

Locating the Concept of Education in Kalenjin Kamuratanet

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Abstract

African cultural practices and traditions provided individuals with socially mediated contexts of behaviour adaptation and learning. With Westernization most children today have few structures to learn social self-regulating. The role of cultural structures, such as Circumcision (*Yatitaet* in Kalenjin) was explored for its potential educational value and how it provided initiates with contexts for self-regulating behaviour management. The specific objective of the study was to locate the concept of education in the *Kamuratanet* context. The theoretical foundation of this study hinges on Social Cultural Theory by Lev Vygotsky. The study was qualitative, informed by Interpretivist paradigm and guided by Ethnographic research design. Purposive and Snowball sampling procedures were used to get participants with experience, deep knowledge and an understanding of the Kalenjin cultural systems of socialization. Twelve participants informed the research through intensive interviews. Consequently, a multi-method approach was used in data analysis in order to enhance findings. The study determined existence of a clearly defined educational structure that also manifest as a self-regulating social mechanisms of behaviour management. Conclusions are provided.

Keywords: kamuratanet, behaviour, education, self-regulating, social-mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

Kamuratanet is a Kalenjin traditional process of teaching its members appropriate behaviour, knowledge, skills, attitudes, virtues, religion and moral standards. (The Kalenjin speakers are a Nilotic group-Highland Nilotes-of the African race in Kenya). Though carried out throughout an individual's lifetime, *Kamuratanet* is formalized during *yatitaet*/circumcision and subsequent initiation (*tumdo* for men or *soet* for women). *Yatitaet* and *tumdo* played a significant role in initiating individuals from childhood to adulthood. Because of their unique roles and peculiar usage, this study prefers to use the terms *Kamuratanet*, *Yatitaet* and *tumdo* as opposed to the distant meanings provided by their supposedly equivalent translations in English.

With the onset of Western education and Christianity, new patterns of social interaction emerged that seemed to negate the role of *Kamuratanet* processes. It is however apparent that in spite of the Westernized approaches, the principles of *Kamuratanet* continues to influence the Kalenjin social order. Similarly, assessed from the point of view of Developmental Psychology, *Yatitaet* is an important transition from childhood to adulthood. Subsequently, as an insider, I purposed to objectively appraise the pedagogical techniques of *Kamuratanet*

Statement of the Problem

This section contextualizes *Kamuratanet*, *Yatitaet* and *tumdo* while showing their relationships and points of departure.

To majority of the Kalenjin, *Kamuratanet* is a cltural practice largely seen as a timed ritual. In this study however, *Kamuratanet* is conceptualized as a process not an act. As a process, *Kamuratanet* has lasting residual impact, lasting beyond generations: older generations owe it to the next generation. *Kamuratanet* as a vehicle of Kalenjin cultural knowledge and standards therefore propels itself in a cyclic rather than linear form.

This study argues that the position of *Kamuratanet* has remained steadfast because it serves a purpose for which the modern western educational practices have not been able to provide a substitute and that the findings of the study may reveal these limitations. Moreover, Obanya (2008) explains that, "culture and education are inseparable, as they are simply two sides of the same coin. Indeed, the intention of this study was to locate the concept of education in the context of *Kamuratanet* and how this engendered appropriate behaviour among the Kalenjin. This might provide an opportunity for psychologists to evaluate *Kamuratanet* and to derive appropriate strategies of behaviour management within cultural psychology. This makes the study a worthy adventure.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate *Kamuratanet* with the aim of locating the concept of education in context.

Objective of the Study

To locate the concept of education in the Kalenjin *Kamuratanet* context.

Research Question

How was education conceptualized within the context of Kalenjin *Kamuratanet*?

Justification of the Study

This study sought justification on the basis of two issues: First, available research has not addressed itself to conceptualizing education in *Kamuratanet* context. Second, the self-regulating social mechanisms are a challenge in the midst of less understood systems of schooling. Consequently, *Kamuratanet* may provide educational strategies beyond the current school system.

