A Morpho-semantic Study of Adjectives in Fulfulde

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Abstract

The study of adjectives reveals that universal adjectives are found across Languages including Fulfulde. This call for a study of adjectives cross-linguistically so as to determine typical characteristic features that are shared by all languages and those that are specific to particular languages. This work explores the method of description in the study of adjectives in Fulfulde, putting into consideration their distribution, form and function. The work also looks at different types of adjectives in Fulfulde and their Morpho-semantic structure, types and interpretation. Adjectives in this language display interesting and varied Semantic dimensions through its robust noun classes. This paper demonstrates that adjectives in Fulfulde usually occur in the predicative position, except in focused cases. Again, adjectives in Fulfulde are usually derived from nouns and verbs through suffixation. Fulfulde presents overwhelming morphological and morphophonemic processes in adjectival creation, displaying both covert and overt semantic nuances. Introspection was used to collect data and the analysis has been through morphophonemic process. The study has been for documentation before purpose before further research on same aspect.

Keywords: Adjectives, Fulfulde, predicative position

Introduction

This paper on the description of Fulfulde adjectives, with particular reference to their Morphological and semantic dispensation. The term Morphosemantic is used in linguistics to refer to grammatical category or property whose defining criteria of Morphology and Semantics both apply in describing adjectives. It seems, a reasonable number of languages posses the category adjective, and they serve similar purposes as modifiers. Dixon (2006) notes that cross-linguistically valid core semantic types of adjectives are DIMENSIONS, AGE, VALUE, and COLOUR. This indicates that certain adjectives are linguistically universal and are found in all languages of the world. This work looks at the Morphological derivation and Semantic Perspectives of adjectives in Fulfulde. Thus, this study focuses on the Morphosemantic description of adjectives in Fulfulde, within the general framework of Linguistic analysis.

Basic linguistic background of Fulfulde

Speakers of Fulfulde call themselves Fulbe (Singular Pullo), other names currently used for the language are *Ful, Fula, Fulan, Peul,* and *Pulaar* (Breedveld, 2009). According to Greenberg (1966, 1970 and 1978), Arnott (1970), Mukoshy (1991 and 2014a) and Breedveld (2009), the language is also called *Fula, Fulde* and *Pular*. Henceforth, this study refers to the language as "Fulfulde", because the work dwells on Sokoto dialect where the language is referred to as Fulfulde. Fulfulde is classified under West-Atlantic languages, and this automatically puts it under Niger-Congo of Niger-Kordofanian. Speakers of Fulfulde Language call themselves Fulbe (singular *Pullo*).

On the category Adjective

As is the case with many languages of the world, Fulfulde has attracted some degree of Scholarly attention. Today, there are a significant number of published books on Fulfulde grammar in different dialects which appear to be in advanced specialized forms rather than being merely pedagogical (Daudu 2001). Many researches have also been conducted on different aspects of the language such as; Grammar, Literature, Sociolinguistics and Language-culture related issues. Daudu (2001) noted that in spite of the relatively long period of intense research made and the considerable number of publications about the language over the past three hundred years no comprehensive dictionary has ever been published. This is perhaps not unassociated with the extremely; extensive but relatively sparse distribution of the native speakers of the language. Being nomads with migratory tradition, the Fulanis are often extremely difficult to be researched; this creates a problem of discontinuity. Another reason may well be that the different dialects of the language vary remarkably from what has been collected of the language over time. In spite all these, a remarkable progress have been made on the aspect of research studies and a number of commendable works have been recorded.

Ba (2013) investigates the clause structure of Pulaar. In his work (ibid), he focuses on the ordering of functional heads under the hypothesis on the hierarchy of functional heads. The study also examines the derivation of the functional morphemes under Baker's mirror principle (1985). In that, he demonstrates that Pulaar is largely consistent with this hypothesis (Baker, 2003; Cinque, 1994). This work studies the Morphosemantic dimensions of Fulfulde adjectives.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) in their description of adjectives define them as expression that alter, clarify or adjust the meaning contributive of nouns". They further argue that, adjectives at general level gain this modifying capability, by virtue of their two main characteristics; one of which is 'Semantic' and the other Syntactic. On the semantic side, they introduce properties. Whether or not they (adjectives) devote properties, their study tries to prove that syntactically they can function as modifies. They maintain that peripheral analysis of adjectives tends to hide any important and interesting complexities which provide insights into several topics of central interest to both Linguists and Philosophers, including: vagueness, contextualism, relativism, compositionality and the Semantic analysis of significant phenomena such as modality. Furthermore, distribution of adjectives is looked at in this study coming up with prominent analysis of their meanings. This work relates to the present research especially for its emphasis on bringing out hidden semantic properties of adjectives and their distribution.

