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Sara Petrollino

Chapter 2

‘Father of the spotted cow’: Hamar titles and their connection to cattle appearance

Abstract: The Hamar are agro-pastoralist people inhabiting the southernmost corner of Ethiopia. Like many other pastoralist groups in Africa, their language is rich in words and expressions referring to the appearance of their cattle and goats (colours and patterns, horn shapes, brands, and ear cuts). The classification system for cattle appearance is extremely complex and it allows herders to provide detailed descriptions of animals’ appearances. This system is closely intertwined with livestock-centred naming practices, in particular with individual appellations designated for adult humans and for livestock, particularly cattle. By studying the livestock-centred terms of address we can understand the organising principles of the Hamar descriptive system for cattle appearance. Hamar titles and appellations are employed as identification devices and as such they help to individuate people and heads of livestock; their referential and pragmatic function allows speakers to individuate people’s and animals’ statuses within the community. In addition, these naming practices are key to understanding the categorisation system for cattle appearance, remember its structuring principles and transmit them to younger generations. Building on the existing anthropological literature and on the author’s first-hand collected data, the chapter provides an overview of Hamar naming practices with a focus on the livestock-centred system of address terms and its interconnectedness with the pastoral indigenous knowledge system.

Keywords: cattle names, cattle colors, honorific titles, pastoral linguacultures

1 Introduction

The Hamar are agropastoral people who live in South West Ethiopia: like many other pastoral groups of East Africa, their society and culture shows traits of typical

Acknowledgments: This paper is the result of endless conversations with Hamar men and women from various villages, who patiently taught me their livestock-centred system of address. I am deeply grateful for the insights and explanations that Wengela Gedo, alias Baldámbe (calf name), or Nabuíz (favourite animal name), shared with me during my stay in Shanqo Kalama.

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“East African Cattle Complex” societies (Herskovits 1926), whereby cattle is not only kept as a commodity but is a cultural theme; in these pastoral societies, cattle, as well as goats and sheep, play a fundamental role in shaping the identity of members of the society and are involved in rituals around death, birth and marriage.

The importance of cattle as a cultural theme is reflected in two domains which are of particular interest for an anthropological linguistic approach: lexical specialisation in the domain of animal appearance (the so called “cattle colours and patterns”) and the livestock-centred naming practices for both humans and livestock.

In pastoralist societies, cattle are pedigreed animals and are considered members of the society and “mirror species” (Abbink 2003: 360). Humans identify with their livestock (Seligman and Seligman 1965: 169; Hazel 1997; see also Dubosson 2014: 88–89) and engage in naming practices that bind herders together with their favourite animals. Animals receive personal appellations on the basis of their physical traits, and herders derive terms of address (i.e. praise names and honorific titles) from the physical appearance and personal appellations of their livestock. These appellations have been referred to in the ethnographic literature under various labels, such as “calf names”, “ox names”, “bull names”, “pet names”, “favourite animal names”, and so on.

This paper explores the relationship between Hamar terms of address and the pastoral knowledge system: a close analysis of the appellations assigned to both humans and cattle shows that these linguistic and cultural practices are inextricably intertwined with the descriptive system for cattle appearance. The formal and semantic relationships between appellations for cattle and humans and the descriptive linguistic terms for cattle coats highlight important aspects of the Hamar pastoral lingua-culture system: appellations for humans and cattle are not only identification devices with referential functions (i.e. individuating people, livestock and their statuses, creating a symbolic relationship between animals and people) but they also function as structuring principles for the descriptive system of cattle appearance. Appellations for humans and cattle derive their meaning from the cattle descriptive system: this allows members of the society to create meaningful associations and remember the principles underlying the indigenous categorisation system for cattle.

The paper is structured as follows: the next section provides an overview of livestock-centred linguistic and cultural practices in pastoral societies (§1.1), including a terminological note to distinguish descriptive terms for cattle appearance from “personal names” and “titles” in the context of East African livestock-centred terms of address (§1.2, §1.3). Next, the livestock-centred linguistic practices among the Hamar of South-West Ethiopia are presented (§2), with a brief explanation of the descriptive system for cattle appearance (§2.1), which is the starting point for understanding the principles regulating the assignment of titles to both humans

and cattle. This is followed by a description of the titles for cattle (§2.2) and how they relate to the descriptive system for cattle appearance. Section 3 deals with terms of address for humans; after a brief outline of Hamar naming practices, it focuses on livestock-derived terms of address for adult Hamar men: the so-called calf names (§3.1) and favourite animal names (§3.2). The formal and semantic relations that link the descriptive system for cattle appearance to the terms of address for both humans and cattle will be explained and discussed. Given the history of contact among East African pastoralists, some of the links between the Hamar appellations and other languages will also be highlighted.

The plurality of names and titles that a Hamar man receives throughout his life, and their interconnection with cattle, will be exemplified here with a fictional male individual named Kála. Kála¹ is the birth name (*gáli náabi*) that the fictional individual received a few weeks after his birth (see §3). At a young age, Kála learns how to distinguish and describe the various colours and patterns on livestock’s coats (see §2.1); while growing up (or even after his marriage), Kála may develop a special relationship with a cow or goat which will become his favourite animal. Kála will name his favourite ox (see §2.2) with a special appellation derived from the colour-pattern configuration of its coat. At the same time, Kála’s age-mates will look at the physical traits of his favourite ox and they will come up with a new title for Kála, the so called “favourite animal name” (*qóle náabi*): this is a special title which will be used by friends and age-mates to address Kála in salutations and during dances (see §3.2). When Kála reaches puberty he is initiated into adulthood through various rituals, at the end of which he will leap over a row of cattle: at the end of this rite of passage (called *ukulí bulá* in Hamar), Kála becomes an adult man and he acquires the right to marry and build his own homestead, fields and herds. On this occasion he receives a new title, the so-called “calf name” (see §3.1). A calf name is a tekonymic title which evokes the appearance and physical traits of the heifer calf positioned at the beginning of the cattle row. During the ritual Kála stepped on a yellow calf, so he will be named *Burrémbe*: ‘father of the yellow cow’. From now on, he will be addressed as *Burrémbe* by his peers, age-mates, and by his mother.

