



INFORMATION PACKET

Greetings!

This information packet will serve as a guide during your stay and visit to a couple of artisanal small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sites located in the northern region of the Philippines. This packet will include data and other matters related to the ASGM sites as well as travel infos and what to expect during travel and your stay in the communities.

The mining sites you will be visiting are in the municipalities of Kalinga and Benguet. These regions have strong cultural roots tied to the land and to this day, communal bonds and tradition still form a strong part of their society.

These sites are also a part of BAN Toxics projects on the reduction and phase-out mercury in ASGM. During the first year of our project, these mining communities have consistently shown their commitment in pursuing mercury-free methods through participation and vigorous sharing of their mining methodology with other small-scale miners.

We hope that this short visit provides you with insights on the ASGM communities in the country and how the sector is working pro-actively towards a sustainable and future.

Should you have questions, BAN Toxics' ASGM Field Coordinator, Abel Felix, will be on hand to give assistance as well.

Best Wishes,

BAN Toxics!



NATIONAL ASGM ^[1] SITUATIONER



ASGM presents a complex development issue. While it provides livelihood to a significant number of people worldwide and accounts for a sizeable volume of annual gold production, it is also confronted with various environmental, social and health concerns.

The sector is also known as the largest emitter of mercury. The global mercury treaty seeks to incorporate ASGM elements to reduce, and if feasible, eliminate mercury use in the sector and to protect human health and the environment. While the terms of the global pact are being considered, parallel efforts are underway to encourage migration of miners to mercury-free gold liberation techniques.

The Philippines is in the process of formulating its National Strategic Plan on ASGM with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). To supplement this initiative, BAN Toxics conducted a study on the inner workings of ASGM focusing, among others, on the trading, use and emission of mercury, gold mining and production methods, and the human health and environmental impacts of mercury pollution. BAN Toxics found out that the problem of mercury pollution in the Philippines is widespread and that unless and until urgent and drastic steps are carried out to contain its further discharge into the environment, the effects will be disastrous. It also noted frequent shifts from mercury to cyanide and attempts to move to mercury-free gold production technologies.



Hg⁸⁰

Mercury use in ASGM in the Philippines is said to commence from 70s to 80s. At present, ASGM accounts for the annual discharge of 70 metric tons of mercury into the atmosphere. The amount of mercury used by miners to produce a unit of gold varies depending on the stage when amalgamation is practiced. Whole ore amalgamation utilizes 10 to 25 grams of mercury to produce a gram of gold. Amalgamation of retrieved concentrates, on the other hand, uses about one to three grams of mercury per gram of gold.

ASGM activities utilizing mercury has been reported in about 20 provinces in the country. Since ASGM is a poverty-driven activity, the desire of miners to immediately produce income to bring food on the table has been identified as the main reason why mercury use has become widespread in the sector.

Several studies have been carried out in the Philippines to probe the effects of mercury pollution from ASGM. Results of these investigations reveal that drinking waters and river systems have exceeded recommended water quality criteria due to mercury contamination, marine species such as mollusks and fishes have mercury levels that are more than the allowable limit, while people that were examined, mostly children, miners and their families exhibited symptoms of mercury intoxication.

LOCAL SITUATIONER

Balbalan, Kalinga [2]



While the people of the northern Philippine hill tribes are collectively known as Cordillerans, Balbalan is composed of several ethno-linguistic groups. Defined primarily by the dialect, the population identify themselves as either Kalinga, Ilocano, or Kankanaey.

With a young population comprised mostly of schoolchildren and young adults, a large percentage of the demographic is engaged in the informal agricultural sector. According to the province's census, the remaining are involved in fishing or aquatic-farming and an estimated number of 1,500 individuals out of the 12,000 residents are involved in the small-scale mining sector as miners, financiers, managers, and gold buyers.



Mining History

The people of Balbalan took to gold panning in 1984 when a local forager from Bontoc spotted traces of the precious metal along the Saltan River. For most of them, mining was only possible in the abandoned government-owned and –operated Batongbuhay bato – rock, buhay – life or alive) Gold Mines in Pasil or in the province of Benguet were a lot of Kalingas worked in the mines. This discovery encouraged locals to pan gold along the river banks using “barkis”. Tribes, such as the i-Banao, also staked mining claims in the area.



