ატენის სიონი თანამედროვეობა და პერსპექტივა

კავლელაშვილი ელენე საქართველოს ეროვნული მუზეუმი

ატენის სიონი განსაკუთრებული მნიშვნელობის ძეგლია ხუროთმოძღვრებით, კედლის მხატვრობით და მრავალრიცხოვანი წარწერებით. მისი მხატვრულ - ისტორიული ღირებულება სცილდება საქართველოს ფარგლებს და კუთვნილ ადგილს იმკვიდრებს მსოფლიო კულტურის საგანძურში. მდებარეობს გორიდან თორმეტი კილომეტრის მანზილზე, მდინარე ტანას მარცხენა ნაპირზე, 40-45%ით დახრილ კლდის მძლავრ მასივზე მიშენებულ ხელოვნურ გაქანზე. აგებულია ღმრთისმშობლის მიძინების სახელზე მეშვიდე საუკუნის მეორე ნახევარში და იმეორებს მცხეთის ჯვარს, როგორც არქიტექტურით ისე ტოპოგრაფიით. ტამარს უმნიშვნელოვანესი ადგილი უკავია ამიერკავკასიაში ცენტრალურგუმბათოვანი ხუროთმოძღვრების წარმომავლობის საკითხის განსაზღვრაში, რადგან მას მეზობელი სომხები იჩემებენ. გურამ აბრამიშვილის მიერ ჩატარებული უახლესი გამოკვლევებით გაირკვა: სუბსტრუქციაზე მეხუთე საუკუნეში ბაზილიკური ნაგებობა მდგარა. მის ნაადგილარზე მეშვიდე საუკუნის მეორე ნახევარში ქართლის ერისმთავრებს ვარაზს, ნერსე პირველ დიდს ($682\86-689$) და სტეფანოზ მესამე მამფალს (711-739) აუგიათ დღევანდელი ნაგებობა. იგი 983-986 წწ ერისთავთერისთავს რატი პირველ ბაღუაშს განუახლებია, რისთვისაც მოუწვევია ეროვნებით სომეხი რესტავრატორი თოდოსაკი, რომლის წარწერა განაწილებულია ტაძრის სამხრეთ ფასადზე. ატენის სიონი გამორჩეულია მეხუთე, მეშვიდე, მეათე საუკუნეთა რელიეფებით. მეათე საუკუნის ოცდაორი ქანდაკებიდან ცამეტი საერო პირია. ტაძარში მაღალმხატვრული ორფენოვანი მოხატულობა (VIII-XI სს.) და დიდი რაოდენობის მეშვიდე - მეთვრამეტე საუკუნეების ფრესკული, ნაკაწრი და ლაპიდარული წარწერაა. ბიბლიური და ისტორიული ტექატების გვერდით გვხვდება პოეზიის ნიმუშები. სხვადასხვა დროს ჩატარებული აღდგენითი სამუშაოების მიუხედავად ეკლესიის მდგომარეობა 2000 წლისათვის საგანგაშო აღმოჩნდა. საფრთხე კიდევ უფრო მეტად გაიზარდა 2009 წლის სექტემბერში, როდესაც ტაძრის ზედა ტერასაზე ჩატარებული სამუშაოების შედეგადაც კლდის მასივი 3-4 მეტრის სიღრმეზე ჩაიჭრა. ჟახლოესი მანძილი ეკლესიასა და განხორციელებულ სამუშაოებს შორის 4-5 მეტრს, ხოლო უშორესი 20-30 მეტრს შეადგენს. ამავდროულად მნიშვნელოვნად დაზიანდა იმავე კლდის დასავლეთ და ჩრდილოეთ მონაკვეთები. ტაძრის დღევანდელი მდგომარეობა საფრთხეს უქმნის მის გამორჩეულ უნივერსალურ ღირებულებას, ინტეგრულობასა და ავთენტურობას. ყველა ამ მოცემულობის დაცვის უზრუნველ-საყოფად საჭიროა ნაგებობის და მისი შემოგარენის უახლესი მდგომარეობის შესწავლა. მათი გრძელვადიანი კონსერვაცია და გამაგრება. აუცილებელია ძეგლის დაცვითი ზონების განსაზღვრა განსაკუთრებული მნიშვნელობის მქონე ძეგლებისთვის მინიჭებული საერთაშორისო კანონმდებლობით დადგენილი ნორმების ფარგლებში. ატენის სიონში, ამავე დროს, კომპლექსური კვლევა-ძიების განახლება საწინდარი იქნება მრავალი ახალი მასალას გამოვლენისა, რითაც ძეგლი კვლავ მნიშვნელოვან წვლილს შეიტანს თეოლოგიის, მეცნიერების და კულტურის სფეროებთან დაკავშირებული სხვადასხვა საკითხების კვლევაში. ეს გამორჩეული ტაძარი ასევე დიდად შეუწყობს ხელს რეგიონში ტურიზმის განვითარებას.

