Islamic-Arab Morals, Virtues and Characters In Arabic-Tamil Novel "Madinatun Nuhas" Or "Tamirapattanam"

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Abstract

Tamirappattanam, also known as Madinatun Nuhas, is a unique piece of literature. It is the first Islamic novel written in India, penned in 1858 by Imam Al Aroos. This novel is unique in its content and script, utilizing the Islamic-Arwi or Arabic-Tamil script and the Dravidian-Tamil script. This research article conducts a comprehensive study of Tamirappattanam, examining its style, contents, and the author himself. It analyzes this novel, highlighting its uniqueness and role as a pioneering Islamic novel. This article aims to establish a position for Islamic novels and literature, tracing the initial endeavors in India. With its deep roots in the history of Islam, Islamic literature has always been a source of education and inspiration. This novel, Tamirappattanam, is a prime example. It weaves historical, legendary, and literary characters together in a narrative infused with Islamic themes and values. The novel explores the unique power and dominion of Prophet Sulaiman and the grandeur of the Abbasid Caliphate. It portrays Allah's bounty and supremacy while emphasizing the importance of Islamic morals and principles. The author skillfully combines art and literature to create a work that entertains and imparts Islamic teachings to the Ummah. Through the use of real historical figures and legends, the novel presents a vivid representation of Islamic culture and values. It balances sentiment and thought, offering a harmonious relationship between faith and moral values. Tamirappattanam is a significant contribution to Islamic literature, showcasing the artistic prowess of the author in crafting a narrative that educates and inspires readers. It serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of Islamic principles in shaping individual lives and society as a whole.

Keywords: Arab; Novel; Islamic Literature; Tamirappattanam; Tamil; Imam Al-Aroos

INTRODUCTION

Tamirappattanam, an Arabic-Tamil novel authored by Syed Mohamed Al-Imam Al Aroos in 1858 (Aroos., 1900, 1979), holds the distinction of being India's first Islamic novel (Ganesan, 1975; Seenivasan, 1980). This article sheds light on the study of this novel and its author, Imam Al Aroos. It analyzes earlier novels, specifically focusing on Tamirappattanam as the inaugural Islamic novel. This study establishes Madinatun Nuhas as the first Islamic novel. This captivating work blends historical, legendary, and literary characters to create a narrative that is infused with Islamic themes and values. Set in the backdrop of the Abbasid Caliphate, the novel explores the power and dominion of Prophet

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Sulaiman, while emphasizing the importance of Islamic morals and principles.Imam al-Aroos masterfully combines art and literature in "Tamirappattanam" or "Madinatun Nuhas" to not only entertain readers but also to impart Islamic teachings to the *Ummah*. The novel serves as a medium to present the richness of Islamic culture and values, drawing inspiration from real historical figures and legends. It strikes a delicate balance between sentiment and thought, weaving together faith and moral values in a harmonious manner. Through this introduction, we embark on a journey into the world of "Tamirappattanam," delving into its intricate plot, well-developed characters, and the profound messages it conveys. The novel stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of Islamic principles, offering readers a deeper understanding of the faith while captivating their imaginations with a captivating narrative.

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The author, Syed Mohamed Imam al-Aroos, would have conducted research on Islamic history, legends, and teachings related to Prophet Sulaiman and other relevant characters. This research would have included studying religious texts, historical accounts, and cultural references to ensure accuracy and authenticity in the novel. The author would have employed various storytelling techniques to engage readers and create a captivating narrative. This may include the use of foreshadowing, suspense, character development, and descriptive language to bring the story to life(Ibn Jinny, 2006). The methodology likely involved carefully weaving Islamic values, morals, and teachings into the narrative. This would have required a deep understanding of Islamic principles and an intention to convey them effectively through the story and characters. The author may have employed literary devices such as metaphors, symbolism, and imagery to enhance the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the novel. These elements contribute to the overall impact and enjoyment of the reading experience. Overall, the methodology employed in creating "Tamirappattanam" likely combined meticulous research, storytelling techniques and integration of Islamic values to deliver a compelling and impactful fiction. The objective of this study seeks to establish a position for Islamic novels and literature, tracing their initial endeavors in India and emphasizing their deep roots in Islamic history and culture.

