

4.4.4. AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES: MOROBE PROVINCE

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4.4.4.0. INTRODUCTION

Although it has been known for many years that there are a number of Austronesian languages spoken in the Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea, it is only recently that attempts have been made to classify these into smaller groups. Salzner's *Sprachenatlas*, published in 1960, gives a classification of Morobe Province languages which roughly parallels that presented in Hooley and McElhanon 1970, but his classification appears to be geographically rather than linguistically based, and there are a number of discrepancies (McElhanon 1970:1190).

Earlier attempts to classify the languages were sketchy and of limited extent, and will not be discussed here. Capell, approaching the problem from a typological viewpoint, separated the Austronesian languages of the whole area into two main groups. Since he has outlined this hypothesis extensively in his published works, it will be discussed in some detail.

4.4.4.1. CAPELL'S CLASSIFICATION

Capell's attempt to classify the Austronesian languages of the Papua New Guinea region into two major groups AN1 and AN2 has been described in *A Survey of New Guinea Languages* (Capell 1969) and in 'The Austronesian Languages of Australian New Guinea' (Capell 1971).¹

The following discussion will be concerned with his theory mainly as it applies within the Morobe Province. Its basic feature is summarised in the following quotation (Capell 1971:241):

The Austronesian languages of New Guinea also fall into two subgroups,... This subdivision is based on a typological feature manifested in two contrasting types of syntax. Austronesian languages in general, apart from New Guinea, have the order

Subject + Verb + Object

in the simple declaratory sentence. In part of the New Guinea Austronesian field this order holds good, but in part the order is

Subject + Object + Verb

i.e. SOV against the more normal SVO. This typological feature permits a first dichotomy of the languages into those which place the verb before the object, and those which place the object before the verb.

Capell calls the first group AN1 and the second AN2.

Other features which he lists as typically AN2 include:

The occurrence of the demonstrative after the noun in noun phrases, in contrast to AN1 languages where the demonstrative is said to occur before the noun.

The fact that dual and trial pronouns do not occur, or if they do occur that they are secondary formations.

Capell only applies this system to the Austronesian languages in the Morobe Province to a limited degree. He lists the languages of the south coast of the Huon Peninsula from Lae to Finschhafen (Bukaua, Yabêm, Tami) as being AN2. He lists Sio among the AN1 languages, and says regarding the other languages on the islands between the Huon Peninsula and New Britain that, because of lack of data, it is impossible to tell whether they are AN1 or AN2. He includes Adzera² among the AN2 languages, saying (Capell 1971:289): "It is true that it does not have a S + V + O syntactical pattern, but in every other regard it is nearer the AN2 group and has been included here with them."

Capell's failure to mention the Buang languages at all is inexplicable, since he already had wordlists from the Mumeng area in 1960 or earlier, and it was pointed out in print in 1964 (Hooley 1964:247, footnote 24) that he had incorrectly classified the Mumeng languages as non-Austronesian in his survey (Capell 1962).

The Adzera and Buang Families do in fact demonstrate clearly the weakness of Capell's dichotomy. His principal criterion for setting up the AN2 group is the SOV word order in clauses, yet these two large families quite definitely have the SVO order.

Capell says that in every other regard the Adzera languages are AN2. The Buang languages also show other features which would link them with his AN2 group: the demonstrative occurs following the noun and marks the closure of the noun phrase, and the dual and trial pronouns are clearly secondary formations based on the numbers two and three (Hooley 1970:186 and 144).

The Yabêm language, which he even more definitely identifies as AN2, also contradicts his criterion, since it too has the SVO order which should put it among the AN1 languages.

Since these discrepancies do relate to his principal identifying criterion, his whole theory is called into serious question. At least for the Morobe Province the classification of the Austronesian languages into AN1 and AN2 groups is inconsistent, and not particularly helpful. At the present stage of our knowledge therefore, a classification based on lexicostatistical studies would seem to be more enlightening.

Using that method, the writer has grouped the languages into families of related languages the composition of which will be discussed more fully below. Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to digress briefly and take up another problem.

4.4.4.2. CRITERIA FOR DISTINGUISHING LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS

It is obvious to anyone with even a superficial knowledge of the languages of Papua New Guinea, that neat categorisation of linguistic groups into dialect and language is impossible. Differences between adjacent villages range all the way from zero to complete unintelligibility. It is therefore difficult to find some consistent, easily applied, formal criterion for distinguishing separate languages from mere dialects.

