. 255	Missal	c. 13	
BNP. Alc. 26 <sup>1</sup>	Missal	1st quarter of the 14	
BNP. Alc. 208	Usages (portuguese)	1415	
BNP. Alc. 278	Usages (portuguese)	1444	
BNP. Alc. 62 <sup>2</sup>	Ordinary of the Divine Office (portuguese)	1475	
BNP. Alc. 54 <sup>3</sup>	Breviary	end c.13/early c.14	
BNP. Alc. 8	Breviary	end c.13	
BNP. Alc. 29	Breviary	c.14	
BNP. Alc. 66 <sup>4</sup>	Breviary	mid c.14	
BNP. Alc. 83	Breviary	c.16	
BNP. Alc. 166 <sup>5</sup>	Collectar-ritual	1185-1191	
brary University of Coimbra. Ms. 893 <sup>6</sup>	Collectar-ritual	c.13	
BNP. Alc. 67	Collectar-ritual	1442	
Monastery of Salzedas <sup>7</sup>	Ritual de Salzedas	end c.15/early c.16	
BNP. Cod. 62078	Processional	c.15	

<sup>1.</sup> PEIXEIRO, 1986; 1991: 208-209; 2007: 121. See also: BARREIRA, 2017a: 97. 2. BARREIRA, 2015: 131-152; 2016: 329-341.

The first tries to clarify how was celebrated a twelve-lesson feast that evolved a procession in Alcobaça — Candlemas or the Purification of the Virgin<sup>19</sup>, a feast already studied in detail<sup>20</sup>. This procession was performed in the cloistral space, with stational stops at specific locations. Though it is impossible to know exactly what happened during this festive day, a good deal of information can be gathered through close analysis of the available manuscripts: in *Breviaries* monks found the necessary texts, formulas, and prayers for the daily's office of the Purification of the Virgin. In *Missals* the specific collects and formulas for the Purification of the Virgin mass. For the procession, Alcobaça's *Processionals* contained the texts, the antiphons and responsories and also clues as to what to do, where, and when to do it. Usually, it was necessary

<sup>3.</sup> BARREIRA et al., 2016: 252-282. 4. BARREIRA, 2017c: 249-276. 5. BARREIRA, 2017b: 33-62. 6. GOMES, 2013: 430.

<sup>7.</sup> RÊPAS, BARREIRA, 2016: 211-236; BARREIRA, RÊPAS, 2017: 343-354. 8. BRAGANÇA, ed., 1984; BARREIRA, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> CANIVEZ, 1934: II, 219; 1935: III, 267, 277, 278, 351, 352.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> BARREIRA, 2018a.

to consult the Books of Usages and the Ordinaries of the Divine Office, because these books carefully described the liturgical feasts, setting rules, usages and proceedings in the commemorations. The text with the formula for the blessing of the Candles that will be used during procession, in Alcobaça's it was copied in one Collectar (Alc. 67). So, concerning the celebration of this feast by the monks, after Matins or Vigils, at two o'clock (with three nocturnes, in a total of twelve lessons extracted from the Alcobaça's Lectionaries), follows the hour of Lauds and then Prime, with all the short readings and collects specific to this celebration. Then, the assembly chapter in the Chapter House, that began with the reading of the Martyrology, some prayers, and a passage of the Rule of Saint Benedict, and then choir, again, to celebrate Terce<sup>21</sup>. All the monks' liturgical circulation was between the dormitory, the church, and the cloister. Before the conventual mass<sup>22</sup>, the abbot blesses the candles which have been placed in the presbytery by the sacristan and sprinkles holy water over them. The singer then presents the abbot with a lit candle and begins the antiphon Lumemn ad revelationem. Following the recitation of the antiphon and the versicle Nunc Dimittis, candles were distributed according to rank among the monks, novices, lay brothers, and familiares and also to guests of the monastery<sup>23</sup>.

The procession would then begin, the deacon carrying the cross, the sub-deacon the holy water. From the church, the procession passed through the cloister as far as the Chapter House in the east wing and the first *statio* was next to the Chapter House<sup>24</sup>, then went to the door of the refectory in the north gallery for the second liturgical stop. The third *statio* was reached by the monks passing along the two cloistral aisles, to the west, and to the south until they met at the door accessing the church in the south wing where should be celebrated the third *statio*. The procession then went back into the church where, arriving to the presbytery, participants returned the candles to the abbot and kissed his hands<sup>25</sup>.

