



# The Impact of Contextualization in Reaching the Gospel to Zaranda People of Bauchi State Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of Christian mission hinges on the ability to contextualize the gospel message within the cultural frameworks of the people being reached. This article explores the impact of contextualization in sharing the gospel with the Zaranda people of Bauchi State, Nigeria. The study begins by examining the mission of the Church and its role in engaging in diverse cultural settings. A detailed exploration of the Zarandawa people's cultural background reveals their unique values, traditions, and worldview, which significantly influence their reception and understanding of the gospel. The research delves into the methods employed by the first missionaries to reach the Zarandawa and evaluates the reasons behind the focus on this community. It highlights how the Zarandawa perceive and interpret the gospel message, emphasizing the importance of tailoring the communication of Christian doctrines to align with their cultural identity. Cultural anthropology is underscored as a vital tool for bridging the gap between the gospel's universal truth and the specific cultural nuances of the Zarandawa. Furthermore, the study provides a biblical analysis of anthropological models and their relevance in gospel missions, drawing out missiological implications for effective ministry. The findings advocate for an approach that honors the Zarandawa's cultural heritage while faithfully presenting the Christian message. The article concludes with practical recommendations for future missionary endeavors, aiming to foster deeper understanding and meaningful engagement with the Zarandawa community. This study underscores the transformative power of contextualization in advancing the gospel mission and shaping the faith journey of the Zarandawa people.

## ARTICLE'S INFO

**Article No.:** 050625080

**Type:** Review

**Full Text:** PDF, PHP, EPUB, MP3

**DOI:** [10.15580/gjss.2025.1.050625080](https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2025.1.050625080)

**Accepted:** 05/05/2025

**Published:** 07/05/2025

**Keywords:** Contextualization, Zaranda people, gospel mission, cultural anthropology, missiology, Bauchi State

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**Article's QR code**



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mission is very key in God's plan because God himself is an exemplary missionary. This is evident in his redemption program in that he came to seek man when sin entered the world in Genesis 3. Most importantly, he gave his only beloved Son Jesus Christ to die for the sake of the sinful world because man could not save himself as portrayed in (John 3:16). Tukura in his book *Church and Mission* says "Mission comes from a Latin word "mitto" which means to send. The Greek equivalent is "apostollos" which means to send a servant or messenger with a message" (1997, 12). Therefore, missions' means' sending someone or people with the gospel of Jesus Christ across cultures, sub-cultures, tribe, and languages, which are unreached for them to hear the word of God and know it. Here on this paper the researcher will look at the mission of the church, the background of Zarandawa with their culture, reasons for spreading the gospel among the Zarandawa people, mode used by the first missionaries in Zarandawa. How Zarandawa understand the gospel, biblical analysis for anthropological model, missiological implication, further recommendation, and conclusion.

## 2.0 MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The researcher is a missionary working with the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) under the COCIN community mission organization. The church vision is in line with God's vision to search for the lost and bring them back to the kingdom. The COCIN community mission is the mission agency of the Church that recruits, orients, and deploys missionaries to mission fields where they engage in evangelism and, where necessary, plant and work in churches for as long as it is considered expedient. This mission body was established in 1989 because of the amalgamation of Borno outreach, which was formed by the Sudan United Mission (SUM) in 1936. It was meant to reach out to hill tribes of Gwoza and Kanuri projects. However, COCIN Community Mission (CCM) has over 800 missionaries serving in various places. There are about 15 CCM Mission zones, and each has a Supervisor where the researcher is one of the supervisors and the head of the supervisors in the entire COCIN community mission organization also (COCIN Service Handbook 2012 20). The researcher of this paper is one of the missionaries working among the organization of COCIN community mission.

Even though the church was established, but the organization had no vision and idea of which Moreau quoted fulfills Anderson and Henry "indigenization to promote the idea of planting national churches that were self-propagating, self-governing and self-financing," (Moreau, 2012, 123) COCIN missionary organization did not go with this in mind, because of

that, there was no growth in the church. Things were said to be done for them instead of them to be taught how to govern themselves after been presented with the gospel. What was necessary was identifying the problem, and developing means to which the church can offer meaningful solutions to those problems. It was a kind of seeing people into the problem and church trying to liberate them by changing their situation.

