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Sacred Art as Parama-Jnana-Patra: A Comparative Ethnopedagogical Study of the Jejumputan Dance in Pedawa and the Jangkang Dance in Cempaga

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ABSTRACT
This study examines sacred art as *Parama-Jnana-Patra*, a vessel of higher knowledge that preserves and transmits life wisdom through a living cultural medium. Employing a qualitative approach and a comparative case study design, this research examines the structure of sacredness and ethnopedagogical mechanisms in the Jejumputan Dance of Pedawa Village and the Jangkang Dance of Cempaga Village, Buleleng Regency, Bali. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary studies, and were analyzed using cross-case thematic analysis. The findings show that although the two dances embody different philosophical orientations and movement symbolism—fertility in Jejumputan and warrior values in Jangkang—both position children's bodies as the primary medium for transmitting values through observation, imitation, and movement repetition within the framework of the legitimacy of sacred time and space. These findings affirm that sacredness and pedagogical processes are not two separate dimensions but rather an integrated epistemological unity that shapes the character and cultural identity of Bali's younger generation.

KEYWORDS
Sacred Art, Ethnopedagogy, Children's Sacred Dance, *Parama-Jnana-Patra*, Balinese Local Wisdom

Introduction

In contemporary cultural studies, sacred art is no longer understood merely as aesthetic expression, but as a manifestation of a living system of cultural knowledge (*living knowledge*) that is continually reproduced through ritual, tradition, and social interaction (Suharta et al., 2021). Unlike formal knowledge transmitted through educational institutions or texts, the transmission of knowledge in sacred art occurs through individuals' direct involvement in cultural practice, so that bodily experience (*embodied experience*) becomes the primary instrument of

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learning through observation, imitation, movement repetition, and adherence to customary (*adat*) norms (Astari & Sugiarta, 2020). In the context of Balinese Hindu society, sacred art integrates religious, social, philosophical, and cosmological dimensions into everyday life, so that values such as discipline, responsibility, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), *ngayah*, and spiritual awareness are transmitted implicitly through participation in rituals and sacred arts (Sugiartha et al., 2024). This organic mechanism of transmission makes sacred art a space of cultural education that builds individual character while strengthening the social cohesion of the communities that sustain it (Suwardani, 2015).

This significance becomes even more relevant when linked to the concept of *Parama-Jnana-Patra*, which emphasizes the importance of supreme knowledge (*parama jnana*) that is not only grasped cognitively but also embodied in living cultural praxis. *Patra*, within this framework, is understood as the medium or vessel in which such knowledge is stored, transmitted, and revitalized by each generation. Sacred art occupies a strategic position as a form of *patra* because it transforms knowledge through symbols, rites, bodily movement, and ceremonial space rather than through texts or formal institutions, so that knowledge is not only known but also experienced, internalized, and enacted (Suwardani, 2015). The contextual character of local knowledge in fact reinforces its significance as supreme knowledge, since values such as devotion, discipline, and reverence for nature, which arise from particular cultural contexts, retain a relevance that transcends space and time (Duija, 2017).

The involvement of children as principal performers in various sacred dance traditions reveals the close integration of religious and educational functions in Balinese society [6]. In ritual contexts, children are often positioned as representations of holiness and purity, so their presence is not merely an artistic consideration but rests on a philosophical and cosmological foundation that regards children as an important part of maintaining harmony among humans, nature, ancestors, and God (Sugiartha et al., 2024). Nevertheless, studies of sacred art have thus far tended to develop separately from ethnopedagogical studies: research on sacred art is strong in explaining ritual structure and symbolism but has not extensively elaborated how such structures of sacredness function as mechanisms of cultural education; conversely, ethnopedagogical research has succeeded in showing the process of internalizing cultural values but often says too little about the role of sacredness as the epistemological foundation that legitimizes that learning process (Dwipayana, 2023).

