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The Diachronic Shift
of the Complementizer *che* in Italian
—The Finite Complement Sentence
of the Verbs *sembrare* and *parere*—

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1. Introduction

In Italian there is the finite complement sentence, introduced by the complementizer *che*, and the non-finite complement sentence lead by the *di* infinitive (*diInf*). The *diInf* was developed in Romance languages and was substantially influenced by the complementizer *che*. In addition to the complementizer *di*, the *φ* infinitive (*φInf*) exists in the non-finite complement sentence, and there are alternations between the *diInf* and *φInf*. Thus, there are three different complementizers, *che*, *di* and *φ*, in Modern Italian. This paper focuses on finite complement sentences of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere*, introduced by the complementizer *che*, and the analysis of the diachronic shift of the syntactic structures.

In Modern Italian, the complementizer *che* appears, as shown in (1) and (2).

(1) 　[ᵥₚ [ᵥ· [ᵥ **V**] ([ₚₚ *a* NP]) [cₚ *che*]]]

　　　　[ᵥₚ [ᵥ· [ₚₚ a lui] [ᵥ **sembrava**] [cₚ *che* la ragazza stesse cedendo]]] (VI ⑦)

　　　　　　to him　　seemed　　　　that the girl　　was　giving up

　　　　　　"It seemed to him that the girl was giving up."

(2) 　[ᵥₚ [ᵥ· [ᵥ **V-A**] ([ₚₚ *a* NP]) [cₚ *che*]]]

　　　　[ᵥₚ [ᵥ· [ₚᵣₙ mi] [ᵥ **sembrava** talmente impossibile] [cₚ *che* mi　　sono voltato]]] (VI ⑦)

　　　　　　me-*DAT* seemed　　so　　　impossible　　　that me-*DAT* is　　turned

　　　　　　"It seemed so impossible that I turned around."

Both (1) and (2) are the unaccusative structures that have the semantic roles of the "Preposition" meaning the "Theme." The difference between (1) and (2) is that (1) is comprised by the single verb, *sembrare/parere*, but the verb of (2) is a verb phrase which is combined with the verb *sembrare or parere* and the subsequent adjective, meaning the "assessment" or "judgement." Both structures, however, are the same unaccusative structures in which the subsequent complementizer phrase (CP) becomes the unaccusative argument. In this paper, regarding *sembrare and parere* which appear as (1) and (2) in Modern Italian, we quantitatively investigate the diachronic corpora and analyze how this unaccusative structure of

Modern Italian shifts. It will be found from this investigation how the finite complement sentences develop and the syntactic structure changes.

2. The Corpora

The corpora, prior to 1861 when Italy was unified, are selectively based on geographical works written in the Tuscany dialect which underlies Modern Italian and of qualitative works written in prose. Concerning the corpora after 1861, we utilize the DiaCORIS Corpus and the CODIS Corpus, created by Università di Bologna. Regarding the classification of Italian historical periods, we use what D'Achille (1990) and Boström (1972) show. Table 1 is an itemized list of the corpora we utilize in this paper.
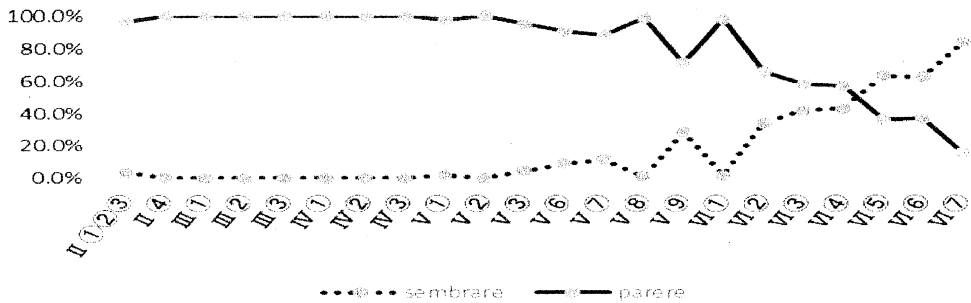
Table 1 The Corpora

