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Ekaputra Tupamahu

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Language Politics and the Constitution of Racialized Subjects in the Corinthian Church[1]

Ekaputra Tupamahu
Vanderbilt University, USA

Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of speaking in tongue(s) in the Corinthian church from the point of view of the politics of language. Instead of seeing tongue(s) as a problem of unintelligible-ecstatic speech, it reconsiders this phenomenon as a linguistic struggle. Tongue(s), in this sense, is a multilingual social dynamic that Paul perceives as chaotic. Special attention is given to the role of language as one of the crucial markers of the ancient Greeks' collective identity. The barbarians are their imaginative and discursive 'others' who do not share their language. It is within this sociopolitical context that the employment of the term *βάρβαρος* in 1 Cor. 14:11 can be understood as a performative act of constituting racialized subjects. Such discourse is Paul's political strategy of bringing a monolingual order into the Corinthian church.

Keywords

First Corinthians, multilingualism, race, ethnicity, Paul, politics of language, tongues

> How one group of people views or 'constructs' others – and how, by doing so, it constructs its own identity – is one of the central themes of history. (Harrison 2002: 1)

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Corresponding author:
Ekaputra Tupamahu, Vanderbilt University, 411 21st Ave S, Nashville, TN 37240, USA.
Email: ekaputrat@gmail.com

Introduction

Concerning the question of tongue(s)[2] in Corinth, Pauline scholars have long debated the identification of this phenomenon. The common methodology employed has been to establish either a phenomenological or a lexicographical connection with parallel instances in both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. Scholarly opinion stands divided: the majority of scholars today thinks that tongues is an ecstatic, unintelligible heavenly or angelic utterance;[3] others see it as a miraculous ability to speak in unknown or unlearned foreign languages;[4] and a few others insist that it is a multilingual phenomenon.[5] Although there are some other positions,[6] such as that tongues is an archaic language (Bleek 1829: 3-79; Héring 1962: 128) or the language of the unconscious (Theissen 1987: 16), the three aforementioned understandings are the major ones. So much attention has been devoted to this debate that almost none of these scholars perceives tongue(s) as a site of sociopolitical struggle. This article highlights one aspect of politics of language, that is, racial-ethnic politics.

Although I will not dwell on this debate, here I interpret tongue(s) in 1 Cor. 14 as a multilingual phenomenon for the following reasons. First, tongue(s) means many languages. Since Greek does not have a word for language, the word *γλῶσσα*, therefore, is used for both a part of the body and a language. Aristotle describes this twofold role of ‘tongue’as follows:

> As air is breathed in Nature makes use of it for two functions: just as she uses the tongue [τῇ γλώττῃ] both for taste [τὴν γεῦσιν] and for articulation [τὴν διάλεκτον], of which taste is essential to life (and consequently belongs to more species), and articulate speech is an aid to living well (*On the Soul,* 2.420b).

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[2] I employ the parenthesis (s) in this article in order to show that the word appears both in singular and plural forms in 1 Cor. 12-14. The phrase ‘speaking in tongue(s)’ (λαλεῖν γλώσσαις or γλώσσῃ) in the Indonesian Bible (*terjemahan baru LAI*) is rendered as *bahasa roh* (lit.: ‘the language of the spirit’), which leaves a strong impression that this is a mystical experience. Also, it is worth noting that the word ‘glossolalia’does not exist in the NT. What we have is a phrase λαλεῖν γλώσσαις (or γλώσσῃ) in 1 Corinthians, and λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις in Acts 2.3. So the distinction that scholars make between *xenolalia* and *glossolalia* is not only unhelpful, but also it does not have a strong textual basis. See Turner 2012: 1-33.

[3] Barrett 1968: 286, 315-34; Clemens 1899: 344-52; Dunn 1997: 243-44; Ellis 1974: 128-44; Engelsen 1970: 103-75; Fee 1980: 3-14; 2000: 105-20; 2009: 24-26; 2014: 597-99, 722-92; Martin 1991: 547-89, 1999: 87-103; Meyer 1877: 365-72; Robertson and Plummer 1914: 267-68; Stendahl 1976: 109-24; Thiselton 1979: 15-36, 2013: 970-89.

[4] Davies 1952: 228-31; Forbes 1986: 257-70; 1995: 5-8; Gundry 1966: 299-307; Tugwell 1973: 137-40.

[5] Fisher 1975: 215-33; Garland 2003: 629-77; Thomas 1998: 128; Zerhusen 1997: 139-52.

[6] Mark Cartledge lists 13 different positions (2000: 136-40).

Paul’s quotation of Isa. 28.11 that God speaks in the lips of foreigners (ἐν χείλεσιν ἑτέρων) and in foreign tongues (ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις) could thus be understood to refer quite simply to languages other than one’s mother tongue, instead of mystical or spiritual speeches. Also, his statement εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ (1 Cor. 14.18) can be read as ‘I give thanks to God, I speak in [many] languages more than all of you’. In this sense, here for once Paul is not ‘boasting’ (Stendahl 1976: 110) that he has more spiritual experience than the Corinthians, but rather that he knows more languages than them. Second, the word φωνή that Paul employs in 1 Cor. 14 is also used widely in Greek literature to refer to spoken language or dialect. Thus, when Paul explains in 14.10 that γένη φωνῶν εἰσιν ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ οὐδὲν ἄφωνον, he is pointing to the reality that there are many languages in the world and nothing or no one exists without language,[7] which I explain at greater length later in this article. Third, the verb διερμηνεύω (1 Cor. 12.30; 14.5, 13, 27) and the nouns ἑρμηνεία (1 Cor. 12.10; 14.26) and διερμηνευτής (14.28) are best understood, especially in the context of the discussion on language, as translation or interpretation from one language to another.[8] And lastly, geopolitically speaking, as a pivotal coastal city that connected all parts of the Roman Empire, Corinth understandably became the center for cultural interchange in the ancient Mediterranean world. Although people from many different parts of the Empire both visited and lived in Corinth, Greek was the dominant language and Latin the language of Roman administration (Concannon 2014: 63-73; Millis 2010: 13-35). It is not too difficult to imagine that when early Christians gathered for communal worship, they would speak in their own languages.

