

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS IN MAYBRAT: A PAPUAN LANGUAGE

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Abstrak

Bahasa Maybrat adalah suatu bahasa di daerah Kepala Burung Pulau New Guinea. Dalam kajian linguistik, bahasa Maybrat termasuk dalam West Papuan Phylum (Filum Bahasa Papua Barat). Mengacu pada tipologi susunan kata, bahasa tersebut mengikuti pola SVO. Salah satu fenomena menarik dari bahasa ini adalah bentuk kata ganti kepemilikan/posesiva. Terdapat dua bentuk posesiva: alienable form dan inalienable form. Posesiva alienable adalah ro- dan a-, sedangkan posesiva inalienable adalah t- untuk orang pertama tunggal; n- untuk orang kedua tunggal, orang pertama jamak, dan orang kedua jamak; y- untuk orang ketiga tunggal laki-laki; dan m- untuk orang ketiga tunggal perempuan dan orang ketiga jamak. Semua posesiva ini secara morfologi tergolong dalam bentuk prefix (awalan). Data bahasa ini dianalisis dengan menggunakan kajian morfo-sintaksis dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif.

Abstract

Maybrat is a language in The Bird's Head of The New Guinea Island. Linguistically, Maybrat is classified into West Papuan Phylum. It shows SVO word order. One interesting phenomenon of this language is its possessive pronoun. There are two forms of possessive pronouns: alienable form and inalienable form. The alienable possessive pronouns of Maybrat are ro- and a-, while the inalienable possessive pronouns are t- refers to the first person singular, n- refers to the second person singular, the first person plural, and the second person plural, y- refers to the third person singular (masculine), and m- refers to the third person singular (feminine) and the third person plural. Morphologically, all of these possessives are categorized into prefix. Furthermore, the data analyzed by using the morfo-syntax analysis and the descriptive method.

Kata-kata Kunci: Bahasa Maybrat, Sudut Pandang Morfo-sintaksis, Kata Ganti Kepemilikan

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Maybrat is one of the Papuan languages of West Papuan Phylum found in the Bird's Head of New Guinea Island, in which it is spoken in the central area which is also called as Maybrat (Dol, 1999: 1). Linguistically, Maybrat borders to its neighbors: *Abun* and *Karon Dori* to the north, *Moskona*, *Arandai*, *Kaburi*, *Kaib* and *Konda* to the south, *Meyah* and *Mpur* to the east, and the west part are *Moraid* and *Tehit*.

The word Maybrat actually comes from the language *Brat*, in which this term is used to address a small hill near Semetu village (Koentjaraningrat & Bachtiar, 1963); while Dol (1999: 6) argues that the word Maybrat is divided into two words, *mai* meaning sound, and *brat* referring to the variety of sound or language used. Maybrat is also a term to address the people speaking the language. According to Grimes (1948), besides *Maybrat*, people outside them also call the language in other two different terms: *Ayamaru* or *Brat*.¹ However, the native people address themselves as *Ayamaru* as same as their lake's name. It derives from *aya* means water, and *maru* means lake.

In 1987, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) [reports](#) that there are about 20,000 or more speakers who speak the language.² Grimes (1988: 495) then states that people speaking the language live in the west and south of Ayamaru Lake, with approximately 40 villages in which there are about 50 % until 60 % of older people do not know Indonesian. According to Brown and Brown (1989), there are approximately 17,000 speakers living in three districts of Sorong regency of Papua; they are *Ayamaru*, *Aifat*, and *Aitinyo*.³ However, in 1999, Dol in page 7 quotes Schoorl as stating that Maybrat language is spoken in *Ayfat*, *Ayamaru*, *Kebar* and *Sausapor*.⁴ In these last two places, it is the minor language as the native languages of them are different.

