

## Chapter 7 : Monarchic political science

*A people's state [Folkstat] is a state in which the government represents the the people. The people's state is often embodied in a leadership personality or a limited elite.*

Metapedia (2020)

A people's state is a floating concept with vaguely positive associations. Here it is used to designate monarchies where a ruler formally or *de facto* rules with the support of the people, but there is no balance of power. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Swedish military state, the enlightened monarchy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the constitutional monarchy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were all people's states. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept fell into disrepute. France under Napoleon, Germany under Hitler and Russia under Stalin were also people's states.

The alternative designation is *populist autocracy* or *caesarism* with the characteristic that the ruler encourages criticism of the privileged with the intention of portraying himself as an acceptable compromise between Scylla & Charybdis. Both protecting the people from the upper class and the upper class from the people. The debate about the "true nature" of Swedish monarchy is still ongoing, though.<sup>1</sup>

Here is described: (1) The Swedish Military State. (2) The Restricted Monarchy. (3) The Enlightened Monarchy. (4) Hegel's "perfect prince". (5) "The monarchic principle." (6) The Bourgeois State. (7) "The English compromise". (8) "Parliamentarianism from above." (9) Neo-monarchism.

The impression is that Swedish history & political science is highly biased in its depiction of monarchy. Monarchs are despots. Non-despotic monarchs are non-entities. There is no middle ground. Here is rather emphasized the importance of legitimate rule.

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### The Swedish Military State (1563-1721)

During the inter-war period, there was a debate about the popular support for the Swedish policy of Empire. The classic of the subject is Axel Strindberg (1937) "Peasant Squalor and Dreams of Empire". The conclusion of the book was that the Empire in reality was organized robbery & Gothicism a way to defend the venture.<sup>2</sup> Later research has rather talked about unjustified fear of the neighbouring states & that attack was the best defence.<sup>3</sup> Strindberg seems to have had a point, though:

As the kings were in the field, the power of the home nobility grew and the peasants aligned themselves with the royal house to limit it. This policies, however, only worked occasionally. John III & Queen Christina aligned themselves with the nobles and during the guardianship governments it was even nobility who ruled. To restore the balance of power, the peasants also supported autocracy. In exchange, the privileges of the nobles were reduced.

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<sup>1</sup> Nilsson 2017: ss. 115-134.

<sup>2</sup> Boëthius

<sup>3</sup> Gustafsson 2012: ss. 86-87.

The Swedish military state thus alternated between two political systems: Caesarism (=feudal autocracy supported by the commoner estates) & Estates rule (=weak ruler or guardian-rule; de facto a noble republic). This continued even after the end of Empire. Liberty meant noble rule. Gustavian autocracy meant a people's state. 1809-1865 was the end of Estate rule. In 1914, the peasant right-wing had hopes that the people's state would replace party rule (or was at least thought to have such hopes). 1966 there were similar social democratic concerns about the so-called Tutaryd initiative.

The combination of support of the royal house & hatred of nobility has been difficult to explain from a Marxist point of view, King & nobility both belonged to the upper class, but is thus assumed to have a historical explanation. When King Gustaf V in his courtyard speech in 1914 referred to "From times so far back, that they are shrouded in the mystery of fairy tales, this kingdom has rested on the firm and unshakable trust between king and people" it was not taken out of the air, but described 350 years of class struggle between nobility and peasants, with the commoner estates in an unholy alliance with the royal house.<sup>4</sup>

The alternative, more peaceful explanation was assumed to be the regional self-government dating back to the Viking Age and/or that the feudal latifundia worked by serfs never gained ground in Sweden-Finland, but the self-employed yeoman dominated. A third hypothesis was that the Great Wars were in some sense "pro-democracy". The guardianship governments and the frequent dynastic changes (see Appendix 2) prevented a continental development into absolute monarchy. The Dynasties never had time to establish themselves until it was all over.

Starting with the inter-war period, the unique "Nordic democracy" was accepted as a correct "social democratic" interpretation of Swedish history. The criticism has been that this striking image is based more on rhetoric & wishful thinking than on research. The criticism of the criticism has been that the interpretation depends on what aspect of democracy is being studied.<sup>5</sup> The latest multi-dimensional definition of democracy (V-Dem) distinguishes electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative and equality democracy.