Semantic Dimensions of Adjectives in Fulfulde

Dixon (1977) classifies adjectives into seven universal semantic types. Dixon (1982) later increases these to ten. He assumed that the syntactic properties of a lexical item can be largely predicted from its semantic description. He justifies his classification of adjectives into Semantic types "in terms of the Syntactic/Morphological properties of the members of each type". He goes further to claim that the members of each type can be defined by their Semantic content. According to him the Semantic types that make up the adjective category include dimension, physical propensity, colour, human propensity, age, value and speed. All these do occur in Fulfulde, as demonstrated by the following examples;

S/N	Semantic Types	Examples	
i	Dimension	a) maw]um -	Big (it)
		b) <i>njaaju]um</i> -	wide/ large
		c) chew]um -	narrow etc
ii	Physical	a) <i>lammu]um</i>	- sour
	Propensity	b) gul]um	- hot
		c) alam]u]um	- soft
		d) bel]um	- sweet
iii	Human	a) <i>naw]um</i>	- painful
	Propensity	b) choonyaa]o	- greedy"
		c) nalwiru	- jealous
iv	Colour	a) ~aleejum -	black
		b) daneejum	- white
		c) bo]eejum -	red
		d) balgejum -	green
V	Age	a) ki]]um -	old
		b) nayeejo -	aged
		c) chemtini]um, ja	<i>leede</i> –shamefull
		d) kesum	- new
		e) keccho -	- tender'
vi	Value	a) <i>boddum</i> -	good/ nice
		b) <i>bon]um</i> -	bad
		c) gigitido -	confused
vii	Speed	a) sese-sese -	slow

 Table 1 Semantic Types Dimension:

Semantic types of adjectives are very interesting areas and as the examples indicate, the language manifests all the conceptual areas except speed, which has very limited membership. It is worth noting that the examples have not captured the entire noun classes in the language, the researcher selected few class markers in order to demonstrate the semantic dimensions which are termed as universal. Various authors including Olawsky (2004), Osam (2003), and Moshi (1992) have discussed adjectives in relation to these semantic types. The conclusion in most of the cases coincides with those of Dixons; that the semantic types

have universal application. What is different is the distribution of members of each semantic type in different languages, which Dixon himself predicted. "My concentration is however on the Morphosemantic classification of adjectives". As Dixon observed, "each Semantic type has, in a particular language, certain" norm" Syntactic and morphological properties. Adjectives in Fulfulde are very interesting especially the semantic types because of their complex nature and far reaching features, especially the derived adjectives.

Mukoshy (2014b:8) observes that adjectives in Fulfulde are derived from the base morphemes indicating either quality whether positive or negative or colours which are verbs in the language. Adjectives in Fulfulde are mostly derived from nouns, (common and proper) verbs, as well as numeral adjectives and those adjectives derived from ordinal numbers. And in all cases the adjective must agree with the noun it modifies.

The adjectives will be analyzed below and examples given in relation to the class. The noun class in Fulfulde according to Arnott (1970) comprises the following: Fulfulde Noun Class

ulfulde	Noun Class	
1.	0	Personal singular class.
2.	~e	Personal plural class, counterpart of the O class.
3.	ngel	Diminutive singular class, small persons or things or implies disagreement or affection.
4.	kal	Small quantities.
5.	ngum	The pejorative diminutive class, implying disdain.
6.	kon	The diminutive plural class, plural counterpart of 3-5.
7.	nga	The argumentative singular class. Large or important persons or things or implies
	C	dislike, dread etc
8.	ko	The argumentative class, plural counterpart of 7
9.	n]e	A wide range of meanings, including places and times, globular and anular objects
10.	n]e	A wide range of meanings, including places and times, globular and anular objects
11.	ndi	Male animals and birds, uncountable.
12.	ndu	Circular and cylindrical objects.
13.	nga	Some animals including large ones.
14.	nge	Class for cow, fire, sun etc
15.	ngo	Various.
16.	ngu	Insects, worms, fishes and some collectives and abstract nouns.
17.	ngal	Parts of tree and plans, plant and tree products, birds.
18.	ngol	Long things.
19.	ka	Various
20.	ki	Tree and bladed instruments.
21.	ko	Grasses etc
22.	kol	Calf
23.]am	Liquids, collectives and abstracts.
24.	Jum	The neuter class and borrowed words with a suffix.
25.	le	24 and 25 are classes for non-personal, plural-plural counterparts of the
26.]i	singular classes 9-22
		Arnott (1970:75 & Ahmad 2011:85)