This academic gap calls for an approach that brings the perspectives of sacred art and ethnopedagogy together within a single analytical framework. This study therefore focuses on elucidating the structure of sacredness, encompassing the ritual dimension, time of performance, role of performers, and symbolic content, in the Jejumputan Dance of Pedawa Village and the Jangkang Dance of Cempaga Village, while also tracing the ethnopedagogical processes that shape the internalization of character among the children who are the principal performers of both traditions. Furthermore, this study aims to synthesize the points of convergence in fundamental values through a systematic comparison between the structure of sacred meaning and the dynamics of the character-learning processes developed through the two dances, even though the two present different contexts of sanctity and different forms of artistic expression (Ardiyani, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which unites the study of sacred art and the principles of ethnopedagogy within a single coherent conceptual framework, rather than treating them as two separate strands of inquiry. A further contribution lies in the in-depth examination and documentation of two children's dance traditions that have rarely been the object of in-depth comparative research, so that the findings are expected to enrich understanding of how to comprehend, examine, and preserve child-based traditional art forms in Bali.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design of two child-based sacred dance traditions, namely the Jejumputan Dance (Pedawa Village) and the Jangkang Dance (Cempaga Village), Buleleng Regency, Bali. The two villages were purposively selected because of the distinctiveness of their structures of sacredness, movement symbolism, and mechanisms of value transmission. The analysis was conducted on two layers, namely the dimension of sacredness (ritual structure, movement symbolism, sacred space-time, and customary legitimacy) and the ethnopedagogical process (value transmission, character internalization, and children's embodied experience), using four units of comparison: ritual context and sacred calendar, movement structure and meaning, dance performers, and the character values transmitted.

Data were collected through triangulation, namely participant observation from the preparation stage through to the performance, in-depth interviews with customary leaders and child performers, and documentary study (photographs, videos, ritual records, and relevant literature). The data were then analyzed using cross-case thematic analysis to identify patterns of divergence and convergence in values between the two traditions, thereby generating an understanding of sacred art as a vehicle for transmitting *parama jnana* and, at the same time, an ethnopedagogical medium for shaping the character of the younger generation.

Result and Discussion

1. Analytical Framework: Situating Sacredness within the Logic of Parama-Jnana-Patra

Before the two dance cases are described separately, the analytical framework that serves as the common thread of this discussion needs to be clarified. The concept of *Parama-Jnana-Patra*, which can literally be rendered as "vessel of supreme knowledge," is used in this study not merely as a philosophical label but as an analytical category that bridges two domains commonly kept apart in studies of Balinese performing arts: the domain of sacredness as a theological-cosmological phenomenon, and the domain of ethnopedagogy as a phenomenon of character formation grounded in local culture. Drawing on the Balinese Hindu theological concept of the *sekala-niskala* relationship (the visible and the invisible) as elaborated by Titib (2001), as well as the principle of cosmological balance of *Tri Hita Karana*, which serves as a common reference in Balinese cultural studies, this study positions the Jejumputan Dance and the Jangkang Dance as *cultural texts* that simultaneously contain theological, social, and pedagogical structures.

The four elements used as the analytical lens for unpacking the structure of sacredness in both dances (ritual context, time and place, performers, and movement symbolism) are not treated as self-standing descriptive categories but as interlocking layers of meaning. Ritual context provides the cosmological framework; time and place provide spatial-temporal legitimacy, known in Balinese customary concepts as *desa kala patra* (the appropriateness of place, time, and circumstance); the performers (children) provide the symbolic basis of purity and potentiality; and movement symbolism provides the concrete medium through which these values are internalized bodily. This framework is applied consistently in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 to dissect each dance, before the two are brought together in the comparative analysis (4.4) and synthesized in the conceptual model (4.5).

2. The Structure of Sacredness of the Jejumputan Dance in Pedawa Village

2.1 Ritual Context as Cosmological Foundation

The findings show that the Jejumputan Dance cannot be understood outside the context of the *Saba Nguja Benih* ritual, an agrarian ceremony devoted to the worship of Dewi Sri, the manifestation of fertility and source of life in Balinese cosmology. The dance's attachment to this rite affirms an important principle in the Balinese Hindu worldview: a dance offered within the context of *yadnya* (sacred offering) is not an aesthetic representation of the idea of fertility but *laksana* itself, a concrete action fused with prayer (Wiana, 2001). Within the framework of the Hindu ethic of *Trikaya Parisudha* (purity of thought, word, and deed), dance movement performed with full sincerity becomes a form of *kayika* (bodily action) that is in harmony with *manacika* (inner purity), so that dancing in a ritual context is regarded as equal in value to praying. The implication is that understanding this dance merely as "art" in fact reduces its religious function as an instrument for maintaining cosmic order within the worldview of Bali's agrarian society.

