

1 Informal Ways and Means, in Competition with Formal Patterns, 2 in Modern Turkey

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 Turkey, is undergoing a fast modernization process on one hand; but people still cling to
9 traditional ways, on the other hand. This dual character makes it difficult for the formal and
10 informal aspects of social life to go in parallel. There is a gap between anything officially on
11 paper and the actual social reality of the real world out there.

12

13 **Index terms**— tradition; traditional; formal; informal, modern.

14 **1 Introduction**

15 Official structures and policies in a society may not necessarily coincide with the unwritten informal practices.
16 Sometimes full or partial overlapping does occur. But sometimes formal and informal tendencies may be
17 diametrically opposite and even come to compete with each other (1).

18 For a country which has not attained complete modernization, conflict between official structures/ directions
19 and traditional values and virtues of all sorts, is even more prominent. Even in a modernized country certain
20 sections like ghettos of some subcultures display strong distrust against almost anything official.

21 In Turkish folk tales, which are like mirror images of historical and cultural realities, the suspicion towards
22 anything official, can easily be detected:

23 The people and the government appear to be two distinct, opposite ends. When an old woman finds a
24 useful talisman, the government-men deprive her of this talisman by force. The people do not believe that the
25 government-men will act in justice. The sentry, the watchman of the quarter, the village-chief, the executioner
26 can all be bribed and led astray (Tu?rul 1969: 109-110).

27 **2 II. The Visible and the Invisible Issues**

28 Official numbers (2) , though they look good and "scientific" in print, are not always as telltale as a deep
29 qualitative inquiry when it comes to investigate social aspects of a given society. Especially a traditional society,
30 when it comes to detect problems and delicate (heikel / épineux) areas, it is not easy to find honest informants
31 (3) and the researcher at best should rely on his own observations and Feststellungs rather than given out replies.

32 It is said that Turkish people do not talk, but rather they mumble when it comes to express their complaints
33 ("Türk insan? söylemez, söylenir"). Indeed, in all tradition-rich societies the grapevine absorbs the complaints.
34 Gossip continues in full swing. But nobody stands up to make a straightforward proclaim.

35 As Larson (1973: 31) puts it, even if a sociologist would have designed excellent measurement devices he
36 couldn't have applied them extensively due to ethical and other limitations.

37 Those "other limitations", when they come into play, could be of considerable weight. It is almost impossible
38 to "extract" the genuine attitudes and the real thoughts of subjects in some kinds of research. Financial issues
39 are usually taboo, for instance. Turks are proud people and addressing a research question may invoke the feeling
40 of being given an exam. The fear that one's ignorance will be revealed is a horrible experience for some.

41 Here is a case history: In 1975 a social research was designed by Bo?az?i University in some shanty towns
42 (bidonvilles) of ?stanbul. Some students were employed in the project. One of them was a friend of mine, Erkan.
43 One of the questions was "what do you understand from the word 'référendum?'" The injured prides of many

44 respondents put Erkan, a sensible young person, in an uneasy position. Sometimes he had to say "I, personally,
45 don't know this word, either!"

46 One of the respondents whom he visited was a grocery owner. To the question "what is your monthly income?"
47 the man gave the reply with a derisory sum! Erkan insisted for a realistic figure, which the respondent firmly
48 refused to say so. Finally, the grocer "fainted" and the researcher had to take his leave! One of his respondents
49 had been an army sergeant. Erkan later commented with a sigh of relief that while questioning this sergeant, he
50 had felt as if he had been at home. (To the hypothetical question "in whose place would you wish to be?", the
51 sergeant had replied as follows: "I wish I were a well-known labor leader, somebody in charge of a big union!").

52 As another case history regarding the authenticity of answers to a questionnaire, I remember the following
53 incident: While a lycée student (at Robert College), one Monday morning in the big assembly hall right after the
54 recitation of the National Anthem, they distributed to us questionnaire forms about the food in the cafeteria.
55 One of the questions was open-ended: "If there are no changes in the existing food varieties, would this affect
56 your future attendance to the cafeteria?"

