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Finite Groups Whose Sylow Subgroups Are Abelian

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we study the structure of A-groups, finite groups all of whose Sylow subgroups are abelian. We use the recent results of Walter [7], classifying the simple groups with abelian Sylow 2-subgroups, to extend the work of Taunt [6], who studied the structure of solvable A-groups.

We prove the following:

THEOREM. Let G be an A-group. Then there exist subgroups H, S, and K, of G satisfying:

i) HSK = G, |H||S||K| = |G|.

ii) $H \leq G$, $K \leq N(S)$.

(i.e. HSK is a triple semi-direct product)

iii) H and K are solvable, S is semi-simple.

Furthermore, by adding appropriate conditions we insure that S, K, and SK are determined up to conjugacy (and H is uniquely determined) and, if $N \leq G$, then $N = (N \cap H)(N \cap S)(N \cap K)$.

2. NOTATION

Our notation is standard and follows, for the most part, that of Huppert [4]. The following items may be unusual:

Let G be a finite group, then,

 $G^{(\infty)}$ denotes $\cap G^{(i)}$, the intersection of the members of the derived series for G (*i.e.* the "last" member of the derived series).

Sol(G) denotes the maximal normal solvable subgroup of G.

Unless otherwise stated, all groups we consider are finite.

3. A-GROUPS

DEFINITION 3.1. An A-group is a finite group, all of whose Sylow subgroups are abelian.

THEOREM 3.2. (Walter) Let G be a simple, non-abelian, A-group. Then G is isomorphic to J(11), the Janko group (see Janko [5]), or G is isomorphic to $L_2(q)$ for q > 3 and $q \equiv 0,3$, or 5 (mod 8).

Proof. By Walter [7] a simple, non-abelian, group with abelian Sylow 2-subgroup is isomorphic to J(11), $L_2(q)$ (for q > 3 and $q \equiv 0.3$ or 5 (mod 8)), or G is of Ree type. Since groups of Ree type have non-abelian Sylow 3-subgroups (see Ward [8]), the result follows.

LEMMA 3.3. Let G be a simple, non-abelian, A-group. Let α be an r-automorphism of G for some prime r with $r \mid |G|$. Assume α centralizes a Sylow rsubgroup of G. Then α induces an inner automorphism of G.

Proof. By Theorem 3.2 we may assume G is J(11) or $L_2(q)$. For J(11) the result is trivial since, by Janko [5], the outer automorphism group of J(11) is 1. So we may assume $G = L_2(q)$, q > 3, $q \equiv 0,3$ or 5 (mod 8), and let $q = p^n$, for some prime p.

From Gorenstein [3, p. 462] we see that the automorphism group of $L_2(q)$ is the semi-direct product $\langle \beta_0 \rangle$ PGL(2, q), where β_0 is induced by a field automorphism of GF(q) of order n and the elements of PGL(2, q) act by conjugation. Thus we shall assume:

$$\alpha: X \to B^{-1}X^{\beta}B$$

for some $B \in \text{PGL}(2, q), \beta \in \langle \beta_0 \rangle$.

However, for $r \neq 2$, or for r = 2 = p, any Sylow r-subgroup of $\langle \beta_0 \rangle \operatorname{PGL}(2, q)$ lies in $\langle \beta_0 \rangle L_2(q)$. So we may assume (in these cases) that $B \in L_2(q)$. Furthermore, if $\langle \delta \rangle$ is a Sylow r-subgroup of $\langle \beta_0 \rangle$ and $\langle \delta \rangle$ normalizes R, a Sylow r-subgroup of $L_2(q)$, then some $L_2(q)$ conjugate of α lies in $\langle \delta \rangle R$, hence must normalize, and by hypothesis centralize, R. So we may assume, without loss of generality, $\alpha \in \langle \delta \rangle \leq \langle \beta_0 \rangle$, and

$$\alpha: X \rightarrow X^{\beta}$$
 (in case $r \neq 2$ or $r = 2 = p$).