The procession took place on  $2^{nd}$  February usually at about 9:00 am in the cold of the morning, the monks filing through the cloister, praying as they walked, each holding a candle, faces partially illuminated in the pale glow — a row of white habits led by an abbot and a cross. As Carolyn Malone has highlighted,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> NASCIMENTO, 2018: 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> WELCH, 2001: 58.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 142 and following.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Following *Processional*, Cod. 6207, the first station was before the Chapter House, but according to the *Ecclesiastica Officia*, the first station should be at the entrance to the dormitory. This divergence was a liturgical adaptation to the available spaces and accesses. Alcobaça's dormitory originally had only one access: from the night stairs in the north transept (by the church). In the first half of the sixteenth century, the medieval sacristy was demolished in order to build a staircase from the cloister; this access was replaced by the current one during the restoration works of 1930-1940 in BARREIRA, 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 142.

the dramatic visual effect, along with the sound of the chant, the smell of the incense and the tactile warmth of the candles would have created a synergy of sensations enhancing their spiritual experience of Christ as the new and eternal light<sup>26</sup>.

Concerning the second example, it was chosen the performance of Alcobaça's community in the «rites for the dying and for the dead», an expression of Frederick Paxton<sup>27</sup>.

In cases of serious illness or the death of a community member, whether abbot, monk, novice, lay brother, or familiar, a series of ritualised processes were triggered whereby the sick or the deceased would be tended and accompanied. Details of these procedures are contained in these two ordines — *Ordo ad inungendum infirmum*<sup>28</sup> and the *Ordo ad inhumandum fratrem mortuum*<sup>29</sup> which respectively contain instructions, formulas, and prayers for giving assistance in a monk's last moments, and for the inevitable obsequies to follow. Considerable information concerning ritualised perambulations for the accompaniment of the sick and the dead are also to be found among the produce of the Alcobaça *scriptorium*, especially the series of *Collectars* and *Breviaries* Alc. 166, ms. 893 and Alc. 67; Alc. 29, Alc. 54 and Alc. 66 and in the *Ritual de Salzedas* (Table 1) which together span a period from the late 12<sup>th</sup> to the early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, with further information being contained in the *Ecclesiastica Officia/Book of Usages* (in Latin and Portuguese).

One can ask, once more, if these performances and gestures can be (partially) recovered and reconstructed through analysis of these different sources? Both rituals imply actions performed by the abbot and the community take place in a series of specific spaces with particular formulas being applied at each location. According to the first which specified the ritual for anointing the sick when death was imminent, the abbot was prepared with the aid of the sacristan. The cantor handed the abbot the Collectar and the brothers carried the cross, the light, the thurible, and the holy water. A bell or a ratchet (tabula) was sounded to call the community to assemble in the choir where psalms were sung before all proceeded to the infirmary where they surrounded the moribund monk who made confession (Confiteor...). After receiving absolution from the abbot, the sick monk kissed the cross, following which a series of prayers were said before the community left the infirmary. According to Ecclesiastica Officia «as the moment of death approached, the monk would be laid upon the floor on a sackcloth extended over a bed of ashes in the shape of a cross<sup>30</sup>. Summoned by the ratchet, the community once again gathered around the dying brother to recite the Credo and the Litany of the Saints. If death had not yet occurred, the seven Penitential Psalms were recited and four monks were delegated to remain with the dying while the cross and the holy water were left in the church in readiness for the reception of the body.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> MALONE, 2016: 221.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> PAXTON, 2016: 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> WELCH, 2001: 226; CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 266 and following.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> CANIVEZ, 1933: I, 97, 105 and following.

<sup>30</sup> MATTOSO, 2001: 66; CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 269.

Death and burial of a Cistercian brother was governed by the Ordo ad inhumandum fratrem mortuum<sup>31</sup>. According to the prescribed ritual, brethren were to assemble swiftly on the sound of the ratchet to attend upon the dying in their last moments of life so that death could occur in the presence of the whole community. Following death, the deceased was prepared, washed, dressed, and sprinkled with holy water and, following a series of prayers, was carried to the church in a hierarchical procession, headed by the abbot, now dressed in his stole and carrying his crosier, followed by the monks with the lay brothers bringing up the rear. Once the body had been placed in the choir (or elsewhere) the abbot celebrated the office of the dead and the mass in the presence of the deceased. The body was abundantly incensed, the thurifer positioning himself by the abbot's side ready to pass him the incense as necessary, which would have been usually after each collect. Next, following the recitation of prayers and formulas taken from the Collectar, the community is once again organised in procession which, with the abbot leading, monks then novices following, accompanies the deceased, who is carried by four or more monks, ad tumulum. Once arrived at the burial site, again the body was incensed, as was also the grave, before the deceased was lowered into the ground while the Temeritatis quidem was intoned, followed by the seven Penitential Psalms. Next, the community was again organised in procession but this time in reverse hierarchical order, being led by the lay brothers, followed by the novices, then monks, etc., whilst the Requiem aeternam was sung as the community returned to the church where the procession ended in the choir. The text of the Ordo ad inhumandum fratrum mortuum continued in use in Alcobaça until the 18th century, as can be seen from *Collectars* copied by the *scriptorium* at that time.

The third and last example concerns the commemorations for the deceased, how where they practiced in Alcobaça. Processions related to commemorations for the dead in the Cistercian world were celebrated with collective prayers for the deceased in honour of abbots, bishops, monks, and *familiares* of the Order, etc., and came to form an established part of the liturgy from a very early stage<sup>32</sup>.