Each of the noun classes stated above has certain adjectival root which it combines with to create certain adjective in the language. It is worth noting that sometimes adjectives in Fulfulde have covert Semantic properties apart from the Morphological and Syntactic properties. These covert properties are associated with certain class markers or rather the noun class itself, as will be seen subsequently in this section. Mukoshy (2014b) extensively analyzed adjectives in Fulfulde, showing how base Morphemes combine with noun classes to produce different adjectives. The table below is adopted from Mukoshy (ibid) and represented in order to give detailed information on adjectives and their different nuances.

a	ole Z A	djectives of Quantity			
	S/N	<i>juut/</i> be long/tall	ramm/be short	wood/be beautiful	Wum/blind class
	1	juut-nga	ndamm-u-nga	mbood-nga	mbum-nga nga
	2	juut-~e	ramm-u-~e	wood-~e	wum-~e~e
	3	juut-n]e	ramm-u-n]e	wood-nde	wum-n]e n]e
	4	njuut-n]i	nramm-u-n]i	mbood-n]i	wbum-n]i
	5	Juutndu	ram-u-ndu	wood-ndu	wum-ndu ndu
	6	juut-]am	ndamm-u-]am	mbood-]am	mbum-]am]am

Table 2 Adjectives of Quantity

7	juut-]e	damm-u-]e	bood-]e	bum-]e]e
8	juut-]i	dam-u-]i	bood-]i	bum-]i]i
9	juut-]um	damm-u-]um	bood-]um	mbun-]um]um
10	juut-ngel	damm-u-ngal	bood-ngal	bum-ngal ngal
11	juut-nge	ramm-unge	wood-nge	wum-nge nge
12	juut-ngo	ramm-u-kon	wood-ngo	wim-ngo ngo
13	junnt-ngol	ramm-u-ngol	bood-ngol	bum-ngol ngol
14	njuut-ngu	ndamm-u-n]u	mbood-ngu	mbum-ngu ngu
15	juut-ka	ndamm-u-ka	mbbood-ka	mbu-mka ka
16	juut-ki	ndamm-u-ki	bood-ki	mbum-ki ki
17	juut-ko	ramm-u-ko	wood-ko	mbum-ko ko
18	njuut-kol	ndamm-u-kol	mbood-kol	mbum-kol kol
19	juut-]o/d/]o/u/]o	danmm-u-]o	bood-]o	bum-]o 'o
20	njuut-(u)-nga	ndamm-u-nga	nbood-nga	mbum-nga nga
21	njuut-ngel	ndamm-u-ngel	mbood-ngel	mbumn-gel ngel
22	njuut-ngum	ndamm-u-ngum	mbood-ngum	mbum-ngum ngum
23	njuut-kal	ndamm-u-kal	bood-kal	mbum-kal kal
24	njuut-ko	ndamm-u-ko	mbood-ko	mbum-ko ko
25	njuut-kon	ndamm-u-kon	mbood-kon	mbum-kon kon

Adopted from Mukoshy (2014b:9).

From the above data, twenty-five classes are given alongside adjectival roots which are believed to be common and applicable to all dialects of Fulfulde except *be*, *le* and *li* which are common to the western dialects. These classes have to some extent Semantic constraints (Arnott 1970 :75) However, some classes do exist which are known as *nga* for the non-augmentative, *ngii* given by Westerman and Bryan (1952) and attributed to the Fula without any noun assigned to it. (Mukoshy 2014b: 9). Fulfulde gives an overwhelming suffixation as far as adjectives are concerned. Arnott (1970), Mukoshy, (1977, 1984&2014b), MacIntosh (1984) and Daudu 2005), share the same opinion on adjectives in Fulfulde and that the adjectival root is capable of taking different suffixes as demonstrated above. Each concept of adjective stated above will be taken and analyzed using the suffix it can occur with.