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[7] The Revised English Bible (REB) renders this verse as follows: ‘There are any number of different *languages* in the world; nowhere is without language’, while the New International Version (NIV) has a slightly different translation: ‘Undoubtedly there are all sorts of *languages* in the world, yet none of them is without meaning’. The rendition of the second clause (καὶ οὐδὲν ἄφωνον) in the REB, in my opinion, is better than the NIV. Here, Paul is acknowledging that nothing or no one exists without language. Or to put it in a positive way, everyone has language. The emphasis is on the universality of language rather than the meaning of language. Such acknowledgment is an indication that Paul is dealing with the problem of many languages in the Corinthian church. He is telling the Corinthians that he is fully aware of the reality of the multilinguality of the world (see Clackson 2015). However, Paul seems to be convinced that social order can only be achieved through monolingualism.

[8] Anthony Thiselton has proposed that these words be understood as ‘to put into words’ in light of their uses in Philo and Josephus (Thiselton 1979: 15-36). However, Christopher Forbes has challenged this proposal seriously and effectively. Forbes argues that Thiselton’s philological and exegetical arguments are not strong enough to build that case (Forbes 1995: 65-72). Even though I agree with Forbes that these words contain the ‘normal range of meaning including “to translate”, “to explain”, and “to compound”’, I do not think that the phenomenon of tongue(s) in 1 Cor. 14 refers to a miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages.

Paul apparently found it to be chaotic, and 1 Cor. 14 is his effort to bring (linguistic) order back to this community.

Of course, conflict was familiar in the Corinthian church (Meeks 2003; Theissen 2004). In the nineteenth century, the Tübingen School, led by Ferdinand Baur, incorporated a Hegelian dialectical philosophical framework to analyze the tension between groups in the early Christian movement. Baur proposed that Peter and Paul, the former representing the Jewish group and the latter the Gentile group, were in great tension.[9] This conflict between an open-universalistic theology of the Gentile group and a close-particularistic theology of the Jewish group, was the root of the problem in Corinth. James Dunn has pointed out that this is a retrojection of the tension between European Catholicism and Protestantism (2003: 4). Laurence Welborn challenges Baur's theological reconstruction of the Corinthian conflict by pointing to the vocabulary that Paul employs in 1 Cor. 1–4, such as *σχίσμα*, ἔρις and *διχοστασία*. Through establishing parallel linguistic use in Greco-Roman literature, Welborn concludes: 'it is a power struggle, not a theological controversy that motivates the writing of 1 Corinthians 1–4' (1997: 3). This power struggle, Welborn continues, is manifested as socioeconomic, rhetorical and epistemological struggles (1997: 16-36).

In this article, instead of merely identifying the phenomenon and attempting to establish the nature of the political struggle, I discuss the issue of tongue(s) within the framework of the politics of language. Languages do not exist in a vacuum but in a complex network of power relations that are constantly being contested. This is also true in 1 Cor. 14, where Paul, arguing that everyone should speak only one language in public gatherings, has politicized language. One of the aspects in the politicizing of language is directly related to ethnicity, to which I turn in the next sections of this article. I suggest that Paul's employment of the term βάρβαρος, consciously or unconsciously, was part of the larger political struggle between the Greeks and their racial or ethnic others, and resulted in an aggressive act of othering people who speak foreign languages in the Corinthian church. In order to achieve this goal, I divide this article into three sections. The first section will look into the concept of race (and/or ethnicity) as an (un)stable dialectical process. In the second section, I will examine how the ancient Greeks perceived their racial or ethnic others through a linguistic lens. Third, I will analyze Paul's use of the term βάρβαρος in 1 Cor. 14.11 as a strategy of othering that eventually leads to silencing of minority language speakers in Corinth.

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[9] Baur traces the schism in the Corinthian church back to the conflict between Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking groups in the church of Jerusalem recounted in Acts 6. Baur argues that the theology of the early Hellenist church in Jerusalem can be reconstructed through the sermon that Stephen delivers in Acts 7. The main thing that Baur notices in Stephen's message is his strong attack against temple worship. Other Jews in Jerusalem persecuted the Hellenist church, according to Baur, because of this strong rejection of Jewish tradition. Baur argues that the Hellenist church tried to 'set aside the Jewish monopoly of religion, and substituted for it a universal system, in which Jew and Gentile stood equal side by side'(Baur 2003: 61). In other words, the gospel does not belong exclusively to the Jewish people. The Christian faith is universal, whereas Jewish belief is particular. This line of historical reconstruction, Baur maintains, lies at the root of Paul's universal theology. Not only was Paul the first apostle who laid down 'expressly and distinctly the principle of Christian universalism as a thing essentially opposed to Jewish particularism', he is also, according to Baur, the first one who 'set this Christian principle before him as the sole standard and rule of his apostolic activity' (Baur 1878: 47).

Race-Ethnicity Identity as an (Un)stable Dialectical Process

My reading of 1 Cor. 14 is indebted to the theoretical framework provided first by Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown in their collaborative work on racism, and second by Denise Buell in her work on racial reasoning in the early Christian movement. Miles and Brown particularly highlight the constructed dialectical dimension between the self and the other, by which they attempt to find a better solution to two contrasting stances on the issue of race and ethnicity, namely, conceptual inflation[10] and deflation.[11] In order to avoid both extremes, they propose a consistent pattern behind every instance of racism. Racism takes place in a context of dialectical relationship between self and other; when a group defines the other through giving signification to the other, it inevitably reflects its own identity. It is a dialectical movement that goes in both directions.[12]

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[10] Conceptual inflation is when the category of racism is applied and conceptualized too widely, so much so that the concept of racism becomes meaningless. Miles and Brown show two examples of conceptual inflation. The first example is the so-called 'new racism', which is basically a response to the large influx of immigrants coming to Britain from many different parts of the world in the 1970s. Scholars such as Martin Barker began to theorize this new form of racism in terms of inferiority and superiority. This idea of racism was then expanded by Marxist thinkers, especially those who are affiliated with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The problem with CCCS, for Miles and Brown, is that its focus is too much on ideology. If racism and ideology are seen as identical, then conceptual inflation results, in which there is nothing we can say about racism that is different from any other ideology. There should be clear criteria through which we can say that something is racism or not, and conceptual inflation does not provide it. It is the lack of conceptual criteria that creates the problem of inflation (2003: 61-72).

