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## The Formation of the Image of China in the Context of School Textbooks on the History of Kazakhstan

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**Abstract.** History textbooks play a crucial role in history education and are an important tool for imparting historical knowledge and developing historical consciousness. This study explores the formation of historical consciousness in Kazakhstan from secondary school history textbooks. Since the content of history textbooks for grades 10 and 11 is a review and integration of the content of grades 5 to 9, the sample of the study in this paper was selected from history textbooks for grades 5 to 9 in Kazakhstan. The study analyzes the content of Kazakhstan's secondary school history textbooks for grades 5-9 on the relations between China and the Kazakhstan region from ancient times to the present day, explores the past, present, and future of the relations between the two countries, describes the impact of Kazakhstan's secondary school history textbooks on the formation of the population's historical consciousness. The existence of numerous historical materials proves that the relations between China and Kazakhstan have a long history. Nowadays, under the auspices of the Belt and Road cooperation initiative, the prospects for the development of relations between the two countries are optimistic. The narratives about China in the history textbooks of Kazakhstan's secondary schools make it possible for students to implicitly accept China's influence and participation in the historical development of Kazakhstan's region, as well as to make the relationship between the two countries a part of the construction of the national identity of modern Kazakhstan and a part of the population's historical consciousness.

**Keywords:** Kazakhstan, China, history textbooks, historical consciousness, identity, nation-building, interstate interaction, SCO, Belt and Road Initiative, content analysis.

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## **Introduction**

Since the declaration of the country's independence, there has been a significant shift in the self-awareness of Kazakhstani citizens, who have undergone profound social changes. In Kazakhstan, there has been a fundamental change in the perspective on the world, the people, and their history. Previously, the history of Kazakhstan was viewed as part of the unified history of the Soviet Union, but after gaining independence, Kazakhstani citizens began to see their history in the context of world history, Eurasian history, the history of nomadic civilizations, the history of Europe, and the Turkic peoples and states of Central Asia.

However, this shift in thinking did not happen overnight. Independence brought Kazakhstan not only greater autonomy and a broader arena but also new socio-political realities, which had a significant impact on the country's initial ideology and people's self-awareness. The Soviet Union ceased to exist, and in its place emerged a state officially called Kazakhstan. Yet, the majority, if not all, of the population found themselves confused: unsure of their identity, unsure of the country's history, and uncertain about the prospects for the development of the "new country." The three main philosophical questions: "Who am I?", "Where did I come from?", and "Where am I going?" became pressing issues for Kazakhstan after independence.

It is only by understanding the past and forming a self-identification with the people and culture of the country that we can pass on the historical experience to the younger generation and make history useful. Only when the people have a shared historical memory can they develop a historical consciousness, which in turn leads to national and state self-awareness. In the process of forming historical consciousness, people naturally develop a sense of unity, which contributes to the preservation and strengthening of group organization and fosters a sense of belonging in cultural and ethnic terms. Throughout history, people recognize their self-identification, and then, under the influence of historical consciousness, they develop a self-identification with the nation and culture of their country, which gradually leads to political stability and social prosperity.

Therefore, studying the influence of school history textbooks, as an important tool of historical education, on the formation of historical consciousness is relevant and important for Kazakhstan, which is currently facing an identity dilemma. In this regard, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Kh. Abzhanov said: "...the formation of historical consciousness among the population of Kazakhstan is a very urgent issue. Without strong historical consciousness, it is impossible to implement the state strategy 'Kazakhstan-2050'" [1].

The goal of this study is to analyze the content of history textbooks, understand the choices and emphases made in historical narratives, and how they interpret historical events and figures. The study aims to uncover how Kazakhstan officially uses historical education as a tool for developing the historical consciousness of its people, reconstructing national identity, and strengthening the country's distinctiveness.

The task of this research is to study the development of relations between the two sides by analyzing the content of school history textbooks in Kazakhstan about the relations between the peoples and states that lived and existed on the territories of present-day China and Kazakhstan from ancient times to the present. This will provide insights into the influence of Kazakhstani history textbooks on the formation of the historical consciousness of the population.