¹ is taken from <<http://www.papuaweb.org/bib/hays/loc/MAIBRAT.pdf>>

² is retrieved from <http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=AYZ>

³ is retrived from <www.papuaweb.org/bib/hays/loc/MAIBRAT.pdf>

⁴ Dol mentions Sausapor as one of villages using Maybrat language, but based on my knowledge it is Abun village consisting of Abun and Biak people (see *Map 1*)

Furthermore, because of the wide range of the area, it is clear that there are possibly some varieties or dialects of the language. Dialect is the varieties in a language used in several different areas of which the people still can understand the variation of speech (Payne, 1997: 18). Elmberg (quoted by Voorhoeve, 1975) divides this language into 9 dialects: *Brat, Tuf, Maru, Asmawn, Yak, Marey, Fayok, Imien,* and *Sawiet*;⁵ while SIL (1987) classifies this language into five dialects: *Maisawiet, Maiyah, Maimaka, Maite,* and *Maisefa*. By no means of avoiding the ideas from some linguists, the native people divide the language into six dialects classified from the areas in which they are used: (1) *Mayhapeh* in *Ayawasi, Kokas, Mosun, Konya,* and *Kumurkek*, (2) *Mayasmaun* in *Ayata, Kamat,* and *Aisa*, (3) *Karon* in *Senopi,* and *Fef*, (4) *Maymare* in *Suswa,* and *Sire*, (5) *Maymaru* in *Ayamaru,* and (6) *Mayte* in *Aytinyo,* and *Fuoh* (Dol, 1999: 8). Though they are separated, they basically come from the same ancestor with only a few differences in the dialect itself.

Likewise, Maybrat shows a relation to languages which are close to it. In 1987, SIL describes that Maybrat has subject-verb-object (SVO) word order, with heavy verb serialization and 10 % of lexical similarities to *Tehit, Mpur, Abun* languages; while Voorhoeve says that the language shares 80 % cognates with *Karon Dori* language.⁶

As a Papuan language classified as West Papuan Phylum, Maybrat language seems to have many similarities in the characters to the Non-Austronesian languages found in *North Halmahera, Timor, Kisar, Alor* and *Pantar* which had been classified by linguists such as Robide van der Aa. W. Schmidt in 1900s, van der Veen in 1915, and Cowan in 1958 (quoted by Sawaki, 2005: 35-36). Moreover, Donohue (2002) states that Bird's Head languages in the New Guinea island have same characteristics to those in *North Halmahera, Timor, Kisar, Alor* and *Pantar*. He says that they have common forms in pronouns which are various: free and bound morphemes (affixes).⁷

Concerning about the characteristics, Maybrat language has some interesting phenomena in its pronouns functioning as subject, agent, or possession. It operates

⁵ is taken from <www.papuaweb.org/bib/hays/loc/MAIBRAT.pdf>

⁶ is retrieved from <www.papuaweb.org/dlib/bk/pl/C38/02-10-2.pdf>

⁷ is taken from <<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellmd/Saweru/YapenWPP.pdf>>

gender class distinction in the pronouns of which masculine and feminine are separated in the third person singular. The characteristics of them are given as follows: (1) independent pronouns functioning as subject and object, (2) dependent pronouns: prefix to the verb stem indicating the subject/agent, prefix to the adjective functioning as subject, and prefix to noun functioning as possessor.

In doing the study, I choose *Ayamaru* district as the target area in collecting the possessive pronouns data based on the people's dialect; it is *Maymaru* dialect or *Ayamaru* dialect. The reason to choose the dialect is because in my hometown, there are lots of *Ayamaru* people. I usually get in touch with them. The relationship that we build together motivates me to write about their dialect. Moreover, possessive pronouns become my interest as their constructions are unique. To state belonging, a speaker will only change one morpheme as prefix joint together with the noun to indicate the possessor.

1.2 Problem

Problem that is discussed in this paper is:

- What are the form, function, and meaning of possessive pronouns in Maybrat language specifically to the dialect of *Ayamaru* people?