[11] White racism in the USA is the best example of this conceptual deflation. When racism is reduced to a 'white' phenomenon only, so that only white people are capable of racism, then it becomes a deflated concept. Miles-Brown reject this deflated understanding of racism for three reasons. First, it is based primarily on 'racial essentialism'. All white people are categorized in a single box of racism. They are not capable of speaking about racism simply because they are ontologically racists. For Miles and Brown, 'it is evidently a mistake because there is a long tradition of "white" people being involved in anti-racist activities of many kinds'. It is problematic because it will lead to a conclusion that all the things that white people do are racist. And lastly, it will limit the scope of analysis to only an American version of racism (2003: 73-83).

Thus, instead of speaking about race or ethnicity as objective and essentialist facts, Miles and Brown prefer to talk about them as processes – ethnicization and racialization. Ethnicization, on the one hand, they define as 'a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to socio-cultural signifiers of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically, culturally and economically' (Miles and Brown 2003: 99). On the other hand, they define racialization as 'a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons that reproduces itself biologically' (2003: 102). These two concepts are similar in their emphasis on a dialectical process of self and other. However, the difference is also quite obvious: ethnicization is related mainly to the attributed sociocultural signifiers, whereas racialization has more to do with attributed biological or phenotypical features.

Buell notes that in any historical analysis we should remember that all categories that we employ, such as race, ethnicity and religion, are 'modern categories' (2005: 14). The task of a critical historian, therefore, is not to remove these modern analytical categories altogether, but to define them while fully knowing that 'we can place modern categories into conversation with ancient ones without effacing their differences, even while we must also acknowledge that we can only understand those differences through the lens of our present'.[13] While language can be categorized as a sociocultural marker, we should note that language is also a bodily performance (Butler 1997: 9-13), and thus implicated in both racialization and ethnicization. The boundary between them is not as solid as it may seem.[14] Moreover, Buell's proposal of 'racial reasoning' provides a helpful way to navigate the rigid distinction between race and ethnicity. For Buell, the border marker, e.g., skin color, language etc., that separates the others from the self is often perceived as a fixed boundary, while it is actually fluid and movable. In other words, both fixity and fluidity are at play in every racial-ethnic construction of identity.[15] Following Buell, I use the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' in an interchangeable way throughout this article (cf. Barreto 2015: 76-77; Lim 2013: 480), not just because they are imprecise, but because, in the ethno-linguistic context in which language becomes the marker of difference in the dialectical relationship of self and others, the concepts of race and ethnicity are almost inseparable.[16] With this in mind, let us now see the role of language in the constitution of the (un)stable ethnic 'others' in the Greek world.

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[12] Philip A. Harland echoes a similar dialectical process in his discussion on the dynamics of identity in the early Christian movement. He writes: 'Ethnic identities are dependent on the everyday interactions among members of the group and between members of other groups. These interactions result in the formulation of the notions of "us" and "them"' (2009: 11).

[13] Buell's proposal of 'ethnic reasoning', which is an attempt to navigate an inherent tension between fixity and fluidity, is helpful to me in understanding the locus of language in the context of racial-ethnic identity construction (Buell 2005: 1-5).

[14] Benjamin Bailey's research among the second-generation Dominican Republic immigrants in Providence, RI provides an interesting case of how language plays a significant role in breaking the rigid distinction between race and ethnicity. In this research, Bailey demonstrates that 'the ethnolinguistic terms in which the Dominican second generation think of themselves – "Dominican", "Spanish", or "Hispanic" – are frequently at odds with the phenotype-based racial terms in which they are seen by others in the US, namely as Black'. Through language, Bailey argues further, Dominican Americans resist 'American racialization practices' that exclusively operates within the Black/White binary (2000: 556). A more extensive version of this research was published in Bailey 2002.

The Role of Language in the Hellenistic Racial Construction

In 1 Cor. 14.11, after discussing the analogy of musical instruments and acknowledging that there are many kind of sounds (*γένη φωνῶν*)[17] in the world and that nothing exists without sound (*ἄφωνον*), Paul states: *ἐὰν οὖν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος* ('Therefore, if I do not know the force of sound, I will be a barbarian to the one who speaks, and the one who speaks [will be] a barbarian in me'). Many English Bibles translate the word *βάρβαρος* as 'foreigner' (cf. NIV, NLT, ESV etc.). Only the King James Version renders it with the transliterated word 'barbarian'. If Paul had wanted to express the idea of 'foreigner' or 'stranger' from a different geographical location, the word ξένος, which Paul uses three times (Rom. 16.23; Eph. 2.12, 19), probably would have been a better fit. The term βάρβαρος, however, is different from ξένος because it signifies ethnic 'others' marked by a linguistic difference.

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[15] The notion of fluidity is parallel to Cavan W. Concannon's proposal of Pauline malleable body (2014: 31-33).

[16] This definition is close to the working definition proposed by Joshua Fishman in his influential work on language and ethnicity. Although Fishman points out that he does not want to worry too much about definition, he explains that his work is framed in the following definition: 'Ethnicity is a self-and-other aggregative definitional dimension of culture. It is a dimension that deals with "us" vs. "them" and with "them" vs. "them". It is not necessarily a conscious, highlighted or salient dimension of daily life … but it is close to consciousness and contrastive experiences easily call into consciousness'(1989: 5). Within the framework of ethnic analysis, Fishman's project penetrates a wide range of areas in sociolinguistic research such as language and nationalism, language maintenance, language shift, language minority in education, and the relationship between bilingualism and diglossia (cf. Fishman 1985: 3-13).