## 3.0 MODEL USED BY THE FIRST MISSIONARIES IN ZARANDAWA

COCIN Mission organization started operating among the Zarandawa community in Bauchi state in 1998. The first missionary could not take time to learn the culture as stated above. The missionaries were coming from the east of the country while the mission is being found in the Northern part of the country. In times of sharing the gospel, there was a very big gap in the communication channel. While the missionary went with relief materials having known that Zarandawa People some of them were still working naked. The missionaries try to get a translator, but it proved abortive because the translator also could not understand the language of the missionaries properly. So, there was a misinterpretation in the cost of sharing the gospel. The missionary went ahead in building a church, asking the people to come for service on Sunday. For the first few Sundays, people were coming but only because of the relief materials that was given to them, after then no one came to the church on Sunday. People thought it a waste of time because of their interest in farming which they were hindered. Anyone who refuses to go the farm even on Sunday is counted as a lazy person in the society. Though the concept of the gospel was not well understood, yet schools were built to give education to the community. In times of education Zarandawa is lacking behind, COCIN mission organization went with the idea of school with the expectation that people will be educated, but only a few were able to send their children to learn Western education. In the northern part of Nigeria Western education is seen as "Boko Haram" (Education is evil). Looking from the perspective that Western education will spoil their children. The hospital was also built by the missionaries thinking that it will solve the problems of the community in times of sickness.

Looking at this approach it will bring to our understanding that my organization was using Praxis model of contextualization. Moreau had this to say, "Praxis model is framed in terms of a social change in the local setting" (Moreau, 2012, 39). In praxis model, practitioners only focus on the action of social change. According to Bevan, he views the practitioners of the praxis model who have "to Understand the context only from the perspective of social change" (Bevan's, 2002, 37).

#### 4.0 BACKGROUND OF THE ZARANDAWA PEOPLE

Since Zarandawa people are God's creation, God's intention is to see that such lost people should be restored back to him. Therefore, the Church has been working with this set of people using the Praxis model. Praxis model of Contextual theology said, "To focus on the identity of Christian's within a context, particularly as that context is understood in terms of social change." (Bevan 2002, 70). Bevan Continues in his explanation that Praxis model is a kind of model that, often referred to as the "Liberation model" (2002, 70). However, Zarandawa whose name is derived from the word Zaranda which means, people who base on the mountain. They speak the language called Zarandaalso, they can speak Hausa too because they are living in the Northern part of Nigeria where Hausa is the majority. Zarandawa people live in Jama'a district of Toro Local government in Bauchi State of Nigeria. The population of Zarandawa according to population census of 2011 was two thousand five hundred and seventy-six (2576). (Nigeria census, 2011). Zarandawa are said to be idol worshippers. They believe in the religion laydown to them by their forefathers. Zarandawa believes in the ancestral spirit looking at the form of their form of burial in their traditional custom. Here I will briefly explain the form of burial among many forms in Zarandawa custom I have experienced which identify that Zarandawa is idol worshippers which they need the gospel.

##### 4.1. Zarandawa Culture

There is no community that exists without culture "culture is seen as a kind of roadmap made up of various forms designed to get people where they need to go" (Kraft 1996, 32). Culture is the derived force of the people. Just as Kraft said culture is a roadmap of all aspect of life. The researchers concurs with Kraft Without culture no people, or without people no culture these two things go together, communities are identified through the culture. Culture is the total way of life for human beings. To identify a culture amongst people is through form.

Looking at Zarandawa Culture it will help me to know how to do contextualization of the gospel among Zarandawa people that will be effectively implemented. Here I am presenting what I saw in Zarandawa culture as a missionary who worked among them. Even though culture is never static, every community has its uniqueness of culture yet, there are some similarities. Therefore, I believe that the most effective way of creating healthy churches is to create church cultures that reflect Biblical norms. Until we produce a culture of evangelism and discipleship in our churches, for instance, we will never have healthy churches,

regardless of whether our services have a crowd or not. To avoid any factors of hindering discipleship, Culture must be observed. Kraft says "We cannot live without Culture" (Kraft 1996, 32). Culture is very important. Here is the presentation of one of the Zarandawa traditional custom, which identifies who Zarandawa are.