Our intuitive guess might be to say that dialects are mutually intelligible, whereas separate languages are not. This does not really help because it gives us no formal test which can be consistently applied. Social factors of various kinds and the degree of contact found between different groups greatly influence so-called mutual intelligibility.

So far, to my knowledge, no simple identification test has been devised, and I do not anticipate that it will be. Researchers are usually compelled to use some criterion arbitrarily chosen to meet their own particular needs. In the following description of the families of Austronesian languages in the Morobe Province, the criterion for identifying a linguistic group as a language rather than a dialect has been a shared cognate percentage of 77% or lower. Obviously this decision is arbitrary, and open to certain dangers. It depends, for example, on the size and accuracy of the wordlists available, and on the criteria used for identifying cognates, which in turn depend somewhat on the individual investigator. Nevertheless this approach has proved helpful and no apology is made for it here.

The techniques used in the study have been discussed more fully elsewhere (Hooley 1970; 1971), but briefly, the final classification was based on a comparison of 100 words collected from the principal Austronesian languages and dialects of the Province. The results clearly

divided the languages into several different groups. While further information may tend to raise some of the cognate percentages, it is unlikely to change the groupings significantly. These groups have been designated families and sub-families as follows.

4.4.4.3. THE ADZERA FAMILY

The Adzera Family comprises 13 languages.³ It covers the whole of the Markham Valley from near the mouth up to the headwaters of the Ramu; and in fact the Mari language is wholly in the Madang Province. It also includes the lower reaches of most of the Markham tributaries. These languages are:

Adzera	In the Markham Valley proper
Dangal	In the Lower Watut Valley
Guwot	In the Busu Valley
Mari	In the Ramu headwaters and actually in the Madang Province
Maralango	In the Lower Watut
Musom	In the Busu Valley
Onank	In the Waffa Valley
Silisili	In the Lower Watut Valley
Sirak	In the Busu Valley
Sirasira	In the Leron Valley
Sukurum	In the Leron Valley
Wampar	In the Lower Markham Valley
Wampur	In the Wanton Valley

Of these languages Adzera itself is by far the largest with more than 14,000 speakers. Wampar and Silisili are the next biggest groups, with 2-3,000 speakers each, while the others are quite small, being spoken by only a handful of villages or less. The total number of speakers for languages of the Adzera Family is approximately 22,000.

Three sub-families may be recognised within the Adzera Family. These are:

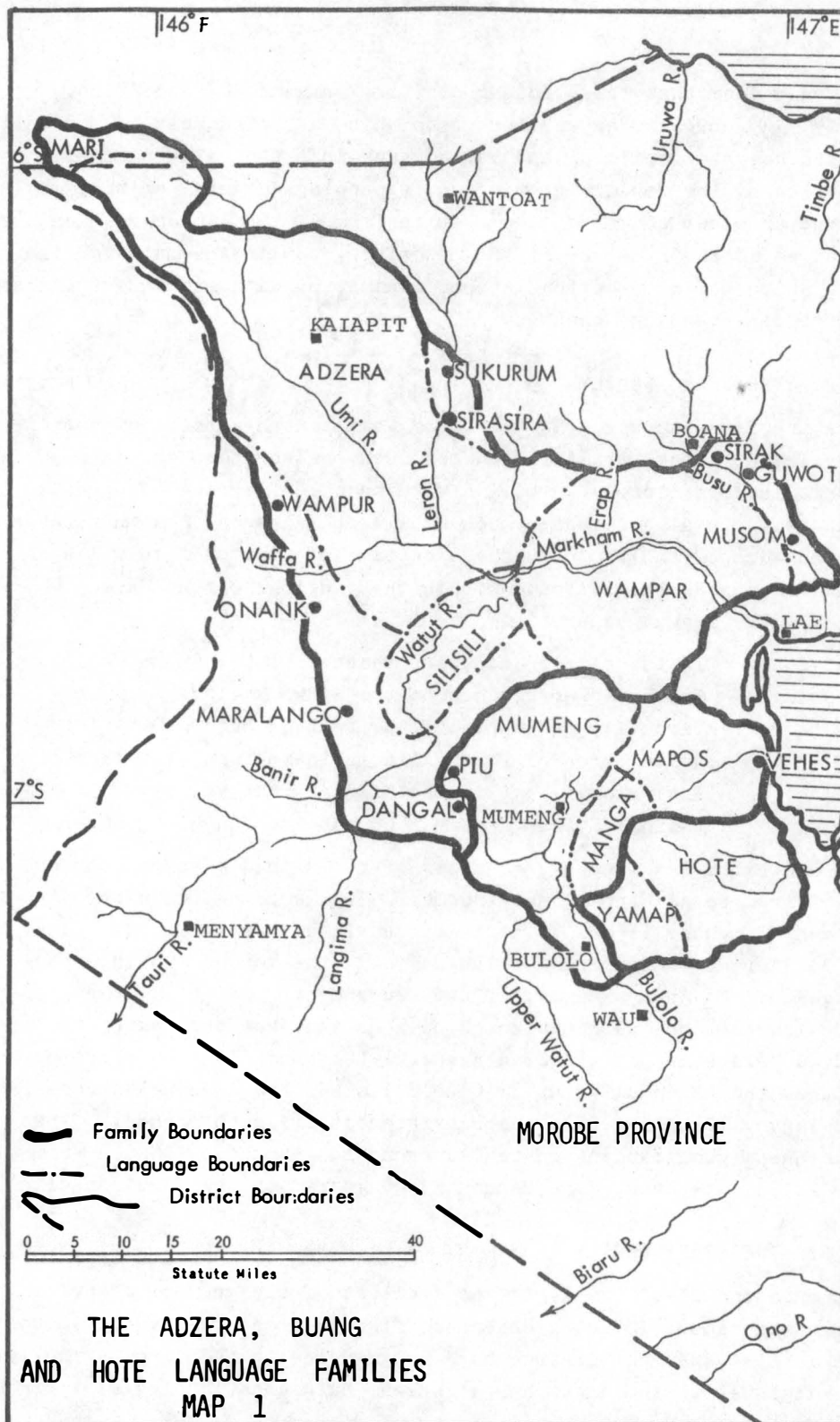
The Lower Watut Sub-Family comprising Dangal, Maralango, and Silisili.