1.1 Livestock-centred practices in pastoral societies

The lexical specialisation in the domain of animal appearance in the languages of East African pastoralists has been discussed in the anthropological and ethnographic literature in relation to cattle aesthetics, colour symbolism and its

1 Kála is also the numeral word for ‘one’.

links with aspects of social organisation. Classic ethnographic works include Almagor (1983), Dubosson (2016), Dyson-Hudson (1966), Eczet (2018, 2019a, 2019b), Evans-Pritchard (1940), Fukui (1979, 1986, 1996), Galaty (1989), Lienhardt (1961), Ohta (1986), Tornay (1973, 1978), Turton (1980) and Wymeersch (1988), among others.

In addition to the descriptive terms for animal coats and animal appearances, the linguistic practices of pastoral societies include naming traditions for both animals and humans: pastoralists assign individual appellations to their animals and derive titles and terms of address for members of the society from the physical characteristics of their livestock (see Section 1.2). In the anthropological and ethnographic literature these livestock-centred linguistic practices are usually discussed in connection with the following topics: the “identification” of a man with livestock (Seligman and Seligman 1965), the cultural practice of animal beautification, which involves permanent body markings and horn training, and the phenomenon of the “favourite animal”, a special human-animal relationship whereby a herder develops a particular relationship with a (usually) bovine or caprine animal; for an exhaustive overview and literature review on the topic of the favourite animal among the Hamar and other east African pastoralists see Dubosson (2014: 86–89, 2016, 229–54).

1.2 Livestock-centred terms of address in East Africa

Livestock-centred naming practices have been the object of study in ethnographic work among the Dhaasanac (Almagor 1972), the Dinka (Evans-Pritchard 1934; Seligman and Seligman 1965: 169–170; Lienhardt 1988, 1961: 12–16), the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1964, 1940: 18, 45–46), the Jie (Gulliver 1952), the Bodi (Fukui 1979) and the Murle (Arensen 1988, 1992, 70–76), among others; these works focus on livestock-centred terms of address for humans. Livestock names are also reported in the literature: Ohta (1986) provides a unique, comprehensive analysis of Turkana cattle names’ etymologies; Seligman and Seligman (1965: 170) and Lienhardt (1961: 14–15) explain the meaning of a few Dinka cattle names, and Wolde Gossa Tadesse mentions livestock-centred naming practices among the Arbore (1999: 199); other works include Umesao (1966) for Datooga livestock names, Imai (1982) for the Gabra Oromo goat naming system and Galaty for Maasai cattle names (1989: 219–220). Lists of names and appellations can be found also in the linguistic literature; see for example the analysis of Iraqw cattle names in Rottland and Mous (2001), or the list of “bull names” (for humans) in Ik (Schrock 2014: 193); Tosco (2001: 581) provides a list of Dhaasanac “ox names” (for cattle); Storch (2005: 428–433) provides a detailed linguistic analysis of descriptive nouns for cattle appearance (also used as appellations for humans) in Dinka and Shilluk.

The literature on livestock-centred naming practices suggest that there are different systems of address in pastoralist lingua-cultures of East Africa. Some lingua-cultures have separate systems; appellations for animals and livestock-derived terms of address for humans do not coincide. This is the case for most of Hamar titles and appellations. In other languages, on the other hand, there might be a partial overlap between livestock-derived terms of address for humans and livestock appellations. In Hamar, for example, a small sub-set of cattle names correspond to titles for humans, see §3.1, Table 2.6. The overlap between appellations for cattle and titles for humans has caused some confusion in the use of labels such as “ox names”, “bull names”, “calf names” etc.: the labels are sometimes used with reference to both livestock and humans, so for languages in which the two systems are separate, the distinction between livestock-derived terms of address for humans and appellations for livestock is lost.

Another source of confusion is the overlap, in some lingua-cultures, between the system of address (for both livestock and humans) and the terms describing the physical traits of livestock: in Dinka and Shilluk, for instance, descriptive terms for cattle appearance become personal appellations for human beings and cattle (Storch 2005: 431, Martin 2018: 17). However, the function of cattle color and pattern terms as appellations in other languages is not always clearly described: Wymeersch (1988), for example, referred to the Turkana descriptive terms for cattle appearance as “names”, although according to Ohta (1986), these are descriptive terms which are not used as appellations; similarly, the Karimojong’s vocabulary for cattle appearance was described by Dyson-Hudson (1966: 96) in terms of “cattle names”, but it is not clear whether these descriptive terms were used as appellations.

1.3 Names and titles

The appellations for animals and humans are usually referred to in the literature as “personal names”. Ohta, for example, talks about “livestock individual names” (1986: 35) among the Turkana, and Lydall (1999) presented Hamar teknonyms, “calf names”, “favourite animal names” and “killer names” as personal names.

Other authors have applied a refined distinction in pastoralists’ systems of address and separated livestock-derived terms of address for humans from personal names. For example, in Nuer culture (Evans-Pritchard 1964), “ox names” are referred to as “titles” (ibid: 222), given their different pragmatic force in comparison to Nuer personal names. Similarly, Lienhardt (1988) compared Dinka ox names to Western personal names and concluded that “ox names” are praise names with different referential and pragmatic functions.

Concerning livestock appellations, some authors have distinguished cattle personal names from cattle titles: Seligman and Seligman (1965: 169), for example, noted an important difference between cattle personal names assigned to female cows and cattle titles assigned to oxen in Dinka culture; according to the authors: “(. . .) *the names of oxen are not individual names (as the names of cows are) but names which they share with all other bulls and oxen of the same class*” (p. 169), and “. . . *cows (not heifers) are given a personal name which they bear through life*” (p. 170).

In this chapter the Hamar appellations for cattle (§2.2) and the livestock-derived terms of address for humans (§3.1 and §3.2) will be analysed as titles rather than personal names.

Appellations for humans and cattle are centred on the appearance of livestock and are part of the knowledge system shared across pastoralists’ lingua-cultures: the titles for Hamar men and for cattle, for example, are assigned according to rigid rules and are not decided arbitrarily by individual herders. The principles regulating the assignment of these titles are rooted in the descriptive system for cattle appearance: members of the Hamar society understand the cultural and pragmatic meanings of the titles because of their shared pastoral indigenous knowledge. The titles encapsulate speakers’ attitudes and convey the specific status of the referent: the human titles referred to as “calf names” (§3.1), for example, individuate adult Hamar men who have been initiated in the presence of animals displaying specific colour-pattern configurations; livestock titles (§2.2) encapsulate the reference to the animals’ physical traits and individuate parous female cows which are milked, draft oxen, or “favourite” animals, hence animals that play specific roles within Hamar culture and society. In some African societies (see Ameka 1991: 408), titles, praise names and other appellations are the most important categories of address; likewise, in many pastoralist societies the so called “calf names”, “bull names” or “ox names” have a stronger pragmatic force than personal names.

