



Interreligious Relations in Early Islam and Their Relevance in the Modern Era: A Study of Umar's Assurance of Safety to the People of *Bayt al-Maqdis*

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Abstract: This study explores Umar's Assurance of Safety to the people of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) in 637 AD, a pivotal document issued by Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab, which guaranteed the protection of life, property, and religious institutions for non-Muslim inhabitants. Against the backdrop of rising religious hostilities in the modern era, as evidenced by a 2022 Pew Research study, this research seeks to understand how historical models of interreligious tolerance, such as Umar's Assurance, can inform contemporary efforts to foster religious coexistence. Using a qualitative approach, this study uses historical and textual analysis to explore the guarantees given to non-Muslims under Islamic rule. The research is based on primary historical sources and previous scientific discussions, focusing on the themes of justice, inclusivity, and religious freedom. The findings reveal that the Umar Guarantee establishes a comprehensive framework to protect religious minorities, ensure their right to worship, and maintain their places of worship. It also emphasizes economic justice through the jizya tax which is designed to be fair and not burdensome. The guarantee promotes inclusivity by allowing religious minorities, including Jews, to return to Bayt al-Maqdis after a period of exclusion. These principles contributed to long-term social stability and set a precedent for later models of government that emphasized pluralism and coexistence. The study concludes that the Umar Guarantee serves as a valuable historical precedent for contemporary models of government that seek to balance interreligious relations with legal protection for minorities. It provides important lessons for policymakers, especially in addressing religious pluralism and promoting an inclusive legal framework in diverse societies. The recommendations obtained from this study emphasize the need to integrate the historical principles of justice and tolerance into modern policies to promote peaceful interfaith relations.

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is characterized by rapid technological advancement and increasing globalization, fostering an interconnected world where diverse societies coexist. By 2023, the global internet penetration rate reached 66 (Statista, 2023), highlighting the unprecedented connectivity among people worldwide. One of the fundamental aspects of Society 5.0 is the emphasis on harmonious living, mutual respect, and coexistence among different religious and cultural groups (Berry et al., 2022; Rosadi et al., 2024). However, historical precedents offer invaluable insights into how interreligious relations were managed in the past, providing guidance for contemporary

challenges. A significant historical event exemplifying religious tolerance and coexistence is Umar's Assurance of Safety to the people of Bayt al-Maqdis.

This assurance, issued by the second Caliph of Islam, Umar Ibn al-Khattab, upon the Muslim liberation of the city (Palestine) in 637 AD, was a landmark document that ensured the protection of life, property, and religious institutions of the non-Muslim inhabitants. Notably, the document guaranteed the safety of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, ensuring their right to practice their faith freely (Hitti, 1968). This study examines the historical background, significance, and ongoing relevance of Umar's Assurance in fostering interreligious relations, especially in the context of modern-day conflicts and societal divisions.

Interreligious relations refer to the interactions, cooperation, and dialogue between different religious communities. These relations play a crucial role in shaping societal harmony, reducing religious conflicts, and promoting mutual understanding among diverse faith (Cornille, 2013; Esposito & Watson, 2000). Historically, interreligious relations have ranged from periods of peaceful coexistence and cultural exchange to instances of conflict and sectarian divisions. The Quran supports religious harmony, stating, "To you be your religion, and to me be mine" (Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf Al-Qur'an Departemen Agama RI, 2001). This principle has influenced governance models in Islamic history, including Umar's Assurance, which institutionalized religious protection for non-Muslims under Islamic rule. Understanding interreligious relations is essential for fostering peaceful coexistence in contemporary societies (Griffel, 2021; Rane, 2022). For instance, a 2022 Pew Research study found that 24% of countries worldwide experienced high levels of religious hostilities, underscoring the need for historical models of tolerance like Umar's Assurance in fostering interreligious relations (Pew Research Center, 2022).