1.3 Objectives

The paper aims at describing the form, function, and meaning of possessive pronouns in Maybrat language, particularly to *Ayamaru* dialect. This means that I am focusing on the description of possessive pronouns in the language linguistically. Moreover, as a person who likes to deal with linguistic field, I try to compose a written document of Maybrat language particularly to the possessive pronouns. In other words, it is done to provide one unique phenomenon on the language for the readers and also a supporting data for the linguistic field in Papua. Another objective is to compose a written text describing about Maybrat Possessive Pronouns to the next generation.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Definition of Pronoun

Crystal (1997: 312) defines pronoun as “a grammatical classification term for referring a single noun or even a noun phrase.” In this definition, he describes pronouns as the grammatical terms used to modify a noun, or a noun phrase which includes article and noun, adjective and noun, adverb, adjective and noun, yet noun and noun. He classifies pronouns into some kinds such as *personal pronoun*, *possessive pronoun*, *demonstrative pronoun*, *interrogative pronoun*, *reflexive pronoun*, *relative pronoun*, *indefinite pronoun*, and *presumptive or shadow pronoun*.

In 1997, Payne [stated](#): “pronouns are free forms (as opposed to affixes) that function alone to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause ...” (43). In other words, his definition can be retold as pronouns are any free morphemes to refer another noun or noun phrases, and they can take the position of a noun phrase.

Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) affirms pronoun as: “a pro-form which functions like a [noun](#) and substitutes for a noun or [noun phrase](#)”.⁸ It means that pronoun is a kind of pro-form functioning similar to a noun and can also replace a noun or a noun phrase without stating them in repetition; comparing to Shopen (1985: 24-25) arguing: “pro-form is a cover term for several closed classes of words which, under certain circumstances, are used as substitutes for words belonging to open classes, or for larger constituents.”

Regarding those definitions, pronoun can be concluded as the term used to refer human including the number, and gender, non-human or animate such as table, tree, sky, sea, air, and animal where the word is not similar to the original word in which its function is like noun.

2.2 Pronoun in Morpho-Syntax Perspective

The word morpho-syntax is derived from morphology: the study of morpheme's or word's structure (Crystal, 1997: 249); and syntax: the study of how speakers use language in phrases and how they structure the phrases into sentences (Stewart and Vaillette, 2001: 150). Thus, morpho-syntax can be concluded as a study of the relationship between morphology and syntax.

⁸ is taken from <www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerm/WhatIsAPronoun.htm>

Morphologically, pronouns in general are divided into two forms: *independent pronouns* and *dependent pronouns*. Independent pronoun is the pronoun that can stand alone, because it is a free morpheme or word; while dependent pronoun is the pronoun which cannot stand alone because it needs to attach to another morpheme. The dependent pronoun [can also be](#) classified as anaphoric clitics (Payne, 1997). But, according to Givon (1984: 62), it is general for possessor/possessive pronouns in a language to be formed as prefix or suffix on noun.

Syntactically, those kinds of prefixed- or suffixed- pronouns can also be identified by structuring them in phrase class, or even sentence. In this view, they are analyzed by observing their functions. Moreover, they are classified as “clitics” since they are meaningless when standing alone. Clitics is a term used to describe bound morphemes categorized in inflectional affixes, such as: *-ed*, *-ing*, *-s* in English (Katamba, 1993: 245). Dependent pronouns categorized as clitics tend to attach with verb in showing subject, and attach with noun in expressing ownership or possession.

To sum up, pronoun is a term in grammatical classification used to refer human or thing in one single word or a phrase, in which it has two forms: independent pronoun and dependent pronoun. Therefore, the using of morphosyntax perspective to New Guinea languages is the appropriate approach to study pronouns including possession. Morphologically, Papuan languages pronouns are divided into two kinds: independent pronouns, and dependent pronouns; moreover, these kinds of pronouns have a great agreement to syntactic structure whereas they influence each other. This signifies that the dependent pronoun changes based on the independent pronoun.

2.3 Possessive Pronoun

Given the explanation above, there is one type of pronouns commonly known in world’s languages: possessive pronoun. According to Swan, possessive pronoun is the pronoun functioning as same as adjective form or coming before noun where it modifies a noun or even another noun phrase for instances *my book* and *my beautiful dress*; and also possessive pronoun is an independent pronoun expressing two noun phrases (e.g.: *I have my life and my parents have theirs*) and functioning as

possession.⁹ Swan means that possessive pronoun is any independent pronouns that function like adjective form to modify a noun or a noun phrase.

