

## **Handbook for the Creation of a Regional Group**

### **Under the Charter of the East Kingdom Royal Foresters Guild**

To form a regional group in any area be that a shire, canton, province, or barony, a minimum of 5 members is needed. While not necessary, it is recommended that permission is asked from local nobility in the event the group is to be created in a barony. In the event permission is not granted, the group will form under a name other than that of the barony in question. While this would complicate things, we are a chartered guild in the east kingdom and are open to all persons living in the east regardless of region. By the end of the process, all members must have been officially accepted by the Principal Officer in a meeting and their probationary periods must be elapsed. It is required for them to be sworn members and for the leader or Deputy Principal Officer appointed by the Guild Principal Officer to be the rank of Forester or above. The Leader of a regional group is referred to as a Keeper, or Keeper of the Forest. For ceremonial occasions the full title is “The Honorable *SCA Name* Keeper of the Forest of *Region Name*. In meetings the full title is not used but is shortened to “Honorable Keeper” the same as the Principal Officer is shortened to “Honorable Warden”.

#### **The Beginning**

The first requirement for starting a Forest Court is the request for a Letter Temporary. A minimum of 5 persons is required but they do not need to be ranked or sworn members. The only requirement is that they have a current application submitted to the guild. A letter to the principal officer or Warden must be written, outlining what the regional group wishes to achieve with their group and what they propose to do for their area and what events they would like to host or be part of. The letter must be signed by all the proposed members of the regional group and it should be delivered to the Principal Officer. An electronic scan in jpg. or pdf. format is acceptable. The letter should include the proposed name of the regional group and if the group is formed in a province or Barony it should include the names of other sub groups within such as cantons. Once the letter is received the principal officer will consult the membership and decide if a letter temporary is to be drafted or not. A letter giving support from the local Baron and Baroness may accompany the request in the event the group is formed in a barony however it is not mandatory. It does look good later for charter purposes.

#### **The Letter Temporary**

The Principal Officer will draft or cause to be written a letter in the form of a temporary charter allowing the regional group to form and conduct limited business. Under a letter temporary the members of a regional group officially become foresters but are not yet royal foresters. This distinction is similar to an incipency period. Under the letter temporary the regional group may not hold funds or conduct forest court but may hold informal meetings to form and assist in the

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creation of the group. Likewise they are encouraged to create and attend events and activities. If the word “foresters” is to be attached to an event, especially a public one or one announced on social media, the principal officer must be consulted, and permission granted.

Under the letter temporary the group will be allowed to function unofficially until such time as a leader emerges and is promoted to the rank of Forester. When a ranked Forester and at least 4 sworn members exist, the Principal Officer may appoint the leader to be the Keeper or Deputy Principal Officer of the regional group. At this time the group becomes semi-official. The Keeper may conduct meetings and forest courts within the region to deal with business and any SCA matters that arise. The Keeper is appointed for an unspecified amount of time but usually a year is the standard term. The New Group is advised to consider creating or acquiring some regalia for the region during this time. A minimum would be a hunting horn slung on a baldric. This regalia is needed for the next part in the formation of the group.

### **Regional Charter**

As the East Kingdom Royal Foresters guild is chartered by the Sovereigns of the East so too the regional group will be chartered by the guild. When a regional group has proven itself stable and active it may apply to the principal officer for its own charter. Again, a minimum of 5 persons is required but they must all be sworn members ranked Underforester and above. Of course, at least 1 Forester is required but the application is taken more seriously if presented by a Master Forester with several Foresters signing the petition. The petition is delivered in writing or in person to the Principal Officer who will accept or reject the petition. If accepted the Charter will be signed by the Warden, and Chronicler of the Royal Foresters. In the event that the charter is issued to a group for an established barony the Baron and Baroness will also be asked by the Principal Officer to give their consent and sign the charter. This is not a guarantee. When this is done the Keeper appointed to be in charge will be presented with the charter and a hunting horn to be kept as the regalia of their Court. At this point the regional group becomes Royal Foresters and may freely use the badges and symbols of the guild.

