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Title:	Strategies Used in the Translation of Allusions in Naguib Mahfouz's "Adrift on the Nile"
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Abstract

Understanding cultural concepts requires an understanding of social and cultural elements. This study focuses on allusions among cultural notions. For translators, the presence of allusions presents greater challenges than a text's syntactic or semantic difficulties. Allusion translation is considered a reader-centered procedure. A literary text usually presents the culture that produced it; that is why it is challenging to convey the source cultural background through translation. Literary texts represent a culture full of intertextual relations and references to other cultural or historical texts. A literary translator has some problems translating these 'cultural bumps' from one language into another. One of the main problems in literary translation that causes cultural gaps is the use of allusions. The researcher attempted to identify Ritva Leppihalme's model in her book *Culture Bumps: An Empirical Approach to the Translation of Allusions* (1997) to effectively convey subliminal meanings and communicate cultural and religious allusions. Some excerpts from Mahfouz's "Adrift on the Nile" and its English translation by Frances Liardet in 1993 are examined to explain the strategies used to overcome the cultural bumps. This novel was chosen due to its abundance of literary and religious references, historical figure names, native Egyptian proverbs, and modified sections from the Prophet's Hadith and the Holy Quran.

Key Words: translation strategies, allusion translation, cultural bumps, Mahfouz's "Adrift on the Nile"



1. Introduction

Writers usually use references or allusions in their works from religious texts, literary works, or mythical figures and historical events, or from folklore. Although some allusions have become cross-cultural and do not constitute any cultural problems for translation, many of them remain linked to a particular culture and thus constitute an obstacle when translating them from the source language to the target language. Those who have grown up in a different culture may feel alienated from recognizing certain popular names or religious key phrases alluded to, owing to a lack of information and differences in culture or religious background. Allusions are one of the cultural elements that require familiarity with the language and culture of the source material. Foreign-language readers will not be able to understand this. Thus, making these components clear and intelligible to TL readers can aid in communicating the text that the author's intended meaning. Allusion in Arabic literature is historical, reflecting the development process of Arabs' culture. Because of the differences between Western culture and Arab culture, translators will have some problems in the process of translating Arabs' literary allusions. Therefore, translators should manage translation strategies to clarify the cultural connotation of allusions and illuminate the meaning of Arabs' literary allusions. Translators of literary texts face many problems, including what is related to language and what is related to culture. One of the challenges that requires special attention from translators is the cultural uniqueness of allusions. This study focuses on how to translate "cultural-specific source-text allusion" to help readers of the target text understand the function and meaning of the allusive passage. The current study defines what is meant by allusion in a literary text. It presents the function of allusions in works of art. It also explains how allusions cause a problem in literary translation. In addition, the strategies used to translate allusions in literary texts are elaborated. Finally, examples of translated allusions into English in Mahfouz's novel "Adrift on the Nile" are excerpted to explain the strategies used in the translation of allusions. The discussion and the conclusion present the most significant findings of the study.

2. The Literature Review

Allusions are literary devices in Arabic and English that are used as references to great works, religion, history, folklore, drama, and important political or economic events. When translating, it is important to focus on the source of allusions as well as the main idea or meaning to choose the most appropriate translations into the target language. Allusions are



studied by many researchers because of their importance in clarifying the intended meanings given by authors in their works. Also, the strategies used in the translation of allusions are presented and discussed because of their vital role in solving some literary translation problems.

The study by Meriem Yahia Aissa (2020), "Strategies of Translating Allusions in the Novel of Naguib Mahfouz, Case Study: *Adrift on the Nile*," is an important empirical study in Arabic that explains the importance of Arabic allusions because of their cultural references. It introduces a discussion of the strategies for translating allusions in Mahfouz's novel from Arabic to French. The researcher assesses a French translation ("Naguib Mahfouz: *Dérives sur le Nil*, traduction de l'arabe par France Douvier Meyer 1989) to find out how successfully the translator conveyed the literary allusions in the novel. She concluded that the translator used mainly two strategies of proper nouns and key phrases to convey the intended and hidden meanings of these allusions from the Arabs' culture. However, the objective of the present research is to determine the extent to which Mahfouz's use of allusion to depict traditional Egyptian society is conveyed in Frances Liardet's English translation of Mahfouz's work.