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### From the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the Congress of Vienna (1814): "The German Monarchy Debate"

The constitutional monarchies of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were not created in a political vacuum. In his treatise "The Monarchy in the Age of Liberty" (2009), Nordin refers to an ongoing debate:

Continental theorists of state law had long treated the monarchy as an institution whose symbolic value was not necessarily directly related to the scope of royal power. In Germany, according to historian Horst Dreitzel, they were mainly experimenting with three models of limited monarchy. According to the first, *monarchia pura*, the king's power was limited only by the constitutional framework. According to the second, *monarchia mixta*, there were several competing or balancing state bodies, corresponding to certain parts of the government. According to the third theory,

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<sup>4</sup> Villstrand 2009; Scherp 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Karlsson Schaffer 2010; Kurunmäkt & Strang red. 2010; Bengtsson 2019.

*monarchia limitata*, the monarch had to cooperate with various administrative bodies to implement his decrees.<sup>6</sup>

The enlightened monarchy appears as an example of *monarchia pura*. Montesquieu's power-sharing is an example of *monarchia mixta* where the king (in the American case the president) is one of several competing state bodies. The Swedish model is a *monarchia limitata* where the king's power is restricted by the Parliament.

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### Frederick II: Enlightened Monarchy

The term "enlightened monarch" has been in use since c. 1670 (then known as "the new doctrine") & involved a combination of autocracy & reform. Gustav III's father-in-law Frederick II of Prussia (1712-1786; "The philosopher on the throne") is considered to have been first. Gustaf III & Gustaf IV are also included.

The enlightened monarchy is usually seen as a phase in the transition between autocracy and parliamentarianism, but appears rather as an attempt to place the autocracy of the grace of God on a secular basis by emphasizing the state utility of the monarchy. The enthusiasm of philosophers and physiocrats for the phenomenon has been contagious. Even Charles XIV John & son Oscar I are usually depicted as enlightened monarchs.<sup>7</sup>

In 1790 Frederick II's collected works were published. Many of Charles John's later opinions are found verbatim in "An essay on the forms of national government and on the duties of the monarch" from 1777. It is also worthwhile to look for influences in Charles John's French circle of acquaintances. He socialized with "Napoleon dissidents" such as Juliette Récamier (1877-1849), Germaine de Staël (1766-1817) & Benjamin Constant (1767-1830), all of whom under the empire were forced into exile because of their enlightenment ideas. Récamier & de Staël each ran a salon. Constant was a journalist and political scientist, known for his ideas of the regent's indirect rule through laws and appointment powers rather than military decrees.

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### Hegel: "The Perfect Prince"

The German philosopher Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) included in his philosophy of law (1821) a frequently cited defence of the constitutional monarchy that the Sovereign has a neutral position above national special interests & that he (symbolically) represents the nation as a whole. The sovereignty is claimed in this way to guarantee the rights of the people. Critics like Karl Marx later emphasized the democratic deficit of the theory: With such a position, the sovereign does not represent the people or the nation (made up of the people) but only itself. Others have argued that Hegel became a victim of his own dialectic: Absolute Monarchy (=thesis), French Revolution (=antithesis), constitutional monarchy according to the 1791 French Constitution (=synthesis).

The literature on Hegel's legal philosophy is very extensive. The above reasoning is based on reviews & special articles (Diamond 2004; Cain 2015; Znoj 2017). There

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<sup>6</sup> Nordin 2009: ss. 270-271.

<sup>7</sup> Bluche 1968; Scott red. 1990.

is also a dissertation (Bosworth 1984 & 1991). Christopher Boström's theory of government seems to be a further development of Hegel's ideas.

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### Germany: "The Monarchic Principle"

In 1845, the German legal philosopher Friedrich Stahl (1802-1861) published a pamphlet "Das monarchische Princip", which can be summarized: Preferably some popular influence but certainly not popular rule! In practice, it meant a system of "non-parliamentary constitutionalism", in which, although there were general elections, the sovereigns were not bound by their parliament. Stahl's thinking had a great impact and from 1871 to 1918 became the "state ideology" of the German Empire. Prutsch makes some important points:

"In a political system committed to the monarchical principle, the right of the monarch to rule at his own discretion was not restricted. According to Stahl, the following elements were distinctive for the principle: 1) the monarch controlled not only the execution of laws, but all administration, and was hence entitled to issue regulations and decrees; 2) he alone had the right of initiative in legislation, the representative body only a right of petition; 3) the budgetary competences of the chambers had to be restricted; A full right of veto was unacceptable, since such a prerogative "calls the government itself into question , [...] [and] forces the prince to comply with the *Stände* everywhere". Above all, the monarchical principle demanded 4) "the prince has the right and power to reign himself". That implied ministers could never be politically, but only juridically responsible: ministerial responsibility serves only the purpose of "constitutionality as in England the purposes of parliamentary government." In the event of diverging interpretations of the constitution or a constitutional conflict "preserving the prestige of the monarch must, according to the monarchical principle, be the overriding principle". For Stahl, only the monarch had the ultimate right to interpret the law, as he was the father of the constitution both in the figurative and literal sense."<sup>8</sup>