### **Governance of a Regional Chapter**

It is incumbent upon the Keeper of a regional forest to conduct at least one meeting per year. This could be very brief and may occur at an SCA event. Any guild business may be discussed and any applications for membership in the area can be accepted. Applications should be provided to the Principal Officer for record keeping before being presented to the membership for acceptance. Accepted applicants to the group will be scheduled to attend an event where the principal officer will be attending should they wish to become sworn members and be promoted in rank.

When the Warden of the Forest is present the regional keeper will begin the meeting by introducing the Warden as an honored guest. At that point the Warden may choose to conduct High

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Court business such as initiations and promotions or may simply allow the Keeper to conduct the meeting.

Keepers are also responsible for one activity per year. This could be as simple as a back yard barbeque or as elaborate as an out of country wilderness expedition. This is left up to the keeper.

Finally, the Keeper is responsible to gather information on all activities the area members are involved in, take photos, or see that photos are taken, if necessary and submit this information to the principal officer to be included in the guild's quarterly reports.

### **Honorarium**

The regional courts are responsible for an honorarium to the High Court. This may take the form of a portion of regional groups raised funds for the year. Typically the regional members will vote to decide upon a donation to the high court to assist with guild costs and officer travel expenses. It typically costs about \$10 to promote a member to a new rank and there are many promotions per year.

If funds are not held by the regional group the honorarium can be anything. Regalia items are always in need and gifts to incoming principal officers are a good way to show thanks. Typically these will be small items created by members. In the case of a group formed in a barony an honorarium may be given to the Baron and Baroness as well, at the discretion of the keeper. Typically this would be described as contraband seized from outlaws, fines paid by law breakers, but it could be anything. Chocolate coins are popular in some circles.

### **Regional Chapter Closure**

If the active membership of a regional group falls below 5 sworn members, or if at any point the group wishes to cease operation, or if the High Court votes no confidence in the regional group, the Keeper will be asked by the principal officer to surrender the charter, regalia, and in some cases, funds, to the guild. These will be kept in trust until the regional group is able to recover.

## **Excerpts From the Constitution of the East Kingdom Royal Foresters Guild**

### **Applicants and Members**

All persons wishing to join the Foresters Guild will apply to the Principal Officer electronically, or to any forester, who will in turn bring it before the Principal Officer. The applicant is considered a regular member once the application is accepted by the membership at a meeting. A regular accepted member may then apply for sworn membership when the probationary period has elapsed.

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Before accepting an applicant, the Principal Officer will inform the membership of any new applications. An applicant may only be refused if a forester is willing to attest that the person wishing to make application to the guild will be disruptive or will not be a good fit. The principal officer may investigate the person's character before if necessary. It is an offence in the guild to refuse to vouch for a person known to be of good character. Once accepted, new regular members will be introduced to all present at the next meeting of the guild which they attend.

Once the probationary period has elapsed, new applicants may swear the forester's oath to obey the laws and to protect the green as part of their initiation. The oath can be deferred at the discretion of the Principal Officer to a future meeting if time does not permit, or other adversity renders the initiation impractical at the meeting where initiations are normally scheduled. If the new member does not swear the forester's oath, they are granted independent status and while they are a regular member of the guild, they may not be promoted or take part in any of the guild's business or court activities.

New regular members that take the forester's oath are then considered to be sworn members and must first sign the constitution to signify that they understand the guild rules. New sworn members may take part in all guild activities and meetings but cannot vote on business while they are still a Novice. They must wait until ranked Underforester to vote. Members who have attained the rank of Underforester may vote in all business meetings and bring business before the Principal Officer.

Suspensions of members is only to be used in the event of un-forester-like conduct; gross negligence that leads to physical injury, loss of finances or property, or in the event of criminal actions, or attempts to conceal criminal behavior. Un-forester-like conduct is defined as contravening guild rules as defined in the constitution. Suspended members may be suspended for a period of time for minor offences, indefinitely, or permanently at the discretion of the Principal Officer in consultation with their advisors (previous principal officers).

