

The Indo-European **H₂ner(t)*-s and the Dānu Tribe

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In several Indo-European myths the river/water deities **deh₂nu-s* or **dhonu-s* are opposed to the gods or heroes related to **h₂ner(t)*- 'virile strength, man.' The **h₂ner*-men fight against them and wed their women. The name of the leader of the **deh₂nu-* / **dhonu-s* is comparable with the West Semitic theonym Baal 'lord.' The mythic adversaries of the **h₂ner-s* were probably conflated with a real Semitic tribe.¹

India

The divine society of ancient India is represented by two opposing groups of deities, Devas and Asuras. Indra is the king of the Devas, while Bali is the king of the Asuras (for the sources and analysis, see Hospital 1984. The Asuras themselves are composed of two family groups: the Dānavas, the children of Dānu, and the Daityas, the children of Dānu's sister Diti (these two groups do not notably differ from each other). Bali was a son of Dānu, i.e., a Dānava. As the chief of the adversaries of the Deva-gods he may be regarded as the epic correspondence of the Vedic arch-adversary to Indra, Vṛtra, son of Dānu.

In the standard variants of the myth, we see that in a war between the Devas and Asuras the Devas were defeated by Bali and his followers and driven out of heaven. Bali became the king of the sky, the mid-region and the earth. Then Hari (i.e., Viṣṇu) defeat Bali by a trick and gave the world again to Indra. Bali himself was sent to an underground kingdom (he was regarded as the king of the netherworld). In other variants, Bali is defeated by Indra. Indra weds Śacī (Indrānī). Her father Dānava (or: Daitya) Puloman was killed by Indra when he tried

¹M.R. Dexter (1990; 1990a: 42-46; *EIEC*: 486 f.), examining almost all the mythic figures comparable with **dānu-* / **dhonu-*, considers them as reflections of an obscure prehistoric tribe, personified as a feminine water deity, who were subdued by the Indo-Europeans. For other aspects of reconstruction, see Petrosyan 1997: 102 ff.; Petrosyan 2002a: 99 ff.

to curse the god for having ravished his daughter.

Indra is an example of the Indo-European thunder and warrior god. He performs many manly deeds and is called *nṛtama* ‘most manly’ < **h₂ner-* (RV 6.19.10; 6.33.3). Moreover, his name, too, according to one opinion, is derived from **h₂ner-*, gen. **h₂nro-* (in the context of comparative mythology, see Lincoln 1986: 97, 122, with bibliography; for the sceptis about this etymology, below). Dānu represents IE **deh₂nu-* (**dānu-*) ‘river,’ a suffixed form of **deh₂-* ‘to flow,’ and Dānava (< **dānawo-*) is a derivative of *dānu-*. Bali is opaque, and in all probability this is a borrowed name.

Iran and Ossetia

In Iranian tradition, the two opposing groups are the Iranians and the Turanians. In the *Avesta*, the Dānava appears as a powerful and malicious Turanian tribe, inimical to the Iranian heroes, while *Narava* is the name or epithet of an Iranian hero, adversary of the Turanians.

The heroes of the Ossetic epic are called Narts. Donbetyr is the water and sea god, Poseidon’s counterpart, ruler of an undersea kingdom and its inhabitants. Donbetyrs (pl.) represent a class of water deities, his sons and daughters (nymphs). The great Nart Æxsærtæg (or: his twin brother Æxsær) enters the undersea kingdom and weds Dzerassæ, the daughter of Donbetyr, who becomes the progenitress of the race of heroes.

Narava represents a derivative of **h₂ner-*. The name Nart is usually derived from **h₂ner-t-* (cf. *IESOI* s.v.). Donbetyr is interpreted as ‘Peter of water, Watery Peter,’ derived from *don* ‘river’ < **dānu-* (*IESOI* s.v.). To the best of my knowledge, there is no evidence of a cognate of Bali king of Dānavas in Iran and Ossetia.²

Armenia

According to the ethnogonic myth, attested in the book of Movsēs Xorenac’i and the brief account of the origins of Armenia by Anonym, attributed to the seventh-century writer Sebēos, the first eponymous patriarch of the Armenians was Hayk, descendant of Noah’s son Japheth (Thomson 1978;

²In the Nart epic of the Circassians, the water-dragon adversary of the Nart Batraz is called Bliago (*MNM*, s.v). This name could theoretically be regarded as a transformed version of the lost Alanian (Ossetic) cognate of the Indic Bali.