Period	Author	Work
Period II 1250-1375	① Brunetto Latini	La Rettorica
	② Bono Giamboni	Il Libro de' Vizi e delle Virtudi
	③	Novellino
	④ Giovanni Boccaccio	Decameron (1348-1353)
Period III 1375-1525	① Santa Caterina da Siena	Dialogo della Provvidenza ovvero Libro della divina dottrina (1378)
	② Leon Battista Alberti	Della Famiglia, libro terzo (1432)
	③ Vespasiano da Bisticci	Le Vite (1480?)
Period IV 1525-1612	① Pietro Bembo	Prose della volgar lingua (1525)
	② Giovan Francesco Straparola	Le piacevoli notti (1550)
	③ Giorgio Vasari	Le vite de' piu eccelenti pittori, scultori e architettori (1550)
Period V 1612-1840	① Traiano Boccalini	De' Ragguagli di Parnaso (1615)
	② Givanni Battista Bonelli	Relazione di alucne cose cavate dalle lettere scritte... (1620-1627)
	③ Girolamo Brusoni	La gondola a tre remi (1657)
	④ Giambattista Vico	Principj di scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni... (1744)
	⑤ Ferdinando Galiani	De' doveri de' principi neutrali verso i principi guerreggianti... (1782)
	⑥ Vittorio Alfieri	La vita (1790-1803)
	⑦ Ugo Foscolo	Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis (1802)
	⑧ Giacomo Leopardi	Operetti Morali (1827)
	⑨ Silvio Pellico	Le mie prigioni (1832)
Period VI 1840-	① Alessandro Manzoni	I Promessi Sposi (1842)
	② DiaCORIS (1861-1900)	
	③ DiaCORIS (1901-1922)	
	④ DiaCORIS (1923-1945)	
	⑤ DiaCORIS (1946-1967)	
	⑥ DiaCORIS (1968-2001)	
	⑦ CODIS (2002-	

3. The Analysis

3.1. The Diachronic Shift of the Verbs *sembrare* and *parere*

Although the verb *sembrare* is almost the same in meaning and usage as the verb *parere*, the frequency of these two words is different in each period. It is shown in Graph 1[1]. The verb

Graph 1 The shift of the Verbs *sembrare* and *parere*

parere comes from Old Italian, as it was adopted at that time from the Latin *pārēre* and was used in its original form. It is possible to say that the verb *parere* was the only word in usage until Period V. On the other hand, the verb *sembrare* is an altered form of the Late Latin *simulāre* "resemble," originally from the Provençal dialect *semblar*. It gradually begins to be used from Period V (the 17th century), and is finally used in the same way as *parere* in Period VI (1861) when Italy was unified. Graph 1 shows that the verb *sembrare* (63.5%) appears more than the verb *parere* (36.5%) in VI ⑤ and the verb *sembrare* (84.2%) becomes a more general word in VI ⑦.

Table 2 shows the appearance ratio of the finite complement sentence in the total corpora of each word. Concerning the connection of each word to the finite complement sentence, the verb *parere* is superior to the verb *sembrare* in every corpus. At the same time it can be seen that the verb *sembrare* is easily connected with the non-finite complement sentence.

Table 2 The Appearance Ratio of *sembrare* and *parere* in the Finite Complement sentence

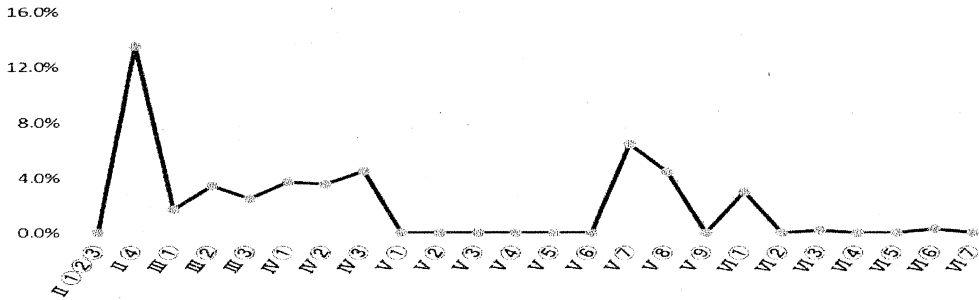|	*sembrare*	*parere*
VI②	25.9%	39.4%
VI③	24.3%	37.5%
VI④	22.9%	46.9%
VI⑤	18.7%	38.0%
VI⑥	17.6%	35.3%

3.2. The Disappearance of the Small Clause Structure

In this section we examine the appearance of the formal subject and the raising predicate in the small clause, and the fact that the complement sentence structure of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere*, which is derived from the unaccusative structure in Modern Italian as shown in (1) and (2), is also derived from the small clause structure in Old Italian.

