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Church and State in Jolo, 1886: A Case Study

Jose S. Arcilla, S. J.



On 16 November 1885, Fr. Juan Quintana was summoned to the bedside of Yusup, a Moro, seriously sick in the military hospital in Jolo. Duly instructed, the patient accepted Christian baptism with the name "Sabas," which in Malay means "good, brave, hero." The next day, Sabas still had enough strength and presence of mind to thank Fr. Quintana before he expired. The Jesuit priest then asked permission to give Christian burial to the dead man, who had been, he now found out, the secretary of the newly installed Sultan Harun of Jolo. Governor Juan Arolas of Jolo, fearing serious political consequences, upbraided the priest for his act.

To understand the story, we must recall the political situation in Jolo. In 1885, the sultan of Jolo died, and the *datus* elected his half-brother to the throne. Accepted by the colonial government in Manila, he was summoned to take his oath of allegiance to the Spanish king before the governor general. New in his position and not quite at ease with the Spaniards, the new Sultan hesitated and finally refused to come or take the prescribed oath. This placed the government in a rather awkward position and, after much hemming and hawing, with all due precaution lest new irritants come up, it appointed another Sultan, Harun, one of the *datus* in Palawan. The latter took his oath and was duly invested in Jolo. But the Joloanos refused to accept him and he was forced to reside within the precincts of the Spanish colony, a prisoner in his own sultanate!

Meantime, the Manila government kept a watchful eye lest the repudiated Sultan-elect appeal to a third power for aid. This was for Spain a critical period when she was threatened by other European powers: Germany which in a year or so would take the Carolines and Great Britain, which eventually claimed Sabah in North Borneo.

Despite Fr. Quintana's explanations, the district governor had Sabas interred in the civil cemetery. Fr. Juan Carreras, who happened

to be there, was soon banned from the military hospital, and Fr. Quintana himself was twice stopped at the door of the hospital. The second time he went to make his usual hospital rounds, he was threatened that he would be shot if he persisted. Official reports were immediately filed before the court in Zamboanga against the Jesuit missionary of Jolo.

Prudently, the judge in Zamboanga inhibited himself from the case and raised it to the Governor General's superior office in Manila. Two conferences between Fr. Juan Ricart, the Mission Superior, and Governor Emilio Terrero, were followed by a formal request for an explanation of the baptism of the "Moro Yusup." (Significantly, the official documents never use the Christian name, but the Moro name, "Yusup.") The Jesuit Superior's answer was clear and unequivocal support for Fr. Quintana. It was also a mini-theology text on the sacraments and, implicitly, an interpretation of the ticklish tradition of the *patronato real* in the Philippines.

Fr. Quintana did only what he had to do, wrote Fr. Ricart. A priest, he continued, called to minister to an unbaptized pagan close to death *must* baptize the latter. It was a duty in justice, especially "if he is charged with the care of souls." The priest is bound to help everyone, including the unbaptized who has no other means of salvation than the sacrament. This was the accepted theological view at the time, "*nulla salus extra ecclesiam*," and the Jesuit Superior explained to the Governor General that baptism was a necessary means that "takes precedence over all other human considerations." The baptized's knowledge and understanding of the sacrament of Christian baptism, or its lack, did not invalidate the sacrament, although, of course, if circumstances permitted, every effort had to be made to "promote it."

The Jesuit Superior added that Fr. Quintana was certain Yusup had been properly disposed for baptism. The two had conversed in both Joloano and Malay, and the next day Yusup had joyfully expressed appreciation for what had been done for him. That he was at death's bed and so deprived of the full use of his senses was the medical opinion of specialists. But it did not invalidate the missionary's statement who "affirms what he sees," while the specialists "infer what must be." It was not unusual, concluded Fr. Ricart, "to see patients who had already gone into delirium or lethargy revive sometimes and enjoy some lucid and clear moments to understand what is said to them." Granted there was no sign that Yusup had either understood or had agreed to be baptized, still, in

this case, "since there was a probability the patient had agreed, a priest is obliged to baptize him, because, I repeat, the latter is bound to help according to the former's need and chances for help."