2 Livestock-centered linguistic practices among the Hamar

Hamar culture has been thoroughly studied by the anthropologists Jean Lydall and Ivo Strecker, who have produced a rich corpus of academic literature and ethnographic documentaries on various aspects of Hamar culture and society (see for example Lydall and Strecker 1979a, 1979b, 1979c). Dubosson has worked on the phenomenon of the favourite animal among the Hamar and other pastoral socie-

ties and has written extensively on the social significance of the favourite animal (2013, 2014, 2016, 2018). Lydall has also written about aspects of the language (1976, 1988, 2002); for a descriptive grammar and linguistic work on Hamar see Petrollino (2016, 2019a, 2019b).

Lydall (1999) presented a paper on Hamar terms of address and illustrated some of their pragmatic functions, including the contexts in which “calf names” are used. Dubosson (2014) reports insightful information about Hamar favourite animal names, which will be discussed in the relevant sections below.

The Hamar data presented in this section were collected in the past few years in South-West Ethiopia by the author. The various titles for both cattle and humans, and their correspondence to the descriptive system for cattle appearance, were collected in different homesteads in order to check the consistency of the system across the Hamar society. Apart from some geographical variation, the core of the system as it is described in this paper seems to be shared across the Hamar society. This paper presents only part of the system, and many titles and appellations have been omitted.

In order to show the interconnectedness between the cattle descriptive system and livestock-centred naming practices, in the following section the Hamar descriptive terms for cattle are introduced (§2.1), followed by an account of livestock naming practices (§2.2). These two systems (cattle descriptive terms and cattle personal titles) are crucial to understanding how livestock-derived titles for Hamar men are assigned (§3).

2.1 The description of livestock appearance

Livestock appearance in Hamar (and in the languages of neighbouring pastoralist groups) is described in terms of four visual domains: coat (or phenotype²), horn shape, ear marks or cuts, and coat branding (tattoos). When describing an animal, a Hamar person refers first and foremost to the appearance of the coat. The terms used to describe the appearance of the animal’s coat refer to the distribution of colour-pattern configurations on the body of the animal. These can be followed by a descriptor of the horns if these display a particular shape, or by a term describing special features of the tail, head, dewlap or legs.

The descriptors for coat appearance are nouns; as such they can be inflected for feminine or masculine gender, depending on the sex of the animal.

2 The coat phenotype refers to the animal’s observable traits. There are overlapping descriptive systems for the phenotypes attested among cattle and among goats and sheep, with minimal differences, since some phenotypes are attested only in bovines and not in caprine or ovine species (and vice versa). The “calf names” discussed in §3.1 are derived from cattle appearance only, whereas the “favourite animal names” discussed in §3.2 can be derived from both bovine and caprine appearance.

Examples of descriptive expressions for cattle can be seen in (1) below.

- (1) a. **deer labál**
 red white.belly
 ‘reddish with a white patch on the belly’
- b. **t’itâ, qushumbán-sa orgó**
 blackish:M horn.F.OBL-GEN short
 ‘blackish (ox), with short horns’
- c. **bordí, alisê taximê**
 large.spots dewlap:M cut:M
 ‘spotted, with a cut dewlap’

As illustrated in the examples above, these terms can be combined with each other as in (1a) in order to describe minimal variations in the colour-pattern configuration, or they can be combined with other descriptive terms referring to features of the head, tail, legs and dewlap (1c); the terms can also be accompanied by descriptors for horn shapes as in (1b).

The descriptors *deer*, *labál*, *t’iá* and *bordí* in the examples above individuate livestock according to coat pigmentation. These terms correspond to macro-categories for coat appearance, which are referred to as *dánta* in the Hamar language. The term *dánta* derives from the existential predicator *daa* (see Petrollino 2019b) and can be translated as ‘way of being’, both in the sense of ‘appearance’ and ‘behaviour’.

The main macro-categories (*dánta*) for coat appearance are represented by 18 terms describing the variation in colour pigmentation, including sheen and (de)saturation, and the distribution, size and orientation of patterns on the animal’s body. The term *labál* in (1a) above, for example, refers to a white underside patch that can extend to the flanks of the animal. A *deer labál* ‘reddish with white underside patch’ type of cattle (1a) belongs to the macro-category *labál*. Other “subtypes” of *labál* are *t’iá labál* ‘blackish with white underside patch’, *gal labál* ‘yellowish with white underside patch’ and so on, that is, types of coat appearance which combine the feature *labál* with other visual properties. For a coat to be described as such, the *labál* feature has to be visually predominant. The principles regulating the descriptive system for cattle appearance cannot be discussed here for lack of space, but the table below provides an overview of the most common terms defining the main macro-categories for appearance, accompanied by their glosses.

The 18 descriptors presented in the table above can be combined with each other into 152 expressions. Not all the logical combinations are possible: for example the inverse of *deer labál*, **labál deer* is not a grammatical expression and does not identify a cattle phenotype.

Table 2.1: Main categories for livestock appearance (*dánta*).

Term	Gloss
t'íá	blackish
c'aulí ~ c'ailí	whitish
deer	reddish
galáf	yellowish
guitá	iridescent
úló	blueish
silbí	dark sheen
morá	desaturated
súra	pale grey
shamáj	roan
túrga	brindled
lálala	colour sided
shóta	patched
bordí	large spots
zargí	small spots
labál	white belly
balá	forehead patch
gawá	bicolour pattern

The descriptive system for coat appearance described in this section will now be used to illustrate the connection with livestock naming practices: each *dánta* presented in Table 2.1 corresponds to a set of personal appellations for cattle (§2.2) and titles for humans (§3.1 and §3.2).