Significance of the Study

Although African traditional education has been negatively projected by most of the western pioneered literature, most Africans still subscribe to the cultural practices. Subsequently, the concepts of childhood and adulthood are aggregated against the cultural standards set by *Kamuratanet* among the Kalenjin. Moreover, the self-regulating mechanisms set by *Kamuratanet* impose on the members an obligation to satisfy the cultural standards. Consequently, this implores upon researchers to explore the various methodologies that make the cultural standards so resilient to competing forces brought by Western oriented religion and education.

Scope

This study was concerned with locating the concept of education in the Kalenjin *Kamuratanet* context. The study thus purposefully sought the recollections of an audience that interacted with Kalenjin culture in its original form.

Limitations to the Study

Old age affects memory and hearing ability which posed a serious challenge to the study.. To ensure these did not influence the findings, I listened to my respondents patiently. I also used source triangulation to clarify issues. Further, to avoid distraction by paper work and technology I used a small tape recorder.

Assumptions of the Study

The research study was guided by the following assumptions:

- a) Respondents answered the questions asked truthfully and accurately.
- b) Behaviour exemplified by the target population reflects a direct or indirect influence of *Kamuratanet*.
- c) *Kamuratanet* rituals observed are a promulgation of the self-regulating processes of behaviour management.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided Lev Vygotsky’s Social cultural approach. For Vygotsky, human cognition, even when carried out in isolation, is inherently socio-culturally affected by beliefs, values and tools of intellectual adaptation passed to individuals by their cultural custodians (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010; Miller, 2011). According to Vygotsky, children’s mind develops as they take part in cooperative dialogues with skilled partners. This theory helps us understand the unique role that *Kamuratanet* serves as a socializing agent. This is because *Kamuratanet* defines the cultural standards of the Kalenjin.

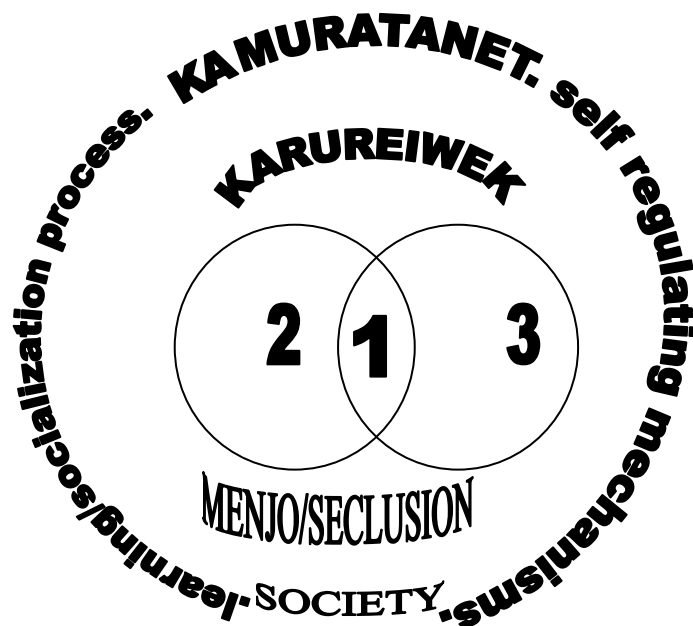


Figure 1: Conceptualisation of *Kamuratanet*.

- 1. Initiation
- 2. *Yatitaet*
- 3 *Tumdo*/ritual (*Tumwek*/rituals)

Conceptual Framework of *Kamuratanet*

Kamuratanet learning processes are formalized during circumcision and initiation but its influence goes on throughout the individual's lifetime. Initiation is the intermediate stage between *Yatitaet* (circumcision) and *Tumdo* (ritual). The initiation rituals are carried out in *Menjo* (Seclusion) alongside special learning instructions referred to as *Karureiwek*.

This section examines available literature in attempt to locate the concept of education within the Kalenjin *Kamuratanet* context.

The Concept of Education in the Kalenjin *Kamuratanet* Context.

Chebet (2007), notes that for a long time the Kalenjin have defied campaigns from the church and state to end female circumcision. She observes that some Christian believers and public servants alike condemned the practice in public but individually condoned it because when their daughters attained marriageable age, the missing link from childhood to adulthood compelled them to perform the rite secretly. Clearly, this situates the critical role of *Yatitaet* as an educational unit of *Kamuratanet* that prepares the youth for adult responsibilities.