[17] Edward Anson points out that the word *φωνή* is often used to describe local dialects. He observes: 'While Herodotus routinely refers to "Greek speech", he is, nonetheless, cognizant of the many variations of the Greek language during the fifth century, and while Plato has Socrates speak of "Greek speech" (*Crat.* 409e, 410a), he also acknowledges that Greek differed in their speech (*Crat.* 385e). Our sources routinely refer to "Boetian speech" (*φωνή*), "Laconian speech" (*φωνή*) (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 26.11), "Dorian speech" (*φωνή*), "Aeolian speech" (*φωνή*) (Paus. 9.22.3), "Chalcidian speech" (*φωνή*) (Thuc. 6.5.1), "Phecian speech" (*φωνή*) (Aesch. *Supp.* 563-4), "Arcadian speech" (*φωνή*) (Paus. 8.23.3), and "Attic speech" (*φωνή*), etc.' (Anson 2009: 7-8).

That Paul talks about φωνή and then immediately βάρβαρος would likely catch the attention of many Greek-speaking people, especially those familiar with the eighth-century BCE text *The Iliad*, in which Homer describes the Carians, a group of people in his Trojan Catalogue, as βαρβαρόφωνων.[18] This is the earliest appearance of βάρβαρος, as a compound word with φωνή, in Greek literature.[19] Indeed, Edith Hall in her important work *Inventing the Barbarian*, which is deeply influenced by Edward Said's work on orientalism, argues emphatically that it was not until the Greeks had to face the immense social and political challenge from the Persians during the Greco-Persian war (499–49 BCE) that the 'otherness' of βάρβαρος became critical in their collective identity. As Simon Hornblower puts it, 'Persia gave the Greeks their identity, or means for recognizing it' (1983: 11). This is the reason why Hall thinks that βαρβαρόφωνων in *The Iliad* is probably a fifth- or fourth-century interpolation (1989: 9). Thus, in the post Greco-Persian wars, language became a crucial boundary marker that the Greeks constructed to separate themselves from the others (i.e., βάρβαροι). One of the factors that contributed to this ethno-linguistic construction of identity, according to Hall, was their geographical location, which made them different from the Chinese or Hebrews.[20] Hall strongly suggests that ‘no other ancient people privileged language to such an extent in defining its ethnicity’ than the Greeks. Her entire project is centered on the idea that the ‘others’ are described with all kinds of representations in ‘the rhetorical topos’ of the tragedies. Those representations are not neutral but thoroughly political. They are constructed not only as a way to describe the others, but also as a strategy of ‘self-definition’, by portraying the barbarians ‘as the opposite of the ideal Greek’ (Hall 1989: 2-3).

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[18] *Iliad*. 2.865: Νάστης αὖ Καρῶν ἡγήσατο βαρβαροφώνων ('Nastes led the Carians who are *barbarophōnōn*').

[19] Deborah Gera explains, 'Even if Homer uses the term *allothroos*, speaker of a different language, in neutral fashion, with no intention of erecting either a cultural or conceptual barrier between such people and Greek speakers, the two epithets *barbarophonos* and *agriphonos* seem less innocuous. These words may point to an attitude found in later Greek writings, according to which the non-Greek languages spoken by foreigners are thought to characterize their (inferior) culture' (2003: 9).

[20] Hall writes: 'The priority of the linguistic criterion in the Greek's self-determination of their ethnicity is not surprising when one considers their geographical dispersal over numerous coasts and countless islands, and the enormous variety in way of life, political allegiance, cult, and tradition amongst the different communities, whether Ionian, Dorian, or Aeolian. Had the Greek-speakers walled themselves into cities on a mainland, like ancient Chinese, many of whose words for "barbarian" were connected with lifestyle and habitat ("nomads", "shepherds", "jungle people"), the original criterion of Hellenic ethnicity might *not* have been their language. It has been suggested that the closest parallel in the ancient world to the Greeks' self-image was that of the Hebrews; both travelled widely and settled everywhere, but their language was in both cases remarkably resilient and inextricably bound up with their sense of "peopleness". But religion was central to the difference felt by the Hebrews between themselves and Gentiles, as it was to the Hindus' distinction between themselves and the non-Hindus, *mlechhas*; Greek polytheism, on the other hand, was remarkably flexible and able to assimilate foreign gods and cults' (Hall 1989: 5).

In the *Histories*, Herodotus describes how the Athenians originated from the Pelasgians. The Pelasgians, Herodotus explains, ‘spoke a language which was not Greek’ (βάρβαρον γλῶσσαν) and the Attic people had to change their language in order to become part of the Hellenes (*Histories*, I.57). Herodotus further explains that the people of Creston and Placia had their own common language (ὁμόγλωσσοι) which they brought with them wherever they went. Now, concerning the Greeks (τὸ δὲ Ἑλληνικόν), Herodotus writes: ‘it seems clear to me, [this people] has always used (διαχρᾶται) the same language (γλώσσῃ) since its beginning’. Language is clearly a crucial defining marker of being τὸ Ἑλληνικόν. The word διαχρᾶται (or διαχράομαι) is a compound verb of the preposition δια, and the verb χράομαι denotes the idea that the Greek language (i.e., the same language) thoroughly binds their differences. Thus, when recounting the story of the Athenians’ response to Alexander concerning whether they should make a peace pact with Xerxes, the Persian king, Herodotus describes the Greeks (τὸ Ἑλληνικόν) as having a common ancestor, a shared language (ὁμόγλωσσον), common temples for gods and sacrifices, and the same way of life (*Histories*, VIII.144.2.).