Petrosyan 2002). After the construction of the tower of Babel Hayk refused to obey the Babylonian tyrant Bel the Titanid (identified with the Biblical Nimrod), and with his large patriarchal family, consisting of three hundred men, he moved to the north and settled in Armenia. Bel attacked Hayk with his huge army but was killed in battle. After several generations the second eponymous patriarch of the Armenians, Aram, defeated Baršam, the epicized figure of the god Baršamin, i.e. Syrian Ba'al Šamin 'Lord of Heaven.'³ Aram represents the "second figure of Hayk" (Abeghian 1966: 55) therefore Baršam/ Baršamin may be regarded as the "second figure of Bel." The temple of Baršamin in Armenia was situated in the village T'ordan in the upper part of the Euphrates. According to the historic tradition, this cult was founded by Tigran the Great in the first century BC (Khorenatsi 2.14), yet the first mention of this god in the upper Euphrates in known more than a millennium earlier. In the Hittite version of a West Semitic (Canaanite, Ugaritic) myth, the weather god Baal "went to the headwaters of the Mala (= Euphrates – A.P.) River" to meet his father Elkunirša (Hoffner 1990: 69).

Aram's son Ara the Handsome (*Ara Gelec'ik*) ruled Armenia while Assyria was under the power of Šamiram (Gk. Semiramis), the widow of Bel's descendant Ninos (who sometimes was identified as Bel himself or Bel's son, Khorenatsi 1.5). Šamiram tried to marry Ara the Handsome, but he rebuffed the lascivious Assyrian queen and was killed in battle against the Assyrians. Thus the "sacred" mythical era of the forefathers of Armenia ends and "history" begins.

Hayk and Aram have been considered the epicized figures of the thunder god (Harutyunyan 2000: 230 ff.; Petrosyan 2002: 43 ff.). In Anonym, Hayk is called *ari* 'manly.' This word is associated with *ayr* 'man,' derived from *h₂ner- (*h₂nryo- or *h₂nēr > *ainir- > ayr, see e.g. Djahukian 1987: 140, 183; Kortlandt and Beekes 2004: 210). *Ari* is the consistent epithet of the supreme god of the heathen Armenians Aramazd (< Iran. Ahura Mazda). He was the patriarch of the gods, the divine counterpart of the epic patriarch Hayk. Furthermore, Aramazd was identified with the Greek Zeus and called *ampropayin* 'thunderer.' The

³Notably, according to Khorenac'i, Barsam was deified in Syria, while in an ancient legend he is represented as the forefather of the Syrians (Petrosyan 2002a: 50, 87-88).

relationship of Aramazd : Baršamin would correspond to those of Hayk : Bel and Aram : Baršam (Petrosyan 2002: 131 f.).

Bel, deified king of Babylon, represents the Babylonian (originally West Semitic) great god Bēl-Marduk (Petrosyan 2002: 58). The first element of the name of Baršamin/ Ba'al Šamin is etymologically identical with the name of Bel.

The name of Ara is obscure, yet it is consonant to the Armenian reflexes of **h₂ner-*, which in its derivatives may figure as *ar-*, cf. *ari* (*HAB* 1: 173). According to Xorenac'i and Anonym, Ara is the eponym of the central province of Armenia Ayrarat (cf. *ayr* 'man'); Ari Armaneli, a folk tale hero, is regarded as the folk variant of Ara the Handsome, son of Aram (Kapantsian 1956: 187). **Dānu-* would yield Arm. **Tan* (with regular soundshift and apocope). This name is not attested in Armenian mythology, yet it may be inferred that the derivation of Bel from the Greek Titan (identified with the Biblical Ham) and the constant identification of Bel and his descendants as *Titanean* 'Titanid' in the books of the Armenian authors reflect the Graecophile transformation of the original **Tan* (on the possible West Semitic associations of Titan, see below).⁴ On the other hand, the second part of the toponym T'ordan is also reminiscent of **Dānu-*. The figure of Ara the Handsome is comparable with Bres 'Handsome,' the king of the people of the goddess Danu in the Irish tradition (see Petrosyan 2002a: 103 f. and below) which may connect the Armenian ethnogonic heroes to the **deh₂nu-* / **dhonu-* myths.