The restriction of the dance's performance solely to the Purnamaning Kaulu ceremony, held in the Madya Mandala (middle courtyard) of the Pura Desa (village temple) of Pedawa, reveals a mechanism of sacred delimitation consistent with the principle of *desa kala patra*: the sanctity of a ritual act depends greatly on its conformity with the appropriate place, time, and social context. Epistemologically, this restriction serves a dual function. First, it safeguards the authenticity and authority of the dance as a religious medium that cannot be reduced to secular spectacle. Second, and this is the aspect relevant ethnopedagogically, it instills in the child performers an implicit understanding that supreme knowledge (*jnana*) is not acquired instantaneously or free of context but is bound to the discipline of particular space-time. Space and time are thus not merely the technical backdrop of the performance but a hidden curriculum that teaches respect for the structure and authority of *adat*.

2.2 Children as Performers: Purity, Potentiality, and Pedagogical Subjects

The selection of pre-pubescent children (those who have not yet reached *akil balig*) as the principal performers of Jejumputan reveals a symbolic logic distinctive to Balinese society, namely the association between purity and a pre-pubertal condition regarded as not yet contaminated by the *sad ripu* (the six enemies within the human being according to Hindu ethics). However, this finding needs to be read beyond religious symbolism. Within the

framework of ethnopedagogy, children's involvement as ritual performers positions them not as passive objects of cultural transmission but as active learning agents who personally experience, through their bodies, the values to be transmitted. This process is consistent with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's (1977) educational philosophy of the *tri pusat pendidikan* (three centers of education) and the *among* method, which holds that true education occurs through exemplary conduct and direct experience in the socio-cultural environment, rather than merely through one-way transfer of verbal information, a principle that the Bali Aga customary communities have implicitly practiced for far longer by involving children in sacred dance rites.

In practice, children's involvement in Jejumputan rehearsals and performances requires them to internalize discipline (adherence to repeated training patterns), responsibility (awareness of the individual's role in collective success), and compliance with customary norms (awareness that their bodily actions are bound by rules greater than themselves). These three values are not taught through moral lectures but through the repeated experience of dancing in sacred space alongside other children. This process affirms that character education in Bali Aga society is direct and communal in nature, in line with the concept of *ngayah* (selfless service to the customary village and temple), which has been identified as a distinctive ethnopedagogical vehicle of the Indonesian archipelago, in which noble values are transmitted through voluntary and repeated social engagement rather than through formal classroom instruction.

2.3 Movement Symbolism: Fertility as Body Language

At the choreographic level, the refined movements that dominate Jejumputan, together with the circular floor patterns it employs, are not neutral aesthetic choices but units of signs that symbolically represent the concepts of fertility and the cycle of life. The refined movement, with its slow tempo and bodily suppleness, visually resembles the qualities of plant growth: slow, continuous, and non-aggressive. This accords with the typology of Balinese dance movement that Bandem (1983) categorizes as *alus* (refined) movement, commonly used to represent gentle and noble characters or themes. The circular floor pattern, for its part, symbolically represents the cycle of nature (planting–growth–harvest) as well as the cycle of human life (birth–life–death–rebirth), which lies at the core of the Balinese Hindu worldview regarding *punarbhawa* (reincarnation) and the principle of *rwa bhineda* (the balance of two opposing yet complementary sides). What makes this movement ethnopedagogically valuable is the process of imitation carried out by the children: through repeated movement, they not only master motor skills but also develop an understanding of orderliness, patience, and connectedness with nature. This process accords with the concept of practice-based learning (*meguru panggul*, or learning through direct practice) that is widely known in the Balinese performing-arts transmission tradition, as elaborated by Dibia (2012) in his account of the transmission of *taksu*, the spiritual-artistic power that can only be acquired through lived engagement and repeated practice, not through conceptual explanation alone. In other words, the child's body becomes the space in which abstract concepts such as fertility and the life cycle are translated into physically felt understanding, long before the child is able to articulate it verbally.