Besides communicating with the Governor General, the Jesuit Superior sent a complete report to the Archbishop of Manila, the Military Vicar in the Philippines, and the Bishop of Jaro, who enjoyed ecclesiastical jurisdiction over southern Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. Naturally, both supported and approved what Fr. Quintana had done, but the Manila government did not see things in the same light. Reporting to his Provincial Superior in Aragón, Fr. Ricart mentioned that there was no lack of individuals who grabbed the opportunity to whisper a number of things into the governor general's ears who subsequently came down hard on the hapless Fr. Quintana in Jolo.

Born on 1 June 1843 in Berga, Barcelona, Spain, Juan Quintana entered the Society of Jesus on 16 September 1864 and came to the Philippines as a scholastic to teach at the Ateneo Municipal in Manila three years later. After ordination to the priesthood in Spain, he came back to the Philippines in 1876 and was variously assigned to the Jesuit schools in Manila and the missions in southwestern Mindanao. When Fr. Federico Vila died in Jolo in 1884, Quintana was transferred there from Las Mercedes, Zamboanga. The Yusup case forced his recall and reassignment again in the Zamboanga mission district in 1887, and Fr. Pablo Cavalleria took his place in Jolo. Fr. Quintana had never really enjoyed good health, and on 10 July 1904 he died in Manila. But long before this, Fr. Estanislao March had already been assigned to the parish-mission of Jolo.

Sultan Harun, notwithstanding the support of the Manila authorities, failed to win majority support in Jolo. This is not the place to describe the subsequent civil war that wore out battling Moro factions until the turn of the century.¹ Luckily, the Jesuit missionary provided consolation and help to the simple people in the rest of the Sulu archipelago. But he had to tread carefully. He had no choice.

The Jesuits had returned to the Philippines in 1859 at the behest of the Spanish royal government in order to "resettle and evangelize the unbaptized mountain tribes in Mindanao and the adjacent islands."² Till then, Spain had never effectively ruled the southern islands of the Philippines, and when the other European powers showed active interest in Mindanao, Spain bestirred herself to assert

her claims over the island. To consolidate her military gains, the royal government sent missionaries there. The newly restored Society of Jesus came in handy, and the Jesuits were assigned to replace the Recollect friars who had never had enough missionaries to effectively Christianize the island.

Since the government had guaranteed financial support for the missionary work and the "decent sustenance" of the Jesuits, the latter agreed not to reclaim any of the properties they had owned before their expulsion from the Philippines in 1768. But every six months, a report had to be submitted to detail on how the government funds had been spent. Appointments to the missions, absences of the Jesuits from their posts, substitutions, etc. had to be reported and approved by the governor general; otherwise, "funds for the attraction of pagans" or the missionaries' stipends would not be released. In virtue of the *patronato real*, the government considered it their business to spread and support missions, through which the indigenous Philippine population would be resettled, Christianized, and become "loyal vassals of the Spanish crown" (see Arcilla 1978).

By the end of the nineteenth century, liberalism and freemasonry had dug deep enough roots to make things a little bit more uncomfortable. Even before the Bonifacio uprising of August 1896, the Jesuit missionaries did not always enjoy the full cooperation of the military government in Jolo. Manila had never successfully controlled Islamic Mindanao, and there was official support for missionary work among the Moros only to the extent that the Jesuits were effective colonial agents of Spain. Even then, there was much criticism of the "slow work of conversion" in the Jesuit missions in southern Mindanao, and certain sectors in the government looked askance at the Jesuit method of peaceful attraction and assimilation, rather than the use of military weaponry.

The documents presented here, numbered 1-7, 16-19, are preserved in the Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus in Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City. They are presented in an annotated translation partly to disabuse traditional Philippine historiography which has not been too kind to the missionary orders. This is partly due to ignorance of the problems and constraints they had to contend with in the pursuit of their missionary task. These documents show that the missionary, especially in areas where Islam was strong, not infrequently had to watch his step. It speaks well of them that, despite the odds,

they succeeded in their task, and even if the southern Islamic regions of the Philippines have not yet been Christianized, they are now not averse to Christian influences today.³

The Texts

1. Jolo Mission

Since yesterday at the Military Hospital of this plaza a Malay had died a Christian death;

Since the undersigned Missionary, priest of the Society of Jesus, summoned to administer the holy spiritual helps of our holy religion to this Malay formerly an unbaptized Moro to whom, having asked and received his verbal consent, was given the name Sabas;

The aforesaid Missionary requests that ecclesiastical burial be granted to the deceased which as a Christian befits him, meantime dispensing from this formality and as long as no Ecclesiastical Authority dictate otherwise only in case ecclesiastical burial occasion a public conflict.