On the one hand, the rhetoric of Greekness as a unified entity is surely an ideological, and thus political, move. Hyun Jin Kim in his comparative study of the ethnic constructions between the ancient Chinese and Greeks puts it this way:

> The call for Hellenic unity and rhetoric of freedom of the Greeks were indeed the political tools employed by every successful Greek power for the expressed aim of gaining hegemony over other city-states. The Greeks could in reality utilize their ethnic identity in a flexible manner (2009: 8; cf. Hall 2002: 144-47).

On the other hand, in Plato’s *Statesman* we know that this perceived separation between the Greeks and the barbarians is widely accepted among the Greeks in a quite essentialist way. In his conversation with Younger Socrates (Νεώτερος Σωκράτης) on the issue of the social division in the context of defining the idea of royalty or kingship, the Stranger (Ξένος) says:

> [T]hey [the Greeks] separate the Hellenic race from all the rest as one, and to all the other races, which are countless in number and have no relation in blood or language to one another, they give the single name ‘barbarian’; then, because of this single name, they think it is a single species (*Statesman*, 262d).

We know from Plutarch that the way Alexander unified the Hellenistic empire was by making sure that the Greek language is used and taught throughout the empire (*Alexander* 47.6). As a consequence, Greek became the primary language in the Mediterranean world. After the death of Alexander, 'Greek became … the language used in the various kingdoms resulting from the division in the empire' (Rochette 2010: 282). The Greeks were proud of and identified themselves with their language. Even until the Roman period, the importance of the Greek language was still recognized.[21] To echo Edward Anson's phrase, 'a Greek knew a Greek when he heard one' (2009: 5). This language is what makes them different from the others, the barbarians.

That said, although Arnaldo Momigliano argues that ancient ethnic identity did not have an important space for language because comparative philology had not been invented, and therefore ethnicity was marked mainly by a common ancestor or institution (quoted in Isaac 2004: 112), Benjamin Isaac asserts that one must not deny the importance of language in Herodotus. If Herodotus is convinced that language is a crucial marker of the identity of Greekness, then within the context of the speech in *Histories* book 8, Herodotus 'found it obvious that Athenians would have started speaking Greek when they joined the Hellenic community, or, rather, they could not have joined if they had not spoken Greek, for there are no Hellenes who do not speak Greek. The Hellenes had a common language but no common ancestors or institutions' (Isaac 2004: 112). Therefore, Isaac continues, 'Generally speaking, language is one of the essential components of social identity' (2004: 112). In a similar vein, Anson argues that when Herodotus speaks about language, he refers primarily to mutual comprehension among the Greeks rather than linguistic structural unity. Anson points out: 'in antiquity Greek primarily defined their ethnicity by the Greek language' (2009: 5). Wilfried Nippel, in his discussion of the way in which Greeks differentiate themselves from non-Greeks, likewise argues: 'Language remained the best criterion of differentiation; originally, the concept of the Barbarian referred to those who did not speak Greek' (2001: 281). Language is the marker of a Greek's ethnic identity, and a βάρβαρος is a Greek's imaginative and discursive 'others' who do not share their language. That said, let us now look closer into the particularity of the language struggle in the Corinthian church.

τὰ πνευματικά as an Apparatus for Control

The discussion of tongue(s) in 1 Cor. 14 is part of the larger context of discourse on τὰ πνευματικά (spiritual things) that begins in ch. 12. Paul opens the entire conversation with the statement: Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν ('concerning spiritual things'). In contrast to James Dunn, who thinks that tongue(s) is an ecstatic experience and Paul understood it as a linguistic phenomenon (1997: 244 -45), I think it is the other way around. The phenomenon is a multilingual one, and Paul attempts to make sense of it theologically in 1 Cor. 14. That is to say, Paul filters most social issues through a theological lens (i.e., gender roles, economic relations, foods etc.). Just as he thinks that the law is πνευματικός (Rom. 7.14), language is also spiritual in his worldview. However, a crucial question that needs to be asked is: Why does Paul put languages under the umbrella of 'spiritual' things (τὰ πνευματικά)? Echoing Antoinette Clark Wire's assertion that 'Paul is not answering questions addressed to an authority but questioning answers authoritatively delivered' (1990: 135-36), I would argue that the theological appropriation of tongue(s) is used to establish divine authority over this community. Since Paul thinks that multilingual interactions in the Corinthian gathering are chaotic, he feels the need to bring 'order' (τάξις, 14.40) into that community. To this end, he necessitates a rhetoric of spiritual gifts as a tool for control.

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[21] Cicero acknowledges, 'For if anyone thinks that there is a smaller gain of glory derived from Greek verses than from Latin ones, he is greatly mistaken, because Greek poetry is read among all nations, Latin is confined to its own natural limits, which are narrow enough' (*For Archias* 23).

1 Corinthians 14.37-38 provides the best clue to Paul's desire for control and authority. Paul states: 'If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, let him know that the things that I write to you is the command of the Lord' (Εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός, ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή). In the same breath he continues: 'If anyone ignores (this), let him be ignorant!' (εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοείτω). In this context, I think the best way to understand πνευματικός is that a person who exercises τὰ πνευματικά and tongue(s) speakers are the primary target here. This statement is sufficiently strong that even ancient scribes found it troubling. Assuming that the reading of NA^{28} is more original,[22] then we can argue that many ancient scribes, particularly from a Western tradition (D*, F, G), considered the phrase κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή to be too strong, so they omitted the word ἐντολή leaving κυρίου ἐστὶν ('is of the Lord') only. The word ἐντολή was probably perceived as too authoritarian.

Further, some ancient MSS have a middle indicative ἀγνοεῖται reading instead of an imperative ἀγνοείτω. However, on the basis of the *lectio difficilior potior* principle, I suggest that ἀγνοείτω is an earlier reading. Also, the imperative ἀγνοείτω reading is supported by papyrus P^{46}, one of the earliest textual witnesses to Pauline letters from the Alexandrian tradition dated around the late second or early third century CE.[23] In terms of the temporal quality and geographical distribution of manuscript witnesses, it is still reasonable to conclude that the imperative *ἀγνοείτω* is an earlier reading than the indicative *ἀγνοεῖται*. It means that the scribes found the command to be troubling and decided to ease or smooth the reading.

