Investigation of Ohmic Contacts and Resistances of a 4H-SiC CMOS Technology up to 550 °C

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Abstract

In this work, the temperature dependence of all relevant resistances of a 4H-SiC CMOS technology for high temperature applications is investigated from room temperature up to 550 °C. This includes sheet resistances (R_{sh}) of differently doped regions, metallization layers (Ti/Pt and Ti/Pt/Ti layer stacks), and highly n-doped polycrystalline silicon as well as specific contact resistances (ρ_c) to highly n- and p-doped 4H-SiC obtained by N and Al implantation, respectively. Different test structures were used for comparison and consistency of the results. Positive temperature coefficients of resistance were observed for the metallization layers (2700 ppm/K) and for highly n-doped polycrystalline silicon (1360 ppm/K). R_{sh} and ρ_c for highly n-doped 4H-SiC regions show only moderate variation with temperature whereas a rather strong decrease of R_{sh} and ρ_c can be observed for highly p-doped 4H-SiC and of R_{sh} for moderately p-doped 4H-SiC from room temperature up to 200 °C which is mainly due to incomplete ionization of Al-doped regions. For implanted regions, modelled $R_{sh}(T)$ data qualitatively confirm measured results.

Key words

4H-SiC, CMOS, Temperature dependence, Ohmic resistance, Sheet resistance, Specific contact resistance.

I. Introduction

Recently, a high-temperature compatible 4H-SiC-CMOS technology was introduced targeting applications for temperatures above 500 °C [1], [2]. This technology also allows designing and realizing more complex circuits such as a 64-pixel UV sensor array with integrated readout circuitry [3]. The technology is also accessible via the EUROPRACTICE IC foundry service as an early access prototype technology [4]. To support IC design, a preliminary process design kit is available which, among other supporting information, includes Verilog-A compact models and scalable NMOS and PMOS parameterized cells.

However, models for passive components are not available yet, although accurate knowledge of the temperature dependence of their electrical characteristics is essential for precise circuit design. Next to capacitive elements, particularly ohmic elements such as resistors, wire routing, contacts to semiconductor regions as well as differently doped semiconductor regions need to be considered. The latter will be investigated in this work addressing a temperature range from room temperature to 550 °C. Different types of test structures will be used to characterize Ti/Al-based and NiAl-based ohmic contacts on p- and n- doped 4H-SiC, respectively, with contact areas ranging between (3 µm)² and (100 µm)², sheet resistances of implanted regions, such as highly n- and p-doped contact implants as well as p-doped well regions. Finally, sheet resistance of highly n-doped polycrystalline silicon (polySi) and metallization layers will be considered.

II. Experimental and Evaluation

A. Sample Preparation

The investigated samples were fabricated at Fraunhofer IISB using their prototype 2 µm HT CMOS technology. In this work, the following test structures were investigated for evaluating relevant ohmic resistances: meander type resistors (MEA) to evaluate sheet resistances (R_{sh}), cross-bridge kelvin resistors (CBKR) to determine specific contact resistances (ρ_c) and transfer length method (TLM, also known as transmission line model) structures to analyze R_{sh}, ρ_c and transfer length (L_T) [5]. For all investigations, test structures from different chips from an exemplary wafer

were analyzed and indicated by ascending number (e.g., MEA #1 – MEA #3).

The detailed process flow for the CMOS process is described in our previous work [1]. The main process steps relevant for the preparation of the investigated test structures are summarized hereafter. First, a 12 µm thick epitaxial layer with a N doping concentration of $5 \cdot 10^{15}$ cm^{-3} was grown by chemical vapor deposition on commercially obtained 150 mm 4H-SiC substrates. Next, locally doped contact and well regions were defined by implantation using N for n-doping and Al for p-doping. Subsequent high temperature activation and annealing process at 1700 °C for 30 min in Ar atmosphere is followed by removal of the carbon capping layer used for protecting the SiC surface during annealing [6]. The last steps of the carbon capping layer removal include a sacrificial thermal oxidation of about 10 nm thickness.