## Research methods

The study is generally conducted through content analysis. Content analysis was used in the study and summarization of the content of Kazakhstani school history textbooks, focusing on the relationships between the peoples and states that were located on the territory of present-day China and Kazakhstan from ancient times to the present.

## Results and discussions

There are a number of studies on historical consciousness in Kazakhstan, which primarily emphasize the importance of its formation for building the national self-awareness of the country and strengthening national identity, but they do not discuss how to promote its development. There are also some studies focused on constructing historical memory, showing how the state uses public spaces as a means to transform collective memory and create a new identity, exemplified by changes in Kazakhstan's monumental architecture. To a certain extent, this is also a way to form the historical consciousness of citizens.

Erkin Abil, Doctor of Historical Sciences and former director of the Institute of State History of the Committee for Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in a comment to the Qazaqstan Tarihy portal, stated that the formation of historical consciousness is one of the key components of national consciousness and raised the issue of creating comprehensive historical works. He emphasized that these works need to align to shape historical consciousness and a scientific worldview as the foundation of national (in a civic sense) identity [2].

In his work *The Basis of Consolidating the Historical Consciousness of the People*, L. Prokopenko, head of the Secretariat of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan under the administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, noted that nationwide consolidating historical consciousness, which forms civic identity, sets the guidelines for determining the place of the nation in the modern world and forms the basis of shared values that ensure unity and cohesion [3].

These works highlight the importance of forming historical consciousness to strengthen national identity and maintain national unity. However, specific methods for fostering historical consciousness among citizens are not mentioned.

Medeuova K., a professor at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, explores the efforts of the Kazakhstani government in the post-independence period to shape historical consciousness, restructure collective memory, and strengthen national identity through the lens of places of memory. In her work *Prolonged 'Sovietness' and Transformations of Collective Memory: Soviet and Post-Soviet Memorial Complexes in Kazakhstan*, K. Medeuova noted that monuments are restored according to a shift in the perception of the Great Patriotic War, now seen as monuments to all participants, not only the deceased. Since the individuals came from specific regions, the monuments are re-coded as memories of those people, rather than the war itself. This process helps to move Soviet monuments to the periphery of public spaces and create a shared historical memory. This is viewed as a response to historical/political injustice

concerning cultural memory during the Soviet period. In other words, after gaining independence, Kazakhstan gradually shed the "Soviet character" of public spaces by reconstructing or building new monumental public structures to restructure the population's historical memory and form historical consciousness that would support the stability of the current regime [4].

Sandibayeva U., an associate professor at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, also studies the commemorative policy of independent Kazakhstan. In her work *Memory Politics in the Post-Soviet Period: The Memorial Landscape of Civil War Memory in Kazakhstan*, she focuses on the practices surrounding the memory of the early 20th-century Civil War in Kazakhstan. Sandibayeva U. argues that it is insufficient to merely study the demolition, relocation, and creation of monuments; it is necessary to focus on the producers, practitioners, and actors of memory. This becomes particularly relevant when examining the commemoration of Civil War memory. However, after gaining independence, the memory of the Civil War in Kazakhstan was largely forgotten. The processes of nation-building required different histories and memories. As a result, the memorial architecture in Kazakhstan changed. The state adapted public memorial spaces by altering memory policies to help form historical consciousness among citizens and promote national identity [5].

In his work *The Reflection of the Kazakh Famine (1931-33) in School History Textbooks, 1992-2021*, analyzing the content of Kazakhstani history textbooks from 1992 to 2021, B. Dukeev explores the role of textbook authors in portraying the Kazakh famine of 1931-1933. He argues that the authors of the textbooks repeat narratives ranging from a cautious approach to the memory of the famine, as represented in state-building, to the narratives of Kazakh nationalists and academic historians [6]. In another work, *Kazakhstan in World War II: Authors and Publishers of History Textbooks after 1991*, as part of the *Knowledge in Textbooks* series, through a review of school history textbooks published between 1992 and 2019, he identified at least two different but intersecting perspectives on Kazakhstan's participation in the war: the first reflects a continuation of the Soviet narrative but emphasizes Kazakhstan's heroism, while the second places greater emphasis on the human catastrophe [7]. This indicates that Kazakh narratives created during the Soviet period are evolving. The latest textbooks, published in 2020, aimed to cover the main themes of the country's history from ancient times to the present, rather than focusing solely on pre-Soviet and pre-imperial Eurasian history. The author argues that the authorities may use these new Eurasia-focused historical frameworks to strengthen their legitimacy and justify Kazakhstan's departure from its Soviet past, which has long been a contentious issue.