According to the Zarandawa, people burials are classified into four main categories namely men, women and children. All these categories of people their burial rites are different because they have a different rank in the community. In any given society, men are said to be head of the family or society according to African tradition, women can be said to be the head but not for the whole society or community they could be for sub-local in the group of women association but not for the general society or community. In Zarandawa men are seen as higher than women because they are associated with masquerade.

Men's burial in Zaranda is attached with important rituals such as killing a goat and a chicken. The chicken will be slaughtered first at the spot where the man will be buried and after which a goat will be slaughtered at home the meat is shared amongst people excluding the wives. When a man dies, the preparation of the burial will not take place until the head of the community got the news and confirmed that the dead person had gone to be with the ancestors then preparation of the burial will take place. The duty of the youth in the community is to dig the grave where the body of the deceased will be buried. Whenever the community receives the message, friends and relatives start coming for the ceremony includes even those who live in distant places. As they approach the village place they converge to the compound with cry while some with their hands on their heads, or chest or held behind their backs, as the whole community continues heading towards the compound of the deceased.

Women are buried differently. When a woman dies, the person who announces goes around announcing as he weeps. Then when the sympathizers converge into the house of the deceased then the family quickly decide about the burial. This is different when it is a man who is regarded as the head of the family or community. After the deceased family gives the go-ahead the youth now start digging the grave. For a woman's burial, they will wash the body before taking it to the grave. But for men, the body of the deceased is not washed because women cannot see masquerade when the body is been taken to the graveside. There will be three times loud shout this applied to the three set of people, the men, women, and children, giving their last respect and wishing the deceased safe journey to the ancestral.

A person who is under age and is not married is regarded as a child, in Zarandawa traditional custom. When children die in Zarandawa community, their death is been announced by big shout three times when

people hear the type of sound made, everybody knows that a child has died in that family then sympathizers will converge to the house. Some of the rituals like when the body is taken out for burial, another three times loud shout will be said giving the child welfare (bye bye) to the ancestral fathers. After the burial, the chicken slaughtered will be share and then everybody will go back to his or her homes no staying behind for any mourning.

The grave is said not to dig too deep because it will waste his or her time when the ancestors come to take him to the abode of the forefathers. Every family buried their own member closed to their compound this is because they believe that the deceased will come back to them through reincarnation. Men are said to be buried with the skin of goat put beside their head so that no dust will touch his head, and that signifies that the man is always a warrior. Women and children on the other hand are not buried with the skin of goat. Women are said to be buried with calabash; this signifies that a container is given to her wherever she finds herself that people are eating and drinking that calabash will help her to collect food or to drink water with it. After the body have been put in the grave, burning charcoal will be given to them in case there is cold in the ancestral world. This is derived from their background because where they are living in cold and it is assumed that anybody who is dead still experience the same cold and reason for the charcoal is aid them to get light in their path in case there is darkness this is also applicable to both the women and children. For the case of men the masquerade sings and dance at the graveside, this signifies that one of their own has returned home. The researcher got to know all these forms of culture through anthropological model contextualization.

Religious Zarandawa is said to be a traditionalist with the religion that has been handed down from generation to generation. Zarandawa people have made their religion by living in it. A religion that has no written literature, yet it is written everywhere for those who care to see and read, and how to identify this religion is through people's myths and folktales. This is a religion Zarandawa believed in worshipping the ancestors? Every year a day is set aside to honor those who had died because they believed that those who had died watch them. If they did not treat them well their spirit can harm people. Zarandawa belief in God of rain, when there is no rain, they go to the shrine and consult the gods to give them rain. These are some of the reason why we find it possible to reach out the gospel among Zarandawa community.

Zarandawa speaking language is called Zaranda, while Zarandawa are the people themselves. Zarandawa has many things they believe in, but these are few among them. This is one of thing that makes them call zaranda because of the uniqueness of their language. Even though they are living among Hausa speaking language, but zaranda have their own language. Kraft said concerning language uniqueness "no two are exactly alike" (1996, 243) meaning we have

distinct language in the world. None language is a structure in the same way as any other. There are always differences in sounds and grammar between even; the closely related languages have differences.

