

“ Spy ” : Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa

著者(英)	Ichiro Tomiyama
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“Spy”: Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa

TOMIYAMA Ichirō

Osaka University

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1. VIOLENCE AND SUBJECTS

The process of annexing the Ryukyus to Japan did not end when Matsuda Michiyuki, chief secretary of the Home Ministry (Naimushō), led 560 troops into the islands and proclaimed the establishment of Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. Even after Matsuda's arrival, the Qing government expressed its opposition to the “Disposal of the Ryukyus” (Ryukyu Shobun, as the 1879 military invasion was called) and plans were floated to split off the Miyako and Yaeyama island groups to Chinese jurisdiction. These negotiations with the Qing over national boundaries were finally settled only in a military confrontation, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. This process of annexing the Ryukyus reveals that from the very beginning, the borders of the modern Japanese state were established as part of an imperialist expansion.

After the annexation, however, Okinawa was gradually brought into line with other prefectures in a process that began when it became subject to the Conscription Law of 1898, land reform from 1899 to 1903, the Election Law of 1912, and a final administrative regularization in 1921. Thus, the Ryukyus became Okinawa Prefecture. This violent annexation and the subsequent rapid political assimilation are important matters to keep in mind when considering the place of Okinawa in the modern nation-state. That is, as long as we look at things from the perspective of the political system, Okinawa is always Okinawa Prefecture, a single region in the modern nation-state.

According to Anthony Giddens, political assimilation within the nation-state establishes the state's monopoly over violence [GIDDENS 1985]. Violence is unilaterally possessed by the state and all other forms of violence, no matter what their purpose, are held as illegitimate. If we work from this perspective, the application of the Conscription Law to Okinawa in 1898 was an important turning

point. But as Martin Shaw points out, Giddens's theory overlooks the problem of violent confrontation and suppression within the modern nation-state [SHAW 1987, 1989]. Put another way, to explain the assimilation of Okinawa and the administrative determination of what lies inside and what outside the national borders as simply a matter of monopolizing violence is to already exclude the possibility of violent resistance or the existence of violence that appears in a variety of forms not controlled by the state.

Another important problem is that Giddens makes a distinction between violence as a means monopolized by the state and the state itself as the subject that possesses violence and determines its ends. Giddens is not the only one who sees violence as a means and imagines behind it a subject who has a purpose: many who theorize violence fall into this trap. Violence is not a means, a tool possessed by a subject with a purpose. The division of violence and the subject overlooks the way in which the use of violence and the constitution of the subject are inseparable. What I am trying to think through here are two very problematic discoveries on violence. One is the issue of ceremonial violence, which problematizes both the use of violence and the constitution of subjects [TANAKA 1998], and the other is the problem raised by Walter Benjamin of the realm of violence that exceeds the system of means and purposes [BENJAMIN 1986].

As I mentioned above, the negotiations with Qing China over national boundaries finally ended in the military confrontation of the Sino-Japanese War. But the process was not strictly the kind of violent confrontation between states that this name implies. Ifa Fuyū (1876–1947), who at the time of the war was a student in the Okinawa Normal Middle School, wrote the following in an essay called “The Trends of Ryukyuan History,” which was included in his 1911 publication *Ko-Ryukyu*:

No one can resist the trends of the times. Those who do not wish to die must obey. First one person was Japanized, then a second and finally, by the time the Sino-Japanese War was wrapping up, one heard a chorus of hurrahs for the empire from a land where people had formerly ridiculed the Meiji government [IFA 1911: 96].

Rumors had circulated in Okinawa at the time of the Sino-Japanese War that the Qing army was coming to drive the Japanese army away. In response, merchants and administrators who had come down to the islands from Japan armed themselves with guns and swords, formed self-defense groups to supplement the forces of the police and army, and planned attacks on local residents. The voices that once “ridiculed the Meiji government” were now made to cry “hurrah for the empire” because of nothing other than the violence that the police and these self-defense groups had employed to control Okinawan society. This was what was behind Ifa's statement, “No one can resist the trends of the times. Those who do not wish to die must obey.”

