



Specific *bla*_{CTX-M-8}/IncI1 Plasmid Transfer among Genetically Diverse *Escherichia coli* Isolates between Humans and Chickens

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ABSTRACT We investigated the genetic backbones of 14 *bla*_{CTX-M-8}-positive *Escherichia coli* isolates recovered from human stool samples and chicken meat. All isolates carried IncI1 plasmids with *bla*_{CTX-M-8} (*bla*_{CTX-M-8}/IncI1), and most (9/14) belonged to a specific genetic lineage, namely, plasmid sequence type 113 (pST113). The genetic contexts of the nine *bla*_{CTX-M-8}/IncI1 pST113 plasmids were similar, regardless of the source. These results suggest the probable local transfer of *bla*_{CTX-M-8}/IncI1 between humans and chickens with genetically diverse *E. coli*.

KEYWORDS *bla*_{CTX-M-8}, IncI1 plasmid, *Escherichia coli*, retail chicken meat, human

Escherichia coli isolates harboring CTX-M-type extended-spectrum β -lactamase (ESBL) genes have become a global concern because they are widely disseminated in clinical settings, livestock, healthy humans, companion animals, and wild animals (1). CTX-M-type ESBL-producing *E. coli* isolates in livestock/retail meat need special attention because food contamination could be a major cause of their transfer to humans (2, 3). To assess local transmission of the CTX-M-type ESBL gene between livestock/retail meat and humans in Japan, we analyzed the genetic backbones of CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli*, since its spread is still expected to be limited, at least in Japan (4–6). As described below, our findings suggest the possible horizontal transfer of plasmids of specific genetic lineages bearing the CTX-M-8 β -lactamase gene between humans and chicken meat.

We collected CTX-M-type ESBL-producing *E. coli* from several sources, such as ill patients, healthy people handling food (including employees of retail meat shops and meat producers), and retail foods (chicken meat, beef, and pork) (4, 7, 8). The isolates from ill patients were collected from hospitals spread across Japan, while those from healthy people handling food and retail foods were collected in Aichi Prefecture, Japan (4, 7, 8). Only 14 CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* isolates were identified. Six were from stool samples from healthy food handlers, and eight were from imported chicken meat from Brazil (Table 1). All isolates were resistant to cefotaxime but susceptible to ceftazidime, imipenem, gentamicin, and fosfomycin (Table 1). We performed whole-genome sequencing (WGS) analysis of 14 CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* isolates with the MiSeq platform and an A5-miseq assembler to investigate their genetic backbones (9). Multilocus sequence typing (MLST) was performed by transferring the WGS data to the MLST 1.8 server (10), and the presence of antibiotic resistance genes was confirmed by transferring the WGS data to the ResFinder 2.1 server (11). MLST showed highly diverse backbones; 14 isolates were classified into 12 different sequence types (STs), although strain ST131 was found in both human stool samples and chicken meat and ST1144 was

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TABLE 1 Characteristics of 14 *E. coli* isolates carrying *bla*_{CTX-M-8}^a