Suspended members may reapply to become members directly to the Principal Officer under some circumstances. If a temporary suspension was issued, and the suspension period has elapsed, the former member is allowed to reapply to the Principal Officer with no loss of rank or privilege. In the event of a criminal matter, warrant expiry and a pardon are grounds for a former member to reapply. The principal officer will always consult the former principal officers and his/her advisors and then decide if the former member is eligible to rejoin the guild. If the member is found eligible, then they may reapply as a normal applicant. Any former ranks, titles, or offices they held however are lost and must be earned again from the rank of novice forward if the member was suspended for more than two years.

### **The Forest Courts**

There are two organized levels within the Forester's Guild. At the kingdom level is the high court and at the regional level are the named regional courts.

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The regional courts will be named after the shire, canton or borough that they are formed in (*i.e.* Seashire Forest, Lyndhaven Forest, etc.) and are run by keepers or deputy principle officers. The Principal Officer may appoint a keeper as a ceremonial head of the region to act as a deputy principal officer, who may conduct regional meetings and collect information for the quarterly reports. A keeper cannot initiate new members but may conduct all other business. The regional group may hold money up to \$100. but must report the sum to the principal officer. These funds are to be used for food, and other supplies used at events. Should a regional group hold more than \$100. it must be held in trust by the guild in a bank account and a treasurer and secretary must be elected. Other ceremonial officers may be appointed by the keepers with the permission of the principal officer such as stewards, bailiffs, and sergeants at arms.

The Principal Officer's or Warden's Court is always to be referred to as The High Court of the Forest, for business purposes and the Forest Court of Justice Seat when a SCA trial of outlaws and criminals is taking place for fun. It is always conducted by the Principal Officer. The High Court is comprised of all sworn members of the rank of Forester and above; Underforesters and below while guild members and regional members are not yet elevated to the high court. The Principal Officer must appoint a High Sheriff (master of ceremonies) to conduct the court. If the high court holds funds, a High Chronicler (secretary) is appointed to record the proceedings, and a High Constable (treasurer) to take charge of the finances. Should the funds exceed \$100, these offices must be elected. At the Principal Officer's discretion other ceremonial high officers can be appointed as well to add to the proceedings. Deputy Sheriffs, Stewards, bailiffs, and sergeants at arms are all possible as are many more to suit any kind of business or court drama that may arise.

**Regional Groups:** (Forest Courts) Semi-independent regional courts of guild members who look to the guild to assist with the initiation of their members. They may operate under a letter temporary written by the Principal Officer during their formation but will receive a distinct charter from the High Court of the Forest when their formation is complete. While Regional Forest courts may act largely independent, they are bound by the rules, regulations, and constitution of the East Kingdom Royal Foresters Guild. Failure to uphold the laws of the guild will lead to revocation of the regional charter.

Official regional groups may only hold \$100. in funds for their use and any excess is held by the Guild on the regional group's behalf. If a regional group holds more than the \$100 cap in funds, they must elect a secretary and treasurer who work with the guild to access those funds when needed. Should the regional group wish to hold funds more than the \$100 cap, they must demonstrate viability by having at least five members in good standing who have achieved the rank of Forester or higher. In the event a regional group who has funds held in trust by the guild loses members or is diminished in some way as to place their continued existence in doubt, the

principal officer of the guild may ask for a vote of the membership to determine the confidence of the guild in the regional group. If the guild does not have confidence in the regional group, they may withhold the funds held in trust until the regional group recovers. The guild will take

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ownership of the regional group's funds should it dissolve from inactivity or disinterest. It is recommended that regional groups avoid holding funds unless necessary.

**Regional Funds:** The Forester's Guild may hold and raise funds at the guild level and at the regional level by permission of the principal officer. Deputy Principal Officers (keepers) that wish to use or have access to guild funds must petition the principal officer who will in turn call for a vote of the membership and grant access or deny it based on the will of the membership. Regional courts may however receive donations or raise funds on their own with no need for a high court vote so long as they do not exceed \$100 or if they do exceed \$100, they must elect a regional treasurer and secretary to make reports to the guild for their group and submit any funds above the \$100 cap to be held in trust by the main guild bank account. These held funds may not be denied to a regional group by the guild except if the regional group is in its infancy or having membership issues.