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[22] This reading is supported by P^{46}, D^{1}, K, L, Ψ, 81, 104, 365, 630, 1175, 1505, 2464, Majority Texts, and some early translations (Latin, Syriac and Sahidic versions).

[23] The ἀγνοείτω reading also appears in ℵ^{2}, A^{c}, B, D^{1}, K, L, Ψ, 81, 104, 365, 630, 1175, 1241, 1505, 1881, 2464, Majority Text and Syriac version.

That said, by establishing the idea that everything that he writes is the command of the Lord, Paul apparently attempts to establish a divine authority over this community. His words, he says, are the words of Jesus himself, so all things that he says have to be obeyed. In other words, he expects the Corinthians to submit to his divine authority. If anyone ignores his authority, Paul insists, 'let that person be ignorant!'

The Politicization of βάρβαρος

Before proceeding further and discussing how Paul employs the term βάρβαρος, in the context of his claim for divine authority, as a strategy of othering, it is important to highlight first the idea that language is always embedded in power relations. In her book *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler focuses primarily on theorizing the depth of the sociopolitical impact of hate speech. Building upon the speech act theory of J.L. Austin, for whom the function of language is not only to describe things (descriptive) but also to do things (performative) (1975: 6-11), Butler argues that hate speech goes even further than just performing hatred – above all, it constitutes the subject. In other words, it is through language that a subject establishes an identity. A subject can only exist in a linguistic life. 'One comes to "exist" by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other. One "exists" not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being *recognizable*' (Butler 1997: 5).

Concerning the concept of the constitution of the subject, Butler argues that there are two somehow different, yet connected, views of the relationship between subject and speech. One is the Althusserian concept of interpellation (or hailing; see Althusser 2001: 170-77), and the other one is the Austinian concept of illocutionary speech (see Austin 1975: 99-107, 108-31). 'For Austin, the subject who speaks precedes the speech in question. For Althusser, the speech act that brings the subject into linguistic existence precedes the subject in question', writes Butler (1997: 24). What is parallel between them is that Austin still thinks that the illocutionary speech act is influenced and formed by its convention, whereas Althusser argues that there is a ritualistic sort of ceremony (an idea that he develops from Pascal) that forms the subject of ideology. For Althusser, therefore, ideas are formed by ritual, and not the other way around. But for Austin, it is the speaking subjects who produce the linguistic convention (or ritual in an Althusserian sense). On the one hand, Austin believes in the existing subject who speaks; Althusser, on the other hand, believes that the subject is formed through being addressed. Butler tries to find a sort of middle way between these two positions. She asserts, 'To bridge the Austinian and Althusserian views, one would need to offer an account of how the subject constituted through the address of the Other becomes then a subject capable of addressing the others' (Butler 1997: 25-26). This middle way lies at the heart of Butler's theory of linguistic interpellation. By addressing or naming the other, a subject is interpellated, but, for Butler, the addresser will not be able to name without first being named.

Further, Butler insists that 'one need not know about or register a way of being constituted for that constitution to work in an efficacious way' (1997: 31). In other words, 'Interpellation must be dissociated from the figure of the voice in order to become the instrument and mechanism of discourses whose efficacy is irreducible to their moment of enunciation' (1997: 32). The effectiveness of a speech in producing or constituting a subject, both as free being and subjected being, does not depend on whether the listener knows it or not.

Within this theoretical framework, I would argue that the term βάρβαρος, like other racialized terms (the 'N'-word, anchor babies etc.), is political because consciously or unconsciously it produces subjected beings. Language not only facilitates a certain mode of power relation, but also perpetuates such a relation. I would do it by pointing to the political discourse from the two sides of the relation – the Greek and the barbarian sides.

Aristotle, in his *Politics*, helps us see how the construction of βάρβαρος is directly related to power relation between the Greeks and the barbarians. Aristotle attempts to lay out his argument that politics is based on 'partnership' or 'fellowship' (κοινωνία), and that such fellowship exists not just at the higher level of *polis* but goes all the way down to the most basic level of human relationship – that is, 'the union of female and male' for procreation (γενέσεως). This male–female union is 'the union of the natural ruler and natural subject for the sake of security' (*Politics* I.1252a). Just like the relation between mind and body, Aristotle argues further, in which 'mind is naturally ruler and naturally master' and body is 'subject and naturally a slave', so too is the relation between male and female. The mind does all the command, and the body will follow. That is to say, male is naturally master, and female is naturally subject. Although the master–slave relation and male–female relation function in the same way, Aristotle maintains that both of them have a distinct order. They belong to a different order of relations because they serve different purposes.

On the basis of this simple logic, Aristotle then insists that in the barbarians (ἐν δὲ τοῖς βαρβάροις) the female and the slave belong to the same order (τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ δοῦλον τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει τάξιν) because they do not have a 'class of natural rulers'. Thus, he is insisting that the barbarians are slaves by nature, or born slaves. The same case is laid out in Book III, in which he explains many different types of royal governance. One of them is kingship through 'lifelong generalship' (στρατηγία διὰ βίου), and this tends to be hereditary in nature (*Politics* III.1285a), although some kings are elected. Aristotle argues that this kind of military rule tends to be tyrannical and can be found among the barbarians. Why do the barbarians have a tendency to be ruled by a tyrant? He explains: ‘Because the barbarians are more servile (τὸ δουλικώτεροι) in their nature than the Greeks … they endure despotic rule without resentment’ (*Politics* III.1285a). It is no surprise that, in agreement with Euripides, Aristotle maintains: ‘It is reasonable/proper for the Greeks to rule over the barbarians’ (βαρβάρων δ᾽ Ἕλληνας ἄρχειν εἰκός, *Politics* I.1252a),[24] which means that a barbarian and a slave are the same (ὥς ταὐτὸ φύσει βάρβαρον καὶ δοῦλον ὄν). To this, Otfried Höffe comments: ‘In this passage he [Aristotle] derives political privileges from cultural superiority, and he also reinforces the meaning of the poet’s words by placing the barbarians at the level of born slaves’ (2003: 177). Since language interpellates subjects, as Bulter has pointed out, Aristotle’s discourse on βάρβαρος not only promotes an ideology of Greek supremacy, but also constitutes the others as subjected beings. One can see that a certain relation of power is both promoted and perpetuated through the discourse and knowledge production about the others.