I am pleased to submit this to Your Lordship for the corresponding effects, and so that for my part I may be able to communicate to my Ecclesiastical Superiors any action for their information and other corresponding effects.

God keep Your Lordship for many years, Jolo, 17 November 1886.

Juan Quintana

To the Politico-Military Governor of this plaza.

(Copy)

2. Politico-Military Government of Jolo/War Section/No. 1244

I am in receipt of your communication of the current date in which you request ecclesiastical burial which as a Christian befits Yusup, till yesterday a Moro, today a Christian as you claim for having baptized him, since you were called to administer the spiritual helps of the holy Catholic religion;

Considering that you administered the water of baptism with neither the authorization of any person designated for the purpose, nor on the advice of the physician charged with attending to him;

Considering that the patient was in a state in which his intellectual faculties were completely disturbed, according to the official report of the Chief Officer of Health, the Director of the Hospital, at six o'clock in the afternoon of yesterday, the 16th;

And since the cadaver has been claimed by His Excellency, the Sultan;

I have decided to give it civil burial and grant it neither to you nor to His Excellency, the Sultan, until the Superior Government decide to whom

the remains are to belong, subsequent to the resolution of the case in motion occasioned by the incident.

I am pleased to inform you of this in reply.

God keep you for many years, Jolo, 17 November 1886.

Juan Arolas, Governor

To the Reverend Missionary Priest of this locality, Juan Quintana.

(Copy)

3. Jolo Mission

The Commanding Captain, fiscal secretary of this government, communicates to me on this date the following:

Since the Reverend Missionary Priest of this locality, Don Juan Quintana, must render testimony on the case in motion which, on your Lordship's order I am initiating;

Considering that the same priest has baptized the Moro Yusup, although in a grave condition, on the 16th of the current month, in the Military Hospital, into which institution the former had had access at ten o'clock in the morning of the same day;

I am invoking your lordship's superior authority to deign to summon the same Missionary Priest to appear before this fiscal's office on the ground floor of the government house at four o'clock in the afternoon this day for the purpose indicated.

I am pleased to send your Reverence a copy to the end that at the time and place designated you present yourself for the pertinent objectives of the fiscal.

God guard you for many years, Jolo, 18 November 1886.

The Commanding Governor, Juan Arolas

Juan Quintana, Missionary Priest of this locality.

(Copy)

(Sgd.) Juan Quintana, S.J.

4. Jolo Mission

I, the undersigned parish priest of this locality, regret to inform your lordship:

That this morning, on reaching the Military Hospital to perform his priestly ministries, Fr. Juan Carreras, S.J., legitimately authorized by his Ecclesiastical Superiors, and on my delegation, this same priest was met by a boy or a servant to tell him not to enter the same institution without the authorization of the Military Hospital's Director.

I beg to inform your lordship, and in due time my hierarchical Superiors for the corresponding effects.

God keep your lordship many years, Jolo, 19 November 1886.

Juan Quintana

To the Politico-Military Governor of this plaza.

(Copy)

(Sgd.) Juan Quintana

5. Politico-Military Government of Jolo

There being no precedent referring to the right or authorization which you may have to delegate the exercise of your ministry, and considering there is need to know it for the purpose which by my authority it can be appealed to in a situation incumbent upon me, whom to delegate when there is need thereto, and the reasons for the delegation, in order that no difficulty may interpose itself when the occasion to legitimately exercise it occurs;

I beg you to kindly furnish me the original document which grants the authorization (which will be returned to you), or a copy thereof in its defect.

God keep you many years, Jolo, 20 November 1886.

The Governor, Col. Juan Arolas

To the Missionary Priest of this locality, D. Juan Quintana

(Copy)

6. Jolo Mission

In reply to your lordship's communication of this date, I enclose copies of the second and the seventh declarations of the Royal Order of 15 May 1886:

"2. Since it cannot be accepted as good military principles that within the body there be an individual who considers himself authorized to avoid compliance with orders the principal head may issue relative to his organization and its proper control, the chaplains should obey and carry them out, as long as they are unrelated to their spiritual faculties in regard to which no authority is enjoyed by these same heads who, for their part, ought to provide the full support of their authority for the exercise of these afore-said faculties.