Fund raising efforts and funds held should remain small scale unless larger projects are to be undertaken. Should the guild hold in excess of \$100. an election of the secretary and treasurer must be held immediately, and a bank account opened in the name of the Forester's Guild. The signatures of the principal officer and treasurer should be necessary for all withdrawals from the account. As new persons are elected to the positions of principal officer and treasurer the bank chosen to hold the guild funds will be made aware of the changes in account access.

A yearly audit of all funds will be conducted by the treasurer and submitted to the secretary and be made available to the membership for questioning and examination. This report will accompany the Guild report to the East Kingdom Arts and Sciences Minister.

Persons claiming expenses to be reimbursed by the guild should submit receipts to the treasurer and be paid with a check. The receipts and a record of payment for goods will be placed into a report and be submitted to the secretary for the guild records. These will be added to the reports given to the East Kingdom Arts and Sciences Minister as needed.

### **Promotion of Members**

Members of the guild enter as a Novice and are promoted through the ranks based on merit and skill as well as enthusiasm for both the SCA and the Forester's Guild. Members who show a willingness to learn, pass on skills, and who prove excellence in historical accuracy and personal deportment will quickly rise in rank. To be promoted regular members must swear the forester's oath and become sworn members.

The rank of Underforester is earned by going to a camping event successfully, and by learning the core outdoor skills of fire-lighting, self-reliance, outdoor cooking, and low impact camping.

Forester is earned by demonstrating fire lighting without matches or a lighter and cooking a group meal upon an outdoor fire. Also, to be promoted to the rank of Forester the highest level of

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historical accuracy in garb and accessories is required. Foresters are required to have a head to toe “forester outfit” of lincoln or forest green although grey is acceptable in the winter months. A historical persona is also a requirement however this can minimally be described as, time, culture, and social class.

The Master Forester rank is earned by promoting and proliferating the period skills of the foresters by being a mentor, teaching classes, submitting Arts and Sciences projects to competitions, and supporting the SCA through martial activities, or by taking an office in curia, and by proving a willingness to use outdoor skills, as well as maintaining excellence in garb, historical accuracy, and personal deportment. The member is not required to do everything on the list but should be a very active and serious member of the SCA with historical quality clothing and equipment to be promoted to the master level.

As a meritocracy all members will get out of the guild what they put into the guild and more.

### **Guild Activities**

The Forester’s Guild engages in a wide range of activities that include but are not limited to, Camping and outdoor living, arts and sciences, martial activities, guild functions, Royal Court activities, and mundane activities. All persons participate at their own risk and are expected to perform their own risk assessment based on their own experience and level of skill. If they cannot do so, then they are not to participate in the activity. By participating in a guild activity, members declare they have the skills and experience to do so and accept that they are solely responsible for their own personal safety and that they hold no person or group of persons responsible for their conduct or safety save themselves. No member is required or expected to engage in activities they view as unsafe or do not have adequate equipment or skills for and are solely responsible deciding to participate or not to participate. If a member agrees to participate in an activity, they are declaring they are skilled enough and well equipped enough to do so.

Any member seeing any unsafe and unprepared person, or persons engaging in, or planning to engage in an unsafe act, has a personal responsibility to inform the person or persons of the unsafe or potentially dangerous conditions, and any potential for injury or mishap, but have no power to stop them should they insist on continuing. Members who have been thus warned are solely responsible for their actions. Members who give warning of an unsafe condition and are ignored must report the incident to the principal officer and are advised not to engage in activity with the unsafe member. A member putting themselves at risk is also putting others at risk and is guilty of un-forester-like conduct and will be suspended if found guilty.

### **Definitions**

**Applicant:** A person who has applied to join the Foresters Guild.

**Chronicler:** An appointed officer of the Keeper of the Forest who acts as secretary.

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**Constable:** An appointed officer of the Keeper of the Forest who acts as treasurer.

**Court of the Forest:** At the Shire, Canton, or Borough level, Forester groups may be formed with the permission of the principal officer of the guild. Courts are named after the shire, canton, or borough in which they were formed. Typically, the Court of the forest will have meetings for business as required but is required under guild law to hold at least one meeting and to submit quarterly reports each year.