In addition to Kazakhstani scholars, researchers from Ukraine, the United States, and the United Kingdom have conducted several studies on history textbooks, yielding numerous scholarly findings.

Ukrainian scholar O.O. Usenko studied the content of primary school textbooks within the framework of the I and Ukraine program (for students in grades 1-4). The results of the study showed that school education plays a certain role in spreading a specific discourse and contributes to the formation of national identity. Analyzing the content of the I and Ukraine course textbooks, the author concluded that the formation of national identity in young schoolchildren occurs through the creation of a particular image of Ukraine. The textbooks contain descriptions

of traditional Ukrainian holidays, national symbols, state symbols, and traditional traits that reflect not only the officially selected list of "values of the Ukrainian people" but also universal human values [8].

American scholar Nancy Popson, having studied and analyzed the textual elements and gaps in the Tales from the History of Ukraine textbook, used across Ukraine in the fifth grade, shows that the Ukrainian fifth-grade textbook reflects the dominant historical, national, and civic identity of the elite. Despite ongoing debates surrounding this version of history and possible bias in how students perceive, understand, and internalize the textbook content, as long as Tales continues to be used in fifth grades throughout Ukraine, it can be concluded that the message from Ukraine's Ministry of Education emphasizes two features of the "nation"—inclusiveness and the dominant role of the history, culture, and language of the Ukrainian nation [9].

British scholar Anne Doyle argues that the history of the Irish Famine (1845-1849) is marginalized in textbooks containing direct or indirect manifestations of ethnocentrism, based on an analysis of a sample of history textbooks from British secondary schools in the 1920s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s up to 2002. In her work, the author emphasizes that since education continues practically throughout life, it has the longest-lasting impact on the consciousness of a country's citizens. Therefore, the curriculum should be designed to counter ethnocentrism, extremism, and xenophobia [10].

The concept of forming historical consciousness was first introduced in Kazakhstan in 1995, and on June 22, 2013, a group of the country's historians gathered in Almaty to discuss new concepts in the development of historical science, emphasizing the necessity of forming historical consciousness among the population.

Historical consciousness is one of the main elements of national self-awareness and spirit, representing a tremendous value. The formation of historical consciousness contributes to the strengthening of cultural identity. The formation of national self-awareness must begin with historical education. Only by understanding the past and forming a self-identification with the nation and its culture can the historical experience be passed on to the younger generation so that history serves as a source of inspiration. Only when the people share a collective historical memory can historical consciousness be developed, which, in turn, leads to the formation of national and state identity. In the process of shaping historical consciousness, people naturally come together, fostering societal organization and forming a sense of cultural and ethnic belonging.

Fostering historical consciousness helps people understand the historical development of the nation and state in Kazakhstan, the progress of Kazakh society, the unique development of Kazakh culture, and deeply influences the formation of the cultural character of the people and their national self-awareness. Furthermore, historical consciousness is the mental activity of understanding and addressing historical and practical problems from a macro-historical perspective by applying a specific worldview and historical perception based on historical phenomena and materials [11]. Therefore, the formation of historical consciousness also promotes the development of historical thinking and a critical spirit, providing citizens with different perspectives and historical guidelines to address and solve real-world problems.

The document adopted in the early years of Kazakhstan's establishment – "The Concept of Forming Historical Consciousness in the Republic of Kazakhstan" – outlines important

principles: "Historical consciousness is formed through science, education, family upbringing, the media, literature, art, cultural enlightenment, museums, archives, local history, and tourism – channels through which individuals become familiar with historical ideas, achievements, and even the culture of society as a whole. The main means of forming historical consciousness are preschool education, school education, and the university system, as well as the activities of the media and cultural institutions" [12].