During the remainder of this proof we will perform certain matrix calculations. The matrices used—although written in GL(2, q)—will represent cosets of Z(GL(2, q)), *i.e.* elements of PGL(2, q) or of $L_2(q)$. A. r = p

A Sylow r-subgroup of $L_2(q)$ is given by:

$$R = \left| \begin{bmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \right| x \in GF(q) \right|.$$

 α clearly normalizes, hence must centralize R. Thus

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}^{\beta} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Hence $x^{\beta} = x$ for all $x \in GF(q)$. Hence $\beta = 1$.

B. $r \neq p, r \neq 2, r \mid q-1$

Let $|G|_r = r^m$. Then $r^m | q - 1$ and there is $x \in GF(q)$ satisfying $x^{r^m} = 1$, $x^{r^{m-1}} \neq 1$. A Sylow r-subgroup of $L_2(q)$ is given by:

$$R = \Big\{ \begin{bmatrix} x^i & 0 \\ 0 & x^{-i} \end{bmatrix} \Big| 0 \leqslant i \leqslant r^m - 1 \Big\}.$$

There exists an integer s such that, for all $y \in GF(q)$ $y^{\beta} = y^{p^{\beta}}$. Hence α normalizes, and, thus, centralizes R. Thus

$$\begin{bmatrix} x & 0 \\ 0 & x^{-1} \end{bmatrix}^{\beta} = \begin{bmatrix} x & 0 \\ 0 & x^{-1} \end{bmatrix}.$$

In $L_2(q)$ this means $x^{\beta} = \pm x$. If $x^{\beta} = -x$ then $x^{\beta^2} = x$ and, since β is a *r*-element with *r* odd, $x^{\beta} = x$. Hence we may assume $x^{\beta} = x$, i.e. $x^{p^s} = x$, or $x^{p^{s-1}} = 1$. Let β have order r^k . We have:

$$r^{m} | p^{s} - 1, n | sr^{k}, n + sr^{k-1}, r^{m} | p^{n} - 1, r^{m+1} + p^{n} - 1.$$

Thus there are integers a, b, and c, satisfying:

$$br^m + 1 = p^s$$
, $an = sr^k$, $(a, r) = 1$, $cr^m + 1 = p^n$, $(c, r) = 1$.

Hence, $p^{an} = (cr^m + 1)^a = d_1r^m + 1$, for some integer d_1 with $(d_1, r) = 1$. But $p^{an} = p^{sr^k} = (br^m + 1)^{r^k} = d_2r^m + 1$, for some integer d_2 with $(d_2, r) = r$, unless $r^k = 1$. Hence $r^k = 1$, and $\beta = 1$.

C. $r \neq p, r \neq 2, r \mid q + 1$

Since $GF(q) \leq GF(q^2)$, $L_2(q) \leq L_2(q^2)$. Since $|L_2(q)|_r = |L_2(q^2)|_r$, a Sylow r-subgroup of $L_2(q)$ is a Sylow r-subgroup of $L_2(q^2)$. Since β can be extended to a field automorphism, β^* , of $GF(q^2)$ satisfying $t |\langle \beta \rangle| = |\langle \beta^* \rangle|$ where t = 1 or 2, we may regard α^t as an automorphism of $L_2(q^2)$ satisfying our hypotheses. But, now, $r | q^2 - 1$, so we may apply the proof of *B*. to assert $\beta^{*t} = 1$. But for either t = 1 or t = 2 this implies $\beta = 1$, as desired.

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D. $r = 2, p \neq 2$

Since *n* must be odd $(q = p^n \equiv 3 \text{ or } 5 \pmod{8})$, $\alpha : X \to B^{-1}XB$ for some $B \in PGL(2, q)$. But if α , hence *B*, is a 2-element centralizing a Sylow 2subgroup of $L_2(q)$, and if $B \notin L_2(q)$, then PGL(2, q) contains an abelian 2subgroup of order 8. But the Sylow 2-subgroups of PGL(2, q) are dihedral of order 8 (see Carter and Fong [1]). Hence $B \in L_2(q)$, as desired.

Remark. The structure of $L_2(q)$ is discussed in Huppert [4, pp. 191–214]. $L_2(q) = \text{PSL}(2, q)$.