The Hittite Kingdom

In a fragment of Hittite mythology the serpent Illuyanka defeats the weather/thunder god. The god's daughter, Inara, with her human lover, invites the serpent and his children to her home. They eat and drink, and when the serpent gets drunk the weather/thunder god comes and kills him (Hoffner 1990: 11-12).

The Hittite text is represented as a speech of a priest of the weather god of Nerik at the Purulli festival. Nerik was one of the most important Hattian, i.e. pre-Hittite, sacral centers.

⁴The Greek influence is present in some other names of the ethnogonic myth as well (cf. e.g. the name of Hayk's grandson Kadmos, the eponym of the land "Home of the Kadmeans," i.e. Assyr. Kadmuhi/Katmuhi; Ninus, descendant of Bel, Yapetos, identified with the Biblical Japheth).

Taru, the weather god of Nerik, was the head of the early local pantheon.

On the other hand, the Purulli ritual text has been considered in the context of the Indo-European thunder god myth (Ivanov and Toporov 1974: 122 ff.; Lincoln 1981: 117 ff.; Watkins 1995: 321 f., 444 ff.; Petrosyan 2002a: 6 ff.). The names of Inara and Nerik are somewhat reminiscent of Indra and *h₂ner-; the ending of Illuyanka's name can theoretically be compared with IE *ang^whi- 'snake, serpent'; the names Purulli and Taru has been considered as Indo-European borrowings (Toporov 1976; Nikolaev and Strakhov 1987: 150).

Nevertheless, this myth is not of much benefit to the present study. The adduced comparisons are disputable (for the possible folk etymological associations of Inara with the Anatolian reflexes of *h₂ner-, see *HED* I: 62, 368) and there are no traces of the Hittite counterparts of the Dānavas and Bali or Bel.

Greece

Poseidon's son Bēlos begat Aiggyptos (king of Egypt) and Danaos. The brothers quarrelled, and Danaos took refuge in Argos, where he became king. Later, the fifty sons of Aiggyptos married the fifty daughters of Danaos. The latter directed his daughters to kill off their husbands on the wedding night. Lynkeus, the only survivor, eventually killed Danaos.

After some generations, Zeus visited Danaē (Danaos' descendant) in a shower of gold and impregnated her. Danaē's son Perseus, one of the greatest heroes of Greece, wedded Andromedē.

The war of Troy was started because the Trojan Paris had abducted the Greek Helenē from Sparta. Paris is called also Alexandros (Apoll. 3.12.5), while the Greeks in the *Iliad* are frequently called *Danaoi* 'Danaans' (for this ethnonym, see e.g. Sakellariou 1986: 129 ff.). At the end of the war Paris-Alexandros kills the greatest Greek hero Achilles.

Bēlos represents the West Semitic theonym Baal. The names Andromedē and Alexandros are associated with *h₂nro- (Gk. *anēr* 'man,' gen. *andros*). The Danaoi (< *danawo-) are apparently comparable with the Dānavas. The name of Poseidon has also been considered in this context (**poti* 'lord' + *da/onu*?, see *GEW*s.v.; *MNM* 1: 531). Note that in the myth of Perseus (son of Danaē) and Andromedē the names are found in gender-switched order.

Wales and Ireland

The goddess Dôn, Welsh counterpart of Indic Dānu, can be regarded as the wife of Beli, god of death. They appear as the parents of several ancient gods. Beli was considered also as an ancestor from whom several royal lines of Wales claimed descent (Rees and Rees 1961; Kondratiev 1998).

In Irish mythology, Danu is a mother goddess from whom the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, the ‘people of the goddess Danu,’ took their name. They were deities who inhabited Ireland before the coming of the Irish. The first king of the People of Danu, on their arrival in Ireland from a northern country, was Nuadu the Silver hand, whose counterpart in Welsh tradition was Lludd the Silver hand, son of Beli.