METHOD

The findings from the prevalent problems faced in formulating the research revolve around: historical Documentation: Given the historical context of the novel's creation in 1858, accessing reliable documentation, manuscripts, and historical accounts pertaining to both the author and the novel itself could have posed challenges. Cultural and Linguistic Understanding: Understanding the nuances of Arabic-Tamil (Jasim, 2013; Jasim, Jasim Ali and Jasim, 2001), as well as the cultural contexts in which the novel was written, might have presented difficulties(Lado, 1976; Muhammadu Sainulabdeen et al., 2022; Sainulabdeen, Z. M., & Shathifa, 2021; Shathifa, M. C. S. & Zunoomy, 2022; Zubair, 2010). Literary Analysis: Conducting a thorough literary analysis of a novel that intertwines historical, legendary, and literary characters while conveying Islamic themes and values requires a deep understanding of various literary techniques and Islamic teachings. Cultural Sensitivity and Representation: Ensuring cultural sensitivity and accurate representation of Islamic culture, history, and values within the novel and its analysis would have been crucial but potentially challenging, especially considering the diverse interpretations and understandings of Islam(Qutb, 2000).

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The purpose of "Tamirappattanam" is multi-facetadipptamiled. Firstly, it serves as a work of art and literature, providing readers with an engaging and captivating story. The novel incorporates elements of adventure, suspense, and fantasy, immersing readers in a world of historical events and legendary characters. However, the novel goes beyond mere entertainment. It carries a profound purpose of imparting Islamic teachings and values to the readers. Through the portrayal of Prophet Sulaiman and the exploration of Islamic history and legends, "Tamirappattanam" aims to educate and inspire the Ummah.

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The novel strives to emphasize the importance of Islamic morals, ethics, and principles, showcasing the power and dominion of Allah and highlighting the consequences of straying from righteousness. It aims to instill a sense of piety, faith, and reverence in readers, encouraging them to lead a righteous and virtuous life.Furthermore, "Tamirappattanam" seeks to bridge the gap between art and religion, demonstrating that literature can be a powerful medium for conveying religious teachings. It aims to harmonize the artistic and literary aspects of the novel with its underlying Islamic themes, offering readers a unique and enriching experience.In summary, the purpose of "Tamirappattanam" is to entertain, educate, and inspire readers, while promoting Islamic values and principles through a captivating narrative. The methodology used in the creation of "Tamirappattanam" likely involved extensive research, literary craftsmanship, and storytelling techniques.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Islamic-Arab Morals, Virtues and Characters In Tamirapattanam

General observations that can be made:

- 1. Historical and Literary Integration: The novel incorporates elements of historical events and figures, such as the Umayyad Caliphate, Prophet Sulaiman, and other legendary characters. This integration allows the author to create a narrative that merges historical facts with literary imagination.
- 2. Islamic Moral and Cultural Values: The novel aims to convey Islamic moral and cultural values through its characters and events. It highlights concepts such as the supremacy of Allah, the consequences of going astray, the importance of following divine instructions, and the significance of adhering to the will and guidance of Allah.
- 3. Adventure and Exploration: "Tamirappattanam" follows an adventurous team on a mission to search for the copper bottles (Kamaakimils) in which Prophet Sulaiman imprisoned the genies. The plot advances through the team's journey, encounters with various characters, and the exploration of the mythical Copper City.
- 4. Symbolism and Imagery: The author employs vivid descriptions and symbolic elements to create a rich and imaginative world within the novel. This includes descriptions of the Copper City, its towers, tablets, pavilions, and the contents within them. Symbolism and imagery contribute to the overall aesthetic appeal and depth of the story.
- 5. Islamic Education and Entertainment: The novel serves as a means of educating readers about Islamic history, legends, and teachings while simultaneously entertaining them through the storytelling. By combining historical and fictional elements, the author aims to engage the readers and instill Islamic values in an engaging manner(Al-Kalil, 1981; Zubair, 2003).