Kamuratanet, *Yatitaet*/circumcision and *tumdo*/initiation rituals provide a major educational link for transition from childhood to adulthood. Initiation stipulates the expected social roles in readiness for the new adult responsibilities. This agrees with the behaviourists' definition of learning which constitute change of behaviour (Ndurumo, 2002). Indeed, *Kamuratanet* captures this reality since its contents are critical in modifying individual behaviour patterns of the Kalenjin people.

Arguably therefore, it is through cultural education that "human beings have become ontologized as rational animals or as information processors", (Taylor, 2006). Furthermore, Kraeber and Parsons (1958) emphasized the structural aspect of culture when they identified them as patterns of values, ideas and other symbolic meaningful systems. In addition, Goodenough (1957) also explains that culture concerns the forms of things that people have in their minds which function as sets of plans for ordering behaviour. These attributes are embedded in *Kamuratanet*.

In this respect *Kamuratanet* is in the best position to alter the mindset of the Kalenjin by domesticating concepts of the Western oriented type of education into its educational units. It may provide a forum and an appropriate context for focusing on the behavioural goals of the Kalenjin.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.

Overview

This section justifies the choice of qualitative approach and adoption of Interpretivism as a paradigm to guide the study. Methodology employed in the conduct of the study is discussed.

Research Design

Maree (2008) describes research design as the plan on how to proceed with a research study while Creswell (2002) add that a research design is a plan for doing research involving procedure for collecting, analyzing, and reporting research. Similarly, Bryman & Bell (2011) describe a research design as a framework for the collection and analysis of data. While agreeing with all these positions, the study adopted Croft's (1998) procedure for the study. Croft came up with four interrelated questions to consider when deciding on a research design to employ:

- i) **What epistemology?** This study subscribes to the views of Bryman and Bell on the need to employ qualitativism where the ultimate reality is subjective. Subsequently, this study considers context and people's views and values critical to understanding the concepts.
- ii) **What theoretical perspective?** This study subscribes to interpretivism. Consequently reality evolves contextually in response to lived realities encountered in the field settings (Creswell, 2003).
- iii) **What methodology?** In other words, the strategy or plan of action that links methods to outcomes that govern our choice. This study is concerned with understanding of human action (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It sought to explore lived experiences of participants.
- iv) **What methods?** This study adopted face to face interview with open ended questions to prompt qualitative responses (Madil & Gough, 2008)

Deriving from the above, this study employed a qualitative approach and ethnographic case study.

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative approach stems from anti-positivist approach. It refers to research that elicits participant's account of meaning, experience or perceptions (Golafshani, 2003). Similarly, the main goal of this study was to capture the sense that lies within *Kamuratanet*, the structures within it and how they influence the behaviour of the Kalenjin. Thus, the research purpose is best answered by, qualitative methods (Morse & Richards, 2007). Apart from complementing the available literature by filling an apparent knowledge gap, the study on *Kamuratanet* will also be heard from an insider's perspective.

Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

Huitt (2011) describes a paradigm as a pattern or model of how something is structured and how the parts function. Kuhn elaborates that “a paradigm is a cluster of beliefs and dictates, which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted” (Cited in Bryman & Bell 2011, p.24). Consequently, Interpretivism as a paradigm suffices the needs highlighted by Huitt and Bryman and Bell and therefore guided the conceptualization of this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic Case Study Research Design

Ethnography is a systematic study of people and cultures (Lichtman, 2013). According to Morse and Richards (2002), “ethnography provides a means for exploring cultural groups” (p.48). The researcher however took caution from Taylor (2002) that, “if a researcher starts feeling at ‘home’ and all sense of being a stranger is lost, the critical perspective can be diluted” (p.39). Thus, to Taylor, the delicate balance needed between the relatively objective observer and the subjective participant is necessary. The study however argues that the motivation behind a study is more critical, although a risk of bias is eminent if the researcher is not keen to observe reflexivity.

In line with Taylor’s (2002) suggestions, this study was characterized by:

- a) Gathering data from a range of sources.
- b) Studying the behaviour in everyday contexts.
- c) Using a semi-structured approach to data gathering.

Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

To ensure trustworthiness of the research findings, the study used a combination of the following strategies as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2006).

- i) Prolonged the consistent fieldwork which allows analysis and corroboration to ensure match between findings and participants.
- ii) Triangulation.
- iii) Mechanically recorded data involving use of tape recorder.
- iv) Member Checking.
- v) Participant language verbatim accounts to obtain literal statements of participants.

Dependability in Qualitative Research

To ensure dependability of the findings, the study employed the following strategies as suggested by Denzin (1997):

- i) Combine the symbolic meanings with patterns of interaction by clarifying how the various coded words and phrases were operationalized.

- ii) Observe the world from the point of view of the subject.
- iii) Link the group’s symbols and their meanings with the social relationships: An example of a physical symbol is the roaring bulls (*tolgugut*) while abstract symbols include uttered statement with symbolic meanings.

The Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Uasin- Gishu County. Uasin-Gishu lies in a central position relative to other counties that are predominantly occupied by members of the Kalenjin communities in Kenya. The County is a convergence zone for all the Kalenjin sub-tribes.

Research Population

The target population of the study comprised the Kalenjin speakers in Uasin-Gishu county who numbered 894,179 (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Study Sample and Sampling Procedures

Morse and Richards (2007) report that “the choice of the best method always come from the research purpose”, (p.24). Consequently, the study employed a two stage procedure comprising purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Four members deemed as experts were purposively identified. The researcher then employed snowball technique where the identified “experts” led him to those they believed were more knowledgeable.

Participants in the Study

The study contacted 12 respondents. Creswell (2007) points out that qualitative inquiry usually involve few respondents. The sample consisted of six male and six female participants were selected due to their expertise (Morse & Richards, 2002).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Participant Observation

This technique requires the researcher spend time in the activities and culture of the society in question to obtain accurate information (Morse & Richards, 2002). To get appropriate information for this study, I organized *Yatitaet* /circumcision for my sons during the course of my study. Further, I keenly observed the rituals associated with *Yatitaet* throughout their seclusion period with a goal of developing insights into *Kamuratanet*.

Key Informant Interviews in Qualitative Research

Purposive and snowball techniques were used to identify key informants who were considered knowledgeable in various aspects of *Kamuratanet*.

Tape Recording

To avoid any tensions and distractions that would be caused by note taking, the researcher used a small tape recorder to capture every word provided by respondents.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire comprising six lead questions and subsections was developed in consultations with supervisors at Moi University. This study concurs with Madil who says, “Interviews seem designed to tap lived experience, and particularly in the semi structured format, is the most popular method of qualitative data collection in psychology” (Madil & Gough, 2008. p.256).Consequently open but guided interviews were used (Bardsley, Wiles & Powell, 2006). The study was carried out between May and December 2014.

Data Analysis

Groenewald (2004) prefers the term explication to analysis of data. In addition Hycner (1999) states that explication implies, “an investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (p.161). In analyzing data, the study found it suitable to use Hycner’s (1999) explication procedure.

Coding

The researcher first assigned numbers to the informants, such as; Kanaptany 12. Next, the researcher read through the transcribed data to determine emerging themes. The themes were then categorized based on topics and assigned sub-headings. The topics were assigned numerals for ease of reference. In the final analysis, it became easy to refer to an item, for example Kanaptany 12:7. (12 stand for the respondent, while 7 represent the topic and paragraph code.

Theme-ing

According to Morse and Richards (2002), once a researcher has identified a theme, he is more likely to

see segments of text that are pertinent. To them “a theme runs through data” (p.21).The approach of Theme-ing yielded clear patterns that allowed the researcher to look at the data more authoritatively.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Informed consent was sought, while the right to discontinue participation was explained.

Confidentiality

Participants were proud to participate in documenting the Kalenjin heritage and wanted their names included. For ethical reasons only one name was used to satisfy their curiosity. Thody (2006, p.138) says, “cite the source if anonymity has not been requested”.

Research Authorization

Moi University gave permission to conduct research through letter Ref:MU/SE/PGS/54.Formal authority was obtained through research permit: NACOSTI/P/14/7393/1235. Relevant authorities were informed.