The monarchic principle was difficult to apply in full, "hard to be God", as the Russians put it. The Germans therefore also discussed a compromise between the rule of law (=rule by law only) & police state (=implementation of legislation by a "self-perpetuating" bureaucracy). This would be made possible by strict hierarchies and precise job descriptions. In practice, however, there seems to have been a "semi-secret" addition of decrees, oral or implied instructions, rubber paragraphs & proxies. The system became widespread and is now known as "managed" or "guided democracy".

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The Prussian "state ideologue" Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) was even more adamant in his monarchic beliefs. It seems to have been rooted in the role of the monarchy in German unification. Treitschke's ideas of the monarchy as a cohesive force were also influential in Japan. I quote:

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<sup>8</sup> Prutsch 2013: ss. 191-192.

## ON MONARCHY

The will of the state is in a monarchy, the expression of the will of one man who wears the crown by virtue of the historic right of a certain family; with him the final authority rests. Nothing in a monarchy can be done contrary to the will of the monarch. In a democracy, plurality, the will of the people, expresses the will of the state. A monarchy excels any other form of government, including the democratic, in achieving unity and power in a nation. It is for this reason that monarchy seems so natural, and that it makes such an appeal to the popular understanding. We Germans had an experience of this in the first years of our new empire. How wonderfully the idea of a united Fatherland was embodied for us in the person of the venerable Emperor! How much it meant to us that we could feel once more: "That man is Germany; there is no doubting it."<sup>9</sup>

Although no written documentation of any kind exists, Stahl & Treitschke appear to have greatly influenced Queen Victoria (of Sweden). "The venerable Prussian emperor" was after all her grandfather. It has been assumed that Gustaf V held similar views, but no evidence of that exists. He was probably adversely affected by his mother, who was bitter that her home state of Nassau had been annexed by Prussia.

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### Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

Edmund Burke is known for his pamphlet *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). The thesis was that ideologically driven social transformation must necessarily fail because it would end up with everyone disagreeing on everything. There must be common standards and a state that upheld them. Even his opponents are well known: Mary Wolstonecraft "A Vindication of the Rights of Men" (1790) & Thomas Paine "Rights of Man" (1791). A side-track in the pamphlet was that law is made by the living on behalf of the living. Not for the unborn who are free to make their own laws. Each generation creates its own world. Burke's political science influence is thus to depoliticize politics. As he writes in his 1774 defence of acting on his own, when MP of Bristol:

Parliament is not a *Congress* of Ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an Agent and Advocate, against other Agents and Advocates; but Parliament is a *deliberative* Assembly of *one* Nation, with *one* Interest, that of the whole; where, not local Purposes, not local Prejudices ought to guide, but the general Good, resulting from the general Reason of the whole. You chuse a Member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not Member of Bristol, but he is a Member of *Parliament*.<sup>10</sup>

Burke's gentlemen's club has a hard time handling strong political conflicts, everything such is outsourced to newspapers, political parties & the like. Common institutions, in particular the monarchy, the church & the nation, are supposed to serve as a unifying force. All big decisions are enacted stepwise, often in silence, to keep the conflict level down. Burke has had a great influence on the Swedish social debate (see chapter 19), but he was not translated into Swedish until 1982. Boström's state ideology seems to have served the same purpose.

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<sup>9</sup> Treitschke 1958.

<sup>10</sup> Burke 1774.

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### Bentham & Mill: The bourgeoisie

There is no Bernadotte by the grace of God. Charles John supported the enlightenment. Oscar I and later regents are heavily influenced by utilitarians and liberal philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill whose ideas fit well into a modernized (=secular) monarchic ideology. For example, the original Lutheran paternalism could now be justified on the grounds that the goal of human action must be "as much prosperity and success for as many conscious beings as possible". Similar ideas have been a general trend, with the Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan in the 1970s even introducing the concept of "gross national happiness" as a state ideology.

There is no room to elaborate on the subject, but there are three conclusions relevant to the Swedish monarchy: (1) The Royal House and its monarchic environment is too small to support its own ideology. Foreign ideas are constantly working their way in. (2) The problems of state are eternal. The change is that old solutions are motivated by new arguments. (3) "The destructive forces of time" are not quite as destructive as the Republicans are happy to tell you. Just as there is an "eternal Russia", there obviously is an "eternal Sweden".