The originality of "Tamirappattanam" by Syed Mohamed Imam al-Aroos lies in its unique combination of historical events, legendary characters, and imaginative storytelling

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within an Islamic framework. While the novel draws inspiration from historical figures and Islamic traditions, it weaves them together in a fictional narrative that incorporates elements of adventure, exploration, and moral lessons. The author's use of real historical characters, such as the Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan and Prophet Sulaiman, adds a sense of authenticity to the story. By incorporating these figures into a fictional narrative, the author creates a distinct blend of history, legend, and imagination.

Additionally, the novel's exploration of the mythical Copper City, the search for the sealed copper bottles (Kamaakimils), and the encounters with genies and other supernatural beings showcase the author's creative approach to storytelling. This imaginative world and its integration with Islamic teachings provide a unique and original perspective on the themes of faith, morality, and the power of Allah. While the novel may draw inspiration from various sources and traditions, its originality lies in the author's ability to create a narrative that is both rooted in Islamic history and culture while offering an entertaining and thought-provoking reading experience.

Islamic Literature

Islamic literature encompasses qualities that embody Islamic culture, values, and philosophy. It reflects the Islamic principles found in the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)(Bakshi Hazrat 'Alī Ahmed and Rizwānur Raḥmān, 2012). The material of such Islamic narratives comprises the values and history of the Prophet's Companions and their stories. Islamic literature can be categorized based on countries, such as Indian Islamic literature, Iraqi Islamic literature, and so on(Al Amrani, 2005; Al Ghuzaizi, 2000; Al- Kilani, 1985, 1987). However, the content of Islamic literature often shares common values and codes across Islamic countries. It originates from the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet PBUH. Islamic literature is an art that incorporates elements and qualities from various world literatures, with a specific emphasis on Islamic values and culture.

Islamic literature is not confined to Arab countries but encompasses Islamic countries, even if their literature is written in their respective languages, such as Turkish, Canadian, and others. Numerous Islamic writers and critics endeavor to provide their perspectives and insights into Islamic literature. Najeeb al-Kilani defines Islamic literature is not bound by inflexible rules or detached from reality. It is not a discourse or sermon solely reliant on rules and texts. Instead, it comprises valuable images adorned with elements that enhance their beauty and impact. Islamic literature consists of beautiful, artistic, and impactful expressions that arise from real Muslims. These expressions become genuine representations of life, humanity, and the universe. They align with Muslims' beliefs and principles, serving as sources of benefit and enjoyment. They evoke emotions and thoughts while motivating action (Al- Kilani, 1987). Emad Aldin Khalil, an Islamic writer and critic, highlights that Islamic literature is an "aesthetic expression influenced by words, providing an Islamic perspective of the universe." Islamic critics should fully comprehend the essence of Islamic literature and not be swayed solely by their enthusiasm for Islamic knowledge (Al-Kalil, 1981).

Characteristics of Islamic Literature

Islamic literature not only expresses the beliefs and principles of Muslims and presents artistic and impactful expressions, but it also encompasses the translation of the universe, humanity, and life. It provides both enjoyment and benefit. Islamic literature

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stimulates the thoughts and emotions of readers, motivating them to take action. It serves as an expression of life, humanity, and the universe within the framework of Islam, incorporating aesthetic value. It is clear and independent, acknowledging the existence of other worldviews that may align with Islamic values and culture.

Islamic literature showcases Islamic culture and values, drawing concepts from the principles and teachings of Islam while also recognizing and appreciating the artistic value of a work. It combines art and literature, seeking to strike a balance between emotions and intellect. It works towards harmonizing the relationship between Muslim values and faith. Such literature does not compromise or display confusion about the fundamentals of the Muslim faith.