As the news of discovering gold reached other parts of the country, outsiders started rushing to Balbalan while mining corporations applied for Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) to explore and exploit the area. These factors, as well as the threat to peace and order due to the rise in insurgency, prompted the i-Banao to organize them-selves and safe-guard their ancestral domain while protecting their new source of income.

Since the turbulent gold rush, the Banao-Bodong Association (BBA) managed ASGM activities at the “Minahang Bayan” in Sitio Ga-ang at Barangay Talalang which is at least a 3-hour hike from the nearest road. This piece of land is part of i-Banao’s ancestral domain.

The Banao-Bodong Association

The BBA is an organization composed of i-Banao peace pact holders including all the members of its sub-tribes that live with in Barangays Balbalasang, Pantikian and Talalang in Balbalan. It also covers i-Banao who resides outside their ancestral domain.

The ideals of the “bodong” or a traditional peace pact are deeply ingrained in the organization’s constitution. It provides tribal members of the i-Banao priority access to resources in the land while ensuring sustainable use. Part of the constitution are regulations that are in accordance with existing national laws and is guided by the customs of the I-Banao sub-tribes that show due respect to the land and its living things.

The “Minahang Bayan”

The “Minahang Bayan” or mining area in Sitio Ga-ang at Barangay Talalang is self-declared and managed by the leaders of the BBA. It is part of the i-Banao’s legally recognized ancestral domain as well as the government-declared Balbalasang National Park. The area is classified as upper Ga-ang and lower Ga-ang, based on the area’s terrain. It is 7 kilometres from the nearest community or at least a 3-hour hike during good weather.

Based on a 2011 site survey of the “Minahang Bayan”[i], there are more or less 1500 active miners; 180 camps with 5 to 10 miners per group; 150 tunnels of which 80 are operational; and 100 balls mills. Some camps have their own financiers while others finance themselves and divide their profits in accordance with their camp policy or pre-arranged scheme. Almost all of the more than 1,000 adult residents in Sitio Gaang are engaged in small-scale gold mining.

According to i-Banao miners, the ASGM industry with in the “Minahang Bayan”, even at sustenance level, provided them the opportunity to undertake pro-active economic management of the resources in their ancestral domain which in turn placed food on the table, paid for the education for their children, gave them shelter and livelihood.



Mercury-Use in Gold Processing

BAN Toxics' baseline study in 2011 discovered that the main method practiced in the "Minahang Bayan" is through the process of mercury-gold amalgamation.

Based on the interviews done with members of the BBA, the total cost for setting up the equipment (i.e. ball mill, sluice box, etc) is Php2,225 (US\$52). This does not take into account the amount and cost of mercury used to capture the gold which was 2 grams of mercury per 1 gram of gold. As of August 2011, mercury used in the "Minahang Bayan" cost Php8 (US\$0.20) per gram.

A group of 5 miners can dig at least 80 sacks of ore in a month. Using the mercury amalgamation process, an average of 1.26 grams of gold can be recovered per drum or in total 160 grams of gold at 14.9 karats (purity of gold).

The whole process for one batch, including the milling, can take up to 7 hours.

Process



Ore extracted from tunnels are brought to the milling area for crushing and grinding. It is manually crushed using mallets before putting in the drum of a ball mill. After the crushed ore is placed inside the drum, water is then added to help facilitate the milling process.

If the gold from an ore sample is of high quality, mercury is applied directly inside the drum to capture the gold. After milling, the slurry of finely ground ore is poured and collected in the sluice box. In small quantities, the slurry is then directed to a plastic tub which is manually shaken to remove the slime or mud and excess water -- what remains is a concentrate of finely ground ore with mercury or mercury amalgam. This process is repeated until all the slurry in the sluice box has been processed.