The following shows adjectives of quantity in Fulfulde and gives a glimpse of how base morphemes can combine with noun classes to denote different realization of adjectives, consider;

S/N	Base	Suffix	Adjective	Semantic Features
1	Morpheme juut-	nga	juutnga	\pm human –small \pm male +
1	juut-	"animate, human"	"tall/big Man/woman	adult
2	juut-	~e "human"	juut~e "tall People"	+ human, - singular, ± adult
3	juut-	nde "in animate"	juutnde "wrapper"	-human,+singular
4	njuut-	n]i "animate"	juutn]i " tall goats, and cattle"	+ animate – singular
5	juut-	ndu "animate"	juutndu "tall dog and monkey"	+animate – plural, ± male
6	juut-]am	juut]am	+ liquids,-animate
7	juut-]e 'Inanimate'	juutn]e "wrapper (cloth)"	- human,+ singular – animate
8	juut-]i	juut]i " tall animals"	+ animate,- singular. + male
9	juut-]um	juut]um 'tall things'	- human +singular – animate,
10	juut-	ngel	juutngel "tall, small child and animal"	± human,-plural, + small, ± female
11	juut-	nge	juutnge "tall cow"	- human,+ animate, - plural.
12	juut-	ngo	juutngo "tall building"	+singular,-human – animate,
13	juut-	ngol	juutngol "long road, long rope"	- human, + singular – animate,

Table 3 Adjectives denoting quantity (long / tall /wide), these denote an amount, size or number of something.

14	njuut-	ngu	njuutngu	+animate,-plural
			"tall sheep"	
15	juut-	ka	juutka	– human + object
			"a long trouser"	– animate.
16	juut-	ki	juutki	– human - animate
			"a tall tree"	+ singular.
17	juut -	ko	juutko	\pm human – singular,
	-		" tall people(huge)& trees"	+ hugesmall.
18	njuut-	kol	njuutkol	+ animate, - object
			"tall calf"	+ singular
19	juut-]o/d/]o/u/]o	juut]o	+ human,- plural,
	5		"a tall man, woman"	\pm male.
20	njuut-(u)-	nga	njuutnga	\pm human, -huge,
		•	"a huge tall man or woman,	\pm male,
			sheep, goat etc"	
21	njuut-	ngum	njuutngum	see: juutngu
	-		"this adjective is rarely used	
			in Sokoto dialect"	
22	njuut -	kal	njuutkal	- human, + few,
	-		"tall plants (grass)"	- animate
23	njuut-	Ко	njuutko	$+$ human, \pm male,
	-		"tall huge people" used in	- singular
			diminutive cases	-
24	njuut-	kon	njuutkon	\pm human , \pm male,
	-		"tall, children	– singular ,- adult.
			and young animals"	-

From the above, it has been demonstrated that a single adjectival root or base morpheme, (with the addition of initial consonant in some cases as a result of morphophonemic changes) can take different noun classes denoting various things, animals and even humans. Fulfulde has different adjectives for almost all concepts despite them belonging to same species. However, it is worth noting that the base morpheme '*juut*' cannot combine with the noun class '*Jam*' since the class denotes liquids which cannot be said to be tall except in figurative expressions such as euphemism. The table below displays how the adjective 'short' is realized in Fulfulde

Table 4 Adjectives of denoting quantity (Short), this adjective tries to describe the height of things.

S/N	Base	Suffix	Adjective	Semantic Features
1	Morpheme ndamm-u	nga	ndammu-nga "a short man/ woman, elephant, snake, rope, etc"	± human –small ± male/female + adult
2	ramm-u	~e	rammu~e "short people"	+ human, - singular, ± adult.
3	ramm-u-	nde	rammunde "short wrapper"	- human,+ singular, - animate .
4	nramm-u-	ndi	nrammundi "short goats, and cattle"	+ animate – singular ± male
5	ramm-u	ndu	rammundu "a short monkey, dog etc"	+animate – plural, ± female.
6	ndamm-u-]am	ndamm-u]am	+liguid,-animate
7	damm-u-]e	dammu]e "short wrapper (cloth)"	- human,+ singular – animate
8	dam-u-]i	dammu]i "a short ram, bull"	+ animate,- plural . + male.
9	damm-u-]um	dammu]um "short things"	- human +singular – animate,
10	damm-u-	ngal	dammungal " tall chicken"	-human,+animate, -plural, + female,
11	ramm-u	nge	rammunge " short cow"	+singular,-human, + animate,
12	Rammu	ngo	rammungo "short building"	+ human,-animate + singular,