Tamil, Arabic-Tamil, and Islamic Tamil Literature

The cultural relationship between Tamil Nadu and Arab countries can be traced back to the early centuries of the Christian era, established through commercial contacts. The visits of spiritual leaders and Islamic preachers contributed to the expansion of Islam's influence in Tamil Nadu, leading to linguistic connections between these two communities(Abdullah, 2009; Al-Fozan, 1989; Al-Haaj, 2004; Al-Mursafee, 1982; Anees, 1975; Waafi, 2004). Both Islam and Christianity effectively utilized the Tamil language as a medium for propagation(Raj, 2008). Since Islam is closely tied to the Arabic and Persian languages, given that its origins can be traced to regions where these languages were spoken, it is natural to find traces of their influence in Islamic Tamil literature(Abu-Mansour, 1996; Ahana, M. R. F., Aliyar, A. B. M., & Zunoomy, 2022; Ajmal, Khan, 1985; Al-Musarava, 2017; Kokan, 1960; Shathifa, M. C. S. & Zunoomy, 2022). The linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of Islamic Tamil genres should be understood in this context.

During the medieval period, Muslims in vara Nadu were primarily familiar with speaking Tamil but may not have been proficient in writing in the Tamil script(Arunachalam, 1980; Seenivasan, 1999). However, they were able to read the Quran in Arabic script, as they possessed the ability to pronounce and read the Arabilughac alphabet (Saiegh-Haddad, E., & Henkin-Roitfarb, 2014). Consequently, Tamil scholars knowledgeable in Arabic began writing books on Islamic Tamil literature, employing the Arabic script(Imam, A. T., & Alaraif, 2017; Karuņākaran, K., Jeyā, 1997; Kholisin, K., Tohe, A., & Dariyadi, 2022). These books are known as works of Arabic-Tamil literature in the literary history of Tamils (Nuhmān, 2003). This literary tradition is referred to as Arabic-Tamil literature(Arunachalam, 1980; Muhammed Rishwan, 2013; Umar., 1997) (Zubair, 2015a) (Iwaz, Sami and Sayeed Hussain, 2009; Jameel, 2010). The introduction of another language into a particular language and the process of adopting foreign words into a language led to the emergence of english a hybrid language (Ashour, 2017; Faiq, Aseel Muhammad and Israa, 2017) (Ali, 2012; Nuhman, 2002; Salih, 2012, n.d.; Subramanian, 1998; Suntharesan, 2013; Tschacher Torsten, 2001; Yaus, 2014). This phenomenon prompted the study of cultural transmission within bilingual communities. However, the inter-lingual influences between Semitic-Arabic and Dravidian-Tamil languages did not hinder the growth and development of Tamil language and literature(Dhanavendan, K., & Raja, 2016). The linguistic elements of these languages are intertwined and inseparable from one another(Ad-dheen., 1985) (Zubair, 2015b).

Novels in Tamil Literature

In Tamil literature, several early novels hold significance. Here are some examples: "Prathapa Mudaliar Charithiram" (1857, published in 1879) by Mayuram Vedanayagam Pillai. "Tamirapattanam or Madinatun Nuhas" (1858, published in 1900) by Syed Muhammad Imam al-Aroos. "Asanbay Charithiram" by Siddi Levvai Maraikayar (published in 1885). "Suguna Sundari" (published in 1887) by Mayuram Vedanayagam Pillai. "Prema Kalaavadiyam" (published in 1893) by Su. Vai. Guruswamy Sharma. "Mohanaangi" (published in 1895) by Ti.Ta.Saravana Muthupillai. "Kamalaambal Charithiram" (published in 1896) by P.R. Rajam Ayyar. "Padmavathi Charithiram" (published in 1898) by A. Madhavaiyya. "Prathapa Mudaliar Charithiram" is considered the first Tamil novel, written in 1857 and published in 1879. It marked a significant shift from poetry to prose in Tamil literature. The story revolves around the protagonist, Prathapa Mudaliar, and his experiences (Zubair, 2015a) "Kamalaambal Charithiram" by Rajamyyeer from Vathalakundu, written in the later part of the nineteenth century, depicts the lives of people in a realistic manner. The author, who worked for the Tamil daily Dinamani, was known for advocating women's emancipation and social reforms (Zubair, 2015a). While there is debate about the exact year of publication for some novels, "Prathapa Mudaliar Charithiram" is widely acknowledged as the first Tamil novel, followed "Kamalaambal Charithiram" and "Padmavathi by Charithiram." "Tamirapattanam or Madinatun Nuhas" is the first historical novel in Tamil literature. Written by Syed Muhammad Imam al-Aroos, it was published in 1900, two years after the author's passing.