3. The Structure of Sacredness of the Jangkang Dance in Cempaga Village

3.1 Ritual Context: The Cosmological Cycle and Bali Aga Identity

The Jangkang Dance in Cempaga Village is performed as part of the *piodalan* (temple anniversary ceremony) of Kuningan Day, which takes place in a 210-day cycle following the Balinese *wuku* calendar. This periodicity merits attention: the 210-day cycle is not merely an administrative marker of ceremonial time but a representation of the cyclical conception of time characteristic of Bali Aga society, a community that maintains a pre-Hindu-Javanese belief system with a strong emphasis on the balance of the universe through the principle of *rwa bhineda*. The presence of Jangkang in this cycle shows that the dance functions as a rhythmic marker that reaffirms the order of the cosmos at each of its turning points, in line with Bagus's (2002) study of Bali Aga society, which emphasizes that periodic rites serve to maintain continuity between the human world (*buana alit*) and the universe (*buana agung*).

The restriction of the performance to the morning through midday, and to the village temple, reinforces a pattern also found in Jejumputan: space and time function as a mechanism of legitimation as well as implicit learning about the legitimate limits of religious action, in accordance with the principle of *desa kala patra*. However, there is an important difference: whereas the restriction in Jejumputan affirms sanctity through the exclusivity of the temple space at a single moment, the restriction in Jangkang places greater emphasis on the collective momentum of a community-scale ceremony (*piodalan*), so that this dance is structurally more integrated with broader social mobilization than Jejumputan, which is more private and focused.

3.2 Boys in the Tooth-Shedding Phase: Symbols of Transition and Ritual Masculinity

The selection of boys in the tooth-shedding phase as Jangkang performers reflects a symbolic marking of the transitional period of the child's body: the tooth-shedding phase is a biological marker of the transition from early to late childhood, a liminal period which, within the cycle of *manusa yadnya* (the life-cycle rites of Balinese Hinduism), receives particular attention as a phase that is both vulnerable and important for the formation of the child's personality (Wiana, 2001). Placing children in this transitional phase as ritual performers is no coincidence but a deliberate pedagogical strategy: at the point when the child's identity is in the process of formation, the customary community intensively instills collective values through ritual experiences that are emotionally and physically memorable.

In contrast to Jejumputan, which is inclusive with respect to age and status, the gender exclusivity of Jangkang affirms this dance's function as a mechanism for shaping boys' social readiness, a process of socialization that prepares them for their later roles as protectors and guardians of the customary community. This process again affirms the principle of experience- and exemplar-based learning emphasized by Dewantara (1977): through gradual involvement in rehearsals and performances that demand high discipline, the children are not told about courage verbally but are trained to become courageous through the repetition of bodily actions that demand firmness and stamina, accompanied by parents and customary elders as direct role models.

3.3 Movement Symbolism, Props, and Sound: The Construction of Collective Vigilance

The firm and repetitive movements of Jangkang, read through the same movement typology applied to Jejumputan, represent qualities of vigilance and strength: a fast tempo, distinct bodily stamps, and the repetition of consistent patterns imitate the rhythm of a guard's alertness, in line with the *keras* (strong) movement category in Balinese dance typology, commonly used to represent valiant and brave characters (Bandem, 1983). The use of props such as the *keris* (ceremonial dagger), staffs, or bamboo reinforces this symbolic dimension at the material level: these props are not mere performance accessories but sacred artifacts that serve as extensions of customary authority. The *keris*, for example, is often regarded in Balinese cosmology as a vessel of *taksu* that transfers spiritual legitimacy from the heirloom object to the dancer (Dibia, 2012).

The accompaniment of the Bali Aga gamelan, which is musicologically distinct from lowland Balinese gamelan owing to its more archaic scale system and drumming (*tabuh*) patterns, provides an auditory dimension that reinforces Cempaga's local identity as a Bali Aga community, as elaborated by Rai (2011) in his study of Bali Aga ritual music. This sonic dimension needs to be emphasized because, in ritual experience, sacredness is constructed not only visually and kinetically but also aurally: the repetition of *tabuh* patterns creates a magical atmosphere that strengthens collective experience and unites the consciousness of performers and audience in a single shared sacred moment.