13	ramm-u-	ngol	rammungol	- human, + singular
			"rope, paper:	-animate,
14	ndamm-u-	ndu	ndammungu	– human + object
			" a short monkey, dog"	– animate.
15	ndamm-u-	ka	ndammuka	– human - animate
			"short trousers"	+ singular
16	ndamm-u-	ki	ndammuki	- human + singular
			"short tree"	_
17	ramm-u-	ko	rammuko	+ animate – object
			"short people, animals etc"	+ human- singular.
18	ndamm-u-	kol	ndammukol	+ animate - human,
			" short calf" (fem)	-plural,- male
19	danmm-u-]0	dammu]o	+ human, +short,
		-	"a short man or woman"	\pm male
20	ndamm-u-	nga	ndammunga	\pm human, + short,
		-	" a short man, woman"	± male
21	ndamm-u-	ngel	ndamuungel	+human, - animate,
			"small, short girl, boy etc."	+ small,
22	ndamm-u-	ngum	ndammungum	
			"this adjective is same with	
			ndammungu in Sokoto dialect"	
23	ndamm-u-	kal	ndammukal	- animate, + few,
			" short grass"	- human,
24	Ndammu	ko	ndammuko	\pm human,+ plural
			'short things, and persons'	
25	ndamm-u-	kon	ndammukon	+human,- singular

Again the base morpheme "damm-u-"cannot occur with the noun class ']am' connoting " short water" in neutral constructions but can be used in euphemistic constructions.

Table 5 below presents adjectives with the Quality of beauty, handsomeness, nice and clean for inanimate attributes.

Table 5 Adjective denoting quality (Beauty)

S/N	Base	Suffix	Adjective	Semantic Features
	Morpheme			
1	mbood-	nga	mboo]-nga	\pm human –small
			"a beautiful, handsome man, woman,	\pm male + adult
			elephant, snake, rope, etc"	
2	wood-	~ <i>e</i>	woo]-~e	+ human, - singular, + and -
			"beautiful People"	adult
3	mbood-	n]i	mboo]-n]I	\pm animate - human,
			"beautiful sheep, goats, rope, etc"	+ singular
4	wood -	ndu	wood-ndu	+ animate +singular.
			"beautiful dogs and cats."	
5	mbood-]am	mboo]-]am	-animate, - human, +liquid
			"clean water"	
6	bood-]e	boo]-]e	-human + plural,
			"beautiful clothes"	-animate
7	bood-]i	boo]-]I	- human,-singular
			" beautiful animals"	+ animate
8	bood-]um	boo]-]um	-animate,- plural.
			" beautiful flowers"	+ object
9	bood-	ngal	boo]-ngal	- human +singular +animate
			"chicken"	
10	wood-	nge	woo]-nge	- human,-plural,
			"cow"	+ female, -object.
11	wood-	ngo	woo]-ngo	+singular,-human
			"a nice house"	- animate
12	bood-	ngol	boo]-ngol	- human, + singular

			"a good road, rope"	- animate
13	mbood-	ngu	mboo]-ngu " beautiful,small child, table, etc"	± human,+small
14	mbbood	ka	mbbood-ka "a beautiful trouser"	 human + object animate.
15	bood	ki	boo]-ki "a tree"	– human - animate +singular
16	wood-	ko	woo]-ko " beautiful grass"	- human – singular – animate
17	mbood-	kol	mboo]-kol " calf"	+ animate – object + singular
18	bood-]0	boo]-]o "a beautiful woman, handsome man"	+human, plural, ±male
19	nbood-	nga	nboo]- nga "a handsome/beautiful huge,man or woman and animal"	± human, ± male +big
20	mbood-	ngel	mboo]-ngel "a beautiful/handsome small girl, or boy"	± human, ± male,
21	mbood-	ngum	mboo]-ngum "this adjectives is rarely used in sokoto dialect"	see: boodngu
22	bood-	kal	boo]-kal "nice plants (grass)"	- animate + few
23	mbood-	ko	mboo]-ko " beautiful huge people"	+ human, ± male, - singular
24	mbood-	kon	mboo]-kon " beautiful children"	± human ± male – singular

It is to be noted that the base morpheme 'mbood' can occur with noun class ']am' to denote 'clean water'. The following tables showcase the quality 'being blind', which indicate inherent feature or distinguishing attribute.