Furthermore, possessive pronouns can be divided into two kinds: *possessive adjective*, which stands previous to a noun or a noun phrase functioning like adjective (e.g.: *my dog* or *my little dog*), and *possessive pronoun* which stands independently, such as: *mine, yours (singular and plural), his, hers, its, ours, theirs* in English.¹⁰ In accordance to these definitions, Swan does not affirm possessive pronoun: *my, your (S, P), his, her, its, our, and their* as possessive adjective because he assumes that “they behave quite differently from adjectives”, but are more as determiners. Therefore, the possessive pronouns whose function like adjective but not pure adjective are also called *possessive determiner*.¹¹

In short, possessive pronouns can be concluded as the independent forms which can stand alone to modify a single noun or a noun phrase, and/or the dependent forms which modify a single noun or a noun phrase in which their functions are more like adjective.

2.4 Alienable and Inalienable Possessive Pronouns

Semantically, possessive form is divided into two kinds. They are *alienable* and *inalienable*. Alienable is a grammatical term used to address possession where thing possessed has impermanent or non-essential dependence to the possessor; while inalienable is the antonym of alienable of which the term is used to address a thing having permanent relationship to the possessor (Crystal, 1997: 15, 192). In terms of these two kinds, Croft argues that inalienable possession is used to address parts of body and kinship ownership; and alienable possession is used for the ownership of other things.¹² The examples of them can be found in Maybrat:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1). <i>T-aja</i> (inalienable) | (2). <i>Amah ro-jio</i> (alienable) |
| 1SG-father | House Poss.-1SG |
| ‘My father’ | ‘My house’ |

⁹ is taken from <<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/pronoun.htm>>

¹⁰ is taken from <<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/330/grammar/poss.htm>>

¹¹ is retrieved from <http://www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/eduweb/grammar/course/speech/1_2d.htm>

¹² is taken from <<http://ling.man.ac.uk/Students/CourseUnits/LI3051/TypDescriptions.pdf>>

In Yali of Dani language family, there is [also](#) that phenomenon:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (3). <i>n-ikni</i> (inalienable) | (4). <i>n-asum</i> (alienable) |
| 1SG-father | 1SG-net |
| 'My father' | 'My net' |

On the other hand, morphologically, possessive pronoun is identified as inalienable because of the joint construction of noun and genitive;¹³ while alienable occurs when noun and genitive are separated in the morphological construction (cf. Givon, 1984; Nichols, 1988).

2.5 General Papuan Languages Characteristics

The general characteristics of Papuan languages can be looked from each part as follows:

- (1). Syntactical typology: commonly, Papuan languages are agent-patient-verb (APV) or subject-object-verb (SOV) languages (Sawaki, 2005: 55). They are also categorized as agglutinative language. It means a language having two or more joining morphemes to which they are more predictable, while normally each morpheme has no more than one meaning (Stewart and Vaillette, 2001: 131). Though, there are also agent-verb-patient (AVP) or SVO languages classified as Papuan languages such as the languages found in the Bird's Head of New Guinea Island.
- (2). Phonology: in this respect, Foley states that Papuan languages have more simple phonemic systems (quoted by Sawaki, 2005: 55). Their basic vowels are /i/, /e/, /u/, /o/, and /a/; while the consonants are usually produced in alveolar, bilabial, fricative, and velar.
- (3). Morpho-Syntax: the languages show interesting forms in their pronouns, verbs, genitive (possessor) and head noun, and affixes constructions. Pronouns are usually divided of independent pronouns and dependent pronouns, and even abbreviated forms. Wurm (quoted by Sawaki, 2005: 60) says that pronouns play important role in Papuan languages grammar. Many of them address the third person singular in one form without distinguishing masculine and feminine. In

¹³ Genitive is a form of pronoun which functions as possessor to modify an item possessed (Croft)

spite of this, a few of them have also distinguished gender in the pronoun: masculine and feminine, such as languages in the Bird's Head of New Guinea Island. On the other hand, Wurm, Laycock, and Voorhoeve argue that those languages show affix on noun functioning as possessive pronoun (171-172).¹⁴ Also, the verbs in other case, commonly also indicate Tense, Aspect, Mood (TAM), and person/number (Sawaki, 2005: 62-63). However, languages of West Papuan Phylum in the Bird's Head do not demonstrate TAM in the verbs system. Nevertheless, their verb is structured with person/number, for instance *Maybrat*, *Tehit*, and *Hatam* languages. According to Greenberg's prediction (quoted by Payne, 1997: 72), SOV languages should indicate genitive which is also called possessor first and then noun (G-N). The affixes occurring in SOV languages are commonly in suffixes. Yet languages in the Bird's Head take prefix form.