In the following, the implanted regions are referred to as n^+ and p^+ for highly doped contact regions to n- and p-doped 4H-SiC, respectively, and as nwell and pwell for the moderately doped well regions defining the channel doping of n- and p-MOSFETs, respectively. For all according test structures, n^+-implanted regions were always embedded in a pwell region and p^+-implanted regions in a nwell or pwell region, depending on the actual structure. Note that the implanted regions of the TLM structures underwent an additional thermal oxidation step resulting in a 55 nm thick SiO_2 consuming approximately 25 nm of SiC. This equally thins the implanted doping profiles in the TLM structures. In the contact areas, this oxide was removed before contact formation. For both, MEA and TLM pwell test structures, a p^+ implantation was performed below the contact regions to ensure proper ohmic contacts.

A 1050 °C temperature step formed dedicated Ni_2Si n-type and Ti_3SiC_2 p-type ohmic contacts after metal deposition and patterning. First metal layer (M1) consists of an evaporated stack of 40 nm Ti and 400 nm Pt, whereas the second one (M2) has an additional evaporated layer of 40 nm Ti on top of the Pt.

Highly n-doped polysilicon (polySi) is used as gate electrode and possible routing material in the investigated CMOS technology. Thus, MEA test structures were used to evaluate polySi, M1 and M2. These MEA test structures were isolated with thick SiO_x towards SiC.

B. Measurements and Evaluation

All above mentioned test structures were characterized by current-voltage (I-V) measurements from room temperature up to 550 °C. Electrical characterization was performed with a high temperature probing setup in ambient atmosphere. This setup consists of a SUSS PM5 probe station, the Keithley SCS-4200 with three 4200 source measure units (SMU) and one 4210-SMU, a 630 W hotplate up to 650 °C from G. MAIER Elektrotechnik GmbH with an accuracy of ± 5 K in the investigated temperature range due to the self-built setup together with manipulators and tungsten probe tips for high temperature probing from Signatone Corporation. MEA resistors were measured using four terminal sensing with two SMUs on each contact pad. The M1 and M2 ones were measured from -0.1 V to +0.1 V in 10 mV steps, the polySi resistors as well as those for the doped SiC regions from -1 V to +1 V in 100 mV steps. CBKR structures were measured from -1 V to +1 V in 50 mV steps with one source measure unit (SMU) on each pad to achieve four terminal sensing. To ensure proper measurement results and structure fidelity, all CBKR structures were measured twice by changing the terminals for forcing current and measuring voltage [7]. If consistent, results were averaged from both measurements for evaluation. TLM structures were also measured from -1 V to +1 V in 100 mV steps. All resistances determined from *I-V* measurements were only considered for further evaluation if the calculated coefficient of determination (R^2) was larger than 0.999.

MEA test structures were investigated for n^+, p^+, pwell, polySi, M1, and M2. All MEA designs share the same geometry with 117 squares, each with nominal 12 µm side length, connecting the contact pads. Included are 14 corner squares, which have a reduced effective square length of 55 % [8]. This results in an effective length of 110.7 squares. Investigated CBKR test structures for both n^+ and p^+ have squared contacts with side lengths ranging from 3 to 10 µm in 1 µm intervals to include investigation of quality and fidelity of rather small ohmic contacts, which are known to affect ρ_c of p-type ones [9]. TLM test structures for n^+, p^+ and pwell regions have squared contacts with a side length (W) of 100 µm and distances of 15, 30, 60, 120, and 240 µm between individual contacts.

Evaluation of TLM structures was performed by evaluating the resistance vs. contact pad distance (d) plot, as exemplarily depicted in Fig. 1, as described in literature [5]. For the determination of the uncertainty of R_{sh}, ρ_c, and L_T, systematic error propagation was performed. For all test structures, the condition $W \geq L_T$ was fulfilled which simplifies (1) used within the TLM evaluation procedure. Only R_{sh} was evaluated from the pwell TLM test structures as contact resistances were too small in comparison to the sheet resistances due to the p^+ contact implantation used.