On the other hand, there is a little hint available to us about the experience of othering from a barbarian perspective in the so-called Zenon Archive, the collection of papyri mainly from the Ptolemaic period Egypt in the third century BCE. In that collection, there is a letter from a non-Greek-speaking camel driver complaining to Zenon, the administrator of the property belonging to Apollonios, Ptolemy II Philadelphus’s finance minister, in Fayum, Middle Egypt, about his experience of discrimination (Evans 2012: 106-23). Graham Shipley suggests that he hired a scribe or interpreter to write this letter (2000: 220).

In this letter, he reports about the conditions under which he labored in Syria with Krotos, noting that, although he worked hard and was ‘blameless’ toward Zenon, Krotos did not pay him at all. The camel driver also reports about his experience not only in Syria, but also in Philadelphia, saying:

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[24] Isocrates similarly argues that the barbarians must be ruled by the Greeks. He writes: ‘Far more has been passed over than has been said. Apart from the arts and philosophic studies and all the other benefits which one might attribute to her and to the Trojan War, we should be justified in considering that it is owing to Helen that we are not the slaves of the barbarians. For we shall find that it was because of her that the Greeks became united in harmonious accord and organized a common expedition against the barbarians, and that it was then for the first time that Europe set up a trophy of victory over Asia; and in consequence, we experienced a change so great that, although in former times any barbarians who were in misfortune presumed to be rulers over the Greek cities (for example, Danaus, an exile from Egypt, occupied Argos, Cadmus of Sidon became king of Thebes, the Carians colonized the islands, and Pelops, son of Tantalus, became master of all the Peloponnese), yet after that war our race expanded so greatly that it took from the barbarians great cities and much territory. If, therefore, any orators wish to dilate upon these matters and dwell upon them, they will not be at a loss for material apart from what I have said, wherewith to praise Helen; on the contrary, they will discover many new arguments that relate to her’ (Isocrates, *Hellen*, 67-69).

> When you sent me again to Philadelphia to Jason, though I do everything that is ordered, for nine months, now he gives nothing of what you ordered me to have, neither oil nor grain, except two month periods when he also pays the clothing. And I am in difficulty both summer and winter.[25]

In order to make sense of this experience, the camel driver explains that 'they have treated me with scorn because I am a "barbarian"' (*κατεγνώκασίμ μου ὅτι εἰμὶ βάρβαρος*). This sentence can also be translated as 'they have formed unfavorable/prejudice perception/knowledge of me because I am a "barbarian"'. Either way, he is obviously very concerned about his experience of discrimination. He continues, 'I beg you, therefore … to give them order that I may not perish of hunger because I do not know how to act the Hellene'. Again, the statement *οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι ἑλληνίζειν* can also be rendered as 'I do not know [how to speak] Greek', indicating his inability to use the Greek language properly.

There are three things I would like to point out about this letter of complaint. First, this is certainly an anecdotal example. However, it is important to remember once again that almost everything that we now have comes from Greek writers, so this side of the story must be a significant window into the socioeconomic condition of people who did not speak the dominant language. Second, the question of whether or not this is an actual or historical event is an important one – but it is also irrelevant. The historicity of this incident is almost impossible to prove. However, the fact that this discourse existed in the first place is helpful to us modern readers in order to understand the point of view of the barbarians. Third, the discourse on the others, as we have seen in Aristotle, is not mere philosophical discussion, but has a real impact on people's lives. In other words, language has a material quality, as Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out (1991: 37-89). The materiality of language pertains to its use and function, both in economic and social relations. Linguistic competence impacts one's material condition. This camel driver clearly understands the power of the dominant language; being unable to speak the dominant language means that he is the other (*βάρβαρος*), and therefore treated in a discriminatory way (cf. Reden 2008: 6). With this in mind, let us now turn to Paul's employment of this racial othering term in the context of the Corinthian church.

Concerning Paul's dealing with people who speak different languages in the church of Corinth, I first register my disagreement with Joseph Fitzmyer's comment in his Anchor Commentary on 1 Corinthians. Fitzmyer seems to be aware of the negative connotation of the term *βάρβαρος*, as he states that this word 'often connoted people less cultured, among whom were included the noted enemies, Persians and Egyptians; and in the Roman period, the Gauls, Germans, and

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[25] The translation is provided by the Advanced Papyrological Information System (APIS). The image of the papyrus is available online here: http://www.papyri.info/hgv/1781#to-app-choice06

Spaniards' (2008: 514). However, instead of pursuing this line of logic, Fitzmyer immediately denies its importance. He continues,

> [B]ut that is not the sense in which Paul is using the word. For him it means that he would be a speaker of a foreign language that would not be understood; but it also implies that he would be like an outsider to the community, in which he should be recognized as *adelphos*, and that is why speaking in tongues is detrimental to the unity of the community. Just as differences of language make people into foreigners, so unintelligible utterances create barriers to comprehension and foment disunity (2008: 514-15).

Fitzmyer's interpretive move is unfortunate because he seems to overlook the basic fact that language is thoroughly embedded in social relations. Dismissing the negative connotation would consequently sweep the social struggle in this text under the rug. Fitzmyer is not the only scholar who dismisses the negative connotation of this word.