Umar's Assurance refers to the formal protection granted by Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab to the people of Bayt al-Maqdis following the city's peaceful surrender to Muslim rule. This document is widely considered one of the earliest examples of religious tolerance in Islamic governance (El-Awaisi, 2000). It outlined the rights of non-Muslims under Islamic governance, ensuring that their places of worship and cultural practices were safeguarded. The assurance aligns with broader Islamic governance principles, emphasizing justice (Al-Hibri, 1992) and protection for all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation. It was part of a larger framework known as the *dhimma* system, which provided legal recognition and protection to religious minorities under Islamic governance (Hodgson, 1974).

Interreligious relations in early Islam were shaped by policies that sought to ensure peaceful coexistence between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The assurance granted by Umar emphasized non-discrimination, setting a precedent for later Islamic governance policies toward religious minorities (Armstrong, 1997). The Quran explicitly supports interreligious relations, stating: "To you be your religion, and to me be mine" (Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf Al-Qur'an Departemen Agama RI, 2001). This principle was upheld in the governance of Bayt al-Maqdis, where Islamic governance authorities permitted religious groups to maintain their faith and traditions without coercion (Abu-Munshar, 2007). The assurance thus represents a historical model for contemporary debates on religious tolerance and coexistence (Griffel, 2021).

Bayt al-Maqdis, historically known as Jerusalem, holds profound religious significance for Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. It was the site of the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension *Isra and Mi'raj* and has been a center of religious and political contention for centuries (Le Strange, 2010; Strange, 2008). Before the Muslim conquest, the city had undergone periods of restrictive rule under the Byzantines, who barred Jews from residing there. Umar's entry into Bayt al-Maqdis marked a shift in Islamic governance, as he allowed Jews to return and restored Christian religious rights, demonstrating a policy of inclusion (Goitein, 2010). This approach influenced later rulers such as Salah al-Din (Saladin), who similarly ensured religious protections upon reclaiming the city from the Crusaders (Riley-Smith, 2005).

Islamic governance, as exemplified by Umar's rule, is based on principles of justice (*ʿadl*), consultation (*shura*), and protection of minorities (*dhimma*) (Lapidus, 2014). The assurance

provided to Bayt al-Maqdis reflects these ideals, as it guaranteed security, religious tolerance, and property rights to non-Muslims. Unlike the forced conversions seen in many medieval European states, Islamic governance promoted religious tolerance and social contracts (Elamer et al., 2020). Scholars argue that this early model of Islamic governance offers insights into modern governance frameworks that seek to balance interreligious relations with legal protections (Ahmed, 2013).

Religious tolerance, a key feature of Umar's Assurance, is foundational to Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad's Constitution of Medina had earlier established a multi-religious society where different faith communities coexisted under shared governance (Serjeant, 1978). Umar's Assurance extended this precedent by institutionalizing policies that protected religious minorities from persecution (Peters, 2005). The document's relevance in contemporary discussions on religious tolerance is evident in its alignment with international human rights frameworks, such as Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which upholds freedom of religion (UN, 1948). By studying Umar's Assurance, policymakers and scholars can explore historical examples of interreligious relations that foster harmony and inclusivity in diverse societies today (Hallaq, 2009).

This study aims to explore the significance of Umar's Assurance by analyzing historical texts, scholarly debates, and its relevance to modern-day governance and religious coexistence. The primary research question driving this study is: How did Umar's Assurance of Safety contribute to the development of interreligious harmony in early Islam, and what lessons can be drawn for contemporary society? The study hypothesizes that the assurance was not merely a political strategy but a reflection of core Islamic values of justice and tolerance. By critically examining historical accounts and comparing them with contemporary conflicts involving religious minorities, this research aims to demonstrate the applicability of Umar's model of governance in resolving interfaith disputes today.