In addition, Najlaa R. Aldeeb (2020) introduced a prominent study, "Qur'anic Allusions in Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*: Comparing Two Arabic-English Translations." To investigate the methods used by the translators of the novel and analyze the meaning of allusions to the Quran, the researcher studied two English versions of *Midaq Alley* (1947) by Naguib Mahfouz. She concluded that while Douvier used either cultural analogies or paraphrases, Le Gassick, one of the translators, rendered the Quranic allusions literally ignoring the original context. She admitted that misinterpreting the images and their intended function in the ST has a detrimental effect on how they are interpreted.

Furthermore, the study done by Naeimeh Bahrami, entitled "Strategies used in the Translation of Allusions in Hafiz Shirazi's Poetry," focuses on the personal proper noun and the key phrase allusions in the poems of the Persian poet and their translations to find out the strategies used by translators to solve cultural bumps and intertextual reference problems. The researcher explains that the strategies used in the translation of allusions are mainly literal with minimum change. She clarifies that the translators intended to be faithful to the source text, so they ignored the allusive language and connotations of the source text.

Another important study by Mahmood Safari and Leila Niknasab (2021) entitled "Allusion and Translation: A Case Study of English Translation of *Haft Peikar* by Nizami" concluded that



"literal translation" was the translation method that the translators used the most often. Wilson translated this text into prose as the first translator of the work. Meisami, however, created a rhymed translation for the second translation. Because the translator included more context to clarify any ambiguous meanings, the second translation is far more successful. The initial translation is not regarded as an adequate copy of the original text in English since it relies too heavily on literal translation, leaves out important details, and uses insufficient strategies. Thus, the previous studies illuminate the need to do more research, related to the strategies used in the translation of allusions in general and try an empirical translation study into English on Mahfouz's novel, "Adrift on the Nile" in particular.

3. Allusion

The definition of allusion as a literary device needs more attention because it is closely related to some other literary terms such as reference, quotation, borrowing, and sometimes plagiarism or intertextuality. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, "Allusion was borrowed into English in the 16th century. It derives from the Latin verb *alludere*, meaning "to play with", "to jest", or "to refer to"... meaning "to make indirect reference" or "to refer". Moreover, Abrams, M. H. (1999), defines allusion as "a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage." Another definition of the term, Ruokonen Minna (2010 33), writes, "Allusion is an implicit reference resembling an external referent that belongs to assumed shared knowledge." It is clear from the two definitions that the first one mentioned different sources of allusion, but it neglected the fact that allusions must be recognized by readers, which is stressed in the second definition. So, an allusion is when we hint at something and expect other people or readers to understand what we are referring to. In general, the method that one text influences another is known as intertextuality. This can be as straightforward as a quote or plagiarism, or it can be a little more deceptive like a parody, pastiche, allusion, or translation. The reader's past knowledge and comprehension prior to reading the secondary text can have a significant impact on the purpose and efficacy of intertextuality; for example, parodies and allusions rely on the reader's awareness of the subject matter being mocked or alluded to (Hebel, Udo J 1989 18). In short, allusion is usually used by writers as a literary device. "However, allusions are only effective when they are recognized and understood by the reader and that they are properly inferred and interpreted by the reader. If an allusion is obscure or misunderstood, it can lose effectiveness by confusing the reader" (Allusion, Web 2022).



There are various types into which allusions can be divided, including references to proper nouns. Words or phrases from important works of literature or religious texts are another kind of allusion. Translation of allusions represents a cultural difficulty for translators because of the cross-cultural differences. Translation is a form of intercultural communication due to the diversity of cultures, which requires the translator to be efficient and knowledgeable of both the source and target cultures. Because allusion belongs to a particular culture, this may cause a misunderstanding of the target text. When the translator misunderstands the allusion, this makes it lose its performing function in the target text, as it does not belong to the culture of the target language. This puts additional pressure on the translator. Hence, translating allusions represents a challenge for translators, who must choose strategies that ensure conveying them, or at least part of them, to the target language reader.