Sample	Source	ST	CTX resistance transfer by conjugation	Plasmid replicon type	No. of plasmids	MIC ($\mu\text{g/ml}$)								Antimicrobial resistance gene(s)
						CTX	CAZ	IPM	GM	TC	CP	FOM	CIP	
HU23	Human stool sample	131	Yes	Inc11, IncFIB, IncFIC (FII)	3	8	0.5	0.25	0.5	0.5	4	0.5	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8}
HU447	Human stool sample	1144	Yes	Inc11, Col156, IncFIC (FII), IncFIB, IncQ1	5	4	2	0.06	1	64	4	0.5	≤ 0.03	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>bla</i> _{TEM-1B} , <i>strA/B</i> , <i>sul2</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA8</i>
HU476	Human stool sample	1144	Yes	Inc11, Col156, IncFIC (FII), IncFIB, IncQ1	5	8	0.5	0.12	0.5	64	8	0.5	≤ 0.03	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>bla</i> _{TEM-1B} , <i>strA/B</i> , <i>sul2</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA8</i>
HU485	Human stool sample	23	Yes	Inc11, ColpVC, IncFIB	3	8	0.5	0.25	0.5	1	4	1	≤ 0.03	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8}
HU493	Human stool sample	1170	Yes	Inc11, IncFIB, IncFIA, IncFIC (FII)	3	8	1	0.25	1	1	4	1	0.12	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8}
HU590	Human stool sample	2526	Yes	Inc11, IncFIB (K)	2	8	1	0.25	0.5	64	8	1	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>aadA5</i> , <i>sul2</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA17</i>
CH11	Chicken meat	345	Yes	Inc11, IncFII, IncFIB, IncQ1, IncN	5	8	0.5	0.12	0.5	64	4	0.5	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>bla</i> _{TEM-1B} , <i>aadA1</i> , <i>strA/B</i> , <i>sul1</i> , <i>sul2</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA1</i>
CH41	Chicken meat	351	Yes	Inc11, IncQ1, IncFII, IncFIB	3	8	1	0.25	0.5	64	4	0.5	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>aadA1</i> , <i>strA/B</i> , <i>sul1</i> , <i>sul2</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA1</i>
CH42	Chicken meat	88	Yes	Inc11, IncX1, IncFIC (FII), IncFIB	4	8	1	0.25	0.5	128	8	1	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>bla</i> _{TEM-1B} , <i>tetA</i>
CH49 ^b	Chicken meat	224	Yes	Inc11, IncX4, ColpVC, IncFII, IncY, IncX1, IncFIB	7	8	1	0.25	1	128	64	1	32	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>aadA1</i> , <i>aadA2</i> , <i>aph(3'')</i> - <i>la</i> , <i>cmIA1</i> , <i>sul3</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA12</i>
CH56	Chicken meat	131	No	Inc11, IncFIB, IncFIC(FII), IncX1	4	8	0.5	0.25	0.5	0.5	4	0.5	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>bla</i> _{TEM-1B}
CH110	Chicken meat	4576	Yes	Inc11, IncFII, IncQ1, IncFIB	4	8	0.5	0.25	0.5	32	4	1	≤ 0.03	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8} , <i>bla</i> _{TEM-1B} , <i>aadA1</i> , <i>strA/B</i> , <i>sul1</i> , <i>sul2</i> , <i>tetA</i> , <i>dfrA1</i>
CH365	Chicken meat	602	Yes	Inc11, Col156, IncFIB, IncFIC (FII)	4	8	1	0.25	0.5	0.5	4	1	≤ 0.03	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8}
CH407	Chicken meat	101	Yes	Inc11, IncFIB, IncFIC(FII)	2	8	0.5	0.12	0.5	1	8	1	0.25	<i>bla</i> _{CTX-M-8}

^aAbbreviations: CTX, cefotaxime; CAZ, ceftazidime; IPM, imipenem; GM, gentamicin; TC, tetracycline; CP, chloramphenicol; FOM, fosfomicin; CIP, ciprofloxacin.
^bStrain CH49 has amino acid substitutions S83L and D87N in GyrA and S80L in ParC, which confer ciprofloxacin resistance.

TABLE 2 Characteristics of 14 *E. coli* transformants carrying Incl1 plasmids with bla_{CTX-M-8}

Transformant	Plasmid replicon		Approximate plasmid size estimated by		MIC (μ g/ml) of cefotaxime	β -Lactamase gene
	type	Plasmid ST	S1	PFGE		
<i>E. coli</i> (pHU23)	Incl1	pST113	91,831	bp ^a	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pHU447)	Incl1	pST131	90	kb	4	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pHU476)	Incl1	pST131	91	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pHU485)	Incl1	pST114	82	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pHU493)	Incl1	pST113	94	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pHU590)	Incl1	pST113	88	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH11)	Incl1	pST113	101,377	bp ^a	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH41)	Incl1	pST113	87	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH42)	Incl1	pST113	86	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH49)	Incl1	pST113	84	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH56)	Incl1	pST113	87	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH110)	Incl1	pST235	92	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH365)	Incl1	pST132	105	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> (pCH407)	Incl1	pST113	83	kb	8	bla _{CTX-M-8}
<i>E. coli</i> DH10B					0.06	

^aPlasmid size was determined by WGS analysis, gap-closing PCR, and subsequent Sanger sequencing.

found in stool samples from two different people (Table 1). The susceptibility-testing results and carriage of antibiotic resistance genes were quite consistent (Table 1). The replicon types of plasmids carried by 14 CTX-M-8 producers were confirmed by transferring the WGS data to the PlasmidFinder 1.3 server (12). The numbers of plasmids carried by CTX-M-8 producers were estimated by S1 nuclease pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) analysis (13) and simple agarose gel electrophoresis of plasmids extracted with the Plasmid Miniprep System (Promega) (Table 1). All 14 CTX-M-8 producers had Incl1 plasmids, as well as several plasmids with different incompatibility groups (Table 1).