Zarandawa has a rich resource of cultural variations which is unique in many instances. It is a community that has continued to resist the process of change even the innovations of world religions like Christianity and Islam. Another sign of resistance to outside influence which is often a characteristic of Zarandawa settlements is the way any attempt of western innovations such as the building of a chapel, clinic or even a communal latrine is found to be situated apart from the main dwelling area. Zarandawa has their own distinct cultural pattern not easily they interfered with by outside innovators.

#### 4.2 Social Activities

All activities among the Zarandawa people contains a social aspect. The building, roofing, paving, farming, processing harvests are the privilege of every able-bodied member of the group. In building a house, the women are responsible to draw the water and carry it to the site. The men mix the mud both with the traditional hoe and with their feet, and mud balls are formed by hand and jettisoned to a person standing near the site. The builders then receive the mud; dump it on the wall fusing it with their fingers. The children are expected to move in obedience to the command of any senior person. The whole social unit is employed together and there is an air of celebration in the corporate effort. The room being built may be to accommodate one person, perhaps a wife with her children, but all will labor together for its completion. This sense of community among the Zarandawa people is very strong and can well be utilized by the Gospel communicator with great effect. Scripture concepts such as "working together with God", "fellow laborers in the Gospel" would not be foreign to such community-minded people."

#### 4.3 Reasons for Spreading the Gospel among the Zarandawa people

The bible teaches us that God is the owner of everything in the world, it means that everything that exists in the world with the people of Zarandawa inclusive are part of his creation. God's intention is to see such people restored back to God because they are living in sinfulness. He decided to call Abraham to send him so that he may fulfill his desire towards mankind. Shaw asserts, "God's project will lift the curse and replace it with blessings" (Shaw, 2014, 100) Sin had already deprived mankind of God's blessings but because of God's love and passionate love for man, he replaces the curse with blessings. As a result, this raises the concern for the Zarandawa people to have with passion in missions from among them so that the curse of sin among the people may be replaced with

divine blessings. Wright supported the issue of creation by saying that "God created human beings in his own image with the express mission of ruling. God's creation by caring for it is a task modeled on the kingship of God himself" (Wright, 2010, 58). Zarandawa people are not exempted from the caring mission of God and they should be evangelized through the work of missions.

#### 4.4 How Zarandawa Understand the Gospel

From the beginning, the missionaries thought using Western approach will bring understanding and mean well but it was discovered that the gospel must be contextualized. This implies that the Gospel must be presented in the sense that the missionaries must learn the people's culture, through applying the anthropological model of contextualization, Kraft said "culture of any society consists of the same total of the ideas, conditional, emotional responses, and patterns of habitual which members of that society have acquired through instruction or imitation and which they share to a greater or less" (Kraft, 2001, 21). For Zarandawa to understand the gospel missionaries must have the knowledge of their culture so that it becomes easier and also make the gospel understandable within the community because of anthropologies "attempt to study what human beings do, how they behave" (Kraft 1996, 4).

What impressed me by suggesting anthropological model is that it focuses on the interest of everything of mankind, how people think, the way they are and do in their activities including "their work, rituals, child training, play, music and art, religion, philosophy, education, politics, food and family organization" (Kraft 1996, 4). When the missionaries have wider knowledge of the people, they eventually have the skills on how to contextualize the gospel in the community and the gospel becomes easier to understand. Anthropology demands haven known the community, the missionary had to contextualize himself/herself in doing things with them; eating, meetings burial ceremony, community work, by involving yourself into these activities it gives room for the contextualizing of the gospel among the Zarandawa, this will help the missionaries to understand the people in order to present the gospel to the understanding of the people.

#### 4.5 The Importance of Anthropology in reaching out with the Gospel

For any cross-cultural mission, the missionary must understand himself, understand the people to within their culture and present the gospel within the cultural contest using the Bible as a cross-cultural book. "Anthropology is a tool, a perspective in terms of which to better understand and present in the life-changing message of Jesus Christ to people living in cultural and

subcultural context other than our own".(Kraft 2011, introduction). Anthropology can be used for everyone but only as means, never the end. Anthropology brings respect for another cultural world, it is Christian principle, it is a tool for Christian witness or reaching out. The Great Commission must be learned and interpreted within the anthropological framework of the people.