LEMMA 3.4. Let $G = G_1 \times G_2 \times \cdots \times G_k$, with each G_i a simple, non-abelian, A-group. Let α be an r-automorphism of G for some prime r with $r \mid G_i \mid$, all i. Assume that α centralizes a Sylow r-subgroup of G. Then α induces an inner automorphism of G.

Proof. By the Krull-Schmidt theorem (see Huppert [4, I Satz 12.3]), α induces a permutation of the G_i . If this permutation were non-trivial α would not centralize a Sylow r-subgroup of G. Hence, for all i, $G_i^{\alpha} = G_i$. By Lemma 3.3 α induces an inner automorphism on each G_i , hence on G.

LEMMA 3.5. Let G be an A-group. Let Sol(G) be the maximal normal subgroup of G. Then G/Sol(G) is an extension of a semi-simple group by a (solvable) group of odd order.

Proof. Without loss of generality assume Sol(G) = 1. Any minimal normal subgroup of G is semi-simple. Let N be the maximal semi-simple normal subgroup of G (*i.e.* N = sockel of G). Then, by Feit and Thompson [2] and Lemma 3.4, any 2-element of G induces an inner automorphism of N. Thus, if G/N has even order, $1 < C(N) \leq G$. But then $C(N) \cap N = 1$ would contradict N = sockel of G.

COROLLARY 3.6. Let G be an A-group. Then $G^{(\infty)}/Sol(G^{(\infty)})$ is semi-simple.

Proof. By Lemma 3.5, the result is clear.

We shall eventually prove that G splits over $G^{(\infty)}$ and that $G^{(\infty)}$ splits over Sol $(G^{(\infty)})$.

4. A-PAIRS

DEFINITION 4.1. Let G be a normal subgroup of G_0 . If for every prime p, with $p \mid |G|$, a Sylow p-subgroup of G_0 is abelian, then we call (G_0, G) an A-pair.

Remark. If (G_0, G) is an A-pair, then G is an A-group.

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LEMMA 4.2. Let (G, N) be an A-pair. Assume that N is a homogeneous semi-simple group (i.e. a direct product of isomorphic, non-abelian, simple groups). Then there exists a complement, K, of N in G, with $C(N) \leq K$, and all such complements are conjugate.

Proof. We proceed by induction on |G|. If $C(N) \neq 1$, (G/C(N), NC(N)/C(N)) satisfies our hypotheses, and, by induction, we get a complement K/C(N). Clearly, KN = G, and $K \cap N \leq K \cap NC(N) \cap N \leq C(N) \cap N = 1$. So we may assume C(N) = 1. Hence, by Lemma 3.4 (|G:N|, |N|) = 1. Application of the Schur-Zassenhaus theorem (see Huppert [4, I Hauptsatz 18.1, 18.2]) yields the desired result. (Note that $C_{G/C(N)}(NC(N)/C(N)) = 1$.)

LEMMA 4.3. Let (G_0, G) be an A-pair. If $G^{(\infty)}$ is semi-simple (i.e. $Sol(G^{(\infty)}) = 1$) and non-trivial, then there exists a non-trivial, homogeneous semi-simple subgroup N of G, with $N \leq G_0$. (Hence, by Lemma 4.3, N is complemented in G_0).

Proof. Choose N to be a minimal normal subgroup of G_0 contained in $G^{(\infty)}$.

The usefulness of the following transfer theorem was brought to our attention by M. Isaacs.

THEOREM 4.4. Let G be a group with abelian Sylow p-subgroup. Then $p \in [G' \cap Z(G)]$.

Proof. See Huppert [4, IV Satz 2.2].

COROLLARY 4.5. Let G be an A-group. Then $G' \cap Z(G) = 1$. In particular, if G' = G, Z(G) = 1.

COROLLARY 4.6. Let $H \leq G$, H a solvable A-group. Let N be a relative system normalizer, in G, of a Sylow system of H. Then H'N = G, $H' \cap N = 1$.

Proof. By the Frattini argument HN = G. Hence, it will suffice to show $H'N_0 = H, H' \cap N_0 = 1$ where $N_0 = N \cap H$ is a system normalizer of H. Now apply Huppert [4, VI Satz 14.4].