Author Imam al-Aroos

Syed Mohamed Imam Al-Aroos (1816-1898) was a renowned scholar, writer, teacher, preacher, and reformer of his time. Born in 1816 in Kayalpattinam, Tamil Nadu, he hailed from the family of Shaykh Saadaqatulla Appa(Shuyab, 1993). Imam al-Aroos authored 82 major works in Arabic and Tamil, covering various subjects. Some of his notable works include "Minhatu Sarandib fi Mawlidil Habib" and "Mawahibuz Zayn" in Arabic, as well as "Talai Fatiha" in Tamil. From a young age, Imam al-Aroos received religious education and memorized the entire Quran before the age of ten. Shuaib relates that he earned his livelihood through a hardware business in Madurai, later expanding to Kilakkarai (Shuaib 1993 558). He was entrusted with the Madrasatul-Aroosiyya, an office he inherited from his teacher Kilakkarai Tayka Sahib. He expanded the scheme of free boarding and lodging at the madrasa, gaining the attention of the Nawwab of Arcot, Ghulam Ghouse Khan Bahadur Walajah V.

Imam al-Aroos travelled extensively throughout India, Sri Lanka, and various Arab countries, including Mecca and Medina . He played a crucial role in establishing over 350 mosques in Sri Lanka and some in India (Ajmal, Khan, 1985; Mahroof M M M, 1995). In addition to his contributions, he built a library for the madrasa and composed numerous poem s during inaugural ceremonies and appreciating donors of books. He possessed knowledge of Malayalam, Persian, Urdu, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Tamil.

A Study of Legendary Characters in the Novel Tamirappattanam

The novel "Tamirappattanam" includes both real and legendary characters. The real characters mentioned in the novel are (Zubair, 2015a) Abdul Malik bin Marwan, the

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fifth Umayyad Caliph. Talib bin Sahl, a scholar. Abdul Aziz bin Marwan, brother of Abdul Malik. Amir Musa, Governor of Morocco. Shaik Abdul Samad, a guide with extensive knowledge. Harun, Son of Amir Musa.

The novel also features references to legendary characters and others, such as King Zul Qarnayn, Prophet Sulaiman, Nabookath Nasr, Bakshath, Kuwaash (son of Kanaan, son of Shaddad al-Akbar), Kora, Hamam, Canaan, Zul Autad, Tadmurah, Namrood, Pharaoh, Children of Ham, Prophet Khizr, the king of al-Karkar, the people of Mount Tarqoon, and Zubaida (the daughter of the King). The novel is divided into twenty-three chapters, each exploring different aspects of the story. The chapters cover various themes, including adventure, mysteries, and encounters with supernatural beings. Notable chapters include the wonders of the Castle, the Tablet studded with Emerald and Precious Stones, and Amir Musa's seclusion.

The novel "Tamirappattanam" spans 202 pages, with the longest chapter being the eleventh, which runs for 24 pages. Through the study of the novel, one can identify elements such as foreshadowing, conflict, and exposition, typical of a novel structure.

- 1. Theme; the main theme of the novel "Tamirappattanam" is the adventurous quest to search for the Copper Curcubites or Bottles (*Kamaakimils*) in which Prophet Sulaiman imprisoned the genies. The theme revolves around the mission assigned by the Caliph Abdul Malik to a dedicated team led by Amir Musa and their journey to fulfill the caliph's command.
- 2. Plot; the novel "Tamirappattanam" is a historical narrative set during the Abbasid Dynasty. It follows the plot as the team, led by Amir Musa, Talib bin Sahl, and Shaik Abdul Samad, embarks on an adventure to find the Copper Curcubites. The novel intricately weaves together historical events, social realities, and religious aspects to present a captivating storyline. The plot unfolds as the team encounters various incidents, mysteries, and challenges throughout their journey (Zubair, 2015b).
- 3. Setting; the setting of "Tamirappattanam" provides the historical context for the characters and reflects their emotional states. Notably, the setting also symbolizes significant moments in the story, such as the death of Talib bin Sahl. The author skillfully utilizes the setting to enhance the overall atmosphere and convey the depth of the characters' experiences.