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### Bagehot & Dicey: The English compromise

1688-1689, the Bill of Rights, also known as the Glorious Revolution, transferred political power from the English Royal House to Parliament. However, it took long for the English Royal House to accept the consequences. First Queen Victoria could be forced into a completely passive role.<sup>11</sup> Journalist Walter Bagehot described the practice of 1867 in eight paragraphs:<sup>12</sup>

- [A distinction must be made between the efficient and the dignified constitution, meaning the internal workings of state and its public face. The public face (during Bagehot's time, Queen Victoria) has the task of legitimizing the decisions of the state in the population. For this to be possible, the monarch must symbolically behave as if the Bill of Rights did not exist. The consequences are developed below.
- The monarchy gains its strength by concentrating interest in a single person and by appealing to the emotions - in practice for the family & nation. The Republicans are weak because interest in them is divided among many people and because they appeal to reason. Or: Its mystery is its life. We must not bring the Queen into the combat of politics, or she will cease to be revered by all combatants; she will become one combatant among many."
- The monarchy derives its strength from the "monarchic mysticism" of tradition and religion. Many factors contribute to the mystery: Genealogy that provides continuity across generations, the lifelong office that makes the monarch a lasting feature of

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<sup>11</sup> Kuhn 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Bagehot 1873.

individual people's lives and the lack of information. The latter applies both to the office (diffuse responsibility, immunity, the position "above the parties") and to the person (alone, isolated, reserved, infallible). Or: Its mystery is its life. We must not let daylight in upon magic." [This is sometimes interpreted as meaning that monarchism is a (political) religion, but that is doubtful. The emotions however run high & are difficult to distinguish from a personality cult.]

- The monarch is the top of the social pyramid and an easily understood national symbol for the uneducated masses. The splendour & rhetoric of the court reinforces this.
- The Sovereign is a moral role model.
- The monarchy is a bulwark against democracy. It conceals how the society's elites fight for power. If the people knew what was going on, they would demand participation!
- The monarchy is a de facto republic in disguise because of the political powerlessness of the ruler. [A Montesquieu quote.]
- And finally: 'To state the matter shortly, the sovereign has, under a constitutional monarchy such as ours, three rights - the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn.' According to the Constitution, the Sovereign still had a number of reserve powers, but it was unclear whether he or she could exercise them. In fact, they have not been used since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They rather belong to the "dignified constitution", not to the "efficient constitution", that is, they are purely symbolic. The Swedish equivalent is that the regent still has some honorary positions & ditto assignments (see chapter 15: The Torekov compromise).

Bagehot has been difficult to place politically, he is supposed to be a liberal, but his book "the English Constitution" is also quoted by monarchists. Karl Staaff was heavily influenced by its ideas & tried in 1906 & 1914 in a similar way to passivate Gustaf V as a public official, but keep him as a symbol, which however did not succeed until 1917-18 under his successor Nils Edén.<sup>13</sup> The later debate on the subject sprawls, but the arguments have in common that the monarch is no longer (from 1974) needed to legitimize the state's decisions.<sup>14</sup> (See also chapter 35).

Bagehot's very concrete observations about Queen Victoria's public role have created an ocean of "postmodern" speculation about the position of the monarchy between fact & faction. The shift itself is attributed to thinkers such as Lorenz von Stein and Angelo Camillo De Meis. Both eager in the national interest to give the monarchy a popular image - but in moderation.<sup>15</sup> A more dispassionate Marxist interpretation is that the glorious revolution was a revolution from above without popular support. The people retained their old beliefs. Which somehow must be handled.

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<sup>13</sup> Staaff 1914; Staaff 1917

<sup>14</sup> Tingsten 1963b; Craig 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Deploige & Deneckere red. 2006; van Osta 2006.

Yet another influential book from the same period is A.V. Dicey (1885) "Introduction to the study of the constitution" comparing the English and French monarchies. Like Edmund Burke, Dicey concludes that rigid constitutions is no protection against change. You have to be able to compromise - otherwise there will be a revolution. Dicey also explains that the monarchy fit the Commonwealth as an old glove:

"Any great change in the form of the constitution of England, e.g. the substitution of an English republic for a limited monarchy, might deeply affect the loyalty of all the British colonies. Can any one be certain that New Zealand or Canada would, at the bidding of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, transfer their loyalty from George V. to a President chosen by the electorate of the United Kingdom, and this even though the revolution were carried out with every legal formality including the assent of the King himself, and even though the King were elected the first President of the new Commonwealth? Is it certain that a federated union of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales would command in our colonies the respect paid to the present United Kingdom? These questions may well seem strange: they are not unimportant. The King is what the Imperial Parliament has never been, the typical representative of Imperial unity throughout every part of the Empire."<sup>16</sup>