As is known, preschool education is aimed at children whose age and cognitive level do not allow the Ministry of Education to organize systematic historical education at this stage. Therefore, the role of preschool education in the formation of historical consciousness is minimal. However, school education, as the next step in the education system, is the primary source from which most people obtain historical information. In Kazakhstan's secondary schools, history is taught starting in the fifth grade. After the first four years (or more, if preschool education is included), children's cognitive abilities improve, and they gradually acquire the capacity to learn and understand historical terms, as well as to comprehend and briefly evaluate historical events. Historical education at this stage is key to forming the historical consciousness of children.

History textbooks play a crucial role in historical education as an important tool for transmitting historical knowledge and shaping historical consciousness. Through the systematic organization and presentation of material, textbooks help students learn about the events, people, and cultures of the past, encouraging them to better understand the development of history. Good history textbooks can stimulate students' interest in learning, develop critical thinking and analytical skills, and help them understand the connection between history and reality, enabling them to better tackle future challenges.

Thus, this study examines the formation of historical consciousness in Kazakhstan based on school history textbooks. Since the content of history textbooks for the 10th and 11th grades is a review and integration of the material covered in the 5th-9th grades, the research sample of this study is focused on the history textbooks for grades 5-9 in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's school history textbooks narrate that relations with China have a long history, developing both in the past and present. Much of the written evidence of ancient Kazakh history originates from Chinese classics like Sima Qian's *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian). The proclamation of Kazakhstan's independence can be used as a milestone to summarize the characteristics of the relationship between China and Kazakhstan.

Before Kazakhstan declared independence, interactions between China and the peoples and states located in Kazakhstan throughout various historical periods were primarily of a military-political nature, supplemented by economic and trade relations. Throughout history, the Kazakh and Chinese peoples have witnessed, participated in, and shaped each other's historical processes.

During the Turkic period, the ruler of Western China ordered the collection of all information about the Turks. In the 60s of the 6th century, the Turkic Khaganate established relations with China, and various ties developed between the two peoples. During the 60s-90s of the 6th century, the Turks viewed China as a source of income, a situation that China could not accept. Thus, the struggle against the Turks became a key task for China [13]. In 603, China achieved a diplomatic victory by dividing the Khaganate into Western and Eastern Turkic Khaganates, ending the history of the unified Turkic Khaganate.

The founding of the Tang dynasty is also linked to the Turks. At that time, the population of China, dissatisfied with the rule of the Sui dynasty, began to support Suar Khagan, the ruler of the Eastern Turks. Eventually, in 618, the Chinese, together with the Eastern Turks, overthrew the ruling Sui dynasty, and the Tang dynasty came to power [14]. With the new dynasty in power, China was named the Tang Empire. In the summer of 751, a major battle between Arabs and Chinese – the Battle of Talas – took place near the ancient city of Atлах. From that point on, Central Asia began to develop within the framework of Muslim culture.

The Silk Road: The Silk Road was opened by Zhang Qian in the mid-2nd century BCE when he traveled through the western regions on behalf of the Han dynasty emperor. In 139 BCE, to establish military cooperation with the nomadic tribes of Central Asia against the Huns, the Han emperor sent Zhang Qian on a mission to Central Asia. From the second half of the first millennium BCE, lapis lazuli from Badakhshan was transported to China. The Jade Road, which appeared at the same time as the Lapis Lazuli Road, connected Eastern Turkestan with China. The prosperity of the Silk Road in the Middle Ages was closely linked to the development of silk production in China. With the spread of silk production secrets to countries west of China in the 6th century, the northern branch of the Great Silk Road emerged. It became a bustling trade route, linking Central Asia with Eastern Europe [15, 55-57].