After Nuadu, Bres ‘Beautiful, Handsome’ (or: Eochaid Bres) was elected to succeed him on the urgings of the women. Bres’ mother belonged to Danu’s tribe, while his father was a king of the Fomorians, a class of evil gods or demons. Bres failed as king and escaped to the land of the Fomorians. A great battle occurred between the People of Danu and the Fomorians (“the second battle of Mag Tuired”). The leader of the Fomorians was King Balor whose evil eye destroyed his enemies.

The prehistory of Ireland culminates in the biblicized story of the sons of Mil, the mythic ancestors of the Irish people, who wrested Ireland from the people of Danu. Mil himself was a son of Bile, the Irish cognate of the Welsh Beli.

There is much uncertainty in the names and characters of Dôn, Danu, Beli and Bile. However, the Dôn-Danu and Beli-Bile correspondences in the context of Celtic mythology are universally acknowledged. Balor, obviously, is not the same as Bile, yet this name is reminiscent of the names of the arch-enemies of the Indo-European gods and heroes (Bali, Bel, Beli). Thus, irrespective of actual etymology, due to this homophony, the figure of Balor could assume the traits of the adversary of the Indo-European heroes. Note the resemblance between the figures of the Irish and the Armenian kings manqué, Bres, and Ara the Handsome.

Scandinavia and Iceland

In Norse tradition, divine society is represented by the Æsir and Vanir collectivities. After a destructive and indecisive war between them hostages are exchanged and the Vanir send Njörðr and his son Freyr to live with the Æsir. Freyr ‘Lord’ was

also called by another name Yngve: Yngvi-Freyr. This may refer to the origins of the worship of Yngvi-Freyr in the tribal areas that Tacitus mentions in his *Germania* as being populated by the Inguieonnic tribes. Traditions related to Freyr are also connected with the legendary Danish kings named Fróði (*MNM* s.v. Freyr).

The Swedish royal dynasty was known as the Ynglings from their descent from Yngvi-Freyr. In Norse tradition the eponyms of the Scandinavian ethnonym Dan are associated with Yngvi-Freyr / Fróði (e.g. in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, the second king called Dan appears as the grandfather of Fróði the Active who is then followed by the third Dan; in a Danish chronicle's list Ingui was one of three brothers that the Danish tribes descended from, etc).

Freyr is the slayer of the giant Beli. It could be assumed that Beli was the brother of Gerðr, wife of Freyr, based on Gerðr's words about her fear that the unknown man who has come to visit is her brother's slayer (*Skírnismál*, 16).

Njörðr is derived from *h₂ner-t-. The ethnonymic *Dan* is reminiscent of the Greek *Danaoi* and Irish *Tuatha Dé Danann*. Norse Beli is identical with the Welsh Beli.

Consideration

In these myths there are several comparable names and terms.

India	<i>ṛytama</i> , Indra (?)	Dānu, Dānava	Bali
Iran	Narava	Dānava	Omitted
Ossetia	Nart	Donbettyr	Omitted
Armenia	<i>ari</i> , Ara (?)	Omitted (cf. Titan ?, T'ordan ?)	Bel, Baršamin
Greece	Andromedē, Alexandros	Danaos, Danaids, Danaē, Danaans, Poseidon (?)	Bēlos
Wales	Omitted	Dôn	Beli
Ireland	Omitted	Danu	Bile
Scandinavia and Iceland	Njörðr	Dan	Beli

The majority of the names and terms of the second column are associated with IE *h₂ner(t)- / *h₂nro- 'man, virile strength.' As for Indra, this etymology is questionable (*AWAia* 1: 193). Nonetheless, the adduced Indic myths seem to be inseparable from the others. Particularly suggestive is the

comparison with Paris-Alexandros (Indra fights against the Dānavas, defeats their leader Bali, ravishes and weds Śacī, daughter of a Dānava, while Paris-Alexandros fights against the Greek Danaoi, kills their greatest hero Achilles, ravishes and weds their beauty Helenē; Indra is a thunder god, while the name of Paris is reminiscent of a truncated anagram of the Indo-European thunder god **Per-u-no*). On the other hand, Indra is the leader of the Devas against the Asuras, like Njörðr, who is the leader of the Vanir against the Æsir. Thus, the name of Indra, with its Iranian parallel, may represent an ancient borrowing from another Indo-European language (cf. Gk. *andros*).