METHODS

The research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing historical and textual analysis to explore Umar's Assurance of Safety to the people of Bayt al-Maqdis. Data is collected through document analysis, focusing on primary historical sources such as early Islamic texts, treaties, and legal documents (El-Awaisi, 2000; Goitein, 2010; Hodgson, 1974). Secondary sources, including scholarly discussions on interreligious relations and Islamic governance, are also reviewed (Armstrong, 1997; Griffel, 2021). The data analysis employs content analysis, systematically examining the texts to identify key themes such as justice, inclusivity, and religious freedom (Al-Hibri, 1992; Lapidus, 2014). Additionally, comparative analysis is used to evaluate the relevance of Umar's Assurance in contemporary interreligious relations, emphasizing its role in fostering inclusive governance in modern societies (Pew Research Center, 2022; Rane, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to critically examine Umar's Assurance of Safety (also referred to as Umar's Assurance of Aman and its pivotal role in fostering interreligious harmony during the early Islamic period. The study seeks to authenticate the various versions of Umar's Assurance, with a particular focus on the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate's version from 1953, to determine its historical accuracy and reliability. Furthermore, the research aims to analyze how Umar's Assurance contributed to the development of a pluralistic society in al-Quds (Jerusalem) and other regions under Islamic rule, emphasizing its impact on religious freedom, social stability, and peaceful coexistence among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Finally, the study seeks to draw lessons from Umar's model of governance, rooted in justice, tolerance, and respect for diversity, and demonstrate its applicability in addressing contemporary interfaith disputes and promoting harmony in multicultural societies. By critically examining historical accounts and comparing them with modern conflicts involving religious minorities, this research highlights the enduring relevance of Umar's Assurance as a blueprint for just and inclusive governance.

Umar's Assurance of Safety Contribute to Interreligious Harmony in Early Islam

Foundation of peaceful coexistence, Umar's Assurance of Safety marked a transformative moment in the history of al-Quds (Jerusalem) and other regions under Islamic rule, establishing a framework for peaceful coexistence among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The Assurance granted the people of Aelia (Jerusalem) safety for their lives, properties, and places of worship, ensuring that their churches and synagogues would not be destroyed or taken over (El-Awaisi, 2000). This was a stark departure from previous periods of conflict and displacement, where religious groups often destroyed each other's holy sites upon gaining control. Notably, the Assurance allowed Jews to return to al-Quds after centuries of exclusion under Christian rule, reflecting the Islamic principle of inclusion and respect for Ahl al-Kitab (People of the Book) (Harman, 2003). This act of inclusion was a groundbreaking step toward fostering a pluralistic society, where diverse religious communities could coexist under a just and tolerant governance model.

Religious freedom and protection, the Assurance also guaranteed religious freedom for Christians and Jews, allowing them to practice their faith without coercion, a revolutionary concept in a region that had previously experienced religious persecution and the destruction of holy sites by dominant groups (El-Awaisi, 2012). Umar's commitment to justice and respect for all religious communities was further demonstrated when he personally took steps to clean and restore Jewish holy sites that had been desecrated by Christians. This act not only symbolized the Islamic values of justice and tolerance but also helped build trust between the Muslim rulers and the non-Muslim population. The Assurance included provisions to protect religious minorities, ensuring that their places of worship would not be desecrated or taken over, which was a significant step toward creating a stable and harmonious society (Al-Tabari, 1960).

Economic fairness and social stability, in return for protection and religious freedom, non-Muslims were required to pay the Jizya tax, which was designed to be fair and non-burdensome, especially compared to the heavy taxes imposed by the Byzantine Empire (El-Awaisi, 2012). Poor individuals were exempt from paying, and the tax was often lower than what Muslims paid in *Zakat*, reflecting the Islamic emphasis on economic justice. This policy helped stabilize the region and fostered trust between the Muslim rulers and the non-Muslim population. Additionally, the Assurance ensured that non-Muslims who chose to leave the region could do so safely, with their possessions protected, further contributing to social stability and trust (Al-Baladhuri, 1936). These measures underscored the Islamic commitment to fairness and respect for the rights of all individuals, regardless of their religious affiliation.

Legal and moral framework and for long term impact, beyond being a political agreement, Umar's Assurance was a moral and legal framework rooted in the Islamic values of justice, fairness, and respect for human dignity (El-Awaisi, 2012). It established a social contract between the Muslim rulers and the non-Muslim population, clearly defining the rights and responsibilities of both parties. This framework set a precedent for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, which became a hallmark of Islamic governance in the region. The period of peaceful coexistence established by Umar's Assurance lasted for centuries, with al-Quds becoming a cradle of civilization under Islamic rule (Harman, 2003). This harmony was interrupted only briefly during the Crusades (1099–1187) and later in the 20th century with the rise of Zionism and the subsequent conflicts in the region. The long-term impact of Umar's Assurance highlights its significance as a model for just and inclusive governance, offering valuable lessons for contemporary societies grappling with religious and ethnic tensions.