#### 4.6 Importance of Cultural Anthropology

My organization, that is, the COCIN community mission responded to another model after using the praxis model which did not work well, and the model responded to is the anthropological model. Cultural Anthropology is of an important tool for the work of reaching out among those that are unreached. It's an easier way for the missionaries in crossing cultural barriers in sharing the gospel. "Discipline is a science concerned with discovering order in God's creation. These discoveries, help the missionary when entering another culture, which is the very nature of the work of the missionary" (Kraft, 1996, 54). Cultural Anthropology helps the missionary gain a perspective culture that will enable him/her to enter another culture with the least amount of culture shock. It will also prepare the missionary to enter the new field as a first, as a learner instead of a teacher and to be able to find a proper status in the new culture.

"Anthropology is the study of humans to understand them in many different contexts and it is a behavioral science in studying people in the real world. Cultural Anthropology deals with culture as a whole and its related systems. These studies are important to several areas of mission work including Bible translation and de-collateralizing theology in bringing the message in a contextualized manner. Anthropology developed over time under diverse venues beginning with Herodotus who studied in- Greek cultures. Then it developed further under Darwin and under Franz Boas who developed the concepts of exploration for the study of anthropology. Later Missionary Anthropology developed to assist the church in crossing cultures for the work of missions "Enculturation is the learning process whereby children and adults internalize their culture thereby developing their identity in the group. This process occurs early in life through adjustment and later through different forms of education. Acculturation is the learning of the appropriate behavior and concepts in another culture, not the person's original culture. In this process, culture shock can occur wherein the person has a negative emotional response to the new culture from one-sided nods and norms between the person's old and new culture.

Assimilation occurs as the person in the new culture takes on the total lifeway of the new culture realizing that he/she may never return to the old culture. An important aspect of study in this discipline is the study of language. One aspect of communication is verbal which uses sounds and systems to develop grammar and syntax. Language is also symbolic, and its purpose is to communicate intangible concepts from one person to another. All languages can express an abstract concept. Language is the servant of the culture and thereby language procurement relates to understanding that culture. Communication also includes nonverbal language, which uses symbols to transfer signals" (Anthony 2010, 36).

#### 4.7 Biblical Analysis for the Anthropological Model

In the Anthropological Model, the source can be traced in the Bible. Understanding God as creator and redeemer can help us increase our respect for both man and God who becomes a man and invited us into his inner circle (John 15: 15). The psalmist asks, "what is a man?" and concluded that we are "but little less than God" (Psalms 8: 4- 5). Jesus becomes a man and trusted man despite having no reason to trust or relate with man yet, he did and entrusted man with the task of carrying on his work after him.

The example of Paul's visit to Athens in Acts 17:16 where he met the people worshipping Idols is a lesson for missions. Paul did not start by condemning the people but first, he studied the environment anthropologically to know the culture before presenting the gospel to them after recognizing their faith. Klaus in his lecture said, "In using anthropology model, you go as a learner, stay with people, study their culture before you apply the gospel after you might have studied them" (Lecture notes 2018). As a missionary working among the Zarandawa community, I agree with Klaus. Anthropology model has been useful than the Praxis model that was used first. Bevan's in his writing sampled out some scriptural reference to prove that anthropology Bible base, (Matt. 15: 21-28, Mark 7: 24-30, John 3: 16). Jesus Himself did apply the anthropological model in his ministry by living among the people Matthew 15; 21- 28, Mark 7: 24-30. "For God so love the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3: 16). God himself is anthropological, through sending his Son into the world to die for our sins. Anthropology model is a relationship between the sending missionary and the community the missionary is sent to evangelize.

Jesus Christ took the form of human being and dwelled amongst the people he intended to save by becoming emotionally like them, He was circumcised, He cried ate like them because of hunger, He listens to people's problems (John 1:14, Mark 11:12, John 11: 35, Luke 2:21). According to the researcher, this is an

anthropological model of contextualization in which the message of God is brought to the people using that which they can better understand just like the parable of the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10.25-37). Bevan's said, "Anthropological model start where people are, with people's real Questions and interests, rather than imposing question of another context" (Bevan's 2012, 60).