Table 6 Adjectives denoting quality

S/N	Base Morpheme	Suffix	Adjective	Semantic Features
1	mbum-	nga nga	mbumm-nga "blind a man/ woman, elephant, snake, etc"	\pm human –small \pm male + adult
2	wum-	~e	wum-~e "blind People"	+ human, - singular, ± adult
3	wum-	nde	wum-nde "blind eye"	human,+ singular
4	mbum-	ndi	mbum-n]I "blind goats and cattle"	+ animate – singular
5	wum-	ndu	wum-ndu "A blind monkey, dog etc"	+animate – plural, ± male/female.
6	mbum-]am	used in figurative expressions or euphemism, connoting spoilt water	+ liquids - human + singular
7	bum-]e	bum-]e "blind eyes"	
8	bum-]i	bum-di di "a blind rams Bulls"	+ animate,+ plural . + male.
9	mbun-]um	mbun-Jum "a blind object, not applicable, an object cannot be blind, because it has no eyes (only in figurative sense)"	-human,+ object
10	bum-	ngal	mbum-ngal	- human,-plural, small,

			"a blind chicken"	
11	wum-	nge	wum-nge "a blind cow"	+singular,-human +animate,
12	wim-	ngo ngo	wim-ngo ngo "not realized in sokoto dialect."	
13	bum-	ngol ngol	bum-ngol this adjective is used in figurative expression; a road that cannot lead one to a good path	-human,+ object
14	mbum-	ngu	mbum-ngu "a blind person or animal"	± human – object-human
15	mbu-	ka	mbu-mka "not applicable"	 human - animate singular, +abstract
16	mbum-	ki	mbum-ki "not applicable in euphemism	- human + singular – animate
17	mbum-	ko	mbum-ko "blind people"	+ animate – object – singular
18	mbum-	kol	mbum-kol "a blind female calf"	- human,-plural,- object.
19	bum-]0	bum-]o "a blind man or woman"	+human, \pm male
20	mbum-	nga	mbum-nga "a blind man, woman, bull etc"(augmentative)	\pm human, \pm male + huge
21	mbumn-	ngel	mbumm-ngel "this refers to a blind girl or boy and animals." (diminutive)	+animate-big ± male
22	mbum-	ngum	mbum-ngum	see: ngu for features and example.
23	mbum-	kal	mbum-kal "it has sense of sand, which cannot be blind"only in figurative expressions	- human, - animate,
24	mbum-	ko	mbum-ko "blind huge people and animals"	± human ± male – singular.
25	mbum-	Kon	Mbumkon "blind children and small animals"	± human, -singular ±male

Any noun class denoting liquids tends to have less application because it is always restricted to the said class only. (*e.g mbumkal*)

Conclusion

Mukoshy's work on adjectives in (2014b) has paved way for further linguistic analysis of the category. This study concludes that the conceptual explanation about adjectives bears a universal appreciation as one of the lexical categories in any language which describes or gives information about noun or pronouns. Unlike in some languages like English, where the form of an adjective does not change whether the noun is modified as male or female, animate or inanimate, singular or plural, subject or object, in languages like Fulfulde, the case is different. Similarly, through the discussion of the study, it can be concluded that just like the unique nature of the form of Fulfulde adjectives with regards to the number of nouns they modify, the structural arrangement of adjectives in relation to the head they modify also presents a unique feature of Fulfulde grammar. An interesting phenomenon worth mentioning is this work, is the unique and richness of adjectives in Fulfulde like most languages has come of age in terms of grammatical disposition. Certain features that have been discovered are so unique and interesting to investigate. For example, adjectives in Fulfulde do have agreement to a large extent with the noun heads.

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