A broth-mating conjugation experiment was performed to transfer the cefotaxime resistance phenotype of 14 CTX-M-8 producers to *E. coli* J53 (azide resistant), and 13 conjugants were selected on Luria-Bertani (LB) agar plates containing sodium azide (150 μ g/ml) and cefotaxime (1 μ g/ml) (Table 1). Further, plasmids were extracted from 14 CTX-M-8 producers and introduced into the *E. coli* DH10B strain by electroporation. Fourteen cefotaxime-resistant *E. coli* DH10B transformants were selected on LB agar plates containing cefotaxime (1 μ g/ml) (Table 2). As expected, bla_{CTX-M-8} was detected in these cefotaxime-resistant conjugants and transformants. The plasmids were extracted from 14 *E. coli* DH10B transformants with the Qiagen Plasmid Midi kit and subjected to PFGE. DNA bands corresponding to the plasmids were extracted and used as a DNA template for WGS analysis as described above. The assembled contigs derived from the plasmids were transferred to the PlasmidFinder 1.3 and ResFinder 2.1 servers to investigate the replicon types and presence of antibiotic resistance genes, respectively (11), and plasmid MLST was performed through the pMLST 1.4 server (12). Although the sizes of the 14 plasmids, which were estimated by S1 nuclease PFGE analysis of 14 cefotaxime-resistant *E. coli* DH10B transformants, varied from 82 to 105 kbp, these plasmids were assigned to the Incl1 group and carried bla_{CTX-M-8} as the only antibiotic resistance gene (Table 2). The 14 Incl1 plasmids were assigned to five plasmid STs (pSTs); 9 were pST113, 1 was pST114, 2 were pST131, 1 was pST132, and 1 was pST235 (newly assigned) (Table 2). Incl1 pST113 plasmids were dominant in *E. coli* isolates from humans (3/6) and retail chicken meat (6/8) (Table 2). These results indicated the possibility that the bla_{CTX-M-8} spread in *E. coli* in Japan was mainly due to the horizontal transfer of Incl1 plasmids belonging to a specific genetic lineage, such as pST113, regardless of their sources, rather than due to the distribution of a clonal *E. coli* strain producing CTX-M-8. To date, CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* isolates have been found in Germany (14), French Guiana (15), Tunisia (16), Kenya (17), Spain (18), and Brazil (19–21), and Incl1 pST113 plasmids harboring bla_{CTX-M-8} have been reported (22, 23). Preferential carriage of bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 pST113 plasmids has also been reported in