For CBKR square contacts with side lengths W, ρ_c and L_T were determined by fitting (1) [5] to the measured resistances (R_C) as exemplarily shown in Fig. 2:

$$R_C = \frac{\rho_C}{L_T W} \coth\left(\frac{W}{L_T}\right). \quad (1)$$

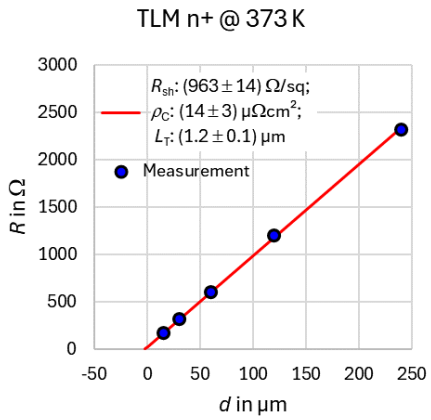

Figure 1: Exemplary R(d) plot of a TLM test structure for characterization of a n^+ region at 373 K; legend of the regression line shows evaluated parameter values.

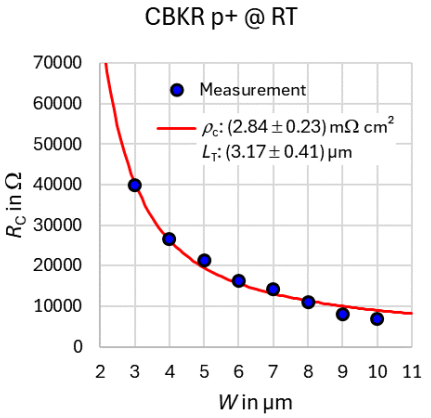

Figure 2: Exemplary contact resistance vs. contact side length W for CBKR test structure for characterization of contacts on a p^+ region at room temperature (RT); legend of the line fitted according to (1) shows evaluated parameter values.

The temperature dependence of MEA resistors for polySi as well as M1 and M2 was evaluated by determining the temperature coefficient of resistance (α) according to (2) with the reference temperature (T_0, in this work approx. 298 K) and measurement temperature (T) [10]:

$$R_{sh} = R_{sh}(T_0)\left(1 + \alpha\,(T - T_0)\right). \qquad (2)$$

C. Modeling of Sheet Resistances of Doped 4H-SiC

Theoretical calculations of the sheet resistances were compared with experimental data for the three investigated regions n^+, p^+, and pwell, respectively. The sheet resistance fundamentally depends on the free charge carrier concentration, their mobilities and the thickness of the implanted layer. For 4H-SiC, incomplete ionization needs to be accounted for considering two different ionization energies (E_{D1}, E_{D2}) and (E_{A1}, E_{A2}) for both, N and Al, respectively. The effective nominal doping concentrations of N and Al (N_N and N_{Al}) were assumed to be evenly distributed between the two energy levels. N_N and N_{Al} as well as the thicknesses of the implanted layers (t_{imp}) were approximated from the actual doping profiles given in [6].

Electron or hole concentrations (n or p, respectively) were calculated by solving the neutrality equation. For the p-type regions where doping was obtained by ion implantation and subsequent high temperature annealing, compensation needs to be considered [11] and, thus, the neutrality equation was solved with an additional concentration of compensating defects (N_{comp}). The parameters used for modelling $R_{sh}(T)$ data for n^+, p^+, and pwell regions are summarized in Table I.

Hole mobilities (μ_p) were calculated by considering scattering by ionized impurities, neutral impurities, acoustic phonons, non-polar optical phonons, and polar optical phonons as described in literature [12], [13]. Electron mobilities (μ_n) were modelled following the empirical approach given by [14]. R_{sh} was then calculated according to (3) with the elementary charge (q):

$$R_{sh} = \left(q\, t_{imp}\left(n\,\mu_n + p\,\mu_p\right)\right)^{-1}. \qquad (3)$$

Table I: Parameters for obtaining modeled $R_{sh}(T)$ curves presented in Fig. 3 for n^+, p^+, and pwell regions. N_{imp} stands for N_N and N_{Al}, respectively; $E_{1,2}$ stands for E_{D1}, E_{D2} or E_{A1}, E_{A2}.

	n^+	**p^+**	**pwell**
N_{imp} in cm^{-3}	$5.0\cdot10^{19}$	$3.5\cdot10^{19}$	$2.0\cdot10^{17}$
$E_{1,2}$ in meV	61, 126 [15]	162, 260 [12]	214, 399 *
N_{comp} in cm^{-3}	-	$1.8\cdot10^{18}$	$8\cdot10^{16}$
t_{imp} in nm	200	130	600

* The exact values of E_{A1} and E_{A2} used here for pwell were recently determined from evaluation of Hall measurements on comparable samples by simultaneously fitting carrier concentration and mobility [13] which will be published elsewhere. They are, however, in very good agreement with values from literature [11] for similar samples.