Remark. Corollaries 4.5 and 4.6 where proved for G solvable by Taunt [6]. By Corollary 4.6 a system normalizer of an A-group is abelian.

LEMMA 4.7. Let (G, H) be an A-pair with $H \leq Z(G)$. Assume G|H is semi-simple. Then G'H = G, $G' \cap H = 1$ (hence $G = G' \times H$).

Proof. By Theorem 4.4 $G' \cap H = 1$. And G/H = (G/H)' = G'H/H; thus G'H = G.

LEMMA 4.8. Let (G, H) be an A-pair with H abelian and G/H semi-simple. Then H is complemented in G and all its complements are conjugate.

Proof. We shall proceed by induction on |G|.

Let p be a prime with $p \mid H \mid$. Let H_p be a Sylow p-subgroup of H. The A-pair $(G|H_p, H|H_p)$ satisfies our hypotheses and, hence, $H|H_p$ has a complement, $L|H_p$, in $G|H_p$ and all such complements are conjugate. If $H_p \neq H$ then the A-pair (L, H_p) satisfies our hypotheses and, by induction, H_p has a complement K in L and all such complements are conjugate. Then K will be a complement to H in G. Let K_0 be another complement to H in G. Then K_0H_p/H_p is a complement to H/H_p in G/H_p . Hence K_0H_p is conjugate to L and K_0 is, therefore, conjugate to a complement of H_p in L (noting $H_p \leq G$); and, thus, K_0 is conjugate to K. Consequently, we may assume $H = H_p$.

If $H \neq C(H)$ then, by Lemma 4.7, $C(H) = H \times S$, where $S = C(H)' \leq G$. The A-pair (G/S, HS/S) satisfies our hypotheses and, by induction, we find a complement K/S of HS/S in G/S. Thus KH = G; and $K \cap H \leq K \cap HS \cap H \leq S \cap H = 1$. Hence, K is a complement for H in G. Let K_0 be another such complement. Then $C(H) = H(C(H) \cap K_0) =$ $H \times (C(H) \cap K_0)$. Thus $S = C(H)' = (C(H) \cap K_0)'$, so $S \leq K_0$. By induction, K_0/S is conjugate to K/S, hence K_0 is conjugate to K. Consequently, we may assume H = C(H).

In this case the hypotheses imply (|G:H|, |H|) = 1. The result now follows from the Schur-Zassenhaus theorem.

THEOREM 4.9. Let (G_0, G) be an A-pair, with G non-abelian. Then there exists a non trivial subgroup, N, of G, normal in G_0 , satisfying:

i) N is either a (abelian) p-group for some prime p or N is a homogeneous semi-simple group.

ii) N is complemented in G_0 .

Furthermore, we may choose a complement K of N such that for any prime p, with $p \mid |N|$, every p-element of K centralizes N. And, if N is semi-simple, $C(N) \leq K$.

Proof. If $G^{(\infty)} = 1$, let the derived length of G be $k(\neq 1)$. Let $M = G^{(k-1)}$. Then, by Corollary 4.6, M is complemented in G_0 (by a relative system normalizer of $G^{(k-2)}$). Any non-trivial Sylow subgroup of M will serve as N.

If $G^{(\infty)} \neq 1$, but Sol $(G^{(\infty)}) = 1$, the result follows from Lemma 4.3.

If $L = \text{Sol}(G^{(\infty)})$ has derived length k > 1, then $L^{(k-1)}$ is complemented in G_0 (by a relative system normalizer of $L^{(k-2)}$). Again, any non-trivial Sylow subgroup of $L^{(k-1)}$ will serve as N.

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If $L = \text{Sol}(G^{(\infty)})$ is abelian and non-trivial, then Lemma 4.8 applied to the *A*-pair $(G^{(\infty)}, L)$ implies that *L* has a complement, *K*, in $G^{(\infty)}$ and that all such complements are conjugate. By the Frattini argument $G_0 = N(K)L$. It will suffice to show that $N_L(K) = 1$ (for then a non-trivial Sylow subgroup of *L* will serve as *N*). But $N_L(K) = C_L(K) \leq Z(LK) = Z(G^{(\infty)})$. But $Z(G^{(\infty)}) = 1$, by Corollary 4.5.