57 The student sitting next to me wrote: "No, because I am a scholarship student and I am Obliged to eat there".
58 (I, also a scholarship student, was glad of the food anyhow). Then the school principal said: "Please put your
59 names on the papers". (We had first had the impression that the answers would be anonymous). Immediately
60 the above-mentioned student excitedly asked for an eraser to soften his reply!

61 3 III. Getting Ahead with Informal Ways

62 It is interesting to note that on a macro-scale this discrepancy between people and the government can be seen
63 in local politics. A certain political party member may stigmatize the opponent party as a "state party", while
64 praising his own as a "nation's party", thereby contrasting state (which represents an official concept) with the
65 nation (which represents the aspirations of plain people).

66 Things set out in written form may assert what is widely different from the actual practices. In the Turkish
67 Law, it is stipulated that any contract / transaction where deceit is involved, is legally null and void. This
68 statement comprises wedding acts also. Now, in reality, in provincial Turkey many would-be grooms lie about
69 their professional, social and financial (4) situations to the would-be brides; just to win those girls! A technician
70 may pose himself as an engineer or a health-official may pose himself as a doctor and so on. (Years ago, in the
71 Çay county of the province of Afyon, a foreman introduced himself as a technician [a technician had higher status
72 than a foreman in the pulp and paper plant where he worked] to the girl's family. The actual technician, his
73 superior, only collaborated with the foreman. He seconded his man and said "he is a technician and I work under
74 him").

75 In primary schools, even two-three decades ago, educational textbooks and magazines used to describe a family
76 as "consisting of father, mother and children". Now, in village societies those nuclear families are difficult to find
77 even today. Instead, we encounter larger families and even polygyny. The daughter-in-law enters the father-in-
78 law's household, where a lot of manual work awaits her! Anthropologist, Joe E. Pierce narrates the following:
79 [Mahmud's elder brother got married]. "The new bride in Mahmud's home was of some interest to him, for she
80 was always on the run. When there was work in the kitchen to be done, he heard his mother's voice snapping
81 out the word gelin (bride) almost constantly, always followed by a command to do this or that about the house.
82 Thus she ran from morning till night, trying to satisfy her new family and prove that she was a good housewife.
83 This situation would remain unchanged until Mahmud married and brought a new gelin / bride into the house"
84 (Pierce 1964: 43).

85 Again, in primary schools' educational curriculum, a breakfast used to be described as consisting of "cheese,
86 jam or honey, butter and tea" (if not grapefruit juice and caviar etc.). Of course, as time passes, urbanization
87 trends and new developments make those clichés more and more valid. But, especially in former times, those
88 were only didactical aspirations/images and would-be-concepts rather than the commonplace reality: "The step-
89 brother of my maternal grandfather had been a prison-guard in a big city. Once he came to visit my grandfather
90 in Thrace. At the time my mother was a ten-year-old girl (The year was 1942). My mother ?as she would narrate
91 it to me in my childhood years? was quite astonished in the morning to see this "guarduncle" seated at the
92 table (!) in expectation of cheese and jam (!) for the breakfast. My mother's own family ate all the meals on a
93 cloth spread on the floor, in accordance with the traditional provincial Turkish way at the time; and their staple
94 morning food itself was soup, not cheese and jam" (Çaya 1992: ix).

95 Even in the army of today, some mornings they give soup to the soldiers as breakfast. Especially in bivouacs
96 during the fall-maneuvers, rice-soup comes out to be much convenient as a substitute for breakfast, instead of
97 the more detailed tea-butter-jam-cheese combination.

98 IV.

99 4 Informality in Formal Organizational Settings

100 In any given formal institution, too, informal works are always at work. Accordingly, informal leaders are also
101 present along with formal authority figures.

102 Wise leaders (5) can sometimes make the two ends meet in this respect. As late Full General (December 22,

103 1995) pointed out in a leadership conference, informal leaders of an organization must be determined and gained
104 to the cause of the organization (or else, this not being possible, they should be dispensed with).

105 "No collection of men and women who remain together for more than a few hours can remain 'unstructured'.
106 Particularly; if they cooperate; they must develop some form of organization [of their own]. A new entrant may
107 be trained in the technique of the job and in the formal organization of the company but he will neither feel at
108 home nor be accepted by his colleagues until he is familiar with the prevailing attitudes and until other people
109 are confident that he shares them wholeheartedly" (Fraser 1968: 255, 283).