Indic Dānu (Dānava), as has been said, is connected to **deh₂* ‘to flow.’ The Scandinavian ethnonymic Dan and the second part of the Armenian toponym T’ordan cannot be associated directly with IE **deh₂*, because they do not undergo the regular soundshift **d > t* (T’ordan is opaque in Armenian and probably represents a borrowing like the name of the god worshipped there). Some of these heroes are strongly associated with water (Dānu is the mother of the cosmic waters, Danaos descends from Poseidon, etc, see Dexter 1990). A number of Indo-European river-names are considered to be derived from **deh₂nu-*: Danube (Celtic), Don, Donets, Dnieper, Dniester (Russia and Ukraine, borrowed from Iranian);⁵ Dunajs (Latvia); Donwy, Don (Wels, England), etc (see, e.g. *EIEC*: 486-487). According to another opinion, these river names can be derived from **dhōnu-* (with difficult lengthened grade) ‘river,’ cf. **dhen-* ‘flow’ (*EIEC*: 486). This second stem may certainly explain many of the considered names.

Bali and his counterparts may be regarded as the rulers of the Danus. The derivation of Arm. Bel, the tyrant of Babylon, Baršam/Baršamin, the Syrian god and forefather of the Syrians, and Gk. Bēlos, the king of Egypt, from the Semitic *b'l* ‘lord’ is beyond all doubt (West Semitic Ba’l, Ba’lu, Ba’al, Akkad. Bēl). Not everything is clear in the figures of Indic Bali, Celtic Beli/Bile, Norse Beli, yet nevertheless in the context of the considered myths they would be related to

⁵It may be noted that Nepra (= Dnieper) Korolevična, Don Ivanyč, and Dunaj (= Danube) Ivanyč appear in Russian bylinas; Dunaj finds a wife for the prince Vladimir; some legends of the Dnieper area are comparable with the Indra and Vṛtra myth, see Ivanov and Toporov 1976: 116 ff.

Greek Bēlos and Armenian Bel (for the comparison of these Celtic names with Indic Bali and Greek Bēlos, see Rees and Rees 1961: 365-366; though some of the adduced comparisons are disputable).

These names cannot be related in the Indo-European context (the reconstruction of IE **b* is improbable; Armenian and Norse forms lack the regular soundshift) which points to the late, borrowed character of this mythic figure. However, in some traditions the Semitic *b'l* might have been equated with the Indo-European homophonic stems in folk-etymological association, which can explain the linguistic inadequacy (cf. *e.g. *bhel-* 'to shine, white;' 'to blow, swell.' For such associations of the transparently Semitic Bel in Armenian tradition, see Harutyunyan 2000: 231; Petrosyan 2002b).

In the majority of the considered myths the positive side of the opposition is represented by the manly and heroic **h₂ner-s* and the negative side by the Danus. The "most manly" Indra and Narava fight against the Dānavas; the Narts are somewhat opposed to the Donbetyrs; the "manly" Hayk is the founder and eponym of Armenia; Njörðr is the ancestor of certain Norse eponyms and kings.

The **h₂ner-* men fight and usually overcome the Danus and their leader B'l: Indra fights against the Dānava Bali; Hayk kills Bel; Lynkeus kills Danaos; Paris-Alexandros fights against the Danaans and kills their great hero Achilles; Freyr son of Njörðr kills Beli.

The **h₂ner-* men wed the Danu women: Indra weds the daughter of a Dānava; the Nart Æxsærtæg weds the daughter of Donbetyr; the sons of Aigyptos wed the daughters of Danaos; Paris-Alexandros weds the Danaan Helenē. Those women are reminiscent of the Greek nymphs or Indic apsaras, classes of mythic women associated with water, who appear, willing or otherwise, as the brides of the gods, deities and heroes (cf. the stories of Zeus and Thētis, Zeus and Aigina, Viçvāmītra and Menakā, etc).

In some myths the normal order is reversed. The Danus figure as the positive side (the Greek Danaans, the Norse Danes, the Irish tribe of the goddess Danu while fighting against the Fomorians); Šamiram tries to seduce Ara; **h₂nro-* occurs in the name of the wife of the descendant of Danu (Perseus the son of Danaē weds Andromedē).