Lessons for Contemporary Society

Justice as the foundation of peace, the research highlights that justice is the cornerstone of resolving conflicts and achieving long-term peace, as exemplified by Umar's Assurance of Safety, which was deeply rooted in the Islamic principles of justice and fairness. This Assurance ensured the protection of religious minorities and their rights, creating a foundation for peaceful coexistence. In contemporary society, particularly in regions like al-Quds (Jerusalem), the absence of justice has perpetuated ongoing conflicts and atrocities. The study suggests that a return to just governance, modeled after Umar's approach, could help resolve interfaith disputes and promote

harmony. Umar's Assurance was not merely a political strategy but a reflection of core Islamic values, emphasizing the importance of fairness and equity in governance. By prioritizing justice, Umar's model offers a timeless lesson for modern societies struggling with religious and ethnic tensions. The Assurance demonstrates that when justice is upheld, it fosters trust and stability, which are essential for peaceful coexistence. In contrast, the lack of justice in contemporary conflicts, such as those in al-Quds, has led to widespread suffering and division. The study argues that Umar's model of governance, rooted in justice, provides a viable framework for addressing modern interfaith disputes and promoting long-term peace (El-Awaisi, 2012; Harman, 2003).

Religious freedom and tolerance, Umar's Assurance serves as a historical example of how religious freedom and tolerance can be implemented in a diverse society. By guaranteeing the rights of Christians and Jews to practice their religions without fear of persecution, Umar's model offers a blueprint for protecting religious minorities in modern contexts, where discrimination and violence against such groups remain prevalent. The Assurance ensured that churches and synagogues would not be destroyed or taken over, allowing religious communities to thrive under Islamic rule. This was a groundbreaking development in a region that had previously experienced religious persecution and the destruction of holy sites by dominant groups. Umar's commitment to religious freedom was further demonstrated when he personally took steps to clean and restore Jewish holy sites that had been desecrated by Christians. This act not only symbolized the Islamic values of justice and tolerance but also helped build trust between the Muslim rulers and the non-Muslim population. In today's world, where religious minorities often face persecution, Umar's model of governance provides a valuable lesson in how to promote interfaith harmony through respect for religious diversity. The study argues that Umar's approach can be applied to modern contexts to protect religious minorities and foster peaceful coexistence (El-Awaisi, 2012; Al-Tabari, 1960).

Inclusion and pluralism, the inclusion of Jews in al-Quds after centuries of exclusion under Christian rule highlights the importance of inclusivity in building a peaceful society. Umar's Assurance allowed Jews to return to the city, reflecting the Islamic principle of respect for Ahl al-Kitab (People of the Book). This act of inclusion was a groundbreaking step toward fostering a pluralistic society, where diverse religious communities could coexist under a just and tolerant governance model. The study emphasizes that exclusion and marginalization, as seen in the current situation in al-Quds, lead to conflict and instability, whereas Umar's approach of embracing diversity and pluralism provides a roadmap for contemporary societies grappling with religious and ethnic tensions. By including Jews in the social and religious fabric of al-Quds, Umar demonstrated that inclusivity is essential for maintaining social harmony. This lesson is particularly relevant today, where exclusionary policies and practices often exacerbate interfaith conflicts. Umar's model of governance offers a blueprint for contemporary leaders seeking to build inclusive societies that respect and celebrate diversity. The study argues that Umar's approach to inclusion and pluralism can serve as a model for resolving modern interfaith disputes and promoting peaceful coexistence (Harman, 2003; El-Awaisi, 2012).