2.2 Cattle titles

The Hamar assign personal titles to a specific set of animals: parous female cows which are milked, draft oxen, and oxen which become the favourite animal of a herder. Several East African groups are known for naming cattle on the basis of their physical traits; the Turkana (Ohta 1986), the Maasai (Galaty 1989; Merker 1910), the Baggara (Reid 1930: 195), the Karimojong (Dyson-Hudson 1966: 96), (partly) the Iraqw (Huntingford 1953: 128; Rottland and Mous 2001: 380), the Datooga (Umesao 1966), the Gabra Oromo (Imai 1982) and possibly the Rendille and the Boraana (see Imai 1982) assign personal names to their livestock, and in some of these cultures livestock names are passed to the offspring along the matrilineal line. The Hamar naming system in this regard is special in that personal titles are assigned to both parous cows and draft oxen (or favourite oxen), regardless of the matrilineal line.

Cattle titles among the Hamar are used to call the animals when parous cows need to be paired with their calves at the end of the day, or to instruct the oxen on the direction to take while ploughing. Cattle titles are also used as praise names in cattle songs, when herders sing about their favourite animals; Dubosson (2014: 96) reports that herders whistle the names of their favourite animals in a specific way to call them.

Cattle titles are related to the cattle descriptive system discussed in the previous section: each macro-category of appearance (*dánta*) corresponds to a set of titles for female and male cattle.

An example of the correspondence between titles and appearance can be seen in Table 2.2 below: the titles that can be assigned to a parous female cow described for instance as *deer labál* will be *galté?*, *labalé?*, or *kapél*; these titles are also assigned to other subtypes of *labál* (a few examples of subtypes are given under *labál*, preceded by a hyphen). Likewise, a ploughing ox described as *labál* will be assigned the titles *labbále* or *galtémbe*. These appellations are standard and are found across Hamar homesteads as titles for parous females, draft oxen and favourite oxen which fall under the *labál dánta*:

Table 2.2: Cattle titles for *labál* cattle.

dánta [gloss]	F cattle title	M cattle title
labál [white.belly]	galté?; labalé?; kapél	labbále; galtémbe
– t'íá labál [blackish white.belly]		
– deer labál [reddish white.belly]		
– gal labál [yellowish white.belly]		
– silbí labál [dark.sheen white.belly]		

The majority of titles for parous female cows end in a glottal stop and/or carry a final accent, see Table 2.4 below. Sometimes the difference between titles for female and male cattle is only prosodic, as can be seen for the *shóta* cattle in Table 2.3:

Table 2.3: Cattle titles for *shóta* cattle.

dánta [gloss]	F cattle title	M cattle title
shóta [patched]	kollé?	kólle?
– t'íá shóta [blackish patched]		
– deer shóta [reddish patched]		
– c'aílí shóta [whitish patched]		
– galáf shóta [yellowish patched]		

Some of the ox titles, such as *galtémbe* in Table 2.2 or *garómbe* in Table 2.4 below, are morphologically derived from the titles for the female cows: the ox title *galtémbe* is thus derived from the parous cow title *galté?*, *garómbe* from *garó?* and so on. These titles are identical to the teknonyms given to adult Hamar men and will be further analysed and explained in the coming section (§3).

In addition to cattle titles for female and male animals, a few *dánta* correspond to unisex titles that can be used for cattle of both genders. For example, cattle classified as *deer* can receive the title *déro?* regardless of the sex of the animal:

Table 2.4: Unisex cattle titles.

dánta [gloss]	F cattle titles	M cattle titles	Unisex title
deer [reddish]	ʔailó; sálleʔ; adaráʔ; béeziʔ; shardóʔ; nabír	díima; shardómbe; deerímbe	déroʔ
guitá [iridescent]	ǵilíʔ; gudán; láalaʔ	shálme; guitámbe	guító
zargí [small.spots]	káiraʔ	kairámbe, wánc'o	atóle
gawá [bicolour.pattern]	garóʔ; tuljáʔ; gáuʔ	garómbe	luttéʔ
morá [desaturated]	digóʔ; bórkoʔ	móra; digómbe	búle

Only a few cattle titles are morphologically derived from the descriptive terms for appearance. These are presented below; the titles follow the descriptive terms from which they are derived.

- (2) a. deer (reddish) > *déro?*
- b. guitá (iridescent) > *guító*
- c. silbí (dark sheen) > *silbo*
- d. shamáj (roan, fawn, beige) > *shamó?*

The titles *déro?* and *guító* in (2a) and (2b) are unisex cattle appellations; *silbo* in (2c) is a title for a male ox; *shamó?* in (2d) is a title for a female cow. These titles seem to follow the same pattern as some Hamar kinship terms (Petrollino 2016), which have a corresponding vocative form ending in -o: for example, *ímbo* is the vocative form of *imbá* ‘father’, *índo* of *indá* ‘mother’, *aakó* of *aaká* ‘grandmother’.

In similar fashion, the Hamar masculine personal name *Túrgo*, used for people and not attested (so far) as a cattle title, could be a vocative form derived from the descriptive term for brindled cattle, *túrga*. It is worth mentioning that some cattle titles are sometimes attested as individuals’ personal names: for example, the cattle title *Silbo* in (2b) also exists as an individual’s personal name, and *Káira?* discussed below is a common personal name for a Hamar woman.

Some cattle titles correspond to terms referring to other animals or to natural objects displaying similar visual features; this is commonly reported in other studies on pastoralists' nomenclatures: descriptive terms for cattle appearance are often polysemic with terms referring to other animals, especially birds (see for example Evans-Pritchard 1940: 44–45, 1934; Lienhardt 1961: 12; Eczet 2019b; Ohta 1986: 40; Koopman 2019: 106–131; Oosthuizen 1996: 343–344; Poland et al. 2004: 34–79).³ In the Hamar system, descriptive terms for cattle appearance are not polysemic and are not related to other terms.⁴ Some cattle titles, however, can evoke their referential meaning through polysemy and point to visual features of cattle and other animals or natural objects. The cattle title *árka* for a *galáf* (yellowish) female cow also refers to the antelope species known as hartebeest. Likewise, the cattle appearance *zargí* (small spots) corresponds to the cattle title *Káira?* for a female cow, and *Wánc'o* for a male ox. These titles are polysemic with the terms *káira*, a type of lark displaying a spotted black and white pattern on the chest, and *wánc'o*, the star cluster known in Western astronomy as the Pleiades; see Figure 2.1 below:

3 Several authors have written about the rich colour analogies with other animals, and described them in terms of metaphorical processes. For example, Dinka cattle names were described in detail by Evans-Pritchard: "Their cattle are thus called by colour-analogy crocodile cow, fish eagle cow, leopard cow, and so on. The Dinka go even farther and make a double analogy in referring to their cattle by terms which suggest some activity associated with, or some attribute of, the creature that displays similar colouring to the cattle" (Evans-Pritchard 1934: 623); Fukui, among others, explained the link between cattle appearance and naming practices in terms of metaphorical extensions: "a girl who received a red (*goloñi*) *morare* [favorite ox] was named *Lilinta* (red dragonfly)" (Fukui 1979: 163); the metaphorical processes underlying Murle calf names were so elaborated that Arensen described them as riddles: "the boy takes a name based on the colour of his new calf. The name is a riddle based on the calf's colour" (Arensen 1988: 128).