If it is of low quality, the crushed ore and water is placed inside the drum and is milled without mercury in it. The slurry is still collected in the sluice box but is then directed, in regulated quantities, through a wooden launder to remove the slime or mud. The finely ground ore is captured using a cloth that is laid on the launder while the overflow is collected in empty sacks to be re-processed with mercury in the drum (same process as the one used with high quality ore). The cloth is gently rinsed in a tub of water to collect the captured ore. This process is repeated until all the slurry in the sluice box has been processed. Most of the water is then slowly poured out of the tub while ensuring that the collected ore remains in the bottom. Whatever is left in the tub, which is usually finely ground ore with a small amount of water, is poured in small quantities in a pan. The next step, which is called panning, is done to separate most of the gold from other minerals and impurities. What remains is a concentrate of finely ground ore, which is mostly gold. Mercury is then poured in the concentrate to produce an amalgam.



The mercury amalgam is sieved using a piece of cloth which is usually nylon based -- similar to fabrics used in umbrellas. Water is further squeezed out by gathering the border of the cloth and twisting it to form a pouch with the mercury amalgam inside it. The amalgam is then refined and cooked with Borax before selling it to gold buyers.

BAN Toxics and the interventions to eliminate mercury-use

Starting in 2011, BAN Toxics have been leading a series of trainings in the area. These trainings presented the dangers of mercury-use to people's health and the environment while also presenting alternative methods to mercury-gold amalgamation.

Efforts have been successful as several miners are making the switch to mercury-free methods. The region also recently adopted a resolution to ban mercury use in small-scale gold mining. Through the province's Environment and Natural Resources Office (ENRO), the prohibition falls in line with the small-scale miners support for the reduction and elimination of mercury use in ASGM.[3]



Benguet



Benguet is another province in the Cordillera region and is home to several northern ethnic groups. Based on the 2000 census, Benguet has the largest population in the Cordillera region with an estimated number of 330, 129 and is expected to further increase in the future.

The province's economy relies heavily on agriculture, tourism and mining. The area's cool climate is favourable to the cultivation of highly prized vegetables and fruits such as cabbage, lettuce, carrots, strawberries, blueberries, and peas. Other cottage industries such as flower production and basket weaving are reliant on the agriculture sector.

Tourism is a large industry in the area. With the city of Baguio as a focal point, tourists are drawn to the area, typically during the summer season or its famous flower festival.

Finally, Benguet is also one of the vital gold producers in the country. In 2006 alone, two large-scale mining companies reach four billion pesos in revenues. The province's mining vigour has never translated into better quality of life for the people of Benguet, simply because a bulk of the mining firm's taxes are not paid directly to the province. The two mining corporations, like many others around the country, have principal offices in the City of Makati, a set-up that makes Makati the prime mining tax beneficiary.[4]



Benguet Federation of Small-Scale Miners

Small-scale miners are represented by the Benguet Federation of Small-Scale Miners. The group has been an active participant in BAN Toxics! ASGM project. The group assisted BAN Toxics in organizing the first ASGM Summit in 2011. Currently, the group is also a signatory to reduce mercury-use in ASGM and regularly conducts mercury-free mining trainings to its members.

HOW TO GET THERE



There are two methods of transportation available for travellers:



By bus.

Travellers can take an overnight bus to the capital city of Tabuk, Kalinga. Bus travel to Tabuk usually takes 10 to 12 hours. Upon arrival, visitors can have their morning meal and take a short rest before leaving for Balbalan. From Tabuk, visitors will have to take another 4 hour drive to Balbalan proper and 2 hour drive going to sitio Sesec-an before finally taking the trail up to the mining sites.



By plane.

Travellers can also opt to take the plane. The plane ride takes only about an hour from Manila to Tuguegarao. After which, visitors will have to take passenger jeepneys for an hour ride to Tabuk.

Whether visitors have arrived in Tabuk by plane or bus, going to the Ga-ang mining site requires a four hour climb. Note that the trek to the site has an inclination of about 60 degrees maximum and visitors are advised to approach each step with caution. The trail leading up towards the mountain top is covered with leafy canopies. Expect occasional drizzles and fog on your ascend. The trail can become very tricky, particularly for inexperienced climbers. Thus, it is recommended to ask for assistance and/or to use hands for that extra support and balance.

REMINDER:

Those who need special medical care should advise their tour guides or take precautionary measures.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The regions of Kalinga and Benguet are part of the Cordillera. This mountainous area is teeming with natural resources and provides a pleasant contrast to the loud, noisy, and often humid temperatures of Metro Manila.