Conclusion on Research design and Methodology

Interpretivism as a paradigm guided the entire study since the ultimate reality is contextual. People’s values and ways of perceiving are critical to the study. Qualitative methods were consequently appropriate in data collection and analysis

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This section answers the objective of the study which sought locate the Kalenjin concept of education as conceptualized within the context of *Kamuratanet*.

Data Presentation

The following key themes were extracted from verbatim transcription of data. The data is analyzed in a tabular form.

Table 4.1: Key themes in conceptualization of *Kamuratanet* (Kalenjin Educational Cultural Curriculum)

Themes	Interpreted and translated codes	Data/verbatim	Source
Absoluteness of the educational value	What other teaching was there outside <i>Kamuratanet</i> ?	<i>Kii mii ano konetisio agenema Kamuratanet</i> No other education outside <i>Kamuratanet</i>	No. 9:1 Sitienei (male)
Maturity: <i>Yatitaet</i> /circumcision brought maturity-childhood knowledge limited	Child/uncircumcised	<i>Kii ingen nee lakwa?</i> What did a child know?	12:3 Kanaptany (male)
Standards to be observed and to be violated	Governed by rules	<i>Ng’atutik chemakiputei</i> Rules not to be violated	No. 10:1 Kiptanui(male)
Gender based education effected by parents	Parental role in education of children	<i>Chepto ak kamet, Werit ak kwan</i> The girl with her mother, the boy with his father	No 8:1 Chebwai(female)

Locating Education in *Kamuratanet* Context

Kamuratanet is conceived as web of many socio-cultural features that were used to facilitate learning

and manage behaviour among the Kalenjin. Similarly, in *Kamuratanet*, education is conceptualized as a holistic social phenomenon, for

provision of knowledge and skills but is also interwoven with identity, spirituality and behaviour (Mbiti, 1986; Cbebet, 2007).

From the data, concepts that distinguish *Kamuratanet* as education include the assertion that ‘there was no other education outside *Kamuratanet* (9:1), ‘a child knew nothing’ (12:3) implying that *Kamuratanet* provided knowledge. Critical to this study is the realization *Kamuratanet* is conceptualized as an absolute adventure for its members. In addition, learning of its content was holistic, clearly enabling individuals to identify and fit into their roles as members of a cultural group.

Certainly, this aspect of *Kamuratanet* differs from the modern global schooling where education is seen as an individual adventure that fosters competition. As a matter of fact, *Kamuratanet* is a collective enterprise used to mitigate against social ills and therefore critical in preservation of the cultural community. In spite of these differences however, both *Kamuratanet* and modern systems of education purpose to equip their graduants with knowledge and skills in order to function well in their respective societies.

To underscore the importance of *Kamuratanet*, Chebet (2007), says that the youth were circumcised so as to immobilize them in order to focus their

attention to the learning context and content provided during *Yatitaet*. Consequently, circumcision was a technique used by *Kamuratanet* to make the initiates receptive and focused on the subject matter provided. Mbiti (1986) agreeably elaborates that, “the initiates (*torusiek*) are now entitled to know every secret of tribal life and knowledge, a part from what is known to exclusive group”, (p129).

According to respondents, there was no other form of learning for the Kalenjin apart from *Kamuratanet*. Consequently, anyone who had not gone through *Yatitaet* was regarded as a child, to mean immature or uneducated regardless of their chronological age. The position adopted by *Kamuratanet* contradicts the position held by modern developmentalists as postulated by Jean Piaget in what he referred to as stages of moral reasoning (Miller, 2011). According to Piaget, individual progression through the stage of Moral Realism to Moral Relativism and eventually to Moral reasoning is pegged on chronological age. On the contrary one is considered immature and uneducated until they go through the full cycle of *Kamuratanet*