In a similar vein, highlighting the idea that the word βάρβαρος was an 'onomatopoeic' reference to 'speaking gibberish', Gordon Fee points out that 'it came to refer to anyone who was non-Greek, hence a foreigner' (2014: 737 n. 503). Fee is correct that this word defines Greekness and non-Greekness marked by linguistic difference. Just like Fitzmyer, Fee acknowledges the negative force behind this word that 'it was sometimes used derogatorily (= "barbarian")'. Further, without presenting any supporting argument, Fee immediately adds, 'but not always (as here)' (2014: 737 n. 503). It seems that such reluctance to locate this word in the context of racial struggle shows that both Fitzmyer and Fee are attempting to save Paul from being a 'racist' so to speak. However, it is important to ask this question: What would the reading look like if this racially charged word were read from the point of view of tongue(s) speakers, i.e., the 'minority' language speakers?[26]

I particularly share Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's concern that biblical scholars, especially white, male European scholars, for too long have identified themselves with the voice of the master, that is (in this case), Paul's voice (2000: 53). She therefore proposes a so-called 'hermeneutics of *ekklesia*', through which a reader would examine the text from the perspective of the silenced and marginalized in order to discover the multiple voices that exist under the Pauline regime of discourse.[27] Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the hermeneutics of *ekklesia* 'seeks to displace the politics and rhetoric of subordination and otherness which is inscribed in the "Pauline" correspondence with a hermeneutics and rhetoric of equality and responsibility' (2000: 54).[28] It is to this end, marked by 'a radical democratic assembly (*ekklesia*) of differing theological voices and socio-rhetorical practices' (2000: 54-55) that I pursue my reading.

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[26] Wongi Park has articulated well the interconnectedness between minoritization and racialization in his recent study on the perpetual operation of the logic of 'white invisibility' in the study of the historical Jesus. He explains, 'In the making of minority groups, minoritization is coterminous with racialization. That is, the degree to which a person is minoritized is often proportional to the degree by which ethnoracial signifiers are activated and negatively attributed in the meaning-making process. This racialized production of meaning ascribes inferiority to the minority-other, among other things, although biological and cultural markers eo ipso are arbitrary and possess no intrinsic meaning'(Park 2017: 198).

According to the Butlerian theory of the performative function of language, the efficacy of a word employed in a speech does not necessarily depend on the intention of the speaker, but on the context, history and power networks from which that word is taken. Speech in essence is citation because a speaker cites the word of the others that has been used, circulated and filled with all kinds of significations. A speaker, in this sense, is not a producer of language, but a citator (Butler 1997: 27-35; cf. Derrida 1988: 13-19). Hate speech, therefore, is effective not because the speaker intends it to be hateful, but because it participates in the hateful power network within which that speech is located. The constitutive force of speech in producing subjects does not depend on whether or not both the addresser or the addressee is aware of this or not. This is true also with the employment of the term βάρβαρος in 1 Corinthians. Whether Paul intends it to be hateful or not, it clearly leads to the production of 'subjects' in an Althusserian interpellative sense – that is, subjected beings (Althusser 2001: 182).

It is important to analyze closely how the sentence is constructed in Greek: ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος. If we are consistent with the prepositional phrase ἐν in the second clause, then the dative in the first clause could be read as a dative of sphere or location (cf. Wallace 1996: 167-68). So the translation would be, 'I will be βάρβαρος in the one who speaks, and the one who speaks will be βάρβαρος in me'. However, because τῷ λαλοῦντι is a bare dative, it is open to many possible interpretations, one of which I will propose now. If we treat this dative as a 'dative of cause', then it can be translated as follows: 'I will be a barbarian because of the one who speaks, and the one who speaks [will be] a barbarian in me'. What we can see in this statement is a flat rejection of βάρβαρος. Paul apparently does not want to be a barbarian and he does not want to have any barbarian in him. The presence of the 'other' in the self is seen as a threat, and thus perceived by Paul as not being beneficial for the church. This reading is consistent with the next statement that Paul makes in v. 12, where Paul encourages the Corinthian believers one more time about the importance of doing things for the building of the assembly (πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας). The erasure of difference at the expense of the others is a Pauline strategy performed by managing the dynamic of multilingualism in this community. By employing a racialized rhetoric, Paul's discourse is very consistent with the larger Hellenistic attitude and discrimination against the others (i.e., the barbarians) discussed in the earlier part of this article. Paul is adopting their ethnic hostility discourse against the others. After being othered, the next step is easy to predict: Paul demands the translation of tongue(s) (14.13, 27), which can be understood as an act of silencing or disavowal of linguistic difference. If there is no translation, he then silences the tongue(s) altogether (14.28).

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[27] It is worth noting that the idea of *ekklesia* as a hermeneutical paradigm is a development of Schüssler Fiorenza's earlier works on the church as the '*ekklesia* of women'(1983: 285-351; 1993: 237-48; 1996: 239-55).

[28] Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 180-94.

Conclusion

To conclude, I should like to emphasize again that the term βάρβαρος is never neutral or detached, because it is thoroughly embedded in the sociopolitical struggle between the Greeks and their imaginative others, i.e., the barbarians. Reading Paul's employment of this term, especially in his effort to bring linguistic order back to the church in Corinth, a reader should not fail to see it as a discourse of othering against minority language speakers. Such construction of racialized subjects becomes a necessary political step toward a complete silencing of these languages in public gatherings.

However, it is equally critical to refer back to Schüssler-Fiorenza's 'hermeneutics of *ekklesia*'. In spite of contemporary readers who often side with Paul and blame the tongue(s) speakers for the linguistic chaos and disorder in this community, and to whom Paul's act of silencing them is therefore acceptable, I argue that tongue(s) actually promises an open space for diversity of the voices in the *ekklesia*. Why is it important? Because, to borrow a statement from Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life' (1991: 19). Tongue(s) is the expressions of these linguistic minorities, and thus of these minorities' lives. They are not as powerful as the dominant language, but they deserve to exist, flourish and be heard. If we allow tongue(s) to flourish, we open the space for many forms of life to flourish as well. This, I would argue, requires of us a serious and radical form of hospitality, certainly a hospitality that Paul, in reinforcing the position of the dominant language, did not display.

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