For each anniversary, specific collects were envisaged with others to be added in the case of the deceased being present. Collects were further tailored according to the rank of a deceased, e.g., abbot, bishop, or monk<sup>33</sup>. Provision was also made for commemoration of the founders of a particular house which, in the case of Alcobaça, was King D. Afonso Henriques.

These commemorations for the dead appear in a group of manuscripts from Alcobaça, usually following the two sacraments mentioned above — the anointing the sick and the rite for death and burial. Besides copied in the *Collectars* Alc. 166, ms. 893 and Alc. 67, was also copied in the following *Breviaries* Alc. 8, Alc. 54 and Alc. 83, in *Psalters* Alc. 140, Alc. 192 and Alc. 193. Further collects are contained in the so-called *Ritual de Salzedas*. Liturgical instructions for the performance of the commemorations are also mentioned in a *Book of* 

<sup>31</sup> CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 269.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> CHOISSELET, VERNET, 1989: 152-155, 269.

<sup>33</sup> WELCH, 2001: 237.

*Usages* and the *Ordinaries of the Divine Office*. These commemorations were celebrated with a procession, but neither manuscript specifies where the locations where the procession should stop for the recitation of the corresponding textual elements (a responsory, a psalm, and a collect). The stations of the procession are, however, documented in two manuscripts of Alcobaça dating to the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the *Ritual de Salzedas*<sup>34</sup> which ends with a set of collects *pro defunctis* and includes both the prayers and the stations of the procession, and the *Ordinary of the Divine Office* were the procession taking place within the precinct of the Monastery is described as follows:

After mass, you shall perform for each anniversary a procession along four stations; in the first always say Inclina et Quaesumus domine, and Per Christum dominum nostrum, for the kings and queens who lie in the Chapel of Kings; in the remaining three stations we say the collect [pertaining] to the [specific] anniversary and in the last [station] the Ffidelium Deus, Per dominum nostrum, dominus vobiscum, Requiescant is added<sup>35</sup>.

The first *statio* on the itinerary of these processions was at the Chapel of the Kings in the galilee (a species of narthex), located at the entrance to the church. The Chapel today no longer existing, which was the location of the first *statio* for the procession, was of considerable size because of the number of tombs it housed — King Afonso II and Urraca, his wife, King Afonso III, and Beatriz and royal children, Sancha, Fernando, and Vicente. The procession then travelled through the church along the central nave, passing through the monks' choir (comprising 83 stalls occupying the first columns in front of the main altar) up to the second *statio* beyond the monks' choir at the main altar. Next, the monks headed for the cloister and the third *statio* which was in front of the Chapter House. The final *statio* was at the cemetery of the lay brothers which was located on the opposite gallery of the cloister<sup>36</sup>.

Processions for the commemoration of the dead were celebrated in this way from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, sometime between 1510 and 1519, Abbot D. Jorge de Melo had the Chapel of the Kings dismantled and the royal tombs moved to the transept thus raising the question as to the location of the starting point for these processions thereafter<sup>37</sup>.

To conclude, and in a very brief way, some of the performances, gestures, and prayers were (partially) recovered and reconstructed through the analysis of Alcobaça's liturgical

<sup>34</sup> RÊPAS, BARREIRA, 2016; BARREIRA, RÊPAS, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> BNP. Alc. 62, folio 177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> According *Definições* of 1593: «The religious are buried into the cloistral aisles (*alas*) of the chapter and collation, and the conversos into that of the gatehouse».

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> GOMES, 2006: 383. Our earliest information in this respect is from the eighteenth century, contained in two manuscripts Alc. 105 and Alc. 107, which indicate substantial procedural changes. The first station has now moved to the presbytery, with the second station in the body of the church from where, following the recitation of prayers, the monks progress through the door leading to the cloister. Once in the cloister, the third station is celebrated, the precise location presently remaining unknown since it is left unspecified in the texts. The fourth station is in the cloister of the lay brothers.

manuscripts — Breviaries, Missals, Collectars, Rituals, Processionals and also with the help of manuscripts pertaining liturgy like the Books of Usages and Ordinaries of the Divine Office. It was also placed some of these rituals and performances in the monastic precinct, like Candlemas procession, the anointing of the sick and the funerals, and also the processions concerning the commemoration of the deceased that Cistercian order celebrated through the liturgical year. This was only possible because the number and the type of surviving manuscripts constitute a diversified sample that enriches the perspective and links it with the context, the community, and the space of the monastery. So, some of the liturgical identity of Alcobaça's was recovered, studied, and placed in time and space. The wealth of the monastery's surviving manuscripts through their diversity of type and chronology, spanning more than six centuries, holds great potential for the analysis of the mechanics of the maintenance and development of medieval liturgical practices, in some cases even perhaps enabling (tentative) reconstruction.

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