4 Except for two terms: *labál* 'white belly' and *shamáj* 'roan, fawn, beige'. The first is related to the Hamar term for ostrich: *labalé*. The second, according to Lydall (1978: 577), derives from *sháami* 'sand'. The term could however be a borrowing from the cattle colour term *shimaji*, attested in neighbouring Surmic languages such as Bodi (see Fukui 1979).

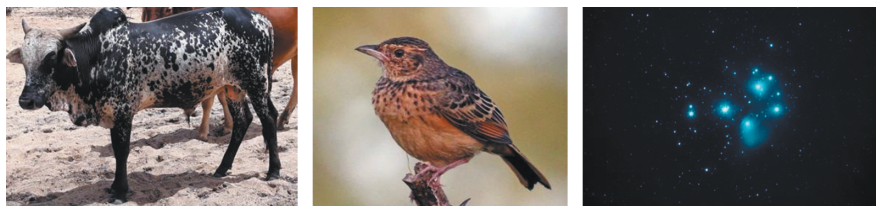


Figure 2.1: (from left to right) *zargí* cattle coat (photograph by the author); a type of lark⁵ called *káira*; the Pleiades⁶, called *wánc'o*.

Some titles have been borrowed from other languages and a closer analysis can reveal the history of interethnic relations among East African pastoralists. The cattle title *gíto* for a male black (*t'íá*) ox, for example, is also attested in Datooga as a personal name for male black cattle (Umesao 1966: 184). The female cattle title *kapél* in Table 2.2 above is a borrowing from the Turkana descriptive term *-kapel(i)*, which refers to a type of coat pattern described as “small patches all over the body” (Wymeersch 1988: 130) or represented as a patched coat in Ohta’s sketches (1986: 10); *-kapil-* is also reported for Nyangatom by Tornay (1973: 90). Further investigation descriptive terms borrowed from other cattle descriptive systems maintain their referential meaning to cattle appearance when they are adopted as terms of address in Hamar. Similar links can also be found among the Hamar “favourite animal names” described in section 3.2.

The system described in this section is the predominant naming practice for livestock. Other practices have also been observed and draft oxen and cows which are milked may be occasionally named after the people or place from which they have been acquired. Ohta (1986) reports similar naming practices among the Turkana: alongside the predominant naming system based on animals’ physical traits, place names are also attested among the Turkana’s cattle; Galaty (1989) also mentions “transaction names” for the Maasai; Iraqw cow names refer mostly to the way in which the animals were acquired and sometimes to the colour-pattern configuration (Rottland and Mous 2001).

⁵ Charles J. Sharp, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flappet_lark_\(Mirafraru_focinnamea_kawirondensis\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flappet_lark_(Mirafraru_focinnamea_kawirondensis).jpg)

⁶ Juan lacruz, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pleiades_1.jpg

3 Personal names and titles for humans

Hamar naming practices consist of a plurality of terms of address: individuals receive various names, appellations and titles at different stages of their lives. Each term of address, to use Strecker's words, signifies "some specific aspect of their *persona*" (Strecker 1993: 126), constructing different social identities. Terms of address have various ethno-pragmatic interpretations and meanings. Lydall provided an overview of Hamar terms of address (1999) including the social and pragmatic norms regulating the use of some of them: husband and wife, for example, avoid calling each other by their birth names, and youngsters cannot address older people by their birth names.

A few weeks after birth, every individual receives a personal name, or *gáli náabi*.⁷ *Gáli* refers to the name giving ritual and the plant used during the ritual (Lydall 1999; Lydall and Strecker 1979a: 33), whereas *náabi* can be translated as 'name' or 'appellation'.

Teknonyms characterise the addressee as a parent and are derived from the name of the first child. Like in other African languages, matronymics are formed from the name of the first child followed by the kinship term *indá* 'mother': thus, a matronymic such as *Bazónda* means 'mother of Bazo', *Barqínda* 'mother of Barqí' and so on. Likewise, patronymics are formed from the kinship term *imbá* 'father, owner': *Dambaitimba* translates as 'father of Dambaiti'.⁸ As pointed out by Lydall (1999), these teknonyms are used in reported speech, or when referring to a person in absentia; the corresponding vocative form ending in *-e* is used instead when directly addressing a person by his or her teknonym. Thus, a woman known as *Barqínda* will be addressed as *Barqínde*, and so on.

In addition to personal names and teknonyms, Hamar men receive special titles such as the calf names (§3.1) and the "favourite animal names" (§3.2); these honorific titles are designated for people with a specific status and are given in the context of ritualised events.

Alongside the names and titles mentioned in this section, age-mates and hunting friends use nicknames recalling shared events and situations, and these may be used among friends as affectionate mockery. "Killer names" (Lydall 1999) are praise

7 Common Hamar personal names include circumstance names motivated by the event, period or place in which a child is born (*Goití* 'way', *Kánki* 'car', *Kerí* 'door', *Baqála* 'sprout', *Bóna* 'drought'); animal derived names (*Walé* 'dove'); objects (*Álfa* 'knife'); name-sakes derived from neighbouring ethnic groups (*Árari*); placenames (*Turmi*); "number names" (Collard 1973) such as *Kála* 'one, first', *Óito* 'fourth', etc.

8 Jean Lydall and Ivo Strecker are known in the Hamar community as *Theoínda* and *Theoimba* respectively, after their first son's name.

appellations which were given in the past to somebody who had killed an enemy from a neighbouring group.