Those who read Ifa's words must stretch their imaginations to recognize the

effects of the violence he encountered. For Ifa, violence was not a means possessed by subjects with a purpose; for him, violence was something continuously felt and feared. This violence was more the disordered, informal violence that springs from everyday life than it was a force organized by the state. The term "self-defense group" reveals this fact most clearly. It was precisely the fear born out of the violence inherent in the everyday that produced the subject known as the "Japanese." In Ifa's "hurrah for the empire," we can hear the cry of a fear of violence and a desire for a subjectivization that might, somehow, erase that fear.

Kim Seong Nae, a researcher who studies shamanism on Cheju Island, has tried to investigate the massacre of Cheju Islanders that began on April 3, 1948, as exemplifying the realm of violence not controlled by the state [KIM 1998a, 1998b]. Kim argues that rather than being a result of a war clearly fought between two states, the Cheju massacre took place through violence in the private realm in a geographically peripheral site. This understanding of violence treats today's massacres as things that arise in accordance with political categories of race, ethnicity, or sex, rather than as part of the politics of international law. Thus, even if a particular massacre is carried out according to a secret, organized plan, the employment of violence takes the form of racism or sexism. In other words, the killing does not begin with the proclamation of war, but arises from within everyday life.

Of course, the massacres that began on Cheju Island on April 3 occurred as the cold war was being constructed in East Asia, under an American imperialism that was forming an anti-Communist bloc and a Japanese imperialism that had cast off responsibility for colonialism and was preparing for a new economic invasion. But once we grant the importance of this kind of explanation, the problems of understanding how it was that the violence in this massacre was inflicted by civilian-soldiers and right-wing terrorists, and of how to understand the particular violence inflicted on women, provide us with an important route to an analysis of violence.

While sharing Kim's problematic, I would like to consider the expansion of the Battle of Okinawa that occurred three years before the April Third Incident. To state my thesis in advance, the realm of the "spy" will be the key issue. What is it that we shall find residing inside this terrible word?

2. SPY

1) Lifestyle Reform

If we understand the wartime mobilization system to have progressed from the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement (Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin Undō) to the Imperial Rule Assistance System (Yokusan Taisei) and finally to the People's Volunteer Corps, the Okinawan case was the extreme, going all the way to the mobilization of the People's Volunteer Corps. But in fact, it would be more

accurate to say that the Okinawan mobilization preceded the concept of the People's Volunteer Corps. In the Okinawan mobilization, military laws, which were never supposed to be applied to noncombatants, were gradually expanded to cover the civilian population.

When we think of Okinawa within this system of mobilization, we cannot overlook the fact that mobilization was aimed at and developed in advance of the conception of the People's Volunteer Corps. How was this mobilization accomplished when it lacked any legal basis? To leap ahead to my conclusion, Okinawan mobilization had layered within it the realms of the experience of labor power, identity politics, and violence. Or, to phrase it the other way around, when we consider what constituted mobilization, we find that that none of these various levels should be discussed separately.

The National Spiritual Mobilization Movement in Okinawa was characterized by a heavy lean toward "lifestyle reform" (*seikatsu kaizen*). What was this lifestyle reform? It was aimed at such details of everyday life as the Okinawan language, bare feet, pig toilets, graves, bone washing, surnames, divination, shamans, clothing, alcoholic consumption, sexual play (*moashibi*), songs on the *sanshin*, celebrations, hygiene problems, and tardiness. In general, lifestyle reform in this period referred to frugality and savings and became ossified in the Imperial Rule Assistance system; it thus was not taken seriously. But the emphasis in Okinawa on the smallest details of everyday life is an important point in our consideration of the disciplinization that brought about war mobilization.

First of all, the various items included within "lifestyle reform" were not problems unique to this particular period. The Okinawan language and the local customs and manners that were labeled "peculiar" had been targeted by customs reform movements since the later years of the Meiji era. Even after the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement was well under way in the 1940s, the same items—particularly the Okinawan language and hygiene practices—were still marked for reform. That is, there may have been different relative emphases at different times, but the same elements were always taken up in every lifestyle reform movement in Okinawa's modern period.