First, Graph 2[2] shows how the appearance of the formal subject diachronically shifts. Although Modern Italian doesn't place the formal subject on the subject position of the impersonal structure

like *it* in English, sometimes in Old Italian subjective pronouns like *egli/e'/el* emerge as a formal

Graph 2 The Shift of the Formal Subject

subject. Such an appearance of formal subjects is the highest at corpus II ④ which is the latter half of Period II. It is sporadically found until Period IV, and doesn't occur at all from Period V onward. From the 19th century (the latter half of Period V) to the first half of Period VI, it is only used occasionally, likely due to nostalgic influences. It is possible to say that formal subjects disappear after the unification.

It is necessary to posit that this structure is derived from the small clause structure shown in (3) below, which possesses the phonetically overt formal subject, since the formal subject cannot emerge from the unaccusative structure of Modern Italian.

(3) a) $[_{VP} [_{V'} [_V \mathbf{V}] ([_{PP} a \text{ NP}]) [_{SC} [_{CP} che] [_{PRN} \text{e'/egli/el}]]]$

b) $[_{VP} [_{V'} [_V \mathbf{V\text{-}A}] ([_{PP} a \text{ NP}]) [_{SC} [_{CP} che] [_{PRN} \text{e'/egli/el}]]]$

The example structure in (3) shows that the small clause (SC) is comprised of the subject (*che* clause) and the predicate (*egli/e'/el*). In this connection, consider the structure illustrated in (4) below:

(4) $[_{PRN} \text{e'}_i] [_{VP} [_V \mathbf{par}] [_{SC} [_{CP} che \text{ tu}\quad \text{sia morto}] [_{PRN} t_i]]]$ (II ④)

It   seems   that you-*NOM* are dead

"It seems that you are dead."

In (4), the formal subject *e'* which replaced the predicate of the small clause, moves to the subject position of the main clause[3]. Looking at the structure in (5), if we posit that this predicate raising is applicable to the *pro* which is phonetically implicit, it is possible to say that the finite clause is derived from the small clause structure.

(5) a) $[_{VP} [_{V'} [_V \mathbf{V}] ([_{PP} a \text{ NP}]) [_{SC} [_{CP} che] [_{PRN} pro]]]$

b) $[_{VP} [_{V'} [_V \mathbf{V\text{-}A}] ([_{PP} a \text{ NP}]) [_{SC} [_{CP} che] [_{PRN} pro]]]$

(6) $[_{PRN} pro_i] [_{VP} [_V \mathbf{pare}] [_{SC} [_{CP} che \text{ m'abbia}\quad \text{posto l'assedio}] [_{PRN} t_i]]]$ (II ④)

seems   that me-*DAT*-has put   the-siege

"il seems that he pursued me."

The structure in (6) shows that the null finite subject *pro*, which replaced the predicate position

of the small clause, raised to the subject position of the main clause. In Old Italian it is not identified whether all *che* finite clauses are derived from the small clause structure as in (5), but the fact that overt formal subjects shown in (5) rarely appear suggests that the small clause structure and the unaccusative structure coexisted: it is conceivable that the coexistence of these structures in Old Italian changed to the only unaccusative structure in Modern Italian, since the small clause structure disappeared. For this reason, the [vp [v' [v **V** (**-A**)] ([pp *a* NP]) [cp *che*]]] is the sole structure in Modern Italian.

Consider now the predicate of the small clause which is a DP that has an entity, as in (7).

(7) [vp [v' [v **V**] ([pp *a* NP]) [sc [cp *che*] [dp DP]]]]

This DP is raised to the subject position of the main clause, as in (8a), or is placed after the main verb, as in (8b).