"7. The rules cited above are applicable in analogous cases to chaplains who serve in plazas, castles, or hospitals, in their relations with the respective military authorities."

Add to all these that faculties to delegate to another priest are granted to the undersigned Superior and missionary of this residence of Jolo, in virtue of the Constitutions of the Institute of the Society of Jesus and of other prerogatives granted him by the Rev. Fr. Superior of the entire [Philippine] Mission.

This I believe sufficient in reply, considering your lordship's unerring prudence.

God keep your lordship many years, Jolo, 20 November 1886.

Juan Quintana

To the Politico-Military Governor of this plaza.

(Copy)

7. Politico-Military Government of Jolo/Section of Government/No. 922

Since Fr. Juan Carreras (fortuitously in this plaza today) is totally a stranger to the staff of the Military Hospital, the Mission having failed yesterday morning to send notice of any kind he was to provide to anyone of the sick there at present spiritual help or sacraments of any kind;

Since the Hospital Director is unaware of the delegation which you claim you made to Fr. Carreras to exercise the ministry, knowledge of which delegation he ought to obtain through my authority precisely since I am the only one in this plaza with the right to approve the personnel connected with all the services according to the formality of the law, whether they be permanent or merely interim appointees to some office;

The same Hospital Director was and is properly within his rights in forbidding any individual unconnected with the staff of the institution from entering the same without his authorization.

I must point out to you that the second declaration of the Royal Order of 15 May 1886 which you refer to continue what you cite as follows: "*without prejudice to the fact chaplains should come to an agreement with the chief whenever a religious act has to be performed, in an effort to reconcile it with the demands of the service.*" At the end of the seventh declaration, as you quote correctly, "*the regulations previously cited are applicable in analogous cases to the chaplains who serve in plazas, castillos, or hospitals in their relations with the respective military authorities,*" it is said that even the proprietary chaplain or one exercising spiritual functions in any military hospital ought to come to an agreement with the Director for performing any religious act, all of which is found in perfect harmony with Article 6 and the first part of the seventh of Chapter Two of the Regulations of Military Hospitals approved by Royal Order of 18 August 1834, which reads thus:

"Article 6. *All the heads and officers of any body whatever and who provide services in the hospital are subject to the Director of the same.*

"Article 7. The attributes of the Hospital Director are: First, be responsible to the government for the establishment, maintain discipline, observing order, making use, if necessary, of force and the help of the guard which daily is posted at the hospital, in grave situations informing the Governor of the plaza that the latter may adopt the measures that may have to be taken."

I am pleased to state this in reply to your official letter dated 19 and 20 this month.

God keep you many years, Jolo, 21 November 1886.

The Governor, Col. Juan Arolas

To the Missionary, Juan Quintana

(Copy)

Note: It should be noted that Fr. Quintana arrived at this place last 26 October. Since then, until 22 November, Fr. Carreras visited the hospital 23 times. The last two times, he was stopped. They pointed the rifle to the chest of the other missionary priest to ban him, and the same soldier on guard raised his rifle for the same purpose. Fr. Carreras was no longer a stranger after so many visits.

(Sgd.) Juan Quintana, S.J.

**16. Governor General Emilio Terrero to the Mission Superior, Manila,
13 December 1886**

As Your Reverence is aware, from two different occasions when you have conferred with my office, the fact that Fr. Juan Quintana has baptized a Moro has occasioned, to my deep disappointment, the filing of complaint by the district governor of Jolo, questioning the validity of the sacrament of baptism considering the circumstances in which it had been conferred. I have been assured that, in the morbid condition of the Moro confined briefly at the hospital of that plaza, he was deprived of the use of his mental faculties, according to expert opinion.

The act gave a pretext to both Fr. Quintana and Sultan Harun⁴ to claim the cadaver after its interment; the first, as a Christian, the second, as a Muslim.

It is of utmost importance for the aims of this General Government and Vice-Regal Patronage that Your Reverence present an explanation of the facts that have occasioned this controversy.

God keep Your Reverence for years.