#### 4.8 Missiological Implication

"Paul sought to be all things to all people" (1cor 9:20-21). He sought to be taken seriously the customs of whatever people he was among, in order to use these customs as vehicles for communicating the gospel" (Kraft 1996, 80). Missionaries need to follow the footstep of Paul by adopting the cultural norms of the people, and studying it order to penetrate such a culture with the gospel, using the custom as vehicles for communicating the gospel. The issue of Zarandawa community of giving the calabash to the deceased is very important having stayed with the people. It can be a means of leading them to where Jesus said that they should be no more hunger and thirsty (Rev 7:16-17). God will provide every necessity for each one.

Having been staying with them in humility and learned from them, the missionary's needs to disciple a community gradually. People that have lost their beloved one can be disciple and giving hope of eternal reunion with their loved once where there will be no death and weeping. The people need to be taught about the values of believers' fellowship in heaven (Rev.21:4). Hiebert had this to say, "The most effective cross-cultural communication takes place when missionaries and nationals from the intimate relationship and work as a team such shared efforts accomplish the major portion of the missionary task" (Hiebert, 1985, 235). As Hiebert said for any effective mission is to have an intimate relationship and intimate relationship answered half of your problem of the mission work as a missionary because you will get to know them and they will get to know you. First Corinthians 9, is "a famous passage on Paul's missionary method. The primary Focus in the passage is on his decision to lay down his rights for the sake of the gospel" (Anthony 2010, 36). Herbert Paul G. says "The twentieth century protestant missionaries began to stress the need for transformations in people's beliefs. People had to belief in the deity. The Virgin birth, the death and resurrection of Christ to be saved, they had to repent inwardly of their sins then seek the salvation Christ was offering to those who belief." (Hiebert 2008, 11). To see the impact of contextualization in reaching out the gospel to Zarandawa not even Zarandawa along any cross-cultural reaching out of the gospel the missionary must learn to humble himself or herself and lays down his or her life so that people may see the reality of the message of the gospel.

## 5.0 FURTHER RECOMMENDATION

I saw as an opportunity of presenting the gospel to the unreached, by knowing and learning from the culture anthropologically. Let us follow the footsteps of our Master Jesus. "honor a people's culture not to wrest them from it just as he entered the cultural life of first-century Palestine in order to communicate with people." (Kraft 1996, 32). Missionaries are to enter the cultural matrix of the people we seek to win if we must witness effectively to human beings, we have to take account of culture in what these human beings live anthropologically.

It is a great privilege that God give to me to recommend especially to my colleague's missionaries that we are working in the vineyard of the Lord and that we should learn how to live with people with humility so that we understand them through their culture. The culture was created by God and God himself allowed his word to be written in Greek and Hebrew cultures. Kraft said. "to me, the most helpful analogy is to suggest that most culture is like most people never perfect, yet adequate to survive and valid to the respect (1998,76).

The research has helped me to know that I have no monopoly of knowing. When missionaries claim monopoly of knowledge of anthropology, the aim of the work is defeated. Since I discovered that my organization is into mission of reaching out to people with the gospel, my recommendation is that the organization should send missionaries for a longer period in a setting community. As far as anthropology is to go to the people, live among them, learn from them, love them, start with what they know and build on what they have. When the mission is being carried in that aspect, the gospel will remain in the hearts of the people. Paul was a missionary and the letters of Paul was part of his missionary strategy. Even without the physical presence of Paul his letters were also a message to the people. "Paul was seldom able to stay long in the city because of opposition and persecution. When he could, as in Ephesus, he stayed longer. Wherever people came Faith, he established churches and appointed elders" (Pratt et al 2014, 62). As Missionary, Paul's style of life is of great help because staying with the people will give one the opportunity to train them and give them instruction even if you are not there the church remains steadfast.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Contextualization of reaching out with the gospel among the unreached is not an option to Christianity but a necessity. The six models of contextualizing the gospel are important but for the case of Zarandawa community, anthropology had played a very good role in contextualizing among the unreached people of Zarandawa. Even though the researcher is not claiming that the anthropology is the most perfect model, every model works effectively best on the situation of the community. Anthropology is not the final solution but it has helped in impacting contextualizing the gospel among the Zarandawa people. The bible is the final authority.

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