3. DISCUSSION

Maybrat language is one of Papuan languages classified as an agglutinative language, in which the morphological inflections are very complex, but they can be analyzed and predicted by looking at the form. As an agglutinative language, its verbs mostly cannot stand as independent morphemes because they require affixation to indicate person (subject or agent). The common affixation of the language is prefixes; functioning to indicate subject/agent, and possessor in possessive construction.

Before discussing about the possessive pronouns of Maybrat language, it is better to discuss about the independent pronouns first. These pronouns are used either as subjective or objective pronouns. By looking at this following table of independent pronouns, it may be easier to understand the use of possessive pronouns in the language.

Table 1

Person	Independent Pronoun
1SG	<i>jio</i>

¹⁴ is taken from <<http://www.papuaweb.org/dlib/bk/pl/C38/02-3-2.pdf>>

2SG	<i>nyo</i>
3SG (M)	<i>ait</i>
3SG (F)	<i>au</i>
1P	<i>amu</i>
2P	<i>anu</i>
3P	<i>ana</i>

There are four abbreviations used in the table. The first one is SG indicating singular person and the second one is PL indicating plural person. The third one is M referring to masculine and the last one is F referring to feminine.

Linguistically, possessive pronouns of Maybrat language may be divided into two types: inalienable possessive pronouns, and alienable possessive pronouns; both of them are in dependent morphemes.

3.1 Inalienable Possessive Pronouns

These pronouns are used to indicate parts of body and kinship terms. Below is the table showing the pronouns.

Table 2

Person	Possessive Pronoun
1SG	<i>t-</i>
2SG	<i>n-</i>
3SG (M)	<i>y-</i>
3SG (F, N)	<i>m-</i>
1PL	<i>n-</i>
2PL	<i>n-</i>
3PL	<i>m-</i>

These following examples will illustrate them:

(1) *t-aja*
1s: Poss-father
'my father'

or

(2) *Jio t-aja*
1s 1s: Poss-father
'my father'

- | | | |
|--|----|---|
| (3) <i>T-eme m-amo to pasar</i>
1s: Poss-mother 3s: Subj-go to market
'My mother goes to the market' | | (4) <i>Ait y-of</i>
3s: Subj 3s: Subj-kind
'He is kind' |
| (5) <i>Jio t-ait boit</i>
1s: Subj 1s: Subj-eat rice
'I eat rice' | or | (6) <i>t-ait boit</i>
1s: Subj-eat rice
'I eat rice' |

Example 1, 2, and 3 show the possessive pronouns in the level of phrase and sentence. Then, example 4, 5, and 6 are only occupied to demonstrate their different function in the level of phrase, clause, and sentence.

In the table, there are two forms showing the third person singular in terms of gender: masculine used to refer human and male animate, and feminine used to refer animate, and neutral. In addition, the third female person form is also the source to indicate non-human thing in general (N = neutral).¹⁵

Moreover, the degree of flexibility in using independent pronouns is different among the possessor to noun, subject/agent to verb, and subject to adjective. The independent pronouns are obligatorily used in parallel with the dependent person marker to adjective. On the other hand, they could be used as the person marker to verbs but not absolute; this means that the dependent pronoun can function alone as a subject or agent without using the independent one. In spite of this, as possessors to noun, they are often not used together with the prefixed form. They will appear when a speaker wants to emphasize his or her possession, or the ownership of somebody else.

By looking at the function, Maybrat language represents genitive-noun (G-N) on its inalienable possessive pronouns. In this case, it always puts possessor or genitive in front of a noun. Besides, syntactically, the possessive pronouns in Maybrat only function as modifier to the head noun; therefore, they cannot be the subject of a sentence (Dol, 1999).