110 Even the way people greet one another may be determined by the unwritten law in a given organization. This
111 greeting aspect alone has tremendous significance for any individual involved there.

112 Groups determine behavior patterns. This begins just from the way the members greet one another. For
113 instance; a person may originate from a group where in the morning each comer shakes hands with the others
114 who had already arrived; while a stranger or an unsympathetic person will solely receive a cool nodding by the
115 head upon encountering with the others. Now, this same person may enter a new group where the procedure is
116 just the other way around! The group members who like one another utter one another a quick hello, while they
117 shake the hand of any stranger or unsympathetic person. He who does not understand the 'system' of the group
118 and so cannot quickly adapt, will suffer under the actual circumstances. The group repulses him. Being gnawed
119 at by tiny bits of behavior against him, the new-comer develops aggressive feelings and is soon stigmatized as an
120 intruder or nuisance (Störenfried / semeur). Of course the 'secret law of the group' is not restricted to forms of
121 greeting or any other formalities (Äußerlichkeiten / Förmlichkeit) (Kolle 1967: 114, 115).

122 "How do we know about [such] informal configurations? Usually one knows something about them in one's
123 own local community, neighborhood, club, or professional organization. This knowledge is gained by personal
124 observation of who visits whom, who avoid each other, the tone of voice in which people speak to each other,
125 how they act when they meet in the street, and a multitude of other hints and suggestions" (Lundberg, Schrag
126 & Larsen 1954: 409).

127 Even the most formal organization, one which just fits the definition of bureaucracy (6) , cannot be totally
128 free from informal elements. A modern army probably resembles the ideal type of bureaucracy described by Max
129 Weber in 1922 more than any other kind of formal organization. (The older armies had a lot of feudal aspects,
130 the fief? in Seljuqs and in Ottomans? were purely feudal institutions. But, even the late Ottoman armies were
131 not purely bureaucratic as far as the number of years in a certain rank etc. was concerned). Even in an army
132 the personality of officers shape the way they apply the strictly definite orders).

133 "The rules, regulations, procedures, and impersonal relationships prescribed by a bureaucracy only rarely
134 correspond with the realities of organizational life; [because] formal organization breeds informal organization.
135 These informal structures provide means by which people bend and break rules, share 'common knowledge',
136 engage in secret behaviors, handle problems, and 'cut corners'. So work relationships are much more than the
137 lifeless abstractions contained on an organizational chart that outlines the official lines of communication and
138 authority...People are tied to the larger group by their membership in primary groups that mediate between them
139 and the formal organization. Further, the impersonality of the bureaucratic arrangements distresses many people,
140 and they search for warmth, rapport, and companionship in the work setting through informal relationships. In
141 brief, formal organizations do not work strictly by the book" (Zanden 1993: 116-118).

142 In some detective movies "the tip of the iceberg" is reflected, regarding the effectiveness of informal ways even
143 in the pursuit of formal objectives. The hero of the movie; a humane, understanding detective; may establish
144 rapport with prostitutes, drug sellers or small thieves! He is very lenient towards those tiny out-laws. He
145 sometimes even literally protects them! All this is for the sake of revealing a more serious crime like a case of a
146 horrible murder or for gaining information in order to prevent a would-be assassination.

147 The above sociological considerations are even more valid in traditional societies like Turkey. Group
148 membership counts more for a Turk than it does for a European. Here, individuality is despised by the general
149 community and group conformities are attached much more importance than in an industrial, truly urbanized
150 society.

151 "[In Turkey] consultation and cooperative effort rather than individual initiative are the accepted norms
152 of behavior. Primary emphasis is placed upon the family and kin. It is only with some difficulty that the
153 traditionoriented villager trusts and cooperates with individuals and groups outside the village context, including
154 the national government" (Roberts et al. 1970: 168, 169).

155 It is true that Turkish society is a young society and the change is an accordingly fast and on-going process.
156 But; how could any society be analyzed without considering its traditional and historical traits?