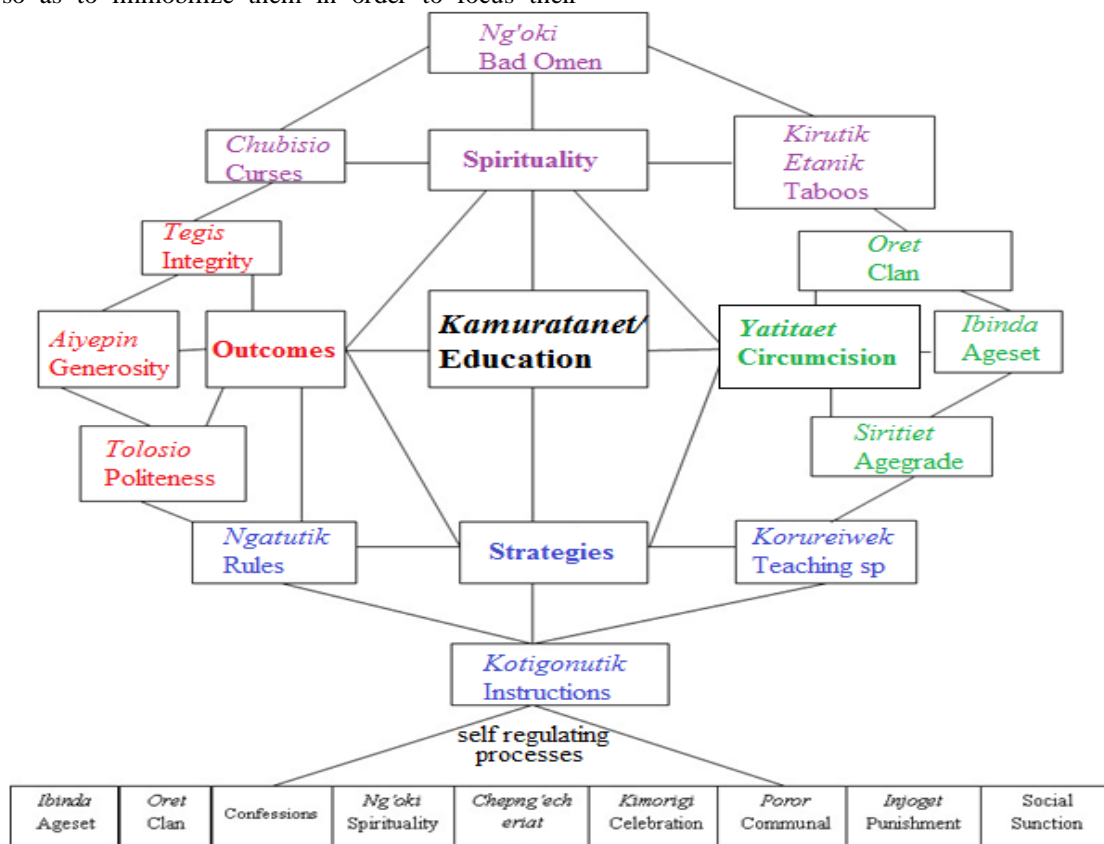


Figure 4.1: Structural Location of *Kamuratanet* in Kalenjin Conceptualization of Education

The units of *Kamuratanet* form a web of interrelated segments which deal with specific facets of learning and behaviour regulation as distinguished by colour. *Kamuratanet* is located at the center of all social functions and every activity is operationalised on the basis of the principles of *Kamuratanet*.

Conceptualization of Education in the Context of Kalenjin *Kamuratanet*

Education in *Kamuratanet* was gender based. More so, initiation and seclusion for boys and girls was designated for separate and distinct areas of operation focused on gender-based teaching and learning. Thus, *Kamuratanet* prepared individuals for gender specific roles. Nevertheless, deriving from the data obtained, it is clear that the Kalenjin possessed a well conceived form of education.

Moreover, to ensure that the members subscribed to the various aspects of learning, *Kamuratanet* instituted diverse self-regulating processes and contexts to enforce obedience to the standards set by society. The strategies comprised engaging identified groups through *Ibinda* (ageset), clan (*oret*), confessions, spirituality (*ng'oki*) e.t.c.

CONCLUSION

In *Kamuratanet* context, education is not seen as an individual adventure but as a collective enterprise for mitigating against social ills. Consequently, education in *Kamuratanet* is a tool of behaviour management. Current individualistic school systems can learn from this aspect.

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