Nestled in the mountains are spots famous to tourists and historians. One of which is the Chico River, a mighty river that stretches for 174.67 kilometers, making it the longest river in the country. The Cordillera is also home to a number of indigenous peoples. The closely knit communities of the area are open and quite sociable to visitors. Expressing their hospitality through offering cups of their aromatic Kalinga coffee, visitors should expect more than one serving of coffee in a day.

While the people are indeed warm and friendly, ASGM sites in Ga-ang however adhere to strict rules and restrictions. These are:

- a. Pregnant women are not allowed in mining sites.
- b. Students (and schoolchildren) are not allowed in mining sites.
- c. and bringing or drinking of alcoholic beverages in the mining areas are also strictly prohibited.



Electricity:



Power supply in the area is limited. The mining sites receive electricity for approximately 3 hours nightly (6.00 to 9.00 PM). Otherwise, people rely on diesel-fuelled generators for their power.

Water:



There is no limit to the water supply.

Communications:



Modern methods of communication are not available in the area.

Health Facilities:



There are a number of barangay health facilities and health clinics dotting the area. The nearest hospital to the mining site is located in Tabuk City.

WHAT TO WEAR/BRING

- rainbreakers
- sturdy, dependable hiking shoes
- plastic bags/containers (for clothes and sensitive equipment, if any.)
- extra clothes
- thick blankets
- sleeping bags
- extra torches

STUDY ITINERARY

STUDY VISIT PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

Day 1, February 15, Friday

Arrival of Participants /Check In
Hotel Address: TBA

Day 2, February 16, Saturday

Time	Activity	Remarks
10:00AM	Orientation/ Briefing on the Study Visit	BT Staff to give the orientation. Presentation of BT organization: mission, work are you doing, experience with ASM community, mercury issues in ASM, challenges and accomplishments.
12:00PM	LUNCH	
1:00PM	Historical Tour in Manila	
6:00PM	Early Dinner	
8:00 PM	Lights Off	

Day 3, February 17, Sunday

10:45AM

ETD to
Tuguegarao

NAIA 3, AirPhil
Express

2P 014
10:45-12:00NN

2 BT Staff will
join the group

12:00NN

ETA/Travel to Balbalan

4:00PM

ETA Balbalan

Meeting with the
Municipality Mayor

Meeting with the
Provincial Env't
Resource Officer

Objective is to learn
how municipality
works with ASM
regulation
implementation at
local level. Learning
about environmental
responsibilities of
ASM.

6:00PM

Check In at the
Municipality Hostel

7:00PM

Dinner

9:00PM

Lights Off

Day 4, February 18, Monday

6:00AM **ETD to Sesec-an**

9:00AM **ETA in Sesec-an/ Breakfast**

10:00AM **Trekking to Gaang Mine Site**

Description:

4 hour trek with 60 degree maximum inclination of trail. The trail is covered with canopies and following the mountain contour with gradual ascend. There are also some part that hands will be used for balance. The trail is always wet with some part covered with moss. Expect rain & fog on trail.

2:00PM **ETA in Gaang Mine Site**

2:30PM **Site Visit: Upper, Lower & Central**
Introduction/ Getting to Know You

6:00PM **Dinner/ Solidarity Night with BBA**

Note:

Participants will be accommodated in the Multi-purpose hall of Gaang Mines. Please bring sleeping bags and thick blankets to keep you warm at night. Please bring head lamps, flashlights as well.

Day 5, February 19, Tuesday

6:00AM	ETD in Gaang Mine Site
9:00AM	ETA in Sese-an/ Breakfast
10:00AM	Travel to Tabuk City
3:00PM	ETA in Tabuk City Check in: Golden Berries Hotel
7:00PM	Dinner/Lights Off

Day 6, February 20, Wednesday

6:00AM	ETD to Baguio City
9:00AM	Breakfast
12:00NN	Lunch
3:00PM	ETA in Benguet Site Visit
6:00PM	Dinner w/ Benguet Fed and Miner Trainers Solidarity Night
10:00PM	Lights Off