III. Results and Discussion

Geometrical dimensions of TLM structures (and here, especially the width of the contacts as well as the widths of the implanted regions) are much larger than those of MEA and CBKR structures. Thus, results from MEA and CBKR structures are more affected by small deviations from nominal geometrical dimensions. This has to be considered when comparing measurement results from the different test structures.

To check consistency and comparability of R_{sh} results for the implanted regions n^+, p^+, and pwell as well as of ρ_c results for the ohmic contacts on both, n^+ and p^+ regions, results from different test structure types are compared, i.e.: for R_{sh}, results from TLM and MEA, and for ρ_c, results from TLM and CBKR test structures are compared.

A. *Sheet Resistance of Implanted Regions*

Evaluated R_{sh} results for the implanted regions n^+, p^+, and pwell from TLM and MEA test structures are presented in Fig. 3 as a function of measurement temperature together with modeled sheet resistances.

Compared to results from MEA resistors, results from TLM structures are by approx. 14% ± 2% larger for n^+, 20% ± 5% for p^+, and 10% ± 3% for pwell regions. In a good approximation, this can be directly related to the removal of the first 25 nm of the implantation profile for the TLM structures by thermal oxidation as described above: Multiplying the TLM R_{sh} values by the factor $(t_{imp} - 25\ nm)/t_{imp}$ with t_{imp} as given in Table I would lead to 12% smaller TLM R_{sh} values for n^+, 24% smaller for p^+, and 4% smaller values for pwell regions, leading to a very good agreement between TLM and MEA R_{sh} data.

The temperature dependence of the modeled sheet resistances shows a very similar trend as measured data for all regions with a slightly larger deviation for the n^+ region. Absolute values of modeled curve are always higher than measured data but still a good agreement can be concluded, especially for the p^+ region. The difference between the absolute values of modeled and measured data are at least partly due to the approximations used to calculate the modeled curves, e.g. assumption of a box type implantation profile with approximated N_{imp} and t_{imp}.

B. *Specific Contact Resistance of Implanted Regions*

Fig. 4 presents ρ_c results for the implanted regions n^+ and p^+ from TLM and CBKR test structures as a function of measurement temperature whereas Fig. 5 presents corresponding L_T data. For the contacts on n^+ regions, simultaneous fitting of both, ρ_C and L_T to the measured CBKR data allows different combinations of ρ_C and L_T with reasonable fits. Thus, the presented CBKR results for n^+ were obtained with a fixed L_T of 1.2 µm which is in good agreement with the L_T data obtained from according TLM evaluation displayed in Fig. 5a). Absolute values of ρ_c on n^+ regions are comparable with typical data from literature [16]. As an example, even for small contact areas of $(4\ µm)^2$ and MEA resistors with five effective squares length, the contact resistance only contributes 2% of the total MEA resistance.

For contacts on p^+ regions, ρ_c values evaluated by TLM structures show a rather large variation and an increase for measurements at 773 and 823 K which is due to slightly non-ideal *R(d)* linearity (i.e., $R^2 < 0.999$) at those temperatures. For TLM results at lower temperatures as well as for CBKR results, a clear trend of decreasing ρ_c with increasing measurement temperatures can be observed which qualitatively correlates with the according trend for $R_{sh}(T)$ shown in Fig. 3b). It should be noted that only one out of three (3 µm) CBKR contacts showed ohmic behavior.