Ateni Sioni Contemporaries and Perspectives

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Ateni Sioni is one of the most important monuments in Georgia by its architecture, wall painting and numerous inscriptions preserved there. The Church of Dormition of the Virgin Mary belongs to the second half of the 7^{th} century. It is located on the distance of 12 km. from the city of Gori near the village of Ateni. The Temple (height 22m., length-width 22X19m) repeats the architectural type of Mtskheta Jvari (the 6^{th} century) both by architecture and topography. It has been constructed on the bank of the river Tana, on the tremendous artificial platform (Height 12/15m., space $800 \, \mathrm{m}^2$) which is built onto a strong massif of the rock bent down by 40-45% and plays one of the most significant roles in general artistic-architectural solutions of the temple.

The central-dome construction is four-apses. The fundament of its plan is underdome quadrate from which passing onto the circle is performed in three lines of tromps. In the interior the four-directional developed apses create a cross in the plan, between the shoulders of which there are located the right-angled premises. The rooms adjacent to the altar are leavening, rennet (samkvetlo) and deacon's house, the south-west premise – a women's area, and the north-west was designated for the feudal lords. The auxiliary chambers are connected with the inner space by three-fourth deep niches of the circle. In them there are cut the apertures (openings) of court chambers. The south-west premise, like Mtskheta Jvari has a door from the outer side put in as well. Setting up of chambers caused appearing of bems at east-west apses by

which it was lightly infringed a central structure as it is in Mtskheta Jvari. The dome is an organizer of the architectural theme. On its hemispheric area there is depicted "Glorious Cross". The interior is decorated with painting of two various periods. To enter the Cathedral is possible through the doors located in the north and south apses.

Structure of the inner space in outer masses of the Temple is expressed by facet projections and deep niches. Ateni Sioni, like the Mtskheta Jvari has been constructed without west facade niches. The facades of the construction are faced with trim quadras of greenish-grayish sandstone. The facades and cupola neck is decorated with ornamented prefixes of windows and relief sculptures. On the facades and interior of Ateni Sioni there are preserved numerous lapidary (scratched out or carved out on stones) and fresco inscriptions.

The yard of the Temple is surrounded by an enceinte strengthened with contraforces. The east wall of the protective wall joins to the artificial platform, accompanies the strong massif of north- boulder rock. The South – borders upon that oldest irrigation system which, in opinion of G.Chubinashvili (1948) should be of the times of construction of the temple. The west wall of protective wall in which it is cut in the only arc door, continues a large massif of the rock.

Ateni Sioni has attracted the researchers' attention since the thirties of the nine-teenth century and towards it the interest has not stopped till present so as the temple occupies the most significant place in solution of the problem of origin of central-dome architectural type in the Transcaucasia. The initial of dissimilar points of view on origin of this architectural theme expressed among the scientists' groups was the conduction inscription in Armenian language spread on the south facade of the Temple, where, the Armenian master Todosaki declares himself to be the builder of the Temple. Here we'll be limited by only several points of view.

The Swiss researcher and traveler, Frederic Dubua d'Monpere (1839-1843) dated the Ateni Sioni by the 10^{th} century. He considered its architectural type to be established in the 7^{th} century, in Vagharshapati Temple of Saint Rapsime in Armenia, which had been repeated in the 10^{th} century for Georgians by the architect Todosaki, being Armenian by nationality, .

In opinion of professor of Vienna University, I. Strjhigovski (1918), the martyriums of Grigol Enlightener and Saint Riphsime are the embryos of central-dome architectural type and they became the basis for development of indicated theme both in Armenia and Georgia.