Authors and writers use allusions not just to embellish their writings or share their cultural experiences, but also because they believe it is essential to elucidate their intended concepts. Researchers refer to literary allusion purposes as the desire to draw attention to the writer's knowledge or his extensive readings, or to enrich the work by including meanings and new associations, or an attempt to create characters or to allude to ideas, impressions, and attitudes unconsciously to increase the significance of the literary work by generalizing or suggesting universality. An important aspect of allusions is the literary ability to present new literary views outside of the classical, religious, or historical ones. This means involving the reader in the re-creation process by alluding to semi-meanings to deepen his knowledge of the work. So, critics think that the use of allusion in general would increase the attractiveness of the text. Allusions are also used for other purposes, including educating readers and generating an aesthetic experience.

4. Research questions

This study tries to identify the strategies for translating allusions from Arabic into English and aspires to provide answers to the following questions:

- A. What strategies has the translator used to translate the allusive devices into English?
- B. How accurately did the strategies used to translate the allusions in Mahfouz's "Adrift on the Nile" produce a translation of the source text that is both accurate and meaningful?
- C. To what extent are the cultural allusions of Mahfouz's "Adrift on the Nile" effectively conveyed by the strategies used in the translation of the allusions?



D. How successfully has the translator picked up on the deeper significance of the author's allusions?

E. How successful is the quality of the translated English version of the novel in terms of conveying the hidden meanings in the allusions?

5. The Material of the Study

The material under study consists of a set of allusions that are excerpted from the novel "Adrift on the Nile" by the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz (1966) and its English translation by Frances Liardet (1993). The reason for choosing this novel is that it contains many allusions and references to the names of historical figures, literary and religious proper names, as well as some modified or real phrases from the Holy Quran, the Prophet's Hadith, and native Egyptian proverbs. It is a good example to explain the use of different strategies in translating allusions from Arabic literary text (the source text) into English (the target text). The novel "Adrift on the Nile" is replete with allusions to Arab and worldwide literary and historical personalities. Mahfouz tends to use this stylistic literary device, like some other Arab writers, to express his opinions and ideas indirectly. So, he employed historical information about ancient Egyptians and well-known Roman figures to inspire his protagonist, Anis Zaki, who, whenever he saw any kind of injustice or tyranny, would summon the injustice and tyranny that the governors of Egypt practiced on their people during the past centuries. Anis also mixes his ideas with some historical figures to evoke sudden incidents, expressing irony over human experiences in madness, love, sickness, man's first landing on earth, Adam, and Eve.

6. Classifications for Literary Allusions

The first type of allusion includes proper nouns of real-life people or fictional characters, such as politicians, leaders, writers, and artists. It also includes names of holy persons from the Bible or the Holy Quran, characters from legends, or literary figures like Shakespearean characters. It may include fairytale characters like Alice in Wonderland or Cinderella. Another type of allusion comprises words or sentences borrowed from Western cultural texts such as the Bible and Shakespeare, as well as national songs, proverbs, political slogans, and rhymes. In Arabian and Eastern cultures, the most important sources of allusions are the Hadith of Prophet Mohamed and the Holy Quran. Writers may use the whole Ayah (verse) or indicate words from it. While others may quote the meaning of Surah or part of Surah, Proverbs or poems may be used as literary allusions.



7. Strategies for translating allusions

According to Ritva Leppihalme (1997), allusions are “often translated literally, while their connotative and pragmatic meaning is largely ignored. This frequently leads to cultural bumps—in other words, to puzzling or impenetrable wording.” Ritva Leppihalme proposes a model for allusion translation in her book because she thinks that allusions are frequently translated literally, with little regard for their pragmatic and connotative significance. This commonly results in confusing or unintelligible wording, or “culture bumps.” She presents some strategies for handling a culturally specific, source-text allusion so that readers of the target text can comprehend the purpose and significance of the allusive section. The emphasis is on readers and translators as engaged contributors to communication. She concluded that while selecting translation procedures for allusions, translators should consider the demands of readers (Leppihalme 1997 3). Leppihalme believes that it is the translator's responsibility to combine competence and responsibility because allusions have a cultural function that necessitates knowledge of the elements they allude to. When a translator notices an allusion in a paragraph of the source text, he must analyze its function at the context level to decide how best to translate it. Leppihalme suggests some strategies to translate allusions as follows.