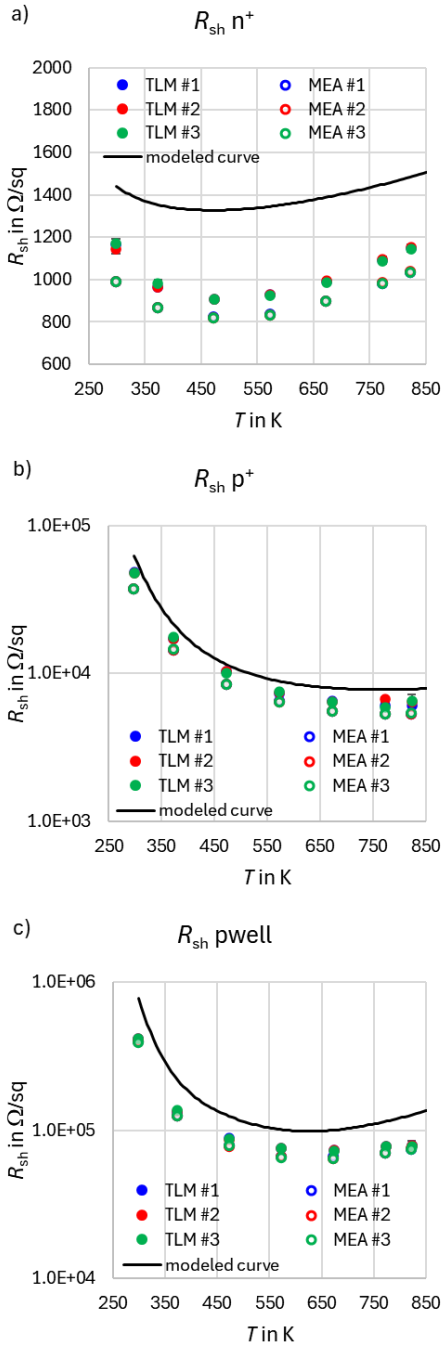

Figure 3: $R_{sh}(T)$ for a) n^+, b) p^+, and c) pwell implanted regions from both, TLM and MEA test structures together with modeled results using parameters given in Table I.

Absolute ρ_c values determined for the investigated samples on p^+ regions are rather large compared to values reported in the literature (e.g., [16], [17]) as the contacts on p-type SiC have not fully been optimized yet for the investigated technology. In comparison with the example above for n^+ MEA resistors, the contact resistance of p^+ MEA resistors with the same contact and MEA geometry would give rise to 12% of the total resistance at room temperature.

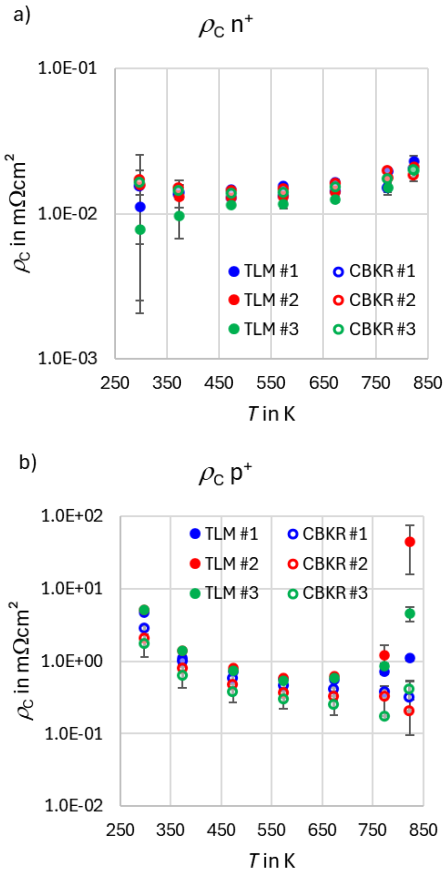

Figure 4: $\rho_c(T)$ for a) n^+, and b) p^+ implanted regions from both, TLM and CBKR test structures.

C. Sheet Resistance of Metallization and Polycrystalline Silicon

Evaluated R_{sh} results from MEA test structures for both metallization layers M1 and M2 as well as for polySi, which in principle could also be used as routing layer material are given in Fig. 6 as a function of measurement temperature together with lines fitted according to (2) indicating α. For polySi and M1, two fits for two individual test structures are given which give an indication of the data variability for the investigated chips whereas for M2 the data from different chips showed very similar resistances for each temperature.

The evaluated α values for both, M1 and M2 resistors are nearly identical considering their uncertainties with a slightly larger value for M2. They are significantly smaller than for bulk Pt being used for platinum resistance thermometers which is approx. 3850 ppm/K for 273 to 373 K [18]. However, this is expected for thin films attached to substrates with smaller thermal expansion coefficients [19]. For metal stacks consisting of evaporated thin layers of Ti, Pt, and Au with thicknesses of 10, 200, and 50 nm respectively, a value of (2977 ± 23) ppm/K was determined for α [20].