**Deputy Sheriff:** An appointed officer of the Keeper of the Forest who acts under the direction of the Sheriff or in their stead as required.

**Forester:** A mid-level rank within the Forester's Guild. The Forester has proven an ability to light fires without matches or lighter and can cook and meal plan on an open fire as well as proving themselves to be a steadfast supporting member of the group. They display a high degree of historical authenticity in all garb and gear and in personal deportment.

**Grandmaster:** The term given to a former principal officer who has served a full term. They are Honored members who act as advisors and teachers to new officers and members.

**High Chronicler:** An appointed officer of the principal officer who acts as secretary.

**High Constable:** An appointed officer of the principal officer who acts as treasurer and who files financial reports quarterly and annually when required.

**High Court of the Forest:** The High Court of the Forest oversees the regional courts and acts as the governing body of the guild. The principal officer receives reports and new business from the regional courts and deals with any issues arising from them. The high court also is responsible for sending reports to the east kingdom arts and sciences minister and dealing with all issues arising from reports and activities of the guild. The High Court is the only court where the keeper of a regional court or new member can be installed or initiated and so it is the duty of the principal officer and the High Court to assist and to install all new incoming Keepers of the regional Forest courts and initiate new members. Lastly it is incumbent upon the high court and its officers to form a procession at Royal functions to escort any forester called before royal court should they ask for an escort, and to make report when asked, to the royalty holding court.

**High Deputy Sheriff:** An appointed officer of the principal officer who acts under the High Sheriff or in their stead as required.

**High Sheriff:** An appointed officer of the principal officer who serves in the High Court to keep



order and to announce and introduce the principal officer on all occasions of Forester business. The High Sheriff also acts as a herald in Royal Court to announce and introduce the Warden should they have Royal business.

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**High Undersheriff:** An appointed officer of the principal officer who acts under the High Sheriff and the High Deputy Sheriff.

**Independent:** A guild member that has not sworn the forester's oath. They cannot be promoted, join houses, vote, or conduct court business.

**Keeper of the Forest:** An appointed official who has reached the rank of forester and who conducts all the business within a Court apart from initiating candidates. A keeper can be appointed for multiple terms if required and is considered a deputy principal officer.

**Master Forester:** A senior rank within the foresters. The forester has either taught classes, submitted arts and sciences projects, supported the SCA as a curia officer or through a martial activity as well as proven themselves in the preceding forester ranks, and who has represented the Forester's Guild well. Excellence in historically accurate garb and personal deportment is mandatory.

**Novice and Youth:** The beginning stage as a member of the Forester's Guild. Novice and Youth members cannot vote in meetings, nor can youth members be promoted until they reach the age of 18. Exceptional youth may upon their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday be promoted to the level of their skills if they have proven themselves capable. All Novice and youth members are not required to take the Foresters Oath however youth members may take the oath when they are 18 years of age.

**Principal Officer:** Warden of the Forest, Warden of the East - The highest officer within the guild according to East Kingdom law governing guilds. The principal officer is elected from among those who have earned the rank of master forester. Also eligible are former principal officers who have served in the past. The principal officer's selected advisors are made up of the former principal officers, and the members who have distinguished themselves within the guild. The principal officer's term is two years, and they may serve multiple terms if elected to do so. The main responsibilities of the principal officer are to act as a speaker for the group, to initiate new members and conduct meetings, and to file reports with the East Kingdom Minister of Arts and Sciences.

**Ranger:** A sworn member who has been made a member of the Order of St. Hubert for completing the ranger trials. They wear a badge of arrows bundled in a belt.

**Regarder:** A sworn member who has been made a member of the Order of St. Eustace for completing the regarder trials. They wear a crown badge.

**Regular Member:** A Forester Friend or camp follower who has represented themselves well and who is a true asset to the group that has applied to become a member. At the discretion of the principal officer, any such person may be made a member so long as they be 18 years of age. Regular Members cannot vote or be promoted through the ranks nor are they required take the foresters Oath unless they wish to become a Sworn member.