7.1 Translation of proper nouns

Translation strategies for translating allusions of proper nouns vary according to translators' knowledge. In many cases, the proper names are kept unchanged. The strategy for translating proper nouns is basically meant to keep the nouns unchanged, to change their names, or to delete them. According to Leppihalme (1997), the basic strategies for translating allusions of proper nouns take the following forms:

1. Keeping the nouns either unchanged in their traditional form in the target language or using them with some guidance for readers.
2. Keeping the nouns unchanged and adding a detailed explanation in the margin.
3. Replacing the proper nouns with other nouns from the source language or from the target language.
4. Deleting the proper nouns. This strategy is used in two ways: either by deleting the proper nouns and providing the meaning by other means, such as common nouns other than proper nouns, or by deleting the proper nouns and the entire allusion.

7.2 Translation of key phrases

The basic strategies for translating alluded-to sentences and key phrases include:



1. Using a standard acknowledged translation of the alluded sentences and key phrases.
2. Doing minimum changes through literal translation, regardless of hidden meanings or contextual meanings.
3. Using information or explanation for the alluded sentences within the text, the translator uses his assessment of what he needs to help the readers of the target text. So, he adds certain information about the source, or he includes hints to refer to the alluded material.
4. Using margins or footnotes and giving explicit annotations outside the text. It should be clearly presented as additional information.
5. Adding internal comments that indicate allusion features (using a special formula or structure) that differ from the context style and thus indicate the presence of borrowed words.
6. Replacing alluded sentences with other ones in the target language.
7. Reducing the allusion by providing its meaning through the commentary or explaining it, in other words, until its meaning is clear, and deleting the source-alluded sentence or phrase.
8. Deleting the alluded sentences or key phrases.

8. Research Methodology

This study is comparative, descriptive, and qualitative research, the aim of which is to identify and evaluate the strategies used in the translation of allusions (proper nouns and key phrases). The allusion-containing passages in the novel (ST) are first identified, and then the alluded-to examples from the Arabic text and their equivalents from the English target text are excerpted. Based on the model of Leppihalme, allusions are classified into proper nouns and key phrases. Then, the allusions excerpted from the source text are compared with their equivalents in the target text to see which strategy was used to translate the allusion. This is followed by an analysis and a conclusion, which include the most important findings of the research.

9. Analysis of the material

9.1 Excerpts of allusions to proper nouns kept as they are.

A- An allusion to religious figures from Islamic history:

- a. "وتذكر كيف أغرته بمغازلتها، وكيف أبى كيوسف!" (ST p. 75)

"and how he had refused "like **Joseph** with Potiphar's wife!" (TT p. 37)



b. (ST p. 21) "وإذا به يغمر بعينه وهو يقول "أنا الحوت الذي نجى يونس"

"I am the whale that saved **Jonah**." (TT p. 11)

c. (ST p. 33) "و هارون الرشيد جالس على أريكة تحت شجرة مشمش"

"The Caliph **Harun al-Rashid** was sitting on a couch under an apricot tree." (TT p. 17)

d. (ST p. 129) "وصعد الحاكم بأمر الله إلى قمة الجبل ليمارس أسرار العلوية"

"The **Caliph al-Hakim** went up on the mountain to practice his sublime secrets and did not return." (TT p. 62)

e. (ST p. 12) "ترى هل يوجد للمعز لدين الله الفاطمي ورثة يمكن أن يطالبوا ذات يوم بملكية القاهرة"

"Did the **Fatimid Caliph Mu'izz li-Din Allah** have any living descendants who might one day rise to claim the throne of Cairo as their own?" (TT p. 6)

f. (ST p. 81) "والخيّام الذي كان مدرسة أمسى فندقاً للملذات"

"**Omar Khayyam**, who gave his name to a school of philosophy, now has a hotel called after him where all kinds of fun take place." (TT p.39)

B- An allusion to historic figures from ancient Egyptian culture:

a. (ST p. 20) " ووضح تماماً أنه من سلالة الهكسوس فوجب أن يرتد الى الصحراء"

"He must surely be a scion of the **Hyksos kings**, and one day would return to the desert" (TT p. 10)

b. (ST p. 16) "وكانت في عصر خوفو ترعى الغنم في شبة جزيرة سيناء"