Nevertheless, if we uniformly portray the entire period from the Meiji era to the Battle of Okinawa (April–June 1945) as the era of "imperial subjectification" (*kōminka*), we mislocate the problem. The effort to ban the Okinawan language, for example, was carried out to an unprecedented degree throughout the 1930s. Until then, the prohibition had been limited to the classroom. But it was expanded in the 1930s to include the inside of the home itself, the site of daily life. The linguist Hokama Shuzen recalled, "When I entered elementary school in 1933, I lived a double linguistic life with dialect spoken at home and standard Japanese spoken in school. But my younger siblings, who were elementary school students in 1941 and 1942, spoke standard Japanese whether they were at home or in school" [HOKAMA 1981: 338]. To understand the lifestyle reforms between the beginning of the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement and the Battle of Okinawa, we must

consider why it penetrated to the level of everyday life. The key, as I shall discuss below, is the period of the so-called *Sotetsu Hell* of the 1920s, when Okinawans were forced to leave their prefecture as labor power.

Another important element in considering the pervasiveness of the lifestyle reform is the style of that penetration. The first thing we can observe is that from the Meiji period on, speakers of dialect were made criminals. At the same time, control of classroom education increased as teachers used "dialect boards" to cultivate snitches; and police regularly interrogated shamans. As lifestyle reform was strengthened, its enforcement moved beyond the schoolroom and the police box to fall under the management of such organizations as the Greater Japan Women's Association and youth groups. This trend continued up until the formation of the Okinawa branch of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association on December 10, 1940. In the process, teachers, village heads, and bureaucrats took leadership roles.

What I would like to emphasize here is that the lifestyle reform movement was not simply led and enforced from above. In fact, the ideal lifestyle was widely accepted and thus was viewed as daily morality. As a result, those who spoke Okinawan were exposed not merely by the movement's leaders or policemen but also by one another, as they surveilled their peers as "moral criminals."

In this surveillance, morals were formed in the concrete details of daily life. Moreover, because these morals did not rest on a clear principle, the surveillance eventually expanded to encompass the entirety of daily life. To the degree that morals took root and were seen as common sense, control became anonymous. And in the space between these morals and the subject, a relation was established in which the self was led by morals. But instead of being guided by a uniform determination of moral lessons or standards, each individual had to rely on concrete practice. Therefore, in analyzing the lifestyle reform movement we should not concentrate on discovering the training in imperial subjectification ideology or on directly finding the birth of the imperial subject. What needs to be made clear is the way the self is "guided" on the basis of people's moral practice.

2) The Experience of Labor Power

As I mentioned earlier, the moral practice of "self-guidance" was related to the conditions in Okinawa that produced massive emigration out of the prefecture from the 1920s on. The Okinawan regional economy disintegrated as the global restructuring of the sugar market forced many people to go outside the prefecture for work. A large portion of these emigrants headed for Osaka, the Japanese city that then had the largest population of Okinawans. It was under these conditions that the president of Kishiwada Textiles, a company whose employees included a considerable number of these people from Okinawa, declared: "If they will work cheaply, it is all the same to me whether they are Cheju Islanders or Ryukyuan" [*Osaka Mainichi Shinbun*, Sept. 23, 1928].

We can clearly see in the statement of this capitalist that as far as capital was

concerned, Okinawans were the same as the Cheju Islanders from Korea; they were both labor, and cheap labor at that. The people who left Okinawa were sought as embodiments of labor power more than anything else. The problem is how these bodies-as-labor-power were rendered into language and recognized by the people themselves. We might also ask what kind of practices this recognition encouraged. It is this point that I wish to make when I speak of the experience of labor power. What was the discursive construction of their experience of having no choice but to live as labor power? What we can gather from the life histories of these men and women is the stress on industriousness. They were told that the best way to find better-paying work was to work hard. But the problem was proving their industriousness. What kind of words did they use to provide evidence of their labor skills?

Beginning around the middle of the 1930s, Okinawans in Osaka advocated a lifestyle reform among themselves. This movement set "Okinawan manners and customs"—such as speaking the Okinawan language, drinking Okinawan liquor (*awamori*), playing Okinawan musical instruments (the *sanshin*) at parties, wearing Okinawan clothes, and serving Okinawan foods—as the things that should be reformed. At the same time, being "Japanese" was established as the goal of reform. In other words, the concrete items of daily life targeted were the very things that composed the "Okinawan" who must be eradicated. The goal of this reform movement was to be "Japanese."