(8) a. [vp [v' [v **V**] ([pp *a* NP]) [[dp DP*i*] [sc [cp *che*] [dp *t*i]]]]]]

[vp [v' [prn mi] [v **pare**] [[np convenevole cosa] [sc [cp *che* noi si   riconfortiamo alquanto] [np *t*i]]]]]]
    me-*DAT* seems   convenient   thing   that we ourselves comfort   somewhat
    "It seems somewohat convenient that we comfort ourselves somewhat" (IV ②)

b. [dp DP*i*] [vp [v' [v **V**] ([pp *a* NP]) [sc [cp *che*] [dp *t*i]]]]]

[prn Alla maestà di Apollo] [np cosa affatto nuova*i*] [vp [v' [v **parve**]
    to-the majesty of Apollo   thing absolutely new   seems

[sc [cp *che* i principi presumessero di goder l'«Eccellenza» con titolo oneroso] [np *t*i]]]]
    that the princes   presumed   of enjoy the-«Excellency» with title   onerous
    "To Majesty Apollo it seems absolutely new that the princes presumed to enjoy (his Excellency's/the) onerous
    title." (V ①)

In the sentence of (8a), *convenvole cosa* is the predicate of the small clause and it moves behind the verb *parve*. In the sentence of (8b), *cosa affatto nuova* is raised to the position of the main clause[4]. In Modern Italian these structures change to the unaccusative structure in which the verbs *sembrare* and *parere* serve as linking verbs and follow adjectives, as in (3b). Next, the appearance ratio of the predicate raising in (3b) and (7) is illustrated in Graph 3.

Graph 3 The Predicate Raising

-5-

The phenomenon of the predicate raising appears until the first half of Period V, and subsequently doesn't appear at all. This means that the small clause structure disappeared during this time.
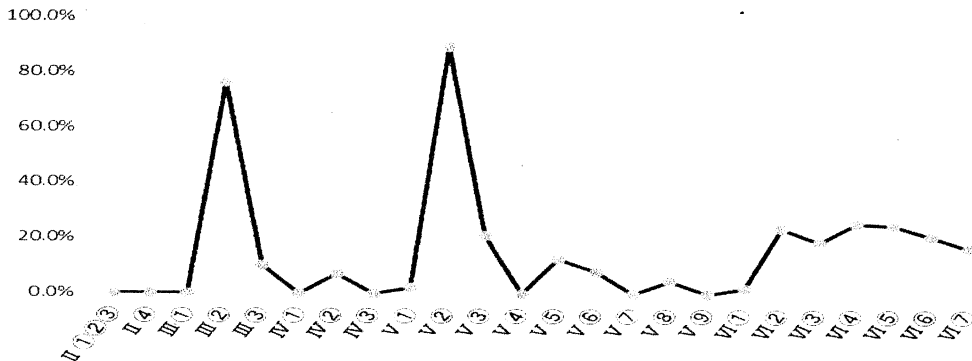
In summary, the small clause structure which doesn't exist in Modern Italian, coexists with the unaccusative structure until the first half of Period V and then aside from some nostalgic use, all but disappears.

3.3. C-omission of the Complementizer *che*

In Modern Italian, the phenomenon that the complementizer *che* is omitted (C-omission) sometimes happens with verbs such as *parere, bisognare, volere, pregare, credere*, etc. (Maiden (1995:208)). Wanner (1981) points out that diachronically such omission is rare in the language of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, becomes extremely common in the fifteenth century, and by the seventeenth century, becomes extremely rare once again. Franco (2015) argues that the generalization in the fifteenth century, especially about relative clauses, is due to the change from Fin* in Old Italian, which requires overt spell-out, to Fin in Renaissance Italian, which permits the absence of an overt C-head.

Concerning the complementizer *che* of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere*, the shift of the appearance ratio in C-omission is shown in Graph 4. Graph 4 shows that, as Tesi (2001) points

Graph 4 The Shift of C-omission

out, C-omission increases as a result of Alberti (III ②) who imitated Latinism. It is sporadic in the seventeenth century and is rare by the nineteenth century. In Modern Italian, C-omission occurs at a ratio of around 20%. The reason for this would be that C-omission of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere,* in particular, frequently occur.