**17. Juan Ricart, Mission Superior, to Governor Emilio Terrero, Manila,
15 December 1886**

In compliance with the task Your Excellency has respectfully enjoined on me in your communication dated 13th this month, relative to the fact that Fr. Juan Quintana has baptized a Moro in the military hospital of Jolo, and later claimed the cadaver to bury it according to the rites of the Church, I have the honor to reply:

I have no information of the case other than what Your Excellency had the goodness to give me by word of mouth, and what subsequently I learned from a letter sent from Zamboanga by this missionary, together with the correspondence exchanged between the mission and the politico-military government of that plaza. However, I believe I have gathered sufficient information to be able to judge Fr. Quintana's conduct in the two instances mentioned.

In his letter he himself reports the first in these words: "At noon (16 November) they came to notify me of someone seriously sick. Fortunately I went there myself. Not knowing the patient was the Moro secretary, I questioned him in Joloano and Malayan, and examined his attitude. I received his consent, clearly expressed in words and external manifestations, and administered the water of help, giving him the name Sabas, which in Malayan means "good, brave, hero."

These are Fr. Quintana's words. Now then, a priest in the presence of a seriously sick pagan who agrees to be baptized, cannot help but administer baptism to him. He would seriously fail in his duty if he did not. All the more if he has the cure of souls, since he is obliged to help all, according to the need and possibilities of each one. The law which favors him is in this case beyond every human consideration. The greater or less instruction does not in any way affect the validity of baptism, even if there is an obligation to receive it depending on the circumstances. Up to this point, then, the missionary has done nothing except carry out his duty.

But, perchance, was the Moro Yusup disposed to be able to give his consent to baptism? Fr. Quintana has no doubts about this. The quotation from his letter, and the text from the official communication which I shall add at the end of this letter are clear and definite. Nevertheless, it is asserted that, given the morbid condition of the Moro in question during his brief stay at the hospital, he was, according to the opinion of the experts, deprived of his mental faculties.

In my opinion, this medical opinion does not destroy the missionary priest's statement. He says what he sees, the experts infer what should have been, considering the patient's morbid condition.

Not rarely one sees the sick who have entered a delirious state or are in lethargy, become aware of things sometimes and enjoy a lucid and clear

respite to understand what they are told. This could have happened to the patient in Jolo. So much more, since he died only the day after, at a time after he was visited by Fr. Cavalleria, who was still in Jolo substituting in Fr. Quintana's absence to attend to his health.

What is more, even if the patient's condition could have been such as to deny the missionary priest any certainty that the former understood and agreed with the advice being offered him; I still say that in this doubtful case, since the priest has a reasonable probability of the patient's consent, he is obliged to administer baptism to him, I repeat, because he should help the latter according to need and the possibility of obtaining it.

After saving the soul, or after doing everything possible to that end, the missionary should look to the decorum of the cadaver. But this is not a peremptory obligation, which cannot yield to other considerations, especially if they are to the convenience of the public. Fr. Quintana did precisely this.

He says in his letter: "We spoke, the governor and I, pleasantly, regarding the burial to be given to the deceased. What we said orally he wanted placed in formal writing."

The formal writing I enclose, where he asks that the cadaver be given ecclesiastical burial. But thinking there could be powerful reasons to the contrary, he immediately says that this formality be dispensed with, in case ecclesiastical burial occasion an open conflict. This freed the governor to do for the cadaver what he might think proper. The added clause, that the dispensation is "temporary and unless another higher ecclesiastical authority decides otherwise," is only to safeguard his responsibility and does not oblige him more than what was declared formerly. If considerations of public convenience weighed so much in the mind of a subordinate as to induce him to allow that a cadaver be not given ecclesiastical burial at the moment of its interment, one must suppose that the same would weigh even more in the mind of a prelate so as to move him to grant a dispensation in the case of body already buried. Much less, then, is Fr. Quintana guilty of any fault in this second instance; rather, he shows discretion and prudence.

In this way, Fr. Quintana's conduct, both in baptizing and in asking for the body in the manner he did, is totally in conformity with his duty and the demands of the delicate task he is carrying out.

Your Excellency, this is the conviction in my mind based on the reports we have in our possession. If after these considerations, Your Excellency came to the same conclusion, I pray that you come to the aid of the missionary of Jolo in the suit raised by the politico-military government of that plaza. If it concerns only the validity of the baptism, it is of the exclusive competence of the Church.