157 Whether a work place or a school, whatever organization we consider, the new-comers (novices) all have
158 their own worlds with their own popular culture, slang, jokes and informal value understandings, to begin with.
159 Further, the prevalent informal culture within the organization is acquired and processed, all merging together
160 and building up a large volume of unwritten codes, which is at least as heavy as the official regulations. The
161 individual complies with them as much as with the official regulations in all his actions within the organization.
162 The formal and informal words just co-exist (7) .

8 : [LOOK AT] THE SLEEVES OF HIS VEST / SHINING IS HIS
EMBROIDERY / ALI-THE-NOMAD IS COMING / LET THE ROADS OF
[THE PROVINCE OF]

163 **5 V. Informal Codes could be of More Noble Nature**

164 It is true that informal codes mostly reflect puerile and hedonistic desires and make fun of serious commitments.
165 Anything official and serious is "corny" and one should just pretend to respect them. Nevertheless, sometimes
166 informal values could be originating from loyalty towards a high, noble cause.

167 As retired infantry colonel, author and history researcher Ferit Erden Boray (8) explained (Feb.23, 2002);
168 Fevzi Çakmak Pasha, while still a young cadet in Kuleli ?dadisi was one day imprisoned there. While in jail, he
169 wrote on the wall the following sentence: "He who dos not enter here (this jail) is a donkey; but he who enters
170 here more than once, is more than a donkey, being also the offspring of a donkey (un âne, de père en fils)!"
171 ("Buraya (nezarethaneye) giren e?ek, birden fazla giren e??o?lu e?ek!"). The burgeoning leadership potential of
172 that young lad can be inferred right here! Here is an adolescent who knows what it is to take a lesson from a
173 wrongdoing! This lad was destined to become a marshal in the future, one of the savors of the country in the
174 War of Independence. He was not to become just any officer! Informal attempts might aim for the betterment
175 of a conceived wrongdoing, which the official view is not in a position to defy. This was the case of the French
176 resistance works in World War II. They were not complying with the orders of Marshal Pétain, the official prime
177 minister, who was lenient towards or even collaborating with the invading Nazis.

178 In a similar fashion, in the Ottoman State, during the turbulent times following the signature of Mudros
179 Armistice in 1918, Kuleli Military High School's cadets were more aware of the awful situation of the country
180 than those holding offices in the Sublime Port. Their extraordinary vision can be seen in the following extract,
181 where a retired colonel in 1956 narrates the contribution of Kuleli High School' (?dadi) to the National Struggle:

182 In evenings we cadets used to shout in chorus: "Long live the Sultan!" (Padi?ah?m çok ya?a!). I don't know
183 how it happened and who instigated or suggested the idea; but somehow; one evening we just found ourselves
184 shouting this rhetoric in a different manner. We elongated some the uttering of some words and it came to
185 sound as if we were saying "The Sultan upside down!" ("Padi?ah?m ba? a?a??") (9) This was an extraordinary
186 event that time! Indeed, though the administration noticed it and warned us about it, this same lullaby went
187 on the following evenings. The time coincides with the dissipation of the school. Some of us then took shelter
188 in old boats around Kâ??thane and some of us were sent home (Türk Kahramanl??? III, 1956: 174-175). [The
189 narration is mentioned to be based on the information taken from the memories of a retired colonel. In the full
190 text, the narrator also refers to a few military teachers who implicitly supported the developments in Anatolia.
191 Those courageous men were simply risking the capital punishment, in those days!].

192 In the above text what is conspicuous at first sight is the modern-minded school-trained-officer's (10)
193 understanding of honor and duty. According to them, in case of a dilemma, loyalty is directed to a higher
194 entity, the Motherland, rather than a sheer person, the Sultan himself.

195 So, there is no paradox to be seen here. After all, such "informal" patriotic actions taken up were stemming
196 from modern minds shaped at the very best schools for those times.

197 **6 VI.**

198 **7 Military as a Modernization-Motivator**

199 Since Selim the Third and Mahmud the Second, the reform movements in the Ottomans had been yielding their
200 fruit, especially in the field of education. (Abdulhamid the Second, too, in spite of his paranoidlike suspicious
201 personality and political repression, gave permission to the educator-minded pashas to further the schooling
202 activities in the western style. As Sherif Mardin notes, unlike politics, sulfuric acid, was not conceived by this
203 sultan as a relevant/immediate threat for himself.).