Additionally, the possessive pronouns above are also the dependent pronouns which can be attached to dependent verbs and adjectives functioning as agent or subject.

¹⁵ Dol (1999) reports the first person plural in *p-* as the data is collected in *Ayawasi*.

3.2 Alienable Possessive Pronouns

The alienable possessive pronouns in the language are used in addressing other nouns; such as house, garden, animal, or even person excluding those nouns described in inalienable possessive pronouns. The alienable possessive pronouns are divided into two kinds. The first one is prefix *a-* only used to the first person singular and second person singular of independent pronouns. The second form is prefix *ro-* which can be used to all independent pronouns. Also, *ro-* can also be used to indicate the ownership of a person by saying his or her name (proper name). Nevertheless, prefix *ro-* changes into *r-* when it occurs with vowel initial pronouns as in both the third person singulars, first, second and third person plurals. According to Dol (1999: 72), *ro-* could be used to vowel initial pronouns when the speakers aim to emphasize the possessor. They are exemplified in the following table.

Table 3

Person	Possessive Form
1s	<i>ro-jio/ a-jio</i>
2s	<i>ro-jio/ a-nyo</i>
3s (M)	<i>r-ait</i>
3s (F)	<i>r-au</i>
1p	<i>r-amu</i>
2p	<i>r-anu</i>
3p	<i>r-ana</i>

These possessive pronouns can be seen in the following examples:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (5) <i>Amah a-jio</i>
House Poss-1s
'My house' | (6) <i>Amah r-ait</i>
House Poss-3s
'His house' |
| (7) <i>Amah a-nyo</i>
House Poss-2s
'Your house' | (8) <i>Amah ro-ana m-of</i>
House Poss-3p 3p-beautiful
'Their house is beautiful' |
| (9) <i>Ora ro-Yopi</i>
Garden Poss-Yopi
'Yopi's garden' | (10) <i>Yu ro-Seli</i>
Bag Poss-Seli
'Seli's bag' |

Based on the examples, either inalienable or alienable possessive pronouns still function as modifier in expressing possession of someone or something, so that they are not the subject. However, different with inalienable possessive pronouns, this second type is structured as noun precedes the possessor. Accordingly, the language operates noun-genitive (N-G) to its alienable possessive pronouns.

After looking at the explanation of these two types of possessive pronouns, a hypothesis towards the use of them can be written as follows:

Table 4

Inalienable Possessive Pronouns	Alienable Possessive Pronouns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Parts of body</i>• <i>Kinship terms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Other nouns</i>• <i>Proper Name</i>
<i>G-N Structure</i>	<i>N-G Structure</i>
<i>Form: dependent morphemes (prefixes)</i>	
<i>Function: possessor</i>	

4. CLOSING REMARKS

4.1 Conclusion

Maybrat language is a Papuan language found in the Bird's Head of New Guinea Island which is also categorized as the West Papuan Phylum. Different with the general characteristic word order of Papuan languages, presenting SOV word order, Maybrat language shows SVO word order. Generally, this language has independent and dependent pronouns. In relation to them, the possession is only structured in dependent form. In its pronouns, gender classification of masculine, feminine, and neutral are found. Moreover, the possessive pronouns are in prefixes and divided into two types: inalienable possessive pronouns (used to indicate parts of body and kinship terms) in which genitive precedes noun (G-N); while alienable possessive pronouns (used to indicate things proper names, and other nouns) where genitive follows noun (N-G). In short, the language structures genitive-noun in

inalienable possessive pronouns where they are prefixes joined with noun, and noun-genitive in alienable possessive pronouns in prefixes joined with independent pronoun, and proper name; likewise, these types function as possessor.

4.2 Suggestion

Considering Papua as a place of language diversity, it is important for the Papuan government and also the other linguists to pay more attention to the study of language, such as acknowledging the indigenous languages by establishing policy to prevent the languages, and supporting the language research. Furthermore, this is important because many of them have not been fully documented yet.

To more specific to Maybrat language, the study will benefit for: the language documentation in order to preserve the language, the literacy program in solving illiteration problem of local people, the language learning of local people which is done by educators to the pedagogical strategies, and also the encouragement of the cultural awareness to the people and government of Papua.

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