I have the honor to submit this answer to Your Excellency in response to your honorable communication of the previous day.

18. Juan Quintana to the Mission Superior, Jolo 1 March 1887

In order to proceed with due liberty and freedom in the exercise of my ministry at the military hospital of this plaza of Jolo:

After being violently repulsed from that institution, first, Fr. Juan Carreras who on 20 November last was going there to visit the unfortunate sick in my name as was customary, and then, I myself twice;

Having been myself blocked and threatened even with a firearm on 22 that same November after having received the word of honor from the politico-military governor of this plaza that future access of the missionaries to that institution would not be banned;

Having three days afterwards, or on the 25th, scheduled three hours daily (8:00-11:00 A.M.) to assist the sick, on communication from the Director of this hospital;

Having much later in December been appointed as chaplain of this institution the incumbent chaplain of the Regiment consequent to an honorable communication from the Superior Government of these Islands, thus leaving the assistance to the sick in the exclusive care of this chaplain;

Considering that till now none of the above details has come to the notice of Your Reverence, as you yourself seems to hint in a recent letter;

I hasten to communicate to Your Reverence everything expressed above for the purposes of the faculties kindly granted on 23 December 1885 by His Grace, the Most Reverend Archbishop of Manila to the then incumbent missionary of Jolo.

I have the honor to submit this to Your Reverence for their consequent ends.

19. Clarification of the Yusup Case and Its Consequences, Unsigned, Undated

Last 16 November [1886], the missionary of Jolo was summoned to provide spiritual help to the Moro Yusup seriously sick at the Military Hospital, where he died the next day, with the name Sabas. This day, the 17th, the governor summoned the missionary asking what burial had to be given to the body of the Moro Sabas. The details of this fact are very well known, especially after considering and reading the communications themselves exchanged at that time, as well as the report submitted by the Mission Superior. Unfortunate and regrettable consequences followed which have inhibited the missionary's necessary freedom and license in the exercise of his sacred ministries at the military hospital of this plaza of Jolo.

First, Fr. Juan Carreras was violently banned from that institution. As was usual, he was going in the missionary's name to the hospital on 19 November to visit the poor patients. Afterwards, the missionary priest was twice

banned from the same hospital. The second time, on 22 November, he was besides threatened with a firearm by the sentry, although the former had received the governor's word of honor the missionaries would not be stopped in the future. Three days later, 25 November, acting on a communication from the Director of the hospital, the missionary scheduled three hours daily (8:00–11:00 A.M.) to assist the sick. Much later, by mid-December, perhaps assuming in Jolo extraordinary faculties, the hospital chaplaincy was assigned definitively to the regimental chaplain. Since then, the ministry to the sick was exclusively in the latter's charge.

All of the above descends to particulars and details which concern apparently incoherent and unrelated facts, but which at the same time are really interconnected. From some, one gains greater knowledge about the rest, leading to a better knowledge of important items seemingly still unknown to some Superiors. Likewise, let it be known that this hospital case actually inhibits the missionary from the use of faculties kindly and generously granted, and in no way derogatory, on different occasions, by His Grace, the Most Reverend Archbishop of Manila.

Notes

1. For an introduction to this problem, see Majul (1973, especially Chapter VII). See also the pertinent letters in the various volumes of the Jesuit letters from Jolo in *Cartas de los PP. de la Mision de Filipinas* (Manila, 1879–1895).

2. See the royal decree, 30 July 1860, which partly reads: "*La Mision de la Compañía de Jesús, enviada ya a Mindanao, se encargara del pasto espiritual de la Ysla . . . se ocupará principalmente y desde luego de la conversión . . .*"

3. APP, XIV-10-009, XIV-10-011, XIV-10-034 to-040.

4. Sultan Harun ar-Rashid ascended the sultanate in 1886, two years after a rival, Amirul Karim, had been proclaimed sultan of Jolo. The former took his oath of allegiance to Spain on 24 September 1886, but was never really accepted as the legitimate ruler. He finally abdicated in 1894, with the consent of the Manila government, and retired to Palawan where he died five years later (Majul 1973, 23–24, but especially chapter 8).

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