In this kind of lifestyle reform, industriousness and labor skills were judged according to the signs of the "Okinawan" who must be eradicated and the "Japanese" that one aspired to be. Each of the items of daily life earmarked for improvement by the lifestyle reformers came to be associated with lazy and nonindustrious workers. Conversely, their eradication was taken as the proof of industriousness. In heeding the command to "construct oneself as a moral subject" in the lifestyle reform movement, the people of Okinawan birth formed themselves into subjects disciplined as outstanding workers. This was an operation directly related to proletarianization. In this way, "lifestyle reform" was a process of transforming the experience of having no choice but struggling through life as labor power into language and morality.

But that was not all. Because the measurement and understanding of industriousness was based on the marks of "Okinawans" and "Japanese," everything—from such bodily actions as speaking in Okinawan speech to such quotidian activities as preparing food and raising children—became materials to be interrogated in order to judge labor skill. Here the relationship between industriousness and its signs was reversed. Industriousness was not measured and understood according to its signs, but the signs produced industriousness. The intimidation that affected the signs of a daily life lived as "Okinawans" disciplined labor and produced industriousness. That is, the movement to show proof of industriousness ended up itself constructing industriousness.

3) Identity

In the lifestyle reform movement, there was no claim to a self-identity as “Okinawan” that could resist the fact of being discriminated against by Japanese as an Other. Rather, the Okinawan was constructed in the movement as the Other within the Self that had to be eradicated. This kind of work on oneself to construct the Self through introspection (in other words, a self-discursive operation) was the key characteristic of the lifestyle reform movement.

This self-discursiveness was connected with the formation of households among people of Okinawan birth in Osaka. That the items marked for reform often pertained to practices that were related to gender, such as providing food and raising children, reveals lifestyle reform also to be the discovery of the home life as the object to be worked on. As an operation that produced the ideal home life and the imaginary figure of “the Japanese,” lifestyle reform sought to organize the practices of daily life. Therefore, the goal was not simply the national identity of “the Japanese” but the ideal home life as well. Because of that, “the Japanese” were imagined and validated by the practices of daily life.

As people became trapped in an existence as labor power, lifestyle reform gave birth to labor discipline. But this disciplinization was experienced and articulated as related to an identity, to becoming “Japanese.” This operation created the kind of ambivalent identity described by Homi Bhabha in which the Other—here the “Okinawan” who is not “Japanese”—is formed within the Self [BHABHA 1994: chap. 4]. This unstable identity can become stable only by endlessly sweeping away the internal “Okinawan” Other. But contrary to the concrete practices of daily life, this also produces the fantasy of an ideal “Japanese” that can never be attained. The “Japanese” of the lifestyle reform existed only as an imaginary entity within the self-discursive practices of daily life. So it is important to note that this ambivalent identity gives birth to identity politics at the same time that it is the experience of labor power.

However, the employment of violence is endlessly anticipated in this mode of identity. During the lifestyle reform movement, a certain teacher noted: “At the time of the Great Kantō Earthquake there were many Koreans who were murdered simply because they couldn’t speak standard Japanese. Be careful that you aren’t mistaken for them and killed” [OKINAWA-KEN RŌDŌ KUMIAI 1972: 69].

The “Okinawan” formed as an internal Other in the practices of the lifestyle reform was simultaneously a nervous system that felt and was constantly subjected to violence. There is an Other within, which should be killed!

4) Spies and Lawmaking Violence

In the process leading to the Battle of Okinawa, the governing mechanism shifted from a top-down wartime administration operating on a framework of community and neighborhood associations to a battlefield administration centered on the 32nd Army. In this latter framework of military power, the military could

command civilians. As a consequence, we must investigate the lifestyle reform that took place in the period immediately before the outbreak of the Battle of Okinawa in its connection to the military demands that came from battlefield mobilization. As we shall see, battlefield mobilization developed by being grafted onto lifestyle reform.