G. Chubinashvili (1939; 1948) on the basis of actual materials defined the fundamental role of Mtskheta Jvari Cathedral in Transcaucasia being originated and developed in the 6th century in the Georgian howls in creation and development of central-dome architectural theme. By his observation Ateni Sioni is an exact copy of Mtskheta Jvari, which is repeated in the thirties of the 7th century by the Armenian Todosaki both by architectural type and topographically.

The Armenian authors tried to get the actual material for the theory of Dubua-Strjhigovski. P. Muadian (1968), on the basis of cross encountered during disintegration of iconostasis of later period of Mtskheta Jvari, on which there is spread the church-building donor inscription in Georgian capital letters (Asomtavruli) writing,

on adjacent facet carved out Armenian grapheme (t) he considered as initial of the architecture of Mtskheta Jvari and identified with Todosaki. By his conclusion it is shown that one and the same group of the masters appeared to work on Mtskheta Jvari and Ateni Sioni and they are the Chalcedonian Armenians immigrated from Armenia to Georgia.

A complex permanently acting expedition of Ateni Sioni which had been headed by deceased scientist G.Abramishvili, greatly contributed to the affair of research of problematic connected with Ateni Sioni.

On the basis of carried out research works G. Abramishvili made clear the wrong bases of those theoretical arguments according to which it was evaluated the interrelations of the Georgian and Armenian architecture - cardinal issues of influences. The researcher in the first turn paid attention to the relief spread on the north facade of Ateni Sioni signed by Todosaki: Lukiane is milking the deer sent by the God which depicts the miraculous aspect of creative work of David from Gareji (Garejeli). The scientist has cleared out that this plot had been based on the metaphrasic edition of "life" of great hermit and initially was depicted in painting of the year of 983 of the main temple of Gareji desert. And this slipped out all bases of dating by the 7th century of the Ateni relief and correspondingly by its master - Todosaki. The next stage of research - study from the paleographical point of view of the Armenian-language constructional inscription distributed on the southern façade of the temple made it clear that the inscription found resemblance with the monuments of the tenth century. At the same time he used to damage the pilgrim postscripts fulfilled in Georgian Asomtavruli and Nuskhui scripts. This fact told about construction of Ateni Sioni much more earlier before carving out of constructional inscription by the Armenian Todosaki and this master of Armenian nationality could not be considered as an architect of the Temple. In inscription Todosaki declared himself as a builder of the Temple, i.e. executor of restoration works and not as an architect. With allowance of all these the researcher identified that execution of restoration works in Ateni Sioni in the 10th century had been imposed on Todosaki.

As a result of study of fresco (the north skirt of altar apse) inscriptions fulfilled in Georgian capital letters (Asomtavruli) and carved out in Nuskhuri scripts (northwest Pylon, deacon's room, principality) he cleared out that: construction of centraldome temple had been started in the reigns supreme of representatives of Klarjeti Bagrationis House, Varaz Erismtavari and had finished in the period of his son Nerse the First Great (682/86-689) and grandson, Stephanoz the Third Mamphali (711-739). The country of Ateni was their inheritance domain, and Ateni Sioni was the ossuary of this house. The relief church-building donor expressions of Nerse and Stephanoz apeared to be spread on the north facet of apse's projection. Their names with the topographical significance purpose, is repeated by the master-sculpture of the period ofrestoration of the 10th century, on that new relief, which is placed on ruins of initial expressions of these church-building donors (Abramishvili, 1965; 1969; 1972; 1977; 1984; 1993; 1995).

As a result of archaeological research works carried out on the territory of Ateni Sioni under the construction, along the south and west facades there were discovered water on the water storage basin – on the portal of the north timpa and on the west facade Senmurvi, a mythological bird with dog's head, bird's body and peacock's tail. To the 5^{th} century belong the basket type wicker capitals of portal of the Temple's north door, with the faces of a woman and a man sculptured in the center (Abramishvili, 1993, 1996; 2002).