The Markham Sub-Family comprising Onank, Mari, Wampur, Adzera and Sirasira.

The Musom Sub-Family comprising Musom and Sirak.

Languages of each of these groups are clearly more closely related to each other than they are to other members of the family.

Another interesting feature of the Adzera Family languages is that Mari, Wampur, Sirasira, and Onank are more closely related to each other than they are to Adzera itself, although they are each contiguous to Adzera while being widely separated from each other.



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It would seem that these four groups are remnants of some kind. Possibly they represent an earlier group which occupied most of the valley and which has been split up and forced back into the valleys of the tributaries by the rapidly growing and expanding Adzeras; or they may represent an older and more conservative form of the language which has not changed in the same way as the powerful group in the main fertile valley, which has much better intercommunication with subsequent faster (and more far-reaching) changes.

4.4.4.4. THE BUANG FAMILY

There are five languages in the Buang Family with a total of approximately 18,000 speakers. Although not much smaller than the Adzera Family it is more closely knit, and with much less spread of cognate percentages. It also covers a much smaller total area than that taken up by the Adzera Family. With the exception of four or five villages, the whole Buang Family is found within the confines of the Mumeng District. The languages are:

Central Buang	In the middle and upper reaches of the Snake Valley
Manga Buang	In the lower reaches of the Snake Valley
Mumeng	Virtually the whole of the rest of Mumeng District plus three or four villages in the Wau District
Piu	A single village in the Middle Watut Valley
Vehes	A single village near the mouth of the Buang River

The Central Buang language consists of two main dialects: what has been referred to as Mapos Buang (Hooley 1970), and the headwater dialect. The Mumeng language is really a dialect chain with six main dialects.

In most previous listings of languages in the Morobe Province the languages of the Buang Family, if they were mentioned at all, were included with the non-Austronesian group. Salzner has them correctly listed as Melanesian in his *Sprachenatlas* (Salzner 1960:28) where he calls them the Kaidemui group.⁴ Capell listed them as non-Austronesian in his survey (Capell 1962), and consistently omits reference to them in subsequent publications on the Austronesian languages. Even Wurm (1971:1261) lists Buang as a Papuan language rather than Austronesian.