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**Royalty:** The figure heads of the Forester's Guild. All ancient Foresters worked for a royal or noble landowner and so too SCA Foresters should aspire to protect the green in the name of the Royals who govern it even if they are largely independent. Royalty for the Foresters guild is defined as; The King and Queen of the East, The Prince and Princess, as well as sitting Barons and Baronesses.

**Royal Forester:** A sworn member who also pledges allegiance to the Crown of the East.

**Sheriff:** An appointed officer of the Keeper of the Forest, who addresses those present, keeps order and introduces the keeper in regional court.

**Sworn Member:** A guild member intent on being promoted through the ranks who has taken the forester's oath as a full member of the guild.

**Underforester:** A junior level rank within the Foresters Guild. The forester has proven that they can pitch a tent and camp outdoors for a short period of time and has shown an interest in outdoor activities conducted in medieval period fashion such as fire lighting and outdoor cooking. The member has also attempted period forester garb.

**Undersheriff:** An appointed officer of the Keeper of the Forest who acts under the direction of the Sheriff and Deputy Sheriff.

**Woodward:** A sworn member who has been made a member of the Order of St. John Gaulbert for competing the woodward trials. They were a fede ring badge.

### **Notes**

The Forester's Guild is more than an outdoor living guild. We do not focus on one art or science but instead aspire to be generalists, as that is what is required to live and survive in the outdoors. The guild is very diverse encompassing not only outdoor skills such as camp craft and fire lighting but other traditional skills such as textiles and leather work and repair, forest lore and knowledge, wood and metal fabrication, as well as outdoor cooking and a great many more. As ancient foresters were called upon to do battle with outlaws and gangs of criminals, today many SCA foresters take an interest in the martial arts practiced in the SCA and enjoy them. Others are more interested in the day to day running of the society and are drawn to positions that allow them to govern and shape the group. Still others love the pageantry and color that comes from the atmosphere of Royal court. Others enjoy the feeling of creativity that comes with the arts and

sciences. The Forester's Guild does not aspire to be all things to all people however it does try to be diverse enough that it encompasses most of the SCA and rewards its members for excelling in whatever it is that interests them. Because ancient foresters did everything from farming to fighting to running courts of law, we the SCA foresters can draw on this rich history to be as diverse as they were and be many things to our members.

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**On Grandmasters:** Grandmasters are former principal officers who act as advisors and honored members who have contributed a great deal to the guild. They may wear a hunting horn as a mark of their rank as well as other badges of office they have earned.

**On Martial Activities:** Foresters also take part in archery, armored combat, fencing and thrown weapons. These activities are attractive to those that enjoy competition and enjoy being part of a team. Persons competing in the name of the foresters are suitably rewarded for their efforts and usually at mealtime.

**On Masters:** Master Foresters have dedicated themselves to the guild and hold themselves to high standards and are examples to all members. They may wear a hunting horn as a mark of their rank as well as any other badges of office they have earned.

**On Officers:** Every group needs officers, and the Foresters Guild is no different. All officers are appointed by the principal officer to serve for a period of one year or at the principal officer's pleasure. Ceremonial officers can be appointed by regional keepers at the regional level. The secretary and treasurer must be elected if the guild holds funds.

**On the Principal Officer:** The Warden of the Forest or principal officer position within the guild is not for everyone however it is not as daunting as it may seem. Responsible for maintaining the group and seeing that it abides by East Kingdom law the principal officer sits in the office for two years and is responsible for quarterly reports to the Arts and Sciences Minister at the kingdom level. Also, the principal officer is responsible to appear in Royal Court on occasion. Those that enjoy curia positions should aspire to be the principal officer of the guild.

**On Ranks:** In ancient times there were apprentices, journeymen craftsmen and masters. Ancient forester ranks were determined more by class and influence than anything else but we in the SCA foresters are a meritocracy. Members are promoted according to their actions and dedication to the guild.

**On Rangers:** Rangers are not organized and stubbornly resist organization. They have egalitarian meetings when they have meetings and will elect one among them to give a report to the principal officer when necessary. Rangers excel at doing things and not talking about things. The skills needed to be a ranger are quite demanding and so typically experienced bush crafters and wilderness travelers are attracted to the subgroup.

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