204 During the following Turkish War of Independence, in para-military units (mobile militia groups), the loyalty
205 of the men went to actual people (instead of high ideals) in accordance with the eastern type of blind obedience
206 (biat etmek) tradition. These men were full of fighting spirit. Some secondary leaders were formerly sheer outlaws
207 and now they might as well fight against the oncoming Greek Army.

208 As a matter of fact, the reconstruction of a regular army was a crucial turning point. (The army had been
209 discharged in accordance with the clauses stipulated by the Mudros Armistice and only Kâ?m Karabekir Pasha
210 kept his own army corps intact, in the East). Many did not like the idea of a formal army at first but were
211 eventually subdued. In the regular army order and discipline comes first. Display of individuality and flattery of
212 personal egos is accordingly frowned upon.

213 The very highest commandant in a particular place on a certain occasion may only enjoy a rightlyplaced subtle
214 compliment at most (11) . But he cannot and should not allow his own praising and glorification to propagate
215 in folk ballads like for instance that of the folk hero and warlord Yörük Ali Efe (1895-1951)

216 **8 : [Look at] the sleeves of his vest / Shining is his embroidery
217 / Ali-the-Nomad is coming / Let the roads of [the province
218 of]**

219 Ayd?n open up!" (Cepkeninin kollar? / par?ld?yor pullar? / Yörük de Ali geliyor / Açı?l, Ayd?n yollar?!).

220 Coincidence between formal and informal ways is, accordingly, best observed in the military institution, in
221 Turkey. The hypocrisy is of the least amount, if any. Paperwork is achieved in a manner which really would
222 correspond with the reality, more than in any other establishment.

223 The military constitutes an all-compassing environment where almost no privacy is available for the individual.
224 For instance, where else can the authorities periodically examine the pubic-hair and armpit shaves (12) of their
225 men? Maybe in no other organization the needs of the people are so thoroughly recognized and admitted by the
226 authorities! Even officially accepted strip-tease shows are organized in the army for the men from time to time.
227 A marginal journalist in an article depicts a "cross-section" of such army practices. Though he uses a sarcastic
228 style in his descriptions, a lot of factual information is to be found there:

229 Male children all of whose health problems and needs are taken care of by their commanders, thus receive an
230 excellent reward. Once every two to three months, a provincial belly-dancer makes her show in front of a whole
231 brigade. Screams arise for the woman to remove her clothing. Everybody encourages her, shouting like lunatics
232 "open! open!" The experienced ritual resembles more a lynching session (Türker 1998: 6).

233 Since orders are to be executed no matter what, the crucial point is to issue logical orders which can be
234 literally carried out. With this realistic understanding and mentality, the High-Command does his best to be
235 flexible whenever it is ever possible, allowing a peaceful compromise to happen between what is formal and what
236 is informal.

237 Anthropologist Pierce lets us know that in rural regions in 1960's even the time of the military service (a must
238 from which there can be no escape) could be somewhat negotiated [In urban centers this was never possible. The
239 "contingency approach" is easy to recognize at first sight].

240 Pierce describes all the aspects of a central Anatolian village (Demirciler near Kaman, K?r?ehir) through the
241 eyes of a ten-year-old boy, Mahmud. One day a jeep brings two officers to the village. The officers want to see
242 the village-chief, the muhtar.

243 "The Muhtar shook hands with his two guests and walked away, as they resumed their seats to await his
244 return. He was on his way to visit the fathers of the men who would be eligible to be called up for service that
245 fall. Mahmud followed him, remaining quietly outside each house while the Muhtar talked within, until they
246 reached his own home. There he followed the old man inside and listened to the conversation with his father
247 concerning his older brother". "The father agreed, but asked that the Muhtar come back in a few days to discuss
248 the possibility of having his son held over until the following year. The Muhtar agreed that he would at least
249 come back and discuss the matter, and then went on about the job of informing the other family heads" (Pierce
250 1964:41). [A few days later Mahmud's father renews his "strong plea for his son's being deferred until the next
251 year; this the Muhtar accepts". [The author hereby stresses that birth days of these young men are known only
252 approximately. He also describes the physical examinations of the youths by the army doctors].