In summary, regarding C-omission of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere*, it scarcely appears in Old Italian, frequently occurs in Renaissance Italian, and then remains at around 20% in Modern Italian. The reason why it increases in Renaissance Italian, as Franco (2015) points out, may be due to the change from Fin* to Fin, but this problem is a further issue. Lastly, the structure of

C-omission is illustrated in (9).

(9)   per questo [VP [V molto [PRN mi] [V **pare**] [CP ~~che~~ siate da essere lodato]]]

    for   this   much   me-DAT seems   ~~that~~   are-2PL from be   praised

    "For this much it seems to me that you have to be praised." (III ②)
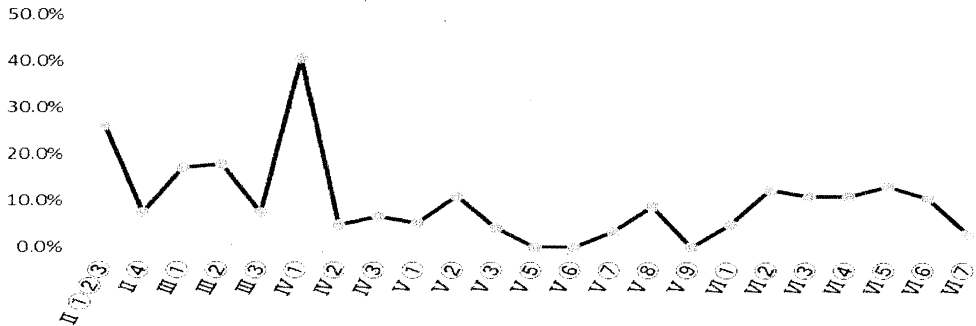
3.4. The Focus-Presupposition Structure

Rizzi (1997) proposed the C system, of which the topic-focus system is integrated into the force-finiteness system. The focus-presupposition structure in this system is expressed by preposing the focal element and assigning it focal stress:

(10)   IL TUO LIBRO ho   letto (, non il suo)   (Rizzi (1997:286))

    the your   book   have-1SG read (, not the his)

    "Your book I read (, not his)."

While this focus element introduces new information restricted to "contrast," the presupposition element expresses contextually given information. In sentence (10), the object *il tuo libro* is preposed and its contrastive focus is in the sense of *il tuo* "your book" not *il suo* "his book." Such a structure appears in the corpora from Old Italian to Modern. The shift is shown in Graph 5.

Graph 5 The Shift of Focalization

Here, we consider the following sentence:

(11)   Altri attori studiano, si   preparano, si   tormentano. <u>Lui</u> **sembrava** sempre *che* passeggiasse,

    Others actors study,   themselves prepare,   themselves torment.   He seemed   always   that walked,

    con quegli occhi semichiusi che generazioni di donne hanno sempre trovato così sexy.

    with those   eyes   half-shut   that generations of women have   always   found   such sexy

    "Other actors study, prepare themselves, and torment themselves. However, he always seemed to walk with his eyes

    half-shut. It seems that the generations of women have always found such behavior very sexy." (VI ⑦)

In the sentences of (11), the pronoun *lui* "he," preposing to the subject position of the main clause, is a contrastive focus in that he acts differently from the behavior of *altri attori* "other actors." Most focalization occurs in the subject of the complement sentence, and the syntactic

structure can be illustrated as in (12) below.

(12) $[_{DP}$ $DP_i]$ $[_{VP}$ $[_{v'}$ $[_v$ $\textbf{V}]$ $([_{PP}$ a $NP])$ $[_{CP}$ $[_c$ $che]$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{DP}$ $t_i]$ $[_{VP}$ $VP]]]]]$

In Old Italian it can be found that not only the subject of the complement sentence but also the object is focused, as shown in (13).

(13) li axempli di ciascuna maniera parrà   che noi possiamo meglio divisare (II ①)

the examples of each   manner   will seem that we can-*1PL*. better   divide

"It will seem that we can better divide the examples of each manner."

In sentence (13), *li axempli di ciascuna maniera,* which is the object of the verb *divisare* in the complement sentence, raises and is focused.

Moreover, in the structure of the verbs *sembrare* or *parere* and the subsequent adjective, the adjective sometimes raises to the sentence's initial position.