Tamirappattanam - Summary of the Novel

The novel begins with the fifth Umayyad Caliph, Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, discussing the legends of Prophet Sulaiman and his dominion over genies, birds, beasts, and the elements. Talib bin Sahl narrates an incident to the caliph, recounting his father's encounter with a copper bottle sealed with Sulaiman's signet. This sparks the caliph's interest in finding these bottles. The caliph orders Talib to request his brother, Abd al-Aziz bin Marwan, to send Amir Musa, the governor of Morocco, to retrieve the Copper Curcubites from the mountains mentioned in Talib's story. Talib is appointed as the messenger to deliver the caliph's letters. With the blessings of the caliph, Talib sets out on his adventure, accompanied by Shaykh Abd al-Samad, a knowledgeable guide (Zubair, 2015a).

The novel progresses as Talib and his team travel through various lands and encounter obstacles along the way. Their journey takes them to Cairo, where they continue their quest to locate the Copper Curcubites. The narrative unfolds with vivid descriptions of their experiences, adventures, and the cultural and religious aspects they

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encounter during their expedition. Overall, the novel "Tamirappattanam" blends historical elements with fictional storytelling, presenting a captivating tale of adventure, mystery, and cultural exploration.

Analysis of "Tamirappattanam"

"Tamirappattanam" is a novel that takes readers on an adventurous journey filled with hardships, terrors, and marvelous encounters. The novel incorporates various elements such as historical events, supernatural beings, cultural exploration, and spiritual themes. It explores the quest of Amir Musa and his team to find the Copper Curcubites, the bottles in which Prophet Sulaiman imprisoned genies.

The setting plays a crucial role in the novel, symbolizing the emotional state of characters and reflecting the grandeur and mystery of the places they visit. The descriptions of the castle, the copper city, and the various bazaars provide vivid imagery that immerses readers in the story. The novel delves into Islamic elements, highlighting the power of Allah, the importance of following His commandments, and the consequences of acting against His will. It explores themes of repentance, redemption, and the limitations of human beings in the face of the divine.

Through the characters' encounters with genies, tombs, and tablets with engraved verses, the author intertwines historical legends and supernatural elements to create a captivating narrative. The story also explores the transient nature of power and wealth, emphasizing the importance of humility and righteousness. The narrative technique adds depth and richness to the storytelling, showcasing the author's literary skills. The use of motifs from different geographical areas adds to the diversity and intrigue of the novel. Overall, "Tamirappattanam" is a complex and multi-layered work that combines adventure, history, spirituality, and cultural exploration. It engages readers with its captivating plot, vivid descriptions, and thought-provoking themes. The novel stands as a testament to the literary prowess of Syed Mohamed Imam al-Aroos and his ability to create a compelling narrative that captures the imagination of the readers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "Tamirappattanam" by Syed Mohamed Imam al-Aroos is a unique and artistically crafted novel that intertwines historical, legendary, and literary characters with Islamic themes and values. The author skillfully incorporates real historical figures such as Prophet Sulaiman and the Abbasid Caliphate, while also presenting a narrative that highlights the bounty of Allah and His supremacy. The novel serves as a means to impart Islamic morals and values to the Ummah (Islamic society) by employing Islamic legends and historical characters. It strives to achieve the social objectives of Islam while maintaining its artistic value. By combining art and literature, the novel successfully represents Islamic culture and values without compromising its artistic merit. The author's approach in "Tamirappattanam" strikes a balance between sentiment and thought, harmonizing the relationship between Muslims' values and their faith. The novel serves as a reminder of the importance of Islamic principles in the lives of individuals and society as a whole. Overall, "Tamirappattanam" stands as a significant work of Islamic literature that not only entertains readers with its captivating storyline but also educates and inspires through its portrayal of Islamic themes, historical characters, and moral teachings.

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