"In the age of **Cheops**, she was a shepherdess in the Sinai" (TT p. 9)

c. (ST p. 84) "هل أنت تحتس الثالث حقاً؟"

"Are you in truth the Pharaoh? Are you **Thutmose III**?" (TT p. 41)

d. (ST p. 84) "أتقاسم العرش مع أختي حتشبسوت"

"I am sharing the throne with my sister **Hatshepsut**." (TT p. 41)

C- An allusion to historic figures from Western culture kept unchanged:

a. (ST p. 28) "غرام أنطوني وكليوباترا"

"What about the passion of **Antony and Cleopatra**?" (TT p. 14)

b. "وبقبيل القيلولة وسمعت إلى نابليون وهو يتهم الإنجليز بقتله بالسم البطيء"

"Just before sleeping this afternoon, you heard **Napoleon**, accusing the English of killing him by slow poison." (TT p. 36)

c. (ST p. 136) "وظيفتك: بروميثيوس مسطولا"

"Job? **Prometheus** Drugged" (TT p. 66)

Discussion



In the source text, Mahfouz uses real and religious nouns from Islamic history. He also uses historical and literary figures from different cultures, such as ancient Egyptians, Arabs, Western culture, and mythology. The translator uses the strategy of keeping the proper nouns as they are, without any reference or hints about these nouns, depending on the cross-cultural background of these nouns. He kept the proper nouns because they are familiar to Western culture, like يوسف Joseph, يونس Jonah, خوفو Cheops. Though he added extra notes to identify some of these nouns, like adding the title Caliph to the proper nouns, Harun al-Rashid, al-Hakim, and Mu'izz li-Din Allah. Sometimes, he completes the proper noun to identify the name for the target reader, like الخيام Omar Khayyam. After that, the translator kept the proper nouns from Western culture unchanged, depending on the known information for the target reader.

9.2 Excerpts of alluded sentences or key phrases:

a. "والحاكم بأمر الله كان يقتل بلا حساب، ولما آمن بأنه إله حرم على الناس **الملوخية**." (ST p. 129)

"The Caliph al-Hakim had murdered so many. When he came to believe that he was a god, he forbade the people to eat **mulukhiya**." (TT p. 62)

b. "وأنته لم يبق من عبادتنا القديمة إلا عبادة أبيس." (ST p. 129)

"And that nothing remains of our ancient worship except the cult of the bull god, **Apis**." (TT p. 39)

c. "كلاً ولكني أقول لك إنّه كما أنّ الطيّبات للطيبين والخبيثات للخبيثين فإنّ مسرح العبث للعبثيين." (ST p. 110)

"Just as **the righteous stick together and the evil find each other**, so is the drama of the absurd for the absurdists." (TT p. 53)

d. "الزمار الذي انقلب مزماره إلى حية تسعى." (ST p. 41)

"Like the tale of the piper whose pipe turns into **a snake!**" (TT p. 44)

e. "فسألها عن البنات فقالت إنها سبقت على جنة الخلد." (ST p. 133)

"She's gone before us to **Paradise**" (TT p. 64)

f. "وبعد العشق ألم تجد شيئاً يسرك؟ قرّة عيني في الصلاة." (ST p. 14)

"**Prayer** is my comfort now." (TT p. 7)

g. "وقد رآه رجل أعمى، ولكن أحداً لم يصدقّه، وغير بعيد أن تجلّى للمسايطيل في ليلة القدر." (ST p. 129)

"A blind man saw him once, but no one believed him. He might yet appear to those who smoke the pipe on **the night that marks the Qur'an's revelation**." (TT p. 62)

h. "خير احتفال بالهجرة أن نهاجر." (ST p. 116)

"The best way to celebrate the **Prophet's journey** is to make one of our own." (TT p. 56)

i. "ينتظر قوم إمامهم منذ ألف سنة." (ST p. 73)



"People have been waiting for **their saviors** for a thousand years." (TT p. 35)

j. "فرمقه خالد بإعجاب قائلاً: خذوا الحكمة من أفواه المساطيل" (ST p. 19)

"Khalid regarded him, delighted." **Wisdom**," he said, "**from the mouth of the intoxicated!**" (TT p. 10)

k. "ولكن ما الأسباب التي حولت طائفة من المصريين إلى رهبان؟ بل ما آخر نكتة سمعتها عن راهب وإسكاف؟" (ST p. 16)