(14) anche evidente sembra che la Grammatica, dinanzi a una proposizione di quella sorta,

also   evident   seems   that the Grammar,   in front of a   proposition   of that   sort,

si debba mostrare soddisfatta (VI ③)

itself must   show   satisfied

"It also seems evident that the grammar itself, in front of a proposition of that sort, must show satisfaction."

In sentence (14), the adjective *evidente* moves to the sentence's initial position. It would be acceptable to state that this structure is a form of focalization. From this adjective preposing, it is possible to consider that the "V-A" combination is not a verb phrase, but is merely the structure of the verb and the adjective. The underlying syntactic structure in this case follows:

(15) $[_{VP}$ $[_{v'}$ $[_v$ $\textbf{V}]$ $([_{PP}$ a $NP])$ $[_{AP}$ $[_A$ $\textbf{A}]$ $[_{CP}$ $che]]]]$

Example (15) shows that the CP merges with the A and the AP merges with the V. This A is focalized and moves to the sentence's initial position.

4. Conclusion

As argued, this paper quantitatively investigated the diachronic corpus and analyzed how this unaccusative structure of Modern Italian shifts. In Modern Italian, the complementizer *che* of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere* appears in the unaccusative structure as follows:

(16) The unaccusative structure: $[_{VP}$ $[_{v'}$ $[_v$ $\textbf{V}$ $(\textbf{-A})]$ $([_{PP}$ a $NP])$ $[_{CP}$ $che]]]$

With regards to this, the following can be pointed out:

A. The verb *parere* is the only word in usage until Period V and becomes a literary word in Modern Italian, whereas the use of the verb *sembrare* begins in period VI. It appears more than the verb *parere* from VI ⑤ and becomes a commonly used word in Modern Italian.

B. The appearance of the formal subject and the raising predicate indicate the existence of the small clause structure. This small clause structure can be illustrated below:

(17) The small clause structure: [$_{VP}$ [$_{v'}$ [$_v$ **V** (-**A**)]] ([$_{PP}$ *a* NP]) [$_{SC}$ [$_{CP}$ *che*] [$_{PRN}$ e'/egli/el]/[$_{PRN}$ pro]/[$_{DP}$ DP]]]

The elements in the predicate of the small clause move ahead of it. Until the first half of Period V, the small clause structure displayed in (17) coexisted with the accusative structure shown in (16). After that the small clause structure is used in a nostalgic way, but mostly disappears.

   C. C-omission scarcely appears in Old Italian, frequently occurs in Renaissance Italian, and remains at around 20% in Modern Italian. This syntactic structure is the unaccusative structure that is shown in (18).

(18) The unaccusative structure: [$_{VP}$ [$_{v'}$ [$_v$ **V** (-**A**)]] ([$_{PP}$ *a* NP]) [$_{CP}$ ~~*che*~~]]

   D. The focus-presupposition structure from Old Italian to Modern Italian shows that the focused element is mainly a subject in the complement clause, but in Old Italian a predicate in it can be focused. The syntactic structure in which the subject is focused is illustrated below.

(19) the unaccusative structure: [$_{DP}$ DP$_i$] [$_{VP}$ [$_{v'}$ [$_v$ **V**] ([$_{PP}$ *a* NP]) [$_{CP}$ [$_c$ *che*] [$_{TP}$ [$_{DP}$ t_i] [$_{VP}$ VP]]]]]

Notes

1) Graph 1 indicates the appearance ratio of the verbs *sembrare* and *parere* including non complement sentence structures.

2) Graph 2 indicates the appearance ratio of the formal subject in the complement sentence structure.

3) In interrogative sentences, the formal subject frequently appears. The appearance ratio is 100% in III ②, IV ② and V ⑧, 66.7% in VI ①, and 50.0% in V ⑦.

      vi   **par** <u>egli</u> *ch'*io sappia i   segreti del   mio padrone? (VI ①)

      you-DAT seems it   that-I know the secrets of-the my boss?

      "It seems to you that I know the secrets of my boss?"

4) Such predicates in the small clause frequently contain a formal noun such as *cosa*: *ben cosa* (II ④) / *cosa molto strana* (V ①) / *cosa degna* (V ①), etc. In Modern Italian this formal noun disappears and the adjective, including the noun *bene*, directly combines with the verbs *sembrare* and *parere*.

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