In a decorative system of dome construction of Ateni Sioni there was distinguished two construction periods. From the portrayals of the first period, i.e. the end of the 7th century, there are preserved: the scene of hunting and on the north - twofigure relief with portrayal of Stephane Diacon and before him a public person on knees with entreaty. The second building period is connected with Feudal House of the Baghvashes: according to inscriptions revealed in Sioni it appeared that the Baghvashes had settled finally in Ateni country since the year of 940. Mikael Baghvash who is depicted on the south facade, has built the border for Ateni Sioni in 945. In 983/84-986. The Eristavt-Eristavi (Grand duke), Rati the First repaired the Temple. For carrying out the restoration works he invited a restorer Todosaki, Armenian by nationality and his guildsmen: consisting of Gergium Erhasan's son and Grigol Dapsi. On the east facade of the temple there is represented a church -building donor sculpture of Rati the First with the model of a church in hands. On the adjacent relief his son, Liparite is represented. The vast scale restoration works carried out at the end of the 10th century have considerably changed the initial decorative system of the temple. Only the static figures located frontally only on the east projection maintain a conditional contact with the first model of architectural type of Ateni Sioni - Mtskheta Jvari. They express a weak contact towards direction of feet (legs) with Our Saviour depicted on the central facet. On other facades and the neck of the cupola it is distributed chaotically. From the twenty-two relieves belonging to the second construction period thirteen are the public persons (Abramishvili, 1972; 1993; 1997; 2003).

As a result of carried out investigations Z.Aleksidze (1978) determined that in Ateni Sioni the Armenian language inscriptions are divided into two chronological groups: those of the second half of the tenth century and of the 17th and 18th centuries. The first group comprises: the constructional inscription of Todosaki; the anthroponomy carved on the relieves of restoration period: names of masters (Todosa, Grigor Daps) and the personages of Old Testament (Samson, Ambakum); On the relieves consisting of two stones, with the aim to adjust correctly the stones enclosed separate graphemes; Inscription of the son of Gergium Erhasan in which with the aim of chronological indication it is applied the fact of Uflistsikhe by Bagrati the Third (on the basis of which fulfillment of the inscription is defined by 982-986 years); The separate graphemes approved in the interior of the temple (signs of stonemasons) and anthroponomes (Ahroni, Giorgi), represent autographs of the masters working on repairing of the shirt of the interior. In the second group there were united: the pilgrim inscriptions of Solomon, Avetis Abegha and Anonim. By conclusion of the researcher: in restoration works carried out in Ateni Sioni the Armenian masters participated only in the eighties of the tenth century.

In spite of all above-indicated, in armenology even for today it is considered as the alpha-betic truth that Ateni Sioni was constructed by the Armenian architect Todosaki for the Armenian Chalcedonic perish residing in Georgia, to prove of which they try through vivid falsification of actual materials. The vivid certification of this fact are the "corrections-amendments" included by rude interference of Armenian scientists in the article of G.Abramishvili "Ateni Sioni" published for the last years in Russia according to which as an architect of Ateni Sioni constructed in the second half of the seventh century is declared again the Armenian Todosaki ("Pravoslavnaya Encyclopedia", 2002). Here we shall not enlist of publications of later period.

Ateni Sioni is as well completely distinguished monument by the wall painting preserved in it which is distributed in the interior by two layers. The first layer is aniconic, belongs to the beginning of the VIII century. By it only constructional parts are decorated. The aniconic painting is covered by a monumental painting fulfilled in the second half of the XI century program of which is determined by dedication to celebration of Virgin Mary of the Temple. In the conch of altar there is represented - Virgin Mary with adolescent ("Nikopea") among the archangels (Michael, Gabriel). The second register – is allotted to the rows of apostles, and the third – to the fathers of the church. In the South apse the apocryphal cycle of God's Mother is represented; In the North -Scenes of "Twelve Celebrations"; In the West there is a vast reduction of the Last Judgment. At the same time on the North skirt and Bema, in the lower register of painting there are expressed the church-building donor portraits of the Georgian kings and majesties. Initially their number constituted seven. And for today only fragmentally achieved six figures have been preserved. In scientific literature there have been expressed inhomogeneous points of view about the epoch of identification of donors and relatively the wall painting.

In opinion of Sh.Amiranashvili (1957) here are expressed: Catholicos of Kartli; Prince Giorgi – son of the King of the Abkhazians, Kostantine; King of the Armenians-Sumbat Tiezerakali; His underage son, Ashot Ekati; Queen – Daughter of Sumbat Tiezerakali, wife of the son of Konstantine- king of Abkhazian, Giorgi. The researcher defined the date of fulfillment of painting with allowance of one date inscription, 904-906ss. By observation of T.Barnaveli (1957) the start of this graphite inscription was covered the by the layer of painting and the year of 906 can't be considered as an upper limit.