The idea of the "spy" played a decisive role in the expansion of military law to the civilian population. Those who did not obey military law were identified as spies and executed. This became a form of intimidation, giving people no choice but to submit to military law. The Japanese army forced compliance with military orders by presenting people with the choice of either obeying orders or being executed as spies. Many people were killed in the process. But—and here I risk being misunderstood as downplaying the cruelty of those murders—in our exploration of the spies as a problem of discipline, what is even more important is the legitimacy of this label signifying a deviance from military law. If this discourse had not circulated among the civilian population—if it was not obeyed or acknowledged as legitimate—spies would not have been a problem of discipline. "Spy" would have been nothing more than a word used by the Japanese army when it threatened violence.

The fundamental meaning of "spy" is not found in the military control of activities intended to aid the enemy. Its essence lies in the application of the label. In other words, there is no objective evaluation of individuals' activities that leads to their identification as "spies." Rather, it is based on nothing more than the consensus among those who attach the label. If there is an agreement that a certain group is composed of spies, then spies are established. This mechanism is significant because of the way that the intimidation of deviance effected by the label "spy" thrusts discipline into the core of the group so identified.

Such close scrutiny of the term "spy" can help us understand just how important the problem of counterespionage is in the expansion of military law. Moreover, the fact that battlefield mobilization was deliberately grafted onto the project of lifestyle reform suggests the possibility of rereading the "moral criminals" of the lifestyle reform movement as spies. Identifying speakers of Okinawan as spies, whatever demands the military might have made that civilians participate in counterespionage efforts, is hardly unrelated to daily life prior to the Battle of Okinawa, when speakers of Okinawan were treated as moral criminals. Furthermore, what the shift from "moral criminals" to "spies" signifies is that the discipline of daily life, constructed by the deviance of the moral criminal, transferred over to military law.

Fukuchi Hiroaki depicts the scene of his home village of Kinyoka, in Ōgimi, at the beginning of the 1940s as follows:

Rumors of spies flew about incessantly. Before we knew it, everyone looked at others in suspicion, as if they could be spies. When travelers passed through, or when unknown peddlers came to the village, people whispered to each other,

"He entered so-and-so's house." There was even one person who went straight to the policeman's office to report that there was a suspicious signal at such-and-such a place and such-and-such a time. The facts were unclear, but it turned out to be somebody coming down from the mountains burning a torch on the path home. Children threw themselves into playing at catching spies. Whenever an unknown person passed through, the children would tail him. There were even times when the village head or the policeman would be tailed, but instead of scolding the children, they would praise them for their good work. In the end, both adults and children resolutely turned suspicious eyes on people from other places [FUKUCHI 1985: 20].

These conditions just before the Battle of Okinawa, in which children played fervently at catching spies, were an extension of the restrictions on Okinawan speech. From here, it was just one short step to the expansion of military law that was responsible for battlefield mobilization.

The significance of leaders in battlefield mobilization also becomes clearer in relation to this counterespionage. To those who had provided moral leadership in the surveillance and guidance of "moral criminals" were added local reservists, who were established as leaders in counterespionage. For example, as the Kunigami Division of the army developed a project of "planting informant cells" in every district of Kunigami, the division also organized counterespionage "Patriotic Corps" among the residents. In addition to the existing leadership of officials and schoolteachers with a middle school or higher education, a large number of local reservists who had graduated from higher elementary school also participated.

Without a doubt, the military regulations related to battlefield mobilization were grafted onto the regulations related to lifestyle reform. But this did not mean that the discipline of daily life was simply transferred to military discipline in its existing form. Transforming the quotidian world into a battlefield required adding reservists—men who had formerly been soldiers—to the leadership and making the leap from reading deviance as "moral criminality" to labeling it "spying." That is, wartime mobilization became a reality as moral criminals were translated into spies and as a new leadership—composed of teachers, policemen, and reservists—appeared in order to control these so-called spies. We can discern here the working of the violence that prepared the ground for the Battle of Okinawa.

In the middle of the fighting, the 32nd Army issued the order that "those persons speaking Okinawan are to be seen as engaged in espionage and should be executed." The surveillance of moral criminals in the lifestyle reform movement became violence against spies, and as people were killed the mobilization system was constructed. I would like to view this use of violence, which made its appearance to control spies, as illustrating Walter Benjamin's concept of "lawmaking violence." Lawmaking violence, whose "characteristic function is not the promulgation of laws but the assertion of legal claims for any decree" [BENJAMIN 1986: 287], corresponds precisely to violence directed toward spies.