The next two sections are devoted to the description of Hamar calf names and favourite animal names. Among the Hamar, women do not receive calf names or favourite animal names, whereas in other groups such as the Mursi (Eczet 2013, 2018), the Bodi (Fukui 1979) and the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1964, 1937: 213), women receive cattle-derived titles at different stages of their life.

3.1 Calf names: *gaar náabino*

Calf names, or *gaar náabino* in the Hamar language,⁹ are status titles which are given to Hamar men after the rite of passage into adulthood. During the ritual an initiated boy leaps over a row of cattle; the first cow of the row is a heifer calf referred to as *garró*¹⁰. The *garró* calf is carefully chosen because the colour-pattern configuration of her coat (i.e. the *dánta*; see §2.1) will determine the title given to the Hamar man once the ritual is over (see Lydall and Strecker 1979; Lydall 1999).

Within the Hamar system of address terms, calf names are status titles and their use is regulated by awareness addressee’s status within Hamar society. These titles are used to address Hamar men respectfully in large social contexts: a man can be addressed by his calf name by men of the same age-set (Lydall 1999); or a woman can address her firstborn by his calf name. The difference between calf names and favourite animal names, according to Dubosson (2014: 97), is that age-mates address each other by favourite animal names, whereas women should use the calf name when addressing adult Hamar men.

As mentioned earlier, a calf name is a teknonymic title: the calf name *Bordimba*, for example, is formed by the descriptive term *bordí* ‘large spots’ plus the kin term *imbá* ‘father, owner’, and it roughly translates as ‘father of the spotted cow’.¹¹ In principle, the title *Bordimba* is given to adult Hamar men who have leapt over a *bordí* calf (including the subtypes of *bordí*, for example *silbí bordí*, *t’iá bordí*, etc.); however the various *dánta* illustrated in §2.1 above may correspond to more than one calf name (see §3.1.1).

⁹ The form *náabino* is the feminine collective form of *náabi*.

¹⁰ As suggested by Lydall (1999), the terms *garró* and *gaar* are related and they translate as ‘grown up’. To be more specific, *gáar(i)* is the general form of a noun that means ‘big, grown up’ and *garró* can be analysed as the feminine inflected form (probably due to the fact that it refers to a female animal).

¹¹ Livestock-derived titles for humans are usually teknonyms and translate as ‘father of’ in Dhaasanac (Almagor 1972: 87) and Turkana (Ohta 1986: 52). Ik (Schrock 2014: 193) has borrowed ox names from Teso-Turkana: for example, *Apá Lokiryon* translates as ‘father of the black bull’; the same can be said for Karimojong (Gourlay 1972: 245).

The association of calf names with the categories of cattle appearance can be self-evident, as illustrated by the example of *Bordímba*. Table 2.5 below shows the calf names which are derived from the corresponding descriptive terms for appearance:

Table 2.5: Calf names derived from descriptive terms for appearance.

dánta [gloss]	Calf name (gaar náabi)
deer [reddish]	Deerímba
c'ailí [whitish]	C'ailímba
guitá [iridescent]	Guitámba
súra [grey.pale]	Surámba
bordí [large.spots]	Bordímba

For other calf names, the link to the appearance of the calf can be understood by looking at the three systems (the cattle descriptive system, cattle titles and calf names) as a whole. A set of calf names, for example, is derived from one of the cattle titles designated for female cows. When a calf name is derived from one of the feminine cattle titles, the corresponding masculine cattle titles are identical to the teknonymic calf names (this was already pointed out above in §2.2). Table 2.6 provides an overview of these correspondences; titles for oxen are reported with the vocative form ending in *-e*:

Table 2.6: Calf names derived from feminine cattle titles. Calf names for humans derived from feminine cattle titles.

dánta [gloss]	F cattle title	M cattle title	Calf name for humans (gaar náabi)
balá [forehead.patch]	Annó?	Annómbe	Annómba
deer [reddish]	Shardó?	Shardómbe; Deerímbe	Shardómba
t'íá [blackish]	Qalló?	Qallómbe	Qallómba
silbí [dark.sheen]	Baldá?	Baldámbe	Baldámba
galáf [yellowish]	Laaló?	Laalómbe	Láalomba
zargí [small.spots]	Káira?	Kairámbe	Kairámba
gawá [bicolour.pattern]	Garó?	Garómbe	Garómba
morá [desaturated]	Digó?	Digómbe	Digómba
labál [white.belly]	Galté?	Galtémbe	Galtémba

A calf name such as *Annómba* thus translates as ‘father of *Annó?*’, but given the referential meaning of the cattle title *Annó?* and its connection to the cattle descriptive system, members of the Hamar society understand the meaning of the calf name *Annómba* and its reference to the *balá* type of appearance.

For other calf names, reference to cattle appearance is evoked through analogy. The calf name *Qaarimba*, for example, is composed of the term *qáari* 'python', given the association with the appearance *túrga* 'brindled, striped', which also describes the skin of the python. Likewise, the calf name *Shaalómba* was explained to me with reference to *sháalo*, the disease term for measles. *Shaalómba* is the calf name primarily associated with *shamáj*, a descriptive term which refers to a mixture of colours and is here roughly translated as 'roan, fawn, beige': the visual effect of measles on the skin of an affected person is described as *shamáj*; *shamáj* also describes the appearance (and the lumpy texture) of the traditional ale-gruel alcoholic drink *parsí*; an alternative name of the drink is *shamajâ*, 'the *shamáj* one'.

Other calf names were further analysed but the analogy with visual features could not be clearly established: the calf name *Silémba*, for example, refers to a *c'aílí* 'whitish' coat and could be derived from the term *silé* 'feather', but its link to a white appearance cannot be explained.

3.1.1 Name avoidance rule and alternative calf names

In the previous section it was mentioned that some categories of cattle appearance are associated with more than one calf name; to be more precise, a *dánta* usually corresponds to two or three calf names, one of which is considered the primary choice. Alternative options to primary calf names are necessary for cultural reasons, but also to account for minimal variations attested in coat pigmentation.