5. STRUCTURE THEOREMS

THEOREM 5.1. Let (G_0, G) be an A-pair. Let $H = \text{Sol}(G^{(\infty)})$. Then there exist subgroups S, of G, and K, of G_0 , satisfying:

- i) $HS = G^{(\infty)};$
- ii) $HSK = G_0$, $|H||S||K| = |G_0|$;
- iii) $K \leq N(S);$
- iv) SK normalizes a Sylow system of H;
- v) If $M \leq S$, $M \leq SK$, then $C_{MK}(M) \leq K$.

Furthermore if S_1 , K_1 satisfy conditions i)—v) then there exists $x \in G_0$ such that $S_1^x = S$, $K_1^x = K$.

Remark. Condition i), together with Lemmas 3.5 and 3.6, implies that S is semi-simple and $K \cap G$ is solvable.

Proof. We proceed by induction on $|G_0|$.

First, let us assume $H \neq 1$. By Theorem 4.9 there is a non-trivial *p*-group $N \leq G_0$, $N \leq H$, which is complemented in G_0 , say $G_0 = NT$, $N \cap T = 1$. By our inductive hypothesis $T = H_1SK$, where $H_1 = \text{Sol}(T_1^{(\infty)})$, $(T_1 = T \cap G)$, and H_1 , S, K satisfy i)-v). We readily find that $G_0 = HSK$ is the desired factorization.

Now we may assume H = 1. We must have $S = G^{(\infty)}$. If S = 1 the result is trivial, so let us assume $S \neq 1$. In this case Theorem 4.9 asserts that there is a minimal normal subgroup, N, of G_0 , such that $N \leq S$ and N is complemented in G_0 by a group T with $C(N) \leq T$. By induction $T = S_0K$; and $S = N \times S_0$ (where $S_0 = (T \cap G)^{(\infty)} = C_S(N)$). Now $G_0 = SK$, and S, K satisfy conditions i)-iv). To verify v) let $M \leq S$, $M \leq SK$. If $M \cap N = 1$, then $M \leq S_0$ and we are done by induction. So we may assume $M = N \times N_0$ for some $N_0 \leq G_0$. Now $C_{MK}(M) \leq C_{MK}(N_0) =$ $NC_{N_0K}(N_0) \leq NK$ (by induction). But $C_{MK}(M) \leq C(N) \leq T = S_0K$. Thus $C_{MK}(M) \leq NK \cap S_0K = K$.

Now assume S_1 , K_1 satisfy conditions i)-v). Then there exist abelian subgroups H_0 and H_1 of H such that H_0SK and $H_1S_1K_1$ are relative system normalizers, in G_0 , of Sylow systems of H. Hence, there is $y \in H$ such that $(H_0SK)^y = H_1S_1K_1$ and $H_0^y = H_1$. Thus, without loss of generality we may assume $H = H_0$ is abelian, and $HSK = HS_1K_1 = G_0$. Now $HS = HS_1 = G^{(\infty)}$ and, by Lemma 4.8 there is $x \in H$ such that $S^x = S_1$. Thus we may assume $S = S_1$, $HSK = HSK_1 = G_0$. But, as in the proof of Theorem 4.9, $SK = SK_1 = N(S)$. So we may assume $G_0 = SK = SK_1$. Let N be a minimal normal subgroup of G_0 , contained in S. Let $S = N \times N_0$, $N_0 \subseteq G_0$. Then $C(N) = N_0C_{NK}(N) \leq N_0K$. Similarly $C(N) \leq N_0K_1$. By Lemma 4.2 N_0K_1 is conjugate to N_0K (by an element of N, which fixes N_0). Hence, by induction, K is conjugate to K_1 (by an element of N_0) and the theorem follows.