"What could it have been that had turned a whole **band of Egyptians into monks?** And what was that last joke he had heard, the one about the **monk and the cobbler?**" (TT p. 8)

l. "يستهن بها أول الأمر ولكنها تؤدبه وتمشيته على العجين .." (ST p. 30)

"He scorns her at first, but she **tames him eventually. By the end he is wrapped around her little finger.**" (TT p. 15)

Discussion

The translator uses different strategies to translate alluded sentences and key phrases depending on the situation to convey a direct, clear meaning to the target reader. For example, he uses an English idiom to translate an Egyptian proverb "تمشيته على العجين" wrapped around some figure", or he keeps the change done by the writer of the Arabic proverb "خذوا الحكمة من أفواه المجانين" wisdom from the mouths of the crazy people", he keeps the change of the source "المساطيل" instead of "crazy people." Moreover, the translator rephrased the allusion to match the context of the text and to keep the sarcasm of the author, who uses a direct, clear allusion from the Holy Quran, "الطيبات للطيبين والخبيثات للخبيثين" he rephrased the allusion from the Quran to explain the meaning "the righteous stick together and the evil find each other". That is not all, but the translator sometimes keeps the alluded words source pronunciation without any explanation. ملخيه mulukhiya, Apis ابيس but in these examples he added words to make the phrases understandable, like "to eat mulukhiya" to clarify that is something eatable and "the cult of the bull god" to explain that Apis is a worshipped god. Another example, الهجرة The Prophet's Journey, أمامهم people are waiting for their saviors, where the allusion is to a religious sect waiting for their saviors. In the example, which needed more explanation because it is a cultural reference to an Egyptian story of the first monk who believed in Christianity in Ancient Egypt, the translator uses a literal translation راهب وأسكاف monk and the cobbler. Most of the time, the translator makes a direct literal translation of the alluded sentences and phrases without any hints or explanations to help the target reader, like حية تسعى a snake; there is no reference to Moses' cane that turned into a snake. However, in other situations, the



translator prefers to add an explanation to clarify the meaning *في ليلة القدر* on the night that marks the Qur'an's revelation. He also uses literal translations to convey a clear, direct meaning known to the target reader, *جنة الخلد* Paradise. The translator translated the meaning of the alluded sentence to reach the intended context of the source, like when the writer alluded to Prophet Mohamed's Hadith "*وجعلت قرّة عيني في الصلاة*", he translated Prayer is my comfort.

Conclusion

Allusions are cultural references that are acknowledged by certain languages and people. Different strategies are used by translators in the interpretation of allusions, which play an important role in the identification and awareness of the meanings carried by them. If a translator provides a literary text without taking care of the allusions, the meanings are likely not to be conveyed to the target reader. The use of allusions in literary works is important and sometimes essential. It means to refer to a person, place, thing, event, or other work that the reader is familiar with. An allusion is a literary device that helps a writer reduce a great deal of meaning and significance into a proper noun or phrase. This helps writers to be brief and concise. The translator of Mahfouz's text uses two different strategies to translate allusions. The first and most common is the translation of proper nouns literally because they are cross-cultural figures from history, like Napoleon, Harun al-Rashid, Omar Khayyam, and Prometheus, or from Pharaonic history, like Cheops, Antony, and Cleopatra, or names of prophets (in English names), like Adam, Joseph, and Jonah. The translator sometimes needs to add to the proper nouns to make them known and distinct, like adding the title Caliph or completing the full name.

Henceforth, the translator uses a mix of strategies to translate the alluded sentences or key words, like the literal translation of the phrase or to rephrase and create a similar allusion to the alluded sentences or phrases. The translation of the proper nouns is easier than translating the alluded sentences or phrases because the translator needs to add to the phrases either within the text or as a phonate an explanatory note to help the target reader catch up with the cultural differences. In brief, the translation of allusive texts is problematic. The possibility exists that the translation's readers won't be able to understand the allusions because their meanings won't be stimulated during the reading process. Not all translation readers are the same, however, and some will undoubtedly recognize and value allusions when given the opportunity to do so, even if they don't want to take the time to record the explanation in a separate note.

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