The appearance of the animals' coats is conceptualised as a continuum in which categories of appearance can have fuzzy borders: the appearance of a specific animal, thus, can be close to what is considered a prototypical example of a *dánta*, or it can diverge considerably and be considered closer to a contiguous category of appearance. When the coat of a specific animal is considered to be a good example of a category of appearance, the association will be with the primary calf name (indicated as calf name 1 in Table 2.7 and Table 2.8 below). However, if a type of appearance diverges from the prototypical pigmentation, an alternative calf name can be chosen that better conveys the visual differences of a specific animal's coat. In other words, calf names can accommodate to the actual visual continuum of animal appearance. In the case of spotted cattle, for example, the calf name assigned to a man can in principle indicate whether the types of spots are more similar to the category *bordí* 'large spots' or *zargí* 'small spots'. The choice of an alternative calf name is also dictated by strict cultural rules: within one family, the same calf name is avoided; thus brothers, or a father and his sons, cannot carry the same title. Despite the variety of coat phenotypes in Hamar herds, it can happen that the heifer calf chosen for the rite of passage

falls into the same category as the cattle coat that determined the title of the boy’s father or brothers. Let’s take, as a fictional example, a man called *C’ailímba* after a *c’ailí* (whitish) cattle coat; if the son of *C’ailímba* leaps over a heifer calf which also classifies as *c’ailí*, the calf name *C’ailímba* will not be selected, and an alternative will be chosen. Usually, for each *dánta*, one or two optional calf names exist along with the primary calf name. The son of *C’ailímba* will receive the alternative title *Silémba* as illustrated in Table 2.7 below:

Table 2.7: Examples of alternative calf-names for *c’ailí*.

dánta [gloss]	Calf name 1 (gaar náabi)	Calf name 2	Calf name 3
c’ailí [whitish]	C’ailímba	Silémba	Annómba

The choice of an alternative name may be determined by the visual features on the coat of a specific calf: this aspect is very interesting because by looking at the choice of calf names with respect to the appearance of the calf, one can understand better the meaning of the categories of appearance and the similarities between contiguous categories; this will be further illustrated with ‘spotted cattle’, ‘dark-blackish cattle’ and other examples below.

The primary calf name associated with the category *zargí* ‘small spots’ is *Kairámba* (Table 2.8, third row), but depending on the name avoidance rule, and on the actual size of the spots on the animal’s coat, the alternative title *Bordímba* could be used *Bordímba* (see the dashed arrow in Table 2.8) is the primary calf name associated with *bordí*, which is just another type of “spotted” appearance: the difference between the two is in the size (and distribution) of the spots on the animal’s coat.

Table 2.8: Examples of alternative calf names.
Examples of alternative calf names and their relation
with animal’s appearance.

dánta [gloss]	Calf name 1 (gaar náabi)	Calf name 2 (gaar náabi)
bordí [large spots]	Bordímba	Burrémba
– guitá bordí	Bordímba	Guitámba
zargí [small.spots]	Kairámba	Bordímba
guitá [iridescent]	Guitámba	Shaalómba
t’iá [blackish]	Qallómba	Baldámba
silbí [dark.sheen]	Baldámba	Qallómba

A similar example can be given for cattle described as *t’iá* (blackish) and *silbí* (dark sheen): *silbí* cattle can have sleek pigmentation and very dark coats, and display a mixture of blackish and reddish pigmentation (Figure 2.2, picture on the right). Similarly, *t’iá* cattle display a sleek, black coat (Figure 2.2, picture on the left):



Figure 2.2: (left) *t’iá* cattle coat; (right) *silbí* cattle coat, photographs by the author.

The visual difference between a coat described as *t’iá* and a coat described as *silbí* can in some instances be minimal, as illustrated in Figure 2.2, and the two categories *t’iá* and *silbí* are contiguous in the Hamar visual system.

Given this similarity, the primary calf name corresponding to a *silbí* cattle coat, *Baldám̐ba*, can be used as the alternative calf name for a *t’iá* cattle coat, and vice versa; if the *silbí* coat displays a predominantly black pigmentation resembling more a *t’iá dánta*, it will be associated with the primary calf name for *t’iá*, *Qallóm̐ba* (see the black arrow in Table 2.8).

Another example illustrating the flexibility of the calf name system with respect to the actual appearance of the animal shows that in extreme cases a re-classification into another category of appearance is also possible. The coat *guitá bordí*, for example, belongs to the *bordí dánta* and is normally associated with the corresponding calf name *Bordím̐ba* (Table 2.8, second row). If the calf name *Bordím̐ba* has to be avoided, or if the visual feature *guitá* ‘iridescent’ is more visually predominant than the spots, the feature *guitá* will be looked at in order to determine the calf name, which will be *Guitám̐ba* (see the blue arrow in Table 2.8).

Calf names can provide useful information about minimal variations in pattern configurations. The category for appearance referred to as *shóta* ‘patched’, for example, can describe patched coats, but also coats which fall between the appearance *túr̐ga* ‘brindled’ and *bordí* ‘large spots’. Depending on the orientation, size and shape of the patches with respect to the pigmentation of the coat, a *shóta* type of coat could be visually closer to either a *bordí* coat or a *túr̐ga* coat. When choosing the calf name corresponding to a *shóta* calf, Hamar herders carefully observe the

details of the coat, and in consultation decide whether the calf name associated with that specific animal should be *Bordimba* (after a *bordí pattern*) or *Qaarimba* (after a *túrqa type of pattern*). Calf names are essential organising principles of the descriptive system for cattle appearance because they provide additional information about the physical appearance of the animal linked to a person's title. This is supported also by the fact that in explaining the meanings of the descriptive terms for cattle appearance, the Hamar people interviewed for this study often referred to the related calf names and explained the core meaning and referential range of the terms with the help of related calf names.

3.2 Favourite animal names: *qóle náabino*

Favourite animal names are referred to as *qóle náabino*. The term *qóle* refers to bovine, caprine and ovine livestock animals; these appellations are titles given to Hamar men by their age-mates, after a chosen favourite animal; this is usually a castrated ox or a castrated goat. The favourite ox undergoes a process of beautification which includes the training of the horns, ear cuts, branding, the incision of the dewlap, and a collar with a decorative bell (see Dubosson 2014 for a detailed description of the beautification ritual and the social signification of the favourite animal). A man is addressed by his *qóle náabi* in salutations, by his age-mates and members of the society who have taken part in the rituals connected to the beautification of the favourite animal, and by people with whom he has established confidence and intimacy.