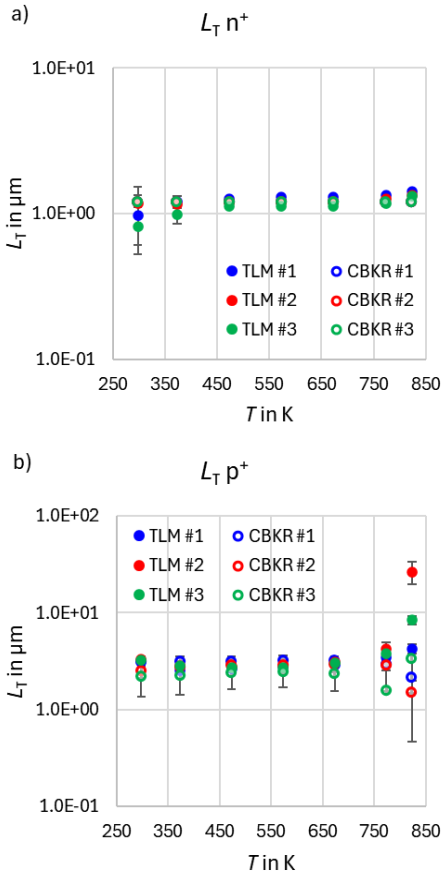

Figure 5: $L_T(T)$ for a) n^+, and b) p^+ implanted regions from both, TLM and CBKR test structures.

The temperature-dependent resistance change observed here for polySi MEA test structures shows a good agreement with data reported in literature for highly n-doped polysilicon, measured up to 373 K [21].

IV. Conclusion

Relevant ohmic and contact resistances of a 4H-SiC CMOS technology were characterized from room temperature up to 550 °C. In a good approximation, a linear dependence on temperature could be observed for M1, M2, and polySi resistors and corresponding values of α were determined. For differently doped 4H-SiC regions, the change of sheet resistances with temperature is qualitatively

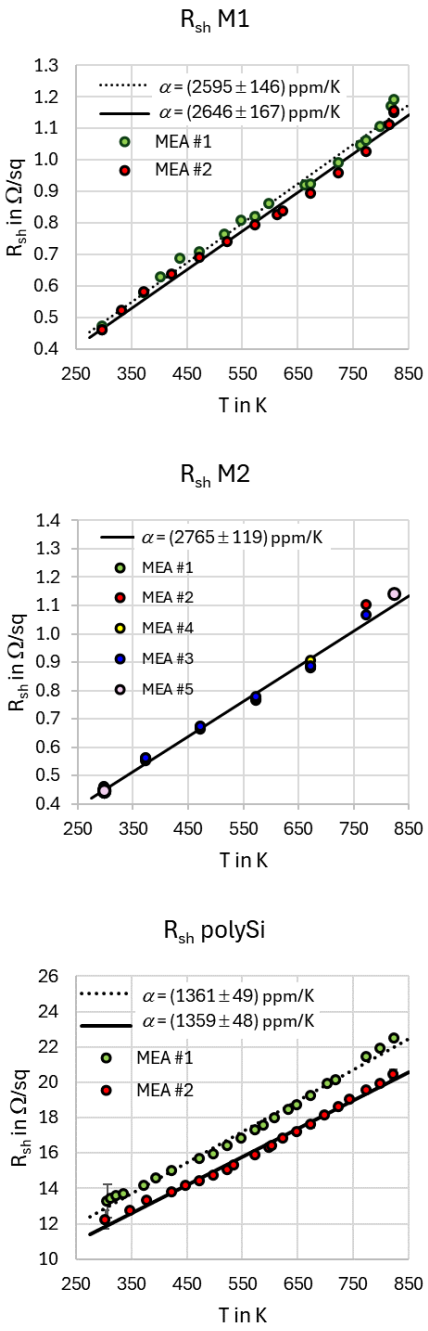

Figure 6: $R_{sh}(T)$ for a) M1, b) M2, and c) polySi MEA test structures together with lines fitted according to (2). Legends give corresponding values of α.

in agreement with physics-based modelling. Contact resistances to highly doped SiC regions and their dependence on temperature were also quantified. Based on these results, first compact models for these ohmic and contact resistances can be set up and parametrized which supports simplified design optimization of integrated circuits with this technology for operation over a broad range of temperatures.

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