4. Comparative Analysis: Divergence and Convergence in the Structure of Sacredness

To clarify the relationship between the two cases, the following table summarizes the points of divergence and convergence elaborated in the two preceding sections.

Dimension	Jejumputan Dance (Pedawa)	Jangkang Dance (Cempaga)
Ritual context	*Saba Nguja Benih*, worship of Dewi Sri (fertility)	*Piodalan* of Kuningan Day, 210-day cycle (cosmic balance)
Time & place	Purnamaning Kaulu, Madya Mandala of the Pura Desa	Morning–midday, village temple, integrated with the community *piodalan*
Performers	Children (varied ages and statuses)	Boys in the tooth-shedding phase
Philosophical orientation	Fertility, continuity of life, harmony with nature	Warrior ethos, vigilance, protection of the community
Movement quality	*Alus* (refined), slow, circular floor pattern	*Keras* (strong), repetitive, high-energy
Props & sound	Minimal props; bodily movement as the main focus	*Keris*, staffs, bamboo; Bali Aga gamelan as a reinforcement of identity
Dominant ethnopedagogical values	Discipline, perseverance, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*)	Vigilance, courage, masculine collectivity

In terms of divergence, the most fundamental difference lies in the cosmological orientation underlying each dance. Jejumputan is rooted in a reproductive-agrarian logic (fertility, growth, the life cycle), whereas Jangkang is rooted in a protective-defensive logic (vigilance, strength, protection). This difference is not a historical coincidence but a reflection of different cosmological needs in each community: Pedawa, with its history as an agrarian Bali Aga village,

requires a ritual system that safeguards soil fertility and food security; whereas Cempaga, as a Bali Aga village historically and geographically more exposed to the needs of communal defense, requires a ritual system that maintains vigilance and social solidity, a pattern consistent with general studies of the diversity of customs and rites among Bali Aga villages (Bagus, 2002). The choreographic differences between the two dances are thus in fact the bodily manifestation of differences in the structure of each community's socio-ecological needs, a finding that broadens the understanding that sacred dance movement is not arbitrary but closely bound to the cultural ecology in which it arose.

The difference in the composition of performers (inclusive and mixed in Jejumputan versus exclusively masculine in Jangkang) also confirms that the category of "children as sacred performers" cannot be generalized uniformly; each community constructs the criteria of purity and eligibility of performers according to the social function the ritual is meant to achieve. This constitutes an important contribution of the present study to the literature on Indonesian ethnopedagogy: children's involvement in sacred rites is not a homogeneous category but is differentiated according to the logic of gender, biological age, and the cosmological function attached to each local tradition.

Meanwhile, the convergence between the two dances lies in three structural aspects that run deeper than mere surface resemblance. First, both place the child's body as the central medium for transmitting values, not books or lectures but repeated bodily experience, in line with Dewantara's (1977) educational philosophy of the unity of *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa* (intellect, feeling, and will) in the learning process. Second, both use movement repetition as a mechanism of habituation that instills discipline non-verbally, consistent with the concepts of *ngayah* and *meguru panggul* in the Balinese performing-arts tradition (Dibia, 2012): cultural values become embedded in the body through repeated practice until they become habits that feel natural. Third, both operate within a frame of sacredness that provides authority and firm boundaries in accordance with the principle of *desa kala patra*, so that the learning process does not take place in a value-free space but in one laden with religious and cosmological legitimacy. This point of convergence forms the basis of the argument that, behind the diversity of their local expressions, the two dances perform the same structural function as ethnopedagogical vehicles.

5. Synthesis: Sacred Art as Parama-Jnana-Patra

Proceeding from the comparative analysis above, this study proposes a conceptual synthesis: child-based sacred art in Bali, as represented by the Jejumputan Dance and the Jangkang Dance, can be understood as *Parama-Jnana-Patra*, that is, a vessel of supreme knowledge that simultaneously performs three interwoven functions: a religious-spiritual function (maintaining the human relationship with the divine and sustaining the balance of *buana agung-buana alit*), a social-communal function (strengthening cohesion and collective identity through shared participation and the spirit of *ngayah*), and a pedagogical function (instilling character values through repeated and meaningful bodily experience, in line with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy of exemplary conduct and direct experience).