By observation of R.Shmerling (1974) Ateni Sioni had been painted in 1080 during the reign of Giorgi the Second (1072-1089), who is portrayed as the second church-building donor. The third is – King Bagrat the fourth (1027-1072), others are – the Feudal of Ateni country. Such date envisaged the notice read out by T.Barnaveli (1956): About painting of the temple in 1080 under the reign suptreme of the king Giorgi the Second Novelisimos. By the further studying it has been revealed that in this inscription of the west apsidal the date had not been indicated and there had been told of repairing of one part of painting of Ateni Sioni under the ktitorship of Liparit Toreli son of Grigol at the merge of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries.(Abramishvili, 1963)

T. Virsaladze (1988; 1991) nominates the year of 1068 as the date if painting of Ateni Sioni. His donors are: Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, Prince Giorgi, son of the king Bagrat the fourth, King Bagrat the fourth, Son in law of the King Bagrat the fourth-sister's husband – Sumbat Ashot's son, an under aged nephew of the King Bagrat the fourth –

Ashot, mother of the King Bagrat the fourth, Queen of queens, Mariam, sister of the King Bagrat the fourth, Gurandukht.

G. Abramishvili (1982; 1983; 1993; 1999) defined the church-building donor list in the following sequence: Giorgi Chqondideli-MtsignobarTukhutsesi (Royal Chancellor); Young King David the fourth Aghmashenebeli (Builder) (1089-1125); King Bagrat the fourth (1027-1072); Sumbat son of Ashot, representative one of the branches of the House of the Bagrationis, financer of this painting so as in his inscription it is mentioned the Byzantine monetary unit botanati (was coined in 1078). His juvenile prince Ashot son of Sumbat, king Giorgi the Second (1072-1089), which is certified by determining inscription: "To Ateni Sioni King Giorgi has denoted [stronghold]s impregnable" (from the figure donor only blackish-brownish, small fragment is preserved). ...isdu(kh)t queen donator [of the calf of tsar Zuar] [sefis zuar]is d(e)geulisa~, wife of Giorgi the Second. The researcher determines the date of painting of Ateni Sioni as 1094-1096. The monumental painting has been repaired several times. The scale repairing it experienced on the boundary of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. When under the ktitorship of Grigol Liparit Toreli's son considerably strengthened "Wall of the West". The next stage of innovation comes on the sixteenth century. That time the painting of tromps was copied.

The Ateni Sioni is worth mentioning temple by numerous epigraphic a fresco inscriptions as well preserved in it. Here one can find witnesses of: Georgian, Syrian, Greek, Armenian, Arabian, Persian, church Slavian, Greek and Hebrew texts fulfilled in Georgian AsomTravruli. Quantitavely the Georgian Asomtavruli, Nuskha and Mkhedruli inscriptions are in excess. Their total number is expressed in three figures. Chronologically they are the oldest as well. In the interior of the Temple, the fresco inscriptions of earlier epoch are covered with thick layer of wall painting of the end of the eleventh century. In places where this painting is thrown down everywhere there are seen the Georgian Asomtavruli, Nuskha and Mkhedruli inscriptions. On the facades and interior carved or engraved inscriptions frequently cover each-other and create some kind of "Palimpsests". Here there are collected the inscriptions both of official, and Pilgrims and pleaders.

It might be said without exaggeration that the inscriptions on Ateni Sioni, have introduced a "Turning over" (revolution) in the issues connected with various problems of the Georgian culture. They have completely changed the dates known till that time of the Georgian Nuskhuri and Mkhedruli writings and they made them older by several centuries (Abramishvili, 1976; Abramishvili, Aleksidze, 1978). In the interior of the Temple (diaconian's, governmental) the Nuskha inscriptions have been already approved for the second half of the seventh century (Abramishvili, 1993). But in the granites fulfilled in Nuskha of Ioane (711) and Georgi (first half of the eight century) a sufficient number of Mkhedruli graphemes are found (Abramishvili, 1984). At the same time the separate Nuskha graphemes comprise the marks of transmission from Nuskha into Mkhedruli writing for the beginning of the eight century. (Abramishvili, 1993)