253 VII.

254 9 Conclusion

255 In Turkey, discrepancy between the actual reality and the "reality" represented on paper is indeed present. This
256 is to be attributed to the highly rich traditional aspects of the country. Increasing urbanization is expected to
257 balance out the differences in the future. Indeed, while for many years the growing shanty towns (bidonvilles)
258 were ignored by officials and euphemistically referred on paper merely as "unwarranted" constructions; eventually
259 the problem was to be recognized and referred to, by its true name. This alone is a sign like many others that,
260 at least an attempt to confront the formerly avoided issues is long under way.

261 Notes 1) A prominent inconsistency between the registered and the unregistered economy, apparently a vast
262 topic to deal with, is beyond the scope of this article. 2) At this point one might as well agree with the giant
263 sociologist Georges Gurvitch (1891-1965). He regarded sociology as an explaining field. He hated numbers
264 and technical obsessions. He even used pejorative terms like test-mania and quantity-craze (paraphrased from
265 Mitchell 1979: 93).

266 3) The idea of speaking his piece of mind upon perception of some wrongdoing is a sheer peculiarity of the
267 most modern societies. Even there, courageous and resolute people, few in number, are up to such an act. They
268 are the ones who can differentiate between betrayal (or denunciation or spying) and whistle blowing. 4) In D.
269 H. Lawrence's unforgettable novel, Sons and Lovers, the newly-married bride (Mrs. Morel) discovers the next
270 day the bills in the suit pockets of her husband, Mr. Morel (a coal miner prone to drink). She then realizes
271 that the furniture was only bought on credit and the debt must be later paid! 5) My own mother, Makbule
272 Han?m, a retired primaryschool teacher, had her own way of doing this: While choosing the class-head-student,
273 instead of the more common practice of picking out a studious child, she used to appoint a natural leader to this
274 "post". A "tough-boy", automatically respected by his peers, when endowed with formal privileges, invariably
275 reconciled obedience to authority with hedonistic puerile tendencies. On one hand; he became more mature now
276 that a responsibility was given him; on the other hand; on the part of the class; defying this boy would also mean
277 defying an admired fellow class-mate, instead of meaning a revolt against the administration. 6) "The larger and
278 more complex a formal organization becomes, the greater is the need for a chain of command to coordinate the
279 activities of its members. This need is fulfilled by a bureaucracy, a hierarchical authority structure that operates
280 under explicit rules and procedures. it is the most effective means ever designed of making a large organization
281 work. Sociologists therefore use the word bureaucracy in a neutral sense, without the 12) The Turkish-Moslem

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282 tradition foresees such a shave. In the army, hygienic purposes also come into play. The officers carry out such
283 inspections, following the simple order "open the rows!" (rompez les rangs! / s?ra aç?l, mar?!). (In addition, lack
284 of privacy and the power of the authority is also stressed, by the practice). 13) Hygienic considerations also gain
285 outmost importance in collective places. (Steinbeck's novel In Dubious Battle is about apple-collecting American
286 labors [in 1930s] who get on strike because of low wages. One big trump of the employers is to rationalize
287 hygienic issues and disperse the strikers on the grounds that their camp is liable to endemic diseases. The labor
288 leaders accordingly arrange for sanitary installations [water treatment, field toilets etc.] under the supervision of
289 a physician, who is sympathizing for their cause).

Appendix: Further Visual Supplement [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)



Figure 1: Fig. 1 :

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Figure 2: Fig. 2 &Fig. 3 :



Figure 3:

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[Note: overtones it usually has in ordinary speech [meaning red tape]"(Robertson 1979: 149). 7)]

Figure 4:

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292 www.GlobalJournals.org

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297 [Aktulga (ed.) (1995)] , D Aktulga . Kara Harp Okulu (ed.) 1995. December 22. Ankara. (Liderlik Üstüne [On
298 Leadership] (conference. War College of Land Forces)

299 [4 : When it comes to raising children, many mothers cling to the old practices, even if some of them contrast with the advice pro
300 4 : *When it comes to raising children, many mothers cling to the old practices, even if some of them contrast*
301 *with the advice provided by modern medical authorities,*

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