These three dimensions do not stand as parallel categories that happen to coexist, but are related dialectically: religious legitimacy is a prerequisite for the community's serious and respectful involvement, while intensive communal involvement is what provides the space for the process of value internalization to unfold deeply. Conversely, the success of the pedagogical process is evident in the continuity of generations of performers over time, which in turn reinforces the religious legitimacy of the dance in the eyes of the community. This circular relationship explains why child-based sacred art is able to endure across generations without requiring written codification: its knowledge is stored and reproduced through the body, practice, and collective memory, in line with the way *taksu* is transmitted through practice rather than through texts (Dibia, 2012).

The conceptual contribution of this synthesis to the study of sacred art and Balinese ethnopedagogy can be formulated in three points. First, this study affirms that the sacred dimension and the pedagogical dimension cannot be separated analytically without losing a full understanding of the phenomenon; they are two sides of one and the same social process, as implied in the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*, which binds the relations of humans with God, with one another, and with nature into a single unity. Second, this study shows that the diversity of local expression (the choreographic differences, performers' gender, and philosophical orientation between Jejumputan and Jangkang) does not preclude the operation of a cross-case pedagogical principle, namely the use of the child's body as the primary medium for learning values through movement repetition within a sacred frame, a finding that opens room for cautious generalization to other cases of child-based sacred art in Bali and in the broader Indonesian cultural context. Third, by conceptualizing sacred art as Parama-Jnana-Patra, this study offers a framework of local (*emic*) terminology rooted in the repertoire of Balinese Hindu thought and Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy, while opening a space for dialogue between local Indonesian epistemologies and the developing national discourse on character education.

Accordingly, the findings of this study answer the research problem comprehensively: the structures of sacredness of the Jejumputan Dance and the Jangkang Dance, although different in their surface expression, both function as living knowledge systems that transmit religious, social, and moral values to the younger generation through sacralized bodily experience, a model of cultural education that is holistic, contextual, and remains relevant as an epistemological alternative amid the dominance of formal education, which tends to separate the cognitive domain from the spiritual and social domains.

Conclusion

This comparative study of the Jejumputan Dance in Pedawa Village and the Jangkang Dance in Cempaga Village shows that the structure of sacredness of both dances functions not only as ritual expression but also as an effective pedagogical vehicle for transmitting religious, moral, and social values to the younger generation. This sacredness is supported by the legitimacy of sacred space and time, movement symbolism laden with philosophical meaning, and the involvement of children as principal performers who represent holiness and purity. Ethnopedagogical mechanisms operate through bodily experience (*embodied learning*),

observation, imitation, repetition, and communal participation, so that the values of discipline, responsibility, mutual cooperation, and spirituality are organically internalized within the children. Sacred art can thus be understood as a living knowledge system (*living knowledge*) that integrates religious, social, and pedagogical dimensions into a single process of cultural learning.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the formulation of an integrative model of sacred art and ethnopedagogy that bridges the gap between studies of sacred art, which focus on ritual meaning, and ethnopedagogical studies, which emphasize the transmission of cultural values. This model affirms that sacredness is not merely a symbolic dimension but an epistemological foundation that legitimizes the process of cultural education. Practically, this study offers recommendations for arts and culture educators and character-education policymakers to integrate sacred art practices as a source of learning based on local wisdom. By making sacred dance a space of education, schools and communities can strengthen character education that is holistic, contextual, and rooted in tradition.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations because it focuses on only two children's sacred dance traditions in Bali, so the generalizability of its findings remains limited. Further research should therefore extend the inquiry to other forms of children's sacred dance in other Bali Aga villages in order to enrich understanding of the variation in structures of sacredness and the ethnopedagogical mechanisms that have developed. Such steps are expected to yield a more comprehensive conceptual framework of sacred art as *Parama-Jnana-Patra*, a vessel of supreme knowledge that maintains the continuity of cultural values while shaping the character of the next generation in facing the dynamics of the times.

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