China and the Kazakh Khanate: In 1722, after the death of the Chinese Emperor Kangxi, who had fought against the Dzungars, a peace treaty was concluded with Dzungaria. After this, the Dzungars focused all their forces on the west and in 1741 launched a new major campaign against the Kazakhs. In 1756, the Kazakhs, under the leadership of Khan Abylai, began their struggle against the Qing Dynasty. This marked the first battle between the Kazakhs and the Chinese [16]. From that year onward, Khan Abylai began to maintain diplomatic relations with the Chinese government. This move allowed him to halt Russia's colonial policy in the territory of Kazakhstan while maintaining stable relations with China. With the destruction of the Dzungar state in 1758, land disputes between Kazakh rulers and Chinese authorities intensified. At the same time, conflicts arose between the two sides, worsening their relations.

After the mid-19th century, when all of Kazakhstan's territory came under the control of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, relations between Kazakhstan and China sharply declined. Interaction between the two sides mainly occurred in the areas of migration and trade. In terms of migration, in 1916, 300,000 Kazakhs migrated from Semirechye to China [17]. During the collectivization of agriculture in 1931-1933, mass migration of Kazakhs out of the republic occurred, with hundreds of thousands fleeing to Mongolia, China, and other countries. Regarding trade, during the NEP (New Economic Policy) period, fair trade was revived, and merchants from China and Mongolia attended the fairs.

Since Kazakhstan declared independence, Sino-Kazakh relations have been characterized by multi-level cooperation and a broad range of interactions.

In the context of interaction between the two countries, on January 3, 1992, the People's Republic of China officially recognized the Republic of Kazakhstan. On this day, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. China took a special place in Kazakhstan's foreign policy, particularly among Asian countries, with various treaties and agreements signed. Kazakhstan established transit connections with China through three main routes – rail, road,

and air transport. A major foreign policy achievement for Kazakhstan was China's nuclear security guarantees for Kazakhstan in 1995, and the signing of the December 23, 2002, "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation" [18, 191]. The construction of the "Western Kazakhstan-China" oil pipeline has effectively positioned China as Kazakhstan's number one trading partner. In recent years, Kazakhstan and China have been actively cooperating in socio-economic, trade, and cultural spheres.

In the context of regional cooperation, on April 26, 1996, an agreement on "Confidence Building in the Military Sphere in Border Areas" was signed in Shanghai. At that time, the organization was known as the "Shanghai Five" (China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), which later evolved into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001. The SCO is not a military alliance; it is an organization that ensures regional security and economic ties. Successful cooperation has developed in the humanitarian sector of the SCO, including education, culture, tourism, and sports.

## **Conclusion**

Kazakhstan and China have a long history of interaction. From dynastic marriages and the development of the Silk Road to the establishment of diplomatic relations after the dissolution of the USSR and the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), along with the successful promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Central Asia Summit in May 2023, the friendly relations between Kazakhstan and China have deep historical roots and great potential for development.

Kazakhstan's history textbooks highlight the relationships between Kazakhstan and China across different periods, showcasing both important trade and economic ties and the complex interactions between the two countries during the colonial era. Their mere inclusion demonstrates their relevance to the histories of both Kazakhstan and China. As a primary tool of historical education, history textbooks shape the collective memory of the population, reflecting the historical origins and development of relations between Kazakhstan and China, making them part of the country's historical consciousness. Despite periodic conflicts between Kazakhstan and China in ancient times, there is no doubt that relations between the two countries have a long history and significant prospects for positive development.

History textbooks play a key role in shaping historical consciousness. By selectively presenting material, instilling certain ideas, and reflecting social ideology, history textbooks directly shape students' historical consciousness. From this perspective, the content and methodology of historical education are crucial for developing a comprehensive and objective historical consciousness. Therefore, when compiling history textbooks, the relevant organizations and authors (scholars, teachers) should consider several factors. While respecting the objectivity of historical reality, textbooks should serve not only the internal needs of forming national identity but also the personal development needs of students.

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### Author Contributions.

**Kishibayeva S.B.** – corresponding author, work with literature, collect and translate materials, write a research article using research materials and methods, and format the article according to the requirements.

**Shan Mengjie** – determine the concept and topic of the article, collect materials, and provide guidance and direction.