Remark. If we examine the inductive nature of the proofs of Theorems 4.9 and 5.1 we find that, if G is an A-group, then

$$G = H_1 \cdot H_2 \cdot \cdots \cdot H_r \cdot S_1 \cdot S_2 \cdot \cdots \cdot S_t \cdot K_1 \cdot K_2 \cdot \cdots \cdot K_s$$

where each H_i and K_j is a *p*-group, for some (varying) prime *p*, and each S_k is a homogeneous semi-simple group. Furthermore each subgroup in the factorization normalizes each of the preceeding ones and:

$$H = H_1 \cdot H_2 \cdot \dots \cdot H_r, \qquad |H| = |H_1| \cdot |H_2| \cdot \dots \cdot |H_r|,$$

$$S = S_1 \times S_2 \times \dots \times S_t$$

$$K = K_1 \cdot K_2 \cdot \dots \cdot K_s, \qquad |K| = |K_1| \cdot |K_2| \cdot \dots \cdot |K_s|,$$

$$(H, S, K \text{ as in Theorem 5.1}).$$

This generalizes Taunt's "Basis Theorem" [6, Theorem 7.1].

THEOREM 5.2. Let (G_0, G) be an A-pair, $H = \text{Sol}(G^{(\infty)})$. Let $G_0 = HSK$, where S and K satisfy conditions i)-v) of Theorem 5.1. Let $N \leq G_0$. Then

$$N = (N \cap H)(N \cap S)(N \cap K).$$

Proof. We proceed by induction on $|G_0|$.

A. First let us assume H = 1. Without loss of generality we may assume $S \neq 1$. If $N \cap S = 1$, $N \leq C(S)$ and, by condition v), $N \leq K$, as desired. Let $S_1 = N \cap S$ and let $S_0 \times S_1 = S$. Then $N \leq C(S_0) = S_1 C_{S_0 K}(S_0) \leq S_1 K$. Thus $N = S_1(N \cap K) = (N \cap S)(N \cap K)$.

B. Assume K = 1. Without loss of generality we may assume $H \neq 1$, $S \neq 1$. Let $N_1 = H \cap N$. If $N_1 \neq 1$ consider $G_0/N_1 = H/N_1 \cdot SN_1/N_1$. By induction $N/N_1 = (N \cap SN_1)/N_1$, and, thus, $N = (N \cap S) N_1$ as desired. So we may assume $H \cap N = 1$.

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Let $H_1 \leq H$ be chosen such that H_1S is a relative system normalizer, in G_0 , of a Sylow system of H. Since $N \leq C(H)$, $N \leq H_1S$. Now $NH_1 = H_1(NH_1 \cap S)$. Hence N and $NH_1 \cap S$ are complements of H_1 in NH_1 and, by Lemma 4.8, $N = NH_1 \cap S$. Thus $N \leq S$, as desired.

C. Assume $H \neq 1$, $S \neq 1$, $K \neq 1$. Let $N_1 = N \cap H$. If $N_1 \neq 1$ consider $G_0/N_1 = H/N_1 \cdot SN_1/N_1 \cdot KN_1/N_1$. By induction

$$N = (N \cap SN_1)(N \cap KN_1) = (N \cap H)(N \cap S)(N \cap K).$$

Thus, we may assume $H \cap N = 1$. By part A. it will suffice to show $N \leqslant SK$.

Let $H_1 \leq H$ be chosen such that H_1SK is a relative system normalizer, in G_0 , of a Sylow system of H. Since $N \leq C(H)$, $N \leq H_1SK$. But $[S, N] \leq N \cap H_1S = (by \text{ part } B.)$ $(N \cap H_1)(N \cap S) = N \cap S$. Thus $N \leq N_{H_1SK}(S)$. But as in the proof of Theorem 4.9, $N_{H_1SK}(S) = SK$. Thus $N \leq SK$, as desired.

Remark. If G is an A-group, and $N \leq G$, and

$$G = H_1 \cdot H_2 \cdot \cdots \cdot H_r \cdot S_1 \cdot S_2 \cdot \cdots \cdot S_t \cdot K_1 \cdot K_2 \cdot \cdots \cdot K_s$$

(as discussed in the previous remark) then Theorem 5.2, together with a result of Taunt [6, Theorem 5.1], shows that:

$$N = (N \cap H_1) \cdot \dots \cdot (N \cap H_r) \cdot (N \cap S_1) \cdot \dots \cdot (N \cap S_t) \cdot (N \cap K_1) \cdot \dots \cdot (N \cap K_s).$$

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