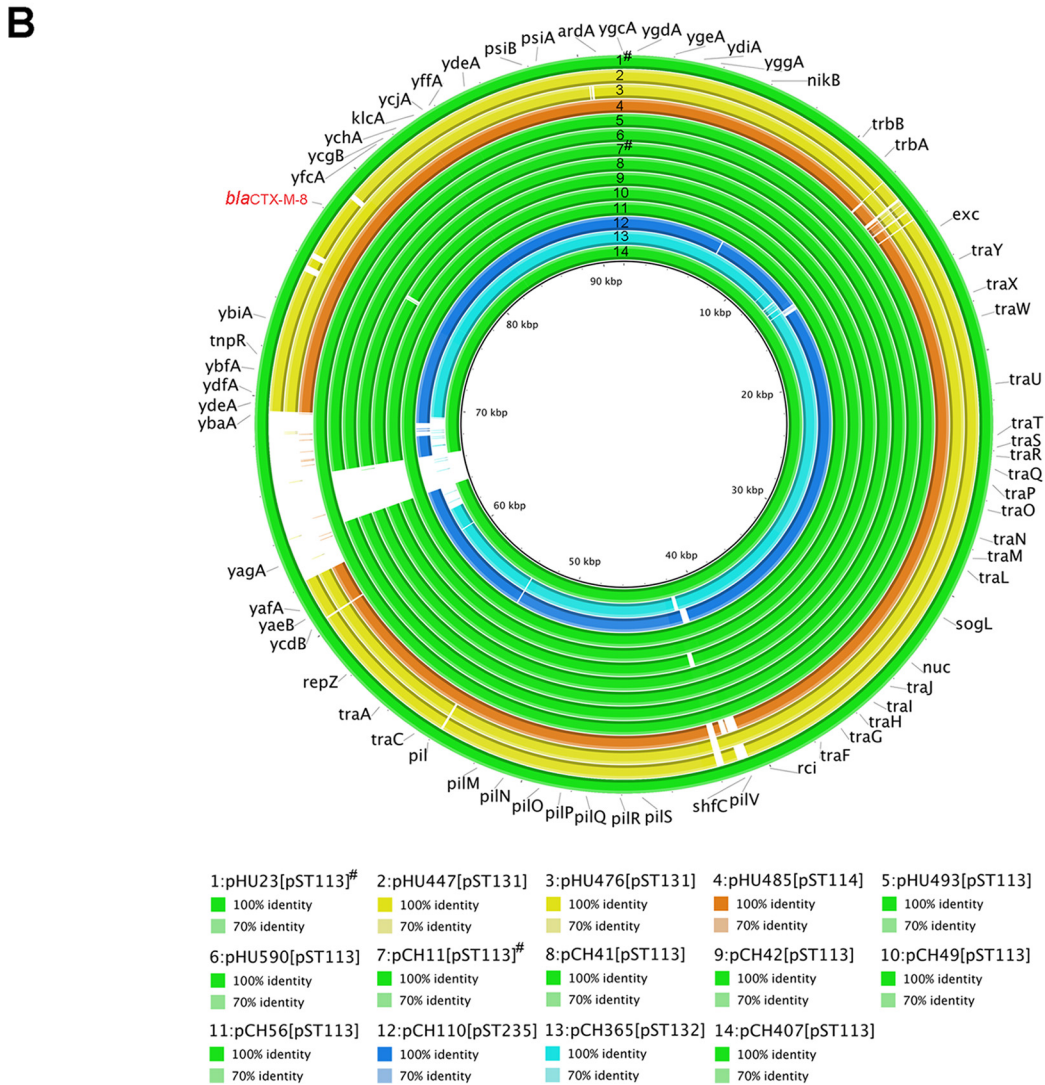
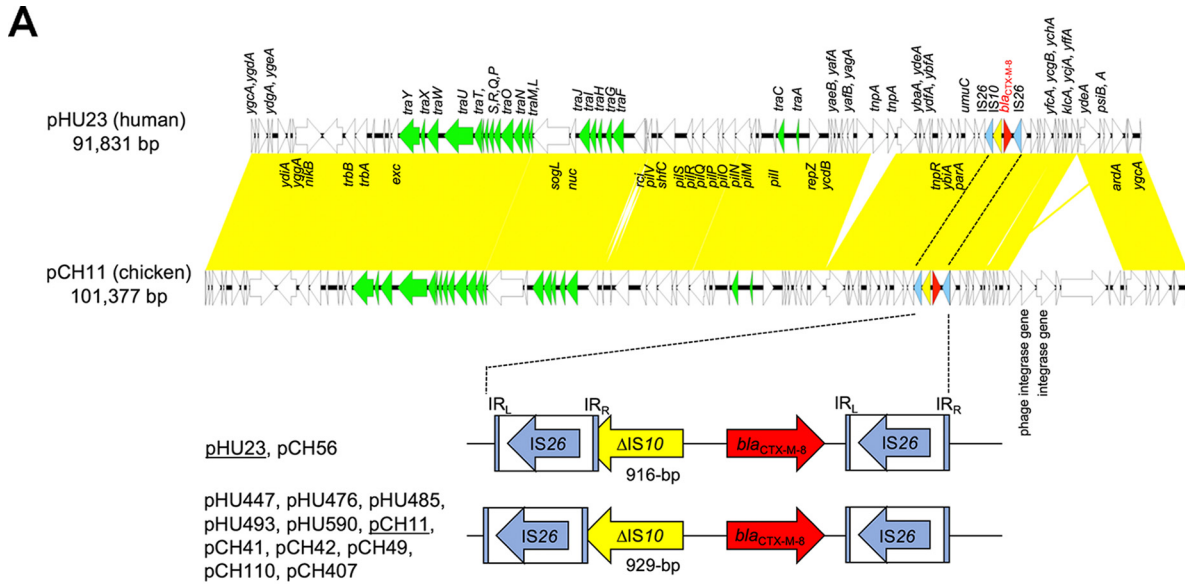


FIG 1 (A) Genetic comparison of the pHU23 plasmid (GenBank accession no. [AP017892](#)) with the pCH11 plasmid (GenBank accession no. [AP017893](#)). The open reading frames are represented by arrows and color coded according to their functions. *bla*_{CTX-M-8} is red. Insertion (Continued on next page)

CTX-M-8-producing *Enterobacteriaceae* isolates, including *E. coli* and *Salmonella* spp. in Germany, whose carriage may be related to contaminated food (14). The carriage of Incl1 plasmids pST114, pST131, and pST132 is lower than that of Incl1 pST113 in this study, and these plasmids were found in CTX-M-8 producers from both humans and poultry in Brazil (22, 23). Worldwide dissemination of the bla_{CTX-M-8} gene might also be mediated by specific Incl1 plasmids such as pST113 and less-well-known plasmids pST114, pST131, and pST132.