Economic fairness and social stability, the research also highlights the critical role of economic fairness in maintaining social stability. Umar's Assurance ensured that the Jizya tax was not burdensome, with exemptions for the poor, fostering trust between Muslim rulers and non-Muslim populations. This economic fairness helped stabilize the region and contributed to the peaceful coexistence of diverse religious communities. The Jizya tax was often lower than the taxes imposed by the Byzantine Empire, and poor individuals were exempt from paying, reflecting the Islamic emphasis on economic justice. In today's world, where economic inequality often exacerbates social tensions, Umar's model offers valuable lessons on how fair economic policies can contribute to peace and stability. The Assurance also ensured that non-Muslims who chose to leave the region could do so safely, with their possessions protected, further contributing to social stability and trust. By prioritizing economic fairness, Umar's model of governance created a sense of security and trust among the non-Muslim population, which was essential for maintaining social harmony.

The study argues that Umar's approach to economic fairness can serve as a model for contemporary societies seeking to address economic inequalities and promote social stability (Al-Baladhuri, 1936; El-Awaisi, 2012).

Historical lessons for modern governance, the study suggests that Umar's Assurance of Safety provides a historical framework for modern governance, particularly in regions with diverse religious and ethnic populations. By examining Umar's approach, contemporary leaders can learn to implement policies that promote justice, tolerance, and coexistence. Umar's model of governance was rooted in the Islamic values of fairness, respect for diversity, and protection of minority rights, which are essential for maintaining social harmony. The Assurance established a social contract between the Muslim rulers and the non-Muslim population, clearly defining the rights and responsibilities of both parties. This framework set a precedent for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, which became a hallmark of Islamic governance in the region. In contemporary society, where interfaith conflicts and ethnic tensions are prevalent, Umar's model offers valuable lessons for promoting justice and inclusivity. The study argues that by adopting Umar's approach to governance, modern leaders can address interfaith disputes and build inclusive societies that respect and celebrate diversity. Umar's Assurance serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of justice, tolerance, and inclusivity in governance (El-Awaisi, 2012; Harman, 2003).

Critical examination of historical narratives, finally, the research emphasizes the importance of critically examining historical narratives, especially those used to justify contemporary political or religious claims. The study reveals that some versions of Umar's Assurance, such as the one published by the Orthodox Patriarchate in 1953, may have been forged or altered to serve specific agendas. This serves as a reminder to approach historical documents with a critical eye, particularly in contexts where they are used to support interfaith or political disputes. The research highlights the need for rigorous historical analysis to ensure that historical lessons are applied accurately and ethically. By critically examining historical narratives, scholars can uncover the true context and meaning of historical events, such as Umar's Assurance, and draw lessons that are relevant to contemporary society. The study argues that a critical approach to historical narratives is essential for understanding the complexities of interfaith relations and promoting justice and tolerance in modern governance. Umar's Assurance, when examined critically, provides valuable insights into the principles of justice, inclusivity, and respect for diversity that are essential for resolving interfaith disputes and promoting peaceful coexistence (El-Awaisi, 2012; Al-Tabari, 1960).

Discussion

The discussion in this study focuses on how Umar's Assurance of Safety contributed to interreligious harmony in the early days of Islam and its relevance in the modern context. In answering the problem formulation, the analysis is carried out systematically by referring to relevant theoretical studies and previous studies.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that Umar's Assurance of Safety is the initial foundation in building interreligious harmony in the early days of Islam. This document affirms that the principles of justice, protection of minority rights, and freedom of religion are integral parts of an ideal Islamic system of government. Furthermore, this model can be a reference for efforts to resolve interreligious conflicts and the development of multiculturalism policies in the modern world. The following table shows the main principles embodied in Umar's Assurance:

Key Principles	Description
Life & Property Protection	Non-Muslims are guaranteed safety
Freedom of Religion	Churches and synagogues are not destroyed
Social Justice	Jizya tax is applied fairly
Inclusivity	Jews allowed to return to Jerusalem
Minority Rights	Legal protection for non-Muslims
Economic Welfare	Jizya tax does not burden the poor

By re-understanding the history of Umar's Assurance, we can uncover valuable insights into how the values of justice and tolerance can be applied in the context of an increasingly complex and diverse modern society. This awareness of history is expected to be the foundation for a more inclusive and harmonious policy in managing religious diversity in the era of globalization.