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### **Қазақстан тарихы бойынша мектеп оқулықтары контекстінде қытай бейнесін қалыптастыру**

**Аңдатпа.** Тарих оқулықтары тарихи білім беруде шешуші рөл атқарады және тарихи білімді беру мен тарихи сананы дамытудың маңызды құралы болып табылады. Бұл зерттеуде Қазақстан тарихы бойынша мектеп оқулықтары негізінде Қазақстанда тарихи сананы қалыптастыру қарастырылады. 10 және 11 сыныптарға арналған тарих оқулықтарының мазмұны 5-9 сыныптардың мазмұнына шолу және интеграция болып табылатындықтан, осы жұмыс үшін зерттеу үлгісі Қазақстандағы 5-9 сыныптарға арналған Тарих оқулықтарынан таңдалды. Қазақстанның 5-9 сыныптарына арналған Тарих бойынша мектеп оқулықтарының мазмұнын талдай отырып, қазіргі қытай мен Қазақстанның аумағында ежелгі заманнан бүгінгі күнге дейін өмір сүрген және орналасқан халықтар мен мемлекеттер арасындағы қарым-қатынастар туралы зерттеу екі ел арасындағы қарым-қатынастардың өткенін, бүгінін және болашағын қарастырады, Қазақстан тарихы бойынша мектеп оқулықтарының халықтың тарихи санасын қалыптастыруға әсерін сипаттайды. Көптеген тарихи құжаттардың болуы қытай мен Қазақстан арасындағы қарым-қатынастың ұзақ тарихы бар екендігін айғақтайды. Қазіргі уақытта "белдеу және жол" ынтымақтастық бастамасының қолдауымен екі ел арасындағы қарым-қатынастарды дамыту перспективалары оптимистік. Қазақстан тарихы бойынша мектеп оқулықтарындағы Қытай туралы әңгімелер оқушыларға Қытайдың Қазақстан аймағының тарихи дамуына ықпалы мен қатысуын саналы түрде қабылдауға, Қытай-Қазақстан қатынастарын қазіргі Қазақстанның ұлттық бірегейлігін құрудың бір бөлігіне және халықтың тарихи санасының бір бөлігіне айналдыруға мүмкіндік береді.

**Түйін сөздер:** Қазақстан, Қытай, тарих оқулықтары, тарихи сана, бірегейлік, ұлттық құрылыс, мемлекетаралық қатынастар, ШЫҰ, «Белдеу және жол» бастамасы, контент-талдау.

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### **Формирование образа Китая в контексте школьных учебников по истории Казахстана**

**Аннотация.** Учебники по истории играют решающую роль в историческом образовании и являются важными инструментами для передачи исторических знаний и развития исторического сознания. В данном исследовании рассматривается формирование исторического сознания в Казахстане на основе школьных учебников по истории Казахстана. Поскольку содержание учебников по истории для 10 и 11 классов является обзором и интеграцией содержания 5-9 классов, выборка исследования для данной работы была отобрана из учебников по истории для 5-9 классов в Казахстане. Анализируя содержание школьных учебников по истории для

5-9 классов Казахстана о взаимоотношениях между народами и государствами, которые проживали и располагались на территориях современного Китая и Казахстана с древнейших времён до наших дней. Исследование рассматривает прошлое, настоящее и будущее отношений между двумя странами, описывает влияние школьных учебников по истории Казахстана на формирование исторического сознания населения. Наличие многочисленных исторических документов свидетельствует о том, что отношения между Китаем и Казахстаном имеют давнюю историю. В настоящее время, при поддержке инициативы сотрудничества "Пояс и путь", перспективы развития отношений между двумя странами оптимистичны. Нарративы о Китае в школьных учебниках по истории Казахстана позволяют учащимся подсознательно принять влияние и участие Китая в историческом развитии казахстанского региона, сделать китайско-казахстанские отношения частью конструирования национальной идентичности современного Казахстана и частью исторического сознания населения.

**Ключевые слова:** Казахстан, Китай, учебники по истории, историческое сознание, идентичность, национальное строительство, межгосударственное взаимодействие, ШОС, инициатива "Пояс и путь", контент-анализ.

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