The oldest samples of the Georgian poetry have been revealed in Ateni Sioni. On the East skirt of the Southern apside two rhythmic rhymes of the medieval periods of the IX century preserved under the layer of painting represent the distinguished samples of secular poetry. Here there are allocated the fragments of texts having the oldest date (840-841) known till present of the Four Gospels (Mathews 5, 3-12). The main idea of rhymes – Moral Perfection of a man on this land is near to the motifs of Holy Letter preserved here. (Aleksidze, 1983; *Fresco inscriptions, I,* 1989).

Among the numerous inscriptions of Ateni Sioni, from the point of view of source study, a special group is distinguished which gives quite new notes on various issues of Georgia.

As a result of observations on the Temple it has been revealed that on it the restoration works had been carried out after the tenth century. In spite of this in the eighties of the nineteenth century P. Uvarova found that the construction and its enclosure had been damaged considerably, which is vividly depicted on the photo shot by D.Ermakov enclosed in his publication (MAK, 1894). A heavy state of the first quarter of the twentieth century of Ateni Sioni has been fixed on the measured ones fulfilled in 1919-1921 by architect –painter, M.G.Kalashnikov been invited by the Caucasian Historical-Archaeological Institute existing in Tbilisi and on the photos made in 1922 by the photograph and painter of Tbilisi State University and the painter T. Kiune (Chubinashvili, 1948).

In the thirties of the twentieth century the Department of Protection of Cultural Monuments of Georgia carried out the restoration-recovery works on the Temple, which was completed in 1940. The restoration works have been renewed again since 1957 and by 1985 it was considered to be fulfilled. In 2002 the state of Ateni Sioni appeared again is very heavy: to the cracks on the Temple, peeling off the surface of quadras stone casing, cracking of stones, cracks, cracks of fresco painting, etc. have been added the damages caused by percolated and sub-infiltrated water penetrated from running waters from the roofs and rocks, as well destroy of face work of subtraction, as a result of which the issue of restoration-strengthening had been put strongly. In 2004-2006. The face walls of subtraction were restored.

Lile – On the German-Caucasian Society's instruction and through cooperation of Cultural-Heritage Agency of Georgia, in 2007 the German party started to study the circumstances created on the Temple. In summer of 2010 they have represented the results of their researches, their means and methods. At the same time in 2008 the Georgian Party was charged (imposed) to prepare the Project. The executed Project won in 2009.

Before completion of works on the Projects, Ateni Sioni has appeared before the new danger. The protection zones of the monument being under defense of Cultural Heritage have been destroyed. In June of 2009, on the cliff adjacent to the construction, by means of using of the piles, on upper terrace it was arranged a road for taking the technique. And in September, on the whole length of the terrace a strong massif of the rock was cut – to the depth of three – four meters. The shortest distance between the executed works on the Temple and rock constitutes 4 -5 meters, and the farthest -20-30 meters. A wide line was cut down from the north-west part of this rock, and as a

consequence of widening of adjacent gap the north part of the rock has been damaged. The started works were interrupted on 24th of September, 2009 on the basis of official statement of the Georgian Patriarchate. Unfortunately, The Agency of Cultural Heritage of Georgia has not defined the degree of damage given (harmed) to the Temple and its adjacent territory as a result of indicated works. They have not even made it of special research.

Ateni Sioni is the monument of special importance. Its artistic-historical value exceeds the borders of Georgia and occupies own place in the treasury of the World culture. But the state created on the Temple for today creates threat to its distinguished universal validity. Integrity and authenticity. For securing all these data it is necessary to study the recent state of construction and its vicinities, their long-term conservation and strengthening. It is necessary to determine the protection zones within the norms established by International Legislation granted to the monuments of special importance.

Simultaneously, revival of complex research-works in Ateni Sioni will be a guarantee for many new materials, by which the Temple will contribute considerably in investigation of various issues connected with the spheres of Theology, Science and Culture. This distinguished Temple will greatly contribute to development of tourism in the region.



Picture 1. Ateni Sioni, Upper Terrace, July, 2009



Picture 2. Ateni Sioni, Upper Terrace, September 5, 2009

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