Umar's Assurance Principles in Building Interreligious Harmony

Umar's Assurance document given to the inhabitants of Bayt al-Maqdis in 637 AD shows Islam's commitment to religious justice and tolerance. This document guarantees the protection of lives, property, and religious institutions for non-Muslim populations (El-Awaisi, 2011). By giving Christians and Jews the right to practice their worship without coercion, this document is an early example of an inclusive and justice-based model of government.

As explained in the *Dhimma* theory in Islamic law, religious minorities have rights that are recognized under Islamic rule with the obligation to pay *jizya* as a form of social contribution (Al-Hibri, 2003). Previous studies have shown that the implementation of this system contributed to building social stability in areas under Islamic rule, especially in Jerusalem in the 7th century (Goitein, 1971).

The success of Umar's Assurance is also supported by the principle of *shura* (deliberation) in decision-making, which provides space for the involvement of various elements of society in government. This shows that this document is not only a political agreement, but also reflects sustainable social ethical values.

The Role of Umar's Assurance in Guaranteeing Religious Freedom

One of the key aspects of Umar's Assurance is religious freedom for non-Muslims. This document explicitly states that churches and synagogues will not be destroyed or taken over by Muslims (Hitti, 1968). This principle is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an which affirms that "There is no compulsion in religion" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 256).

A number of studies highlight that religious freedom in the context of Islam has strong roots in the principles of social justice. Berger (2019) and Griffith (2021) emphasized that the policy of tolerance implemented by Caliph Umar became the basis for the policy of the next Islamic government. In fact, the approach used in Umar's Assurance influenced the model of Islamic government in Andalusia and the Ottoman Caliphate known as the *Millet System* policy (Riley-Smith, 2005).

In the historical context, Umar's Assurance bears a resemblance to the Constitution of Medina established by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which affirms that people of various religions can coexist with clear rights and obligations. The continuity of these values shows that the principle of tolerance is not only a pragmatic policy, but also part of the main foundation of Islam in building a peaceful civilization.

Linkages to Previous Studies and Contemporary Implications

Comparative analysis with the modern context shows that the principles in Umar's Assurance are still relevant in efforts to build a harmonious multicultural society. A study from the Pew Research Center (2022) found that 24% of countries in the world experience high levels of religious tension. This shows the importance of adopting justice-based policies and the protection of minority rights as exemplified in Umar's Assurance.

Furthermore, El-Awaisi (2012) highlights that Umar's approach in managing religious diversity can be used as a model in modern interfaith dialogue policies. Examples of the implementation of policies based on social justice and diversity can also be found in the Medina Charter established by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH earlier. Therefore, the lessons from Umar's Assurance can be used in the context of formulating public policies related to pluralism and religious freedom in the modern era.

In contemporary policy studies, the values embodied in Umar's Assurance are also relevant in the international legal system. These principles are in line with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms the right of every individual to embrace religion and

practice his or her beliefs without coercion. Thus, the lessons from Umar's Assurance are not only part of Islamic history, but can also be a reference in the development of global human rights law.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that Umar's Assurance of Safety is an important document in Islamic history that emphasizes the principles of justice, protection of minority rights, and religious freedom. This document is not only a political instrument but also reflects the fundamental values of Islam in building an inclusive and peaceful society.

The principles contained in Umar's Assurance show that Islam as a system of government accommodates religious diversity and upholds the rights of non-Muslims. The success of this document in creating social stability in Bayt al-Maqdis is a model for future Islamic governments and is relevant in the context of modern multiculturalism.

The relevance of Umar's Assurance in today's world can be found in human rights protection policies and international law that emphasize religious freedom and tolerance. This policy model can be a reference for policymakers and world leaders in efforts to create interfaith harmony and manage diverse societies in a more inclusive and equitable manner.

By re-understanding the history of Umar's Assurance, we can uncover valuable insights into how the values of justice and tolerance can be applied in the context of an increasingly complex and diverse modern society. This awareness of history is expected to be the basis for more inclusive and harmonious policies in managing religious diversity in the era of globalization.

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