4.4.4.5. THE SIASI FAMILY

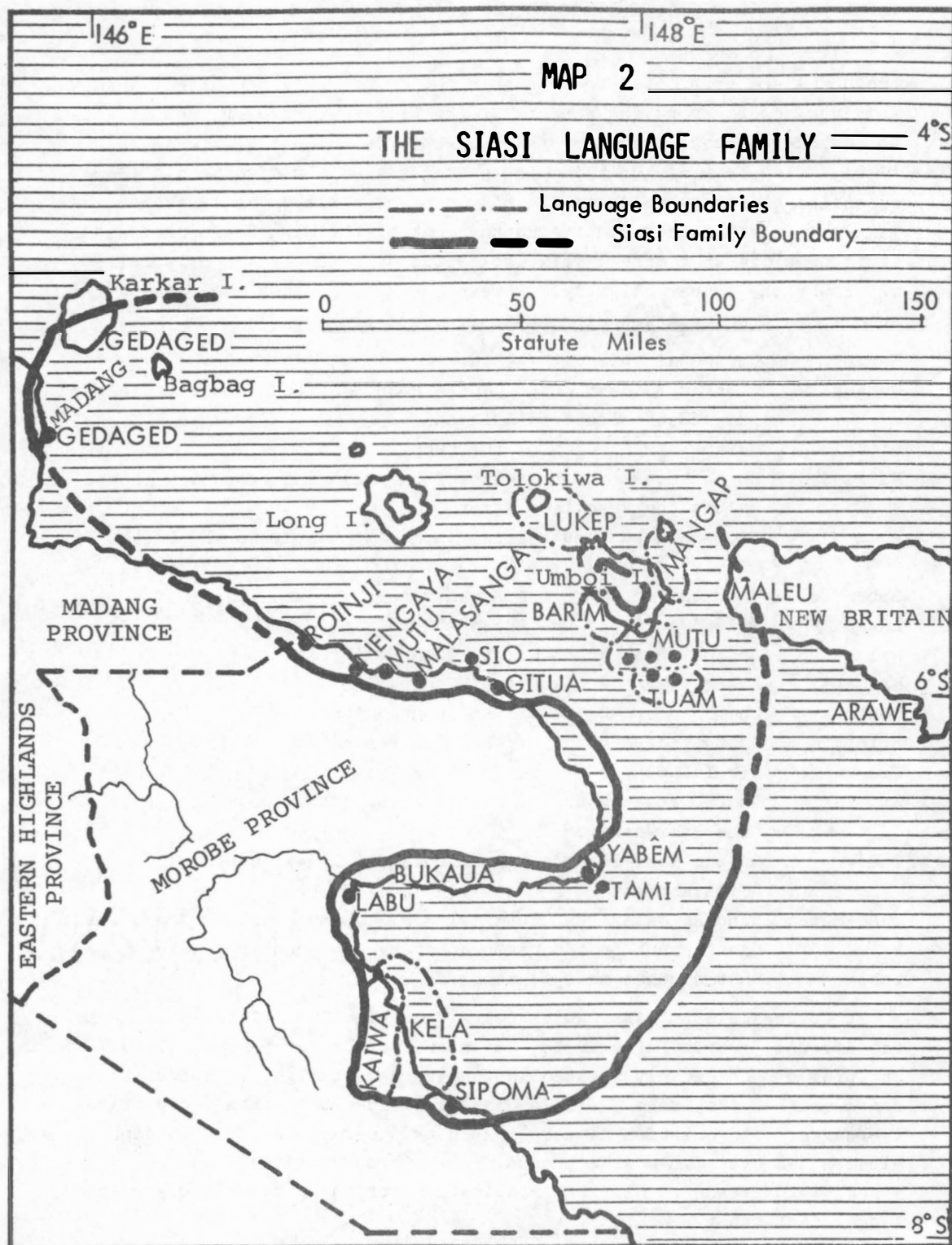
Although the Siasi Family is the smallest of the groups, comprising not more than about 10,000 speakers on figures presently available to me, it is also the most diverse both geographically and linguistically. In the list below, 16 languages (with Tuam-Mutu constituting a single

language) are attributed to it within the Morobe Province itself. The family extends beyond the borders of the Province, however, and is known to include Gedaged, a member of Z'graggen's Belan Family (Z'graggen 1970), Maleu from New Britain, and probably a number of others.⁵ Some questions have been raised concerning the large number of languages listed for the islands and the north coast of the Huon Peninsula, and it is possible that more careful collection and comparison of wordlists may lower the number slightly. However, on the present figures available to me the languages within the Province are:

Barim	On Aronai and south-western Umboi Islands
Bukaua	Along the south coast of the Huon Peninsula and south along the coast almost to Salamaua
Gitua	On the north coast of the Huon Peninsula
Kaiwa	On the coast to the south of Salamaua and extending inland along the Francisco River
Kela	From Salamaua south along the coast nearly to the Paiawa River
Labu	Near the mouth of the Markham on the south side
Lukep	Tolokiwa Island and the northern tip of Umboi
Malasanga	On the north coast of the Huon Peninsula
Mangap	Sakar Island and eastern Umboi
Nengaya	On the north coast of the Huon Peninsula
Roinji	On the north coast of the Huon Peninsula
Sio	Sio Island
Sipoma	On the coast south of the Markham, nearly down as far as the Paiawa River
Tami	On the Tami Islands, and mainland villages south of Finschhafen
Tuam-Mutu	Mandok, Malai, and Tuam Islands, southern Umboi, and a small settlement on the north coast of the Huon Peninsula
Yabêm	On the coast near Finschhafen

It is possible to distinguish certain sub-families within this large and diverse group. For example, Yabêm and Bukaua form a small local grouping of two closely related languages, and it might be better to consider that they form a single dialect chain rather than two distinct languages. The question is complicated by the fact that the Lutheran Mission has used Yabêm as a lingua franca throughout the area for many years, which tends to blur the distinction for these two closely related languages further.

The group of languages Bukaua, Yabêm, Kela and Labu, with perhaps Sipoma and Kaiwa, form a sub-family of their own called the Gulf Sub-Family (Hooley 1971). This group was originally treated as a separate



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family in its own right, but closer study of the percentages of shared cognates showed that they were linked to the island languages at the family level through Tuam-Mutu and Tami. Since additional study of the individual languages is likely to raise rather than lower the percentages it is better to consider this group as a sub-family.

The other main sub-family, and the largest, is found mostly on the islands and in a few scattered settlements along the north coast of the Huon Peninsula. It is called the Island Sub-Family and comprises Barim, Gitua, Lukep, Malasanga, Mangap, Nengaya, Roinji, Sio, Tami, and Tuam-Mutu from within the Morobe Province. As mentioned above, other languages such as Gedaged, from outside the province also belong to this sub-family, and its full extent is not yet known.

Sipoma and Kaiwa constitute a problem at present. They form another small subgroup of their own, being most closely related to each other. They are approximately equally related to the Gulf Sub-Family and the Island Sub-Family and closer study is necessary to elucidate their relationships more fully. Kaiwa is especially interesting since it is the only Austronesian language of the province known to have consonant clusters.

4.4.4.6. THE HOTE FAMILY

This is a small group situated between Wau and Salamaua which is divided on present evidence into the two languages Yamap and Hote. These two are closely related to each other, but more fieldwork needs to be done in the area to clarify the relationships. It may be that more detailed research than has so far been possible will show that there are really more than two languages in the group, or that it comprises a single dialect chain. Relationships to the other families also await further study, but on present indications the percentages of shared cognates are low, and about equal with respect to both the Buang Family and the Gulf Sub-Family.

4.4.4.7. CONCLUSION

Although the overall picture of the Austronesian languages in the Morobe Province is now quite well established, there remains much fieldwork to be done in developing the details of the picture, especially in carrying out in-depth studies of the individual languages. It is to be hoped that many of these will be undertaken during the next few years.

N O T E S

1. This classification is confused because, between the 1969 and 1971 publications, Capell has reversed the groups which he refers to by the terms AN1 and AN2. He has done this without, as far as I can see, noting this fact anywhere.
2. The name 'Adzera' has been spelled in many different ways (Azira, Acira, Atsera). I have preferred the spelling Azera in earlier publications. However, since Rev. K. Holzknacht who has worked among the Adzeras for many years has indicated a preference for the spelling used above, I have changed it accordingly.
3. I am assured by Rev. K. Holzknacht and Dr H. Fischer that there are two more groups belonging to the Adzera Family. These are the Yalu, a small group living about 12 miles out of Lae, and the Lahe (Lae) people, of whom only four or five old people still remain, living at Butibam village. This means that the total number of languages in the Adzera Family should be increased to fifteen. So far it has not been possible for me to confirm this personally.
4. Kaidemui, Gaidemoe, or Kaidemoe, is a Bukaua expression meaning 'the bush people' (Hooley 1970, Preface).
5. Chowning (1973) has now examined the relationships between the New Britain Austronesian languages and the Siasi Family in more detail. It appears that Maleu is a rather divergent member of her Bariai Family. She shows clearly, by comparison with other members of that family (e.g. Kove which she lists as having 52-54% shared cognates with Tuam-Mutu), that the Siasi and Bariai Families should now be united.

[illegible]

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