Like cattle personal titles and calf names, each *qóle náabi* is linked to the appearance of the animal, in this case that of the favourite ox or goat. A few examples of *qóle náabi* can be seen in Table 2.9 below (a tilde ~ indicates inter- and intra-speaker variation, a semicolon indicates alternative titles):

Table 2.9: Examples of favourite animal titles.

dánta [gloss]	Favourite animal title (qóle náabino)
t'íá [blackish]	lukúrjpi ~ lukúljpi; lukurú? ~ lokurúk; lusikirjóno ~ lusikirjá
shamáj [roan]	lukuburáqo ~ lukuburráqo; gílabuíz; maccarjápŋ
guitá [iridescent]	nabuíz; logíle; nakupurrát ~ nakufurrát; logorráxɔ
galáf [yellowish]	ɔɔnabuá; lekkérz; lotiabuló; lokkemér
balá [forehead.patch]	naŋɔɔlamási; naŋɔɔlearúk
bordí [large.spots]	lusilbúq; korbók; lobokotóla

The non-Hamar syllable structure and consonant clusters found in the favourite animal titles, together with the inter- and intraspeaker variation attested in the pronunciation indicate that these titles are not native to Hamar. According to Hamar elders, the titles have been adopted from the cattle descriptive systems and livestock-centred systems of address of neighbouring pastoralist groups, especially Nyangatom and Dhaasanac. This is confirmed also by Tornay (1981: 168), among others. A complete analysis of these titles cannot be presented here for lack of complete data about Dhaasanac and Nyangatom livestock-centred systems of address; however, it is worth mentioning that several titles display typical Teso-Turkana elements such as the masculine and feminine prefixes *lo-* and *na-*, and descriptive terms for cattle appearance such as *bok* 'pale reddish purple', *naŋ* 'yellow-orange' and more. The titles *lokurúk* 'blackish', *nabuíz* 'iridescent', and *lekkérz* 'yellowish' in Table 2.9 above were also collected among the Dhaasanac with the same referential meaning.

The meaning of some of the titles corresponds to the meaning of the Teso-Turkana descriptive terms for cattle appearance; the association with a specific category for appearance has thus been correctly borrowed. The title associated with a black ox, *lusikirjóno* (Table 2.9), can be traced back to the Nyangatom colour term *-kiryon* for black cattle (Tornay 1973), attested also in the Ateso cattle colour term *lòkàkírjònón* 'the black one' (Barasa 2017: 78). In other cases, the association with cattle appearance and the semantic correspondence between the borrowed titles and descriptive terms in their original context is not always clear: the title *nakupurrát*, for example, corresponds to a blue roan coat with iridescent appearance called *guitá* in the Hamar system (Table 2.9). The title *nakupurrát*, however, includes the Teso-Turkana element *-kopurat* (Nyangatom) or *-kipura(t)* (Turkana), which is translated as 'pink' by Tornay (1973) and Dimmendaal (2015, after Barrett 1988).

Similar to calf names, favourite animal names can be derived from a corresponding cattle title: the title *naŋoleamí*, corresponding to the *balá* appearance type in Table 2.9, is related to the cattle title assigned to a *balá* female cow, namely *naŋgulé?* (see the full correspondence in Table 2.10 below).

The list presented in Table 2.9 above is not exhaustive and does not show all the titles associated with the respective categories for appearance. Compared to the pool of *gaar náabino*, or calf names, the choice of a *qóle náabi* is made from among a much larger variety of titles.

Given the foreign origin of this naming practice, the relationship between titles and cattle appearance has to be memorised, and the system relies heavily on collective knowledge: the Hamar *qóle náabino* were in fact more easily collected in group

discussions during which participants recalled a past history of multilingualism and contact with other pastoralist groups.¹²

4 Conclusions

The Hamar livestock-centred system of address and the descriptive system for cattle appearances have been juxtaposed and analysed to show their interconnect-edness (see Table 2.10 below for an overview). The relationship between the system of address and the descriptive terms for cattle appearance has been mentioned in the anthropological and ethnographic literature; however, apart from Ohta (1986), detailed linguistic analyses are rare. We know from Evans-Pritchard's description of Nuer modes of address, for example, that "from its colors, distribution of markings, shape of horns, and other peculiarities, he takes his *cot thak*, ox-name" (Evans-Pritchard 1964: 222) and for Hamar the literature reports that calf names are *derived* from the appearance of the *garró* calf (Lydall 1999; Dubosson 2014). This paper has tried to shed some light on the exact mechanisms by which titles and appellations are derived from the descriptive system for animal appearance. The relationship between terms of address for both humans and cattle and the descriptive system for cattle appearance has been analysed, and some of the processes that keep the systems connected have been explained: cattle titles and titles for humans are interconnected via the descriptive terms for cattle appearance, and meaningful associations are established through morphological processes, polysemy and analogy. This analysis has shown that in order to use and understand the livestock-centred systems of address, knowledge of the cattle descriptive system is necessary, and vice versa, titles (particularly calf names) are used as referential devices which can convey additional information about cattle appearance. These linguistic devices represent only part of a vast and fascinating knowledge system, whose intricacies and complexities are still far from being fully understood.

¹² This resembles the case of Murle ox names, which have been borrowed from the Toposa language; Arensen (1988: 128–129) wrote about Murle ox names that "the words used are from the Toposa language so that most people do not know the components of the word and even less its true meaning".

Table 2.10: Examples of correspondences between cattle appearance and systems of address.

dánta [gloss]	Cattle titles (F, M, Unisex)	Calf names (1, 2, 3)	Favourite animal names
balá [forehead. patch]	F: annó?; pánəs; naŋjulé? M: ʔárbo; wóle; annómbe	1: Annómba 2: Silémba	naŋɔleamśi; naŋɔlearúk
gawá [bicolour.pattern]	F: garó?; tuljá?; gáu? M: garómbe Unisex: lutté?	1: Garómba 2: depends on combined colour	lutiɔabó? ~ lutiɔabó? ~ luciɔabóq ~ luciljabóq; lutiljá ~ lutiljamśi; lolinabóq
deer [reddish]	F: ʔailó?; sálle?; adará?; béezi? shardó?; nabír; M: diima; shardómbe; deerímbe Unisex: déro?	1: Shardómba 2: Deerímba	lɔriáx; loŋabár; lokoɔár ~ lokobár
galáf [yellowish]	F: laaló?; árka; nawi? M: laalómbe	1: Burrémbe 2: Laalómbe	loŋabuá; lekkérz; lotiabuló; lokkemér

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