Day 7, February 21, Thursday

8:00AM

Breakfast

9:00AM

Meeting with DENR EMB
and MGB Cordillera

12:00NN

Lunch

2:00PM

ETD in Baguio

8:00PM

ETA in Manila

Day 8, February 22, Friday

9:00AM

Breakfast

10:00AM

Evaluation of the Study
Visit w/ BT Staff

12:00NN

Lunch

1:00PM onwards

Free time

7:00PM

ETD in Manila to NAIA

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PHILIPPINES

Brief History



The Philippines is the third largest English speaking country in the world. It has a rich history combining Asian, European, and American influences. Prior to Spanish colonization in 1521, the Filipinos had a rich culture and were trading with the Chinese and the Japanese. Spain's colonization brought about the construction of Intramuros in 1571, a "Walled City" comprised of European buildings and churches, replicated in different parts of the archipelago. In 1898, after 350 years and 300 rebellions, the Filipinos, with leaders like Jose Rizal and Emilio Aguinaldo, succeeded in winning their independence.

In 1898, the Philippines became the first and only colony of the United States. Following the Philippine-American War, the United States brought widespread education to the islands. Filipinos fought alongside Americans during World War II, particularly at the famous battle of Bataan and Corregidor which delayed Japanese advance and saved Australia. They then waged a guerilla war against the Japanese from 1941 to 1945. The Philippines regained its independence in 1946.

Filipinos are a freedom-loving people, having waged two peaceful, bloodless revolutions against what were perceived as corrupt regimes. The Philippines is a vibrant democracy, as evidenced by 12 English national newspapers, 7 national television stations, hundreds of cable TV stations, and 2,000 radio stations. Filipinos are a fun-loving people. Throughout the islands, there are fiestas celebrated everyday and foreign guests are always welcome to their homes.

People and Religion



The Filipino is basically of Malay stock with a sprinkling of Chinese, American, Spanish, and Arab blood. The Philippines has a population of 76.5 million as of May 2000, and it is hard to distinguish accurately the lines between stocks. From a long history of Western colonial rule, interspersed with the visits of merchants and traders, evolved a people of a unique blend of east and west, both in appearance and culture.

The Filipino character is actually a little bit of all the cultures put together. The bayanihan or spirit of kinship and camaraderie that Filipinos are famous for is said to be taken from Malay forefathers. The close family relations are said to have been inherited from the Chinese. The piousness comes from the Spaniards who introduced Christianity in the 16th century. Hospitality is a common denominator in the Filipino character and this is what distinguishes the Filipino. Filipinos are probably one of the few, if not the only, English-proficient Oriental people today. Pilipino is the official national language, with English considered as the country's unofficial one.

The Filipinos are divided geographically and culturally into regions, and each regional group is recognizable by distinct traits and dialects - the sturdy and frugal Ilocanos of the north, the industrious Tagalogs of the central plains, the carefree Visayans from the central islands, and the colorful tribesmen and religious Moslems of Mindanao. Tribal communities can be found scattered across the archipelago. The Philippines has more than 111 dialects spoken, owing to the subdivisions of these basic regional and cultural groups.

The country is marked by a true blend of cultures; truly in the Philippines, East meets West. The background of the people is Indonesian and Malay. There are Chinese and Spanish elements as well. The history of American rule and contact with merchants and traders culminated in a unique blend of East and West, both in the appearance and culture of the Filipinos, or people of the Philippines.

Hospitality, a trait displayed by every Filipino, makes these people legendary in Southeast Asia. Seldom can you find such hospitable people who enjoy the company of their Western visitors. Perhaps due to their long association with Spain, Filipinos are emotional and passionate about life in a way that seems more Latin than Asian.

The Spaniards introduced Christianity (the Roman Catholic faith) and succeeded in converting the overwhelming majority of Filipinos. At least 83% of the total population belongs to the Roman Catholic faith.

The American occupation was responsible for teaching the Filipino people the English language. The Philippines is currently the third-largest English speaking country in the world.



Climate



The first half of the year, from January to May, is the best time to visit the country. November to February is cool, while March to May is hot and dry. June to October is rainy, with the months between July and September characterized by typhoons. Average temperature is 78 degrees F/25 degrees C; average humidity is 77%. Some parts of the country such as Cebu, are warm and comfortable in all seasons and can be visited throughout the year.