This kind of violence is hidden in the background in society. But, as Ifa felt,

it is ceaselessly anticipated within identity politics and the experience of an existence as labor power.

3. THE MEMORY OF THE BATTLEFIELD

In the final analysis, battlefield mobilization is a purposeful discipline. However, its development gives birth as well to an estrangement from military law.

Defenders, faced with military orders that were hard to accept, escaped through the use of Okinawan: the sudden cry of "*Rika shimankai!*" (Let's go back to the village!) in the middle of a group suicide; Okinawan, used to persuade others to live during talk of suicide; criticism of Japanese soldiers in Okinawan; the singing of Ryukyuan folk songs repeated every night on the battlefield. This world of Okinawan speech, found scattered among the memoirs of war, was forbidden by the lifestyle reform as a moral crime, and on the battlefield it became the mark of a spy. But the fact that Okinawan was sung and spoken on the battlefield reveals to us how speech and song ensured defection from military law and its companion, peacetime discipline. On the battlefield, Okinawan speech was truly the discourse of resistance.

The head of the agricultural cooperative on Kume Island, a Mr. Yoshihama, recorded his thoughts as battle conditions there took a turn for the worse:

We can no longer believe we will win the battle. The Japanese parliament has already abandoned Okinawa.... It is time that the Okinawan people plan for their own existence! The great task of the Okinawan people's existence cannot be conceived naively. We must live on! No matter what happens. We must continue suffering until we survive! Can we allow the extinction of our people? How can we possibly stand it if the entire Okinawan people make a meaningless and worthless sacrifice? Let us live! [YOSHIHAMA 1945].

We find here an intense resentment toward Japan and the Japanese army. Accompanying that resentment is the rise of the identity of the "Okinawan people." As Okinawans questioned their past, in light of this resentment, what appeared before them was an Okinawan people who, in the worst case, would not hesitate to be labeled spies. As people withdrew from military law, Okinawan speech and song became the discourse of resistance, as I have already said. But it is not hard to imagine that it also bore resentment. Okinawan speech and the Okinawan people, both of which took form on the battlefield when the past was interrogated in the light of resentment, became the starting point for the dissolution of legal violence as the massacre of spies continued.

Kume Island, where Yoshihama was the head of the agricultural cooperative, was also well known as the place where the Japanese troops under Commander Kayama massacred a large number of local residents. As the massacre was proceeding, Yoshihama greeted a village meeting as follows: "Whatever happens, we must live through this, each according to his own power. Those who survive

must form the next people’s organization” [YOSHIHAMA 1945].

Yoshihama’s “people’s organization” and the “Okinawan people” discovered on the battlefield should be understood together. Yoshihama was also the man who decided to arm the residents and conduct a mop-up campaign against Kayama’s troops who had fled to the mountains and continued their massacres of local residents even after the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration. Kume Island was not the only place where armed civilians battled Japanese troops. Such struggles probably took place everywhere in the final stages of the Battle of Okinawa. This new beginning also contained the potential to lead to a struggle against the Japanese army.

What is clear is that the previous process of becoming “Japanese” was resentfully reconsidered on the battlefield, and Okinawan speech made its appearance within hearts that were turned toward the past. What kind of practice was this “becoming Japanese”? It was the construction of bodies as labor power under capitalism. It was the fact of possessing bodies that could be surveilled and mobilized. Therefore, the Okinawan speech and resentment of the battlefield must be understood as a ground from which Okinawans reject the surveillance and violence of capitalist society. This is specifically articulated in the personal feelings conjured up by Okinawan speech and resentment—themselves produced by a separation from the “collectivity” known as “the Japanese”—as they flow into the new communal.

The new communal is neither a preexisting tradition nor a small world of its own, unconnected to modernity. I may even venture to say that it is articulated because of the continuing desire for modernity. It is the structured past *and* the memory of the past. It is something that all who had been related to the process of becoming “Japanese” share, and it is an idea that makes possible a communality with the people who were killed by the violence born of the process of becoming “Japanese.” But how might we speak of the possibilities in this common ground? It can only be that in the memories of the Battle of Okinawa we find the grounding of the new communal that faces toward our future.

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