To further evaluate the genetic backbones of bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 plasmids from humans and chicken meat, we determined the complete nucleotide sequences of representative bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 pST113 plasmids, pHU23 from humans, and pCH11 from chicken meat by gap-closing PCR and Sanger sequencing based on the draft sequences of these plasmids. The plasmid sequences were submitted to the Microbial Genome Annotation Pipeline (<http://www.migap.org>) for annotations. Figure 1A was prepared on the basis of the complete sequences of pHU23 and pCH11 with Easyfig (24). The backbones of the plasmids, including the protein-coding genes *traA* to *traY* responsible for plasmid transfer and the protein-coding genes *pill* to *pilV* responsible for pilus formation, were identical, and both had no antibiotic resistance gene, except for bla_{CTX-M-8} (Fig. 1A). The nucleotide sequence of the pHU23 plasmid showed 97% query coverage and >99% nucleotide identity to that of pCH11. Both plasmids were slightly different in terms of the presence or absence of several putative transposase and integrase genes and hypothetical protein genes (Fig. 1A). Comparison of 14 Incl1/bla_{CTX-M-8} plasmids (pHU23 and pCH11 with complete sequences and 12 plasmids with draft sequences) was performed on the basis of the complete sequence of the pHU23 plasmid with BRIG software (25), and nine bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 pST113 plasmids showed high similarity, regardless of the source (Fig. 1B).

In addition, a common IS10 element with a partially truncated 3' end was upstream of the bla_{CTX-M-8} gene, although its location slightly differed between pHU23 and pCH11 (Fig. 1A). The bla_{CTX-M-8} gene was flanked by two IS26 elements. Although the WGS analyses of the remaining 12 Incl1 plasmids could not determine the extended genetic region around bla_{CTX-M-8}, considering the corresponding regions of these plasmids, the genetic region around bla_{CTX-M-8} of pCH56 was identical to that of pHU23 with 916-bp ΔIS10, while those around bla_{CTX-M-8} of pHU447, pHU476, pHU485, pHU493, pHU590, pCH41, pCH42, pCH49, pCH110, and pCH407 were identical to that of pCH11 with 929-bp ΔIS10 (Fig. 1A). The genetic context around bla_{CTX-M-8} in the pCH365 plasmid could not be categorized because the terminal end of the contigs carrying bla_{CTX-M-8} neighbored the middle of the IS10 element. However, the assembled 2,158-bp sequence of the contigs was the same as that of pHU23 and pCH11. Therefore, the DNA sequence around bla_{CTX-M-8} showed low diversity among the 14 Incl1 plasmids analyzed, as well as low overall diversity (Fig. 1B), indicating that the *E. coli* isolates from healthy individuals and retail chicken meat had bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 plasmids with almost the same sequences. These results can potentially explain the possible horizontal transfer of bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 plasmids with specific genetic lineages between humans and retail chicken meat.

In conclusion, this study is the first to identify and evaluate the genetic relatedness of CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* derived from different origins (i.e., humans and retail chicken meat), and we revealed the possible horizontal transfer of bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 plasmids with a specific genetic lineage, such as pST113. In Japan, CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* has been mainly found in retail chicken meat imported from Brazil (4, 26) but has rarely been found in other sources such as patients in clinical settings and livestock (5,

FIG 1 Legend (Continued)

sequences ΔIS10 and IS26 are yellow and blue, respectively. The *tra* region is green. Yellow shading indicates regions with high genetic identity. IR_L, left inverted repeat; IR_R, right inverted repeat. (B) Comparison of 14 bla_{CTX-M-8}/Incl1 plasmids by using BRIG software. The comparison was performed on the basis of the pHU23 plasmid (91,831 bp), whose nucleotide sequences were completely determined. Color coding is based on pST types as follows: green, pST113; yellow, pST131; orange, pST114; blue, pST235; cyan, pST132. Plasmids marked with the symbol # were completely sequenced, while those with draft sequences are not marked.

6, 8). Our findings suggest that carriage of CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* in humans might be attributed to the horizontal transfer of *bla*_{CTX-M-8}/Inc11 harbored by genetically diverse *E. coli* lineages through imported chicken meat. The food handlers analyzed in this study might have acquired CTX-M-8-producing *E. coli* and/or its *bla*_{CTX-M-8}/Inc11 plasmids by handling chicken meat. The carriage of antibiotic resistance genes by *E. coli* in retail meat should be regularly and carefully monitored to prevent their further dissemination to humans.

Accession number(s). The complete nucleotide sequences of pHU23 from healthy humans and pCH11 from chicken meat were deposited in the DDBJ database under accession numbers [AP017892](https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.02412-14) and [AP017893](https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.00848-13), respectively.

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