Below I would like to consider a possibility of a historical

reconstruction which was implied but not accomplished in previous studies. The Dānavas, Danaans, Danes, and people of the goddess Danu designate mythic / epic or real tribes, thus it seems probable that at least in some of these names *deh₂nu-* / **dhonu-* has been conflated with an ancient homophonic ethnonym Danu. The myths under consideration are associated with the origins of the peoples (cf. e.g. the eponymous figures of Hayk, Danaos, Danu), and moreover, the ethnic identities of the **h₂ner-s* are formed as a result of their conflict with the Danus. In these myths, as it seems, the great god of the Semites, represented as the negative mirror-image of the Indo-European divine heroes, replaced the figure of the mythic adversary of the original myth (cf. the figure of Vṛtra, Dānava, serpent, ruler of the otherworld, adversary of the thunder god Indra in the Vedic myth). These myths would have been formed as a result of contacts between the Indo-Europeans and the Semites (which figure as the Danu clan, under command of the god B'1),⁶ and then passed to the other regions of the Indo-European world. Elements of these myths are comparable with the (West) Semitic myths of Marduk and Baal (cf. Dexter 1990: 54-55). Moreover, some West Semitic mythological motifs and names are reminiscent of those of the Indo-European myths: the thunder god Baal slew the “judge/lord (of) river” Yammu ‘Sea’ and the dragon, *Tannîn*; the eponymous forefather of the North Syrian state of Ugarit was Ditanu / Didanu (Shifman 1987: 73-74, 90-91, cf. the figures of Dānu and Bel the Titanid).

The city of Adana in Cilicia, to the south-east of modern Turkey, on the river Seihan, known from the Hittite sources as *Ataniya* since the 16th century BC, has been considered as associated with **deh₂nu-* / **dhonu-* (**ṇ*) or **e/o* ‘near’ + ‘river,’ see Arbeitman and Rendsburg 1981: 149-150). This was the land of the Danunians. A bilingual (Hieroglyphic Luwian and Phoenician) inscription from this country of the beginning of the 7th century BC represents a demonstrative example of the Danu tribe associated with Baal. It reads as follows (Lawson

⁶Apropos of this, one can recall the similar situation in the mythologies of other peoples: e.g., in the Finno-Ugric tradition, the names of the celestial god are, as a rule, of indigenous origin, while his adversary, ruler of the underworld, is frequently represented by a borrowed god who has positive functions in the tradition from which his name is borrowed (Aikhenvald et al. 1982: 188).

Younger 1998).

I am Azatiwada, the blessed of Ba'al, the servant of Ba'al, whom Awariku, king of the Danunians, empowered. Ba'al made me a father and mother to the Danunians. I caused the Danunians to live. I enlarged the land of the plain of Adana from East to West.

The Danunians were first mentioned in the ancient Egyptian sources in the 14th century BC. They were a major part of the confederation that attacked Egypt with the other group of Sea People in the 12th century BC. Another "land of Danuna" is mentioned by an Assyrian king to the south of the Armenian Highland, far from Cilicia (the region of the Kashiari Mountains). It is difficult to reveal the ethnic origination of the Danunians,⁷ yet in historic times they were associated with the West Semites. The Danites, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, would have been associated with them (see e.g. Yaylenko 1990: 127 ff. with bibliography).

According to V.V. Ivanov and S.A. Starostin, in West Semitic there is a significant layer of Indo-European borrowings (Ivanov 2004: 45-46; the special study of Starostin, to the best of my knowledge, is not yet published). These borrowings are considered in the context of the theory of the original home of the Indo-Europeans in the south of the Armenian Highland and north of Mesopotamia and Syria.

Irrespective of the location of the Indo-European homeland, the early contacts between the Indo-Europeans and West Semites could have occurred in those territories. Judging from the myths, some Indo-Europeans neighbored the West Semites and even could have been merged with them. These myths seem not to have originated among the Anatolians who neighbored the Semites but not mythicized them.

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⁷Azatiwada bore a Luwian name which means 'beloved of the sun god Tiwat' (in the Luwian text Baal corresponds with both the sun god and the storm god, i.e. Tiwat and Tarhunta, rendered ideographically); Awariku is etymologized as a Hurrian, Phrygian or "Aegean" name, see Kosyan 1994: 49 ff., 92; Jasink and Marino forthcoming, with bibliography.

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