For up-to-date weather information, visit the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) website: www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph or call PAGASA 24-hour hotline (632)4338526.

Languages



Two official languages --- Filipino and English. Filipino which is based on Tagalog, is the national language. English is also widely used and is the medium of instruction in higher education. Eight (8) major dialects spoken by majority of the Filipinos: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon or Ilonggo, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, and Pangasinense. Filipino is the native language which is used nationally as the language of communication among ethnic groups. Like any living language, Filipino is in a process of development through loans from Philippine languages and non-native languages for various situations, among speakers of different social backgrounds, and for topics for conversation and scholarly discourse. There are about 76 to 78 major language groups, with more than 500 dialects.

Currency



The currency in the Philippines is the Peso (PhP) and the Centavo. 100 centavos = P1. Coin denominations are: 1, 5, 10, and 25 centavos, P1, and P5. Bill denominations are : 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1, 000 pesos.

Foreign currency may be exchanged in most of the large department stores, banks and authorized money changing shops. Exchanging money anywhere else is illegal and the laws are strictly enforced.

Most large stores, restaurants , hotels and resorts accept major credit cards including American Express, Visas and MasterCard. Traveller's checks preferably American Express are accepted at hotels and large department stores. Personal checks drawn on foreign banks are generally not accepted.

Unit of Measurement



The Metric System is used in most trade and legal transactions.

Clothing



People in the Philippines dress for the weather. Casual attire during the day for women are light blouses and shorts. For men collared T- shirts worn over slacks. In the evening skirts are substituted for shorts and the T-shirts are tucked in.

Water



Water supply in Metro Manila and in all the other major cities are considered potable. Bottled purified water, spring water or mineral water is often supplied by hotels and resorts, and sold in all grocery stores.

Electricity



220 volts a/c is the common standard. 110 volts a/c is also used, especially in major hotels. The plug socket in the Philippines is shown in the picture. Please remember to bring adaptor as required.

Telephone and Mobile phone



Telephone service is modern and you can direct dial anywhere in the world. Public phones are plentiful. Public phones require a minimum of two one-peso coins for a local call.

Bayantel - Bayan Telecommunications, Philippines.

Globe Telecom - One of the leading mobile phone companies in the Philippines.

PLDT - Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company.

Smart - One of the leading mobile phone companies in the Philippines and also offers mobile banking.

Some Important Telephone Numbers: (24-Hour Hotline)

Police & Fire: 757 or 116

Emergency No.: 501- 650 or 501- 728

Directory Assistance: 114

National Operator: 109 I

International Operator: 108

For other emergency numbers, please refer to
Directory.

NOTE: It is advisable to always have the telephone
number and the address of your embassy or
consulate with you.

Business Hours



The post offices are open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
weekdays only. Stamps for postcards are frequently
available from the Concierge Desk at most major
hotels. The Philippines uses ZIP codes, please include
them in addressing local mail.

NOTE: The Standard lunch hour is noon to 1:00 PM.
Most businesses and government offices are closed.

Time Difference



Local time is GMT plus 8 hours. Business English is
the language used. Sexual equality is more
widespread in the Philippines than in other Asian
countries. Make sure you have business cards.

Airport Tax



Passenger Terminal Fee is levied on all passengers embarking for:

1. International travel : PHP 750
2. Domestic travel: PHP 200

Place of payment: Airport of departure.

- Exempt:
1. Children under 2 years of age.
 2. Transit passengers remaining in the transit area and not leaving the airport.
 3. Crew members.

Anti-smoking law in enclosed places



MANILA, Philippines -- Section five of the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 (Republic Act 9211) prohibits the carrying of any lighted tobacco product in public vehicles, schools, health centers, elevators, cinemas, malls and in places where fire hazards are present. Smoking is also banned in recreational facilities for minors. Fines imposed on violators of this section range from P500 to P10,000.

[1] BAN Toxics! (2010). The Price of Gold: Mercury Use and Current Issues Surrounding Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining in the Philippines

[2] BAN Toxics! (2011). ASGM Profile – Kalinga. Unpublished.

[3] <http://www.philstar.com/nation/766023/kalinga-bans-mercury-mining-operations>

[4] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benguet>



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