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#### France: "Top-down parliamentarianism"

After the Napoleonic Wars, the displaced dynasties were to be reinstated. The first to be reinstated was the French Count Louis (XVIII) of Bourbon. He was the brother of the executed King Louis XVI - guillotined in 1793 - and when his son Louis (XVII) 1795 died in prison, the brother was first in line to the throne. Although the Bourbon family was historically compromised, it was the most legitimate option available. Louis was to be pinioned however, as both Tsar Alexander and the Senate leader Talleyrand judged a return to pre-1789 conditions impossible. Louis wanted differently.

May 3, 1814, Louis arrived in Paris. The condition for the victorious powers to support him was the existence of a constitution. The Senate had prepared a draft based on the French Constitution of 1791, which Louis refused to accept. Instead, it became a tug of war in which Louis defended the traditions of *l'ancien régime* against the democratic achievements of the revolution. He did not want to be appointed by the Senate, because his legitimacy was of God. Nor did he wish to legitimize his position through the Constitution; on the contrary, he claimed that the Constitution had its legitimacy through his own approval. The compromise was that he voluntarily (=without being invited to do so) promised to comply with it.

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The new constitution was negotiated under time pressure and signed on May 30. It has since been described as an extension of the Napoleonic era with elements of English parliamentarianism, the most important new item being that the powers of the monarch were so clearly specified that one knew when he violated them. The contemporaries described Louis as having, by embracing the revolution, succeeded in making it appear to be an unfortunate interlude in an otherwise harmonious development from autocracy to a balance of power. Undeniably an achievement.

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<sup>16</sup> Dicey 1982: fotnot 107, s. cviii.



The representation was divided into a House of Lords (Senate) and a House of Commons (Chamber of Deputies). Election to the Chamber of Deputies required that they be 40 & paid a minimum of 1000 francs in tax. The king himself appointed the Senate. Another element of the "system" was to make the king invisible as a politician. By staying in the background, he would avoid taking political responsibility, but could blame his ministers. Louis was also very keen to appear "popular": dressed easily, took walks in the surroundings & presented himself in all contexts as a citizen monarch in step with time.

The meaning and viability of the French Constitution of 1814 was hotly debated from day one. François-René Chateaubriand considered it to be autocratic, but through proxy. Political scientist Benjamin Constant saw it as a transitional form to English government: The king as a mediator between special interests rather than a ruler. The philosopher Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) emphasized the newly introduced civil rights, especially the concept of private property.<sup>17</sup>

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### Maurras: The Neo-Monarchic Renaissance

Neo-monarchism is a collective name for a number of recent monarchic ideologies.<sup>18</sup> Most famous is the Frenchman Charles Maurras (1868-1952), leader of the far-right movement *Action Française*. Like the Swedish "new-ultraists" Harald Hjärne & Rudolf Kjellén (see chapter 14), Maurras had an organic view of the state and emphasized tradition as a way to strengthen national cohesion. The short version of Maurras's ideology is:

"[Charles Maurras] has become known above all for his political beliefs, his monarchism. To a large extent, this is conditioned by hatred of democracy. No one has shown in more detail than Maurras the difficulties and weaknesses of the people's government. Democracy, which thrives on discussion and party formation, stimulates discontent, antagonism, special interests and internal conflict. Politicians and their followers forget what unites and only emphasize what divides. In essence, therefore, democracy is only one stage on the road to anarchy, to a war of all against all. The salvation is in a hierarchical order, crowned by a monarch with great, if not absolute power. It is in his interest to bring the peoples together, to promote unity and a sense of whole, because through his position he identifies himself with the state. At the same time, government should be decentralized; the regional and professional community should be promoted by means of various forms of autonomy, and in this way the antagonism between the classes, which is dangerous to cohesion, shall be eliminated."<sup>19</sup>

It has not been possible to discern any specific "Swedish" influence of Maurras' monarchic ideas. They were commonplaces of the time. However, they were a feature of the German-French-English monarchist debate, and are also said to have had an influence on the rise of Italian fascism.

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<sup>17</sup> Hegel 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Tingsten 1933: ss. 79-85; Tingsten 1966: ss. 172-187.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert Tingsten. Patriot eller förrädare: Charles Maurras. Dagens Nyheter, 1947-02-16, s. 6.

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