

# Do so-called Dewesternized Asian Media Studies as a Discipline Serve Authoritarian Countries as a Tool to Control own People and Cause more Conflicts in the International Communication ?

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## Do so-called Dewesternized Asian Media Studies as a Discipline Serve Authoritarian Countries as a Tool to Control own People and Cause more Conflicts in the International Communication?

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### 日本語要旨

ナショナリズムはどの国でも陥りやすい、非常に根強い病理といえる。それはポピリストと言われる政治家が、外国人排斥や脅威論をあおることで、一定の成果を収めていることから分かる。ナショナリズムを克服したと思われるEU諸国もその例外ではない。昨今の日中関係などを見ると、ナショナリズムの強い国同士の国際関係は摩擦を引き起こし、相互不信を生みだしている。サイバー攻撃などの例で分かるように、インターネットで直接結びついている現在、摩擦は国際政治にダイレクトに反映する。経済力と軍事力を持つようになった国は、国内の不均等な発展の不満を外に向けさせ、国の統一を守るためにナショナリズムを利用する。愛国心という麻酔効果によって、国家はまとめられる。自己の肯定は他者の否定を生み出す。このような営みにマス・メディアは動員される。特にかつて植民地化され、多くの民族をかかえる中国やインドのような国では、国家の一体感を保つために、そのようなナショナリスティックな言説が広く受け入れられる下地がある。脱コロニアリズムという名目で、愛国無罪が叫ばれ、自国に都合の良いイデオロギーと歴史観が持ち出される。それは容易に操作される大衆レベルにとどまらず、学問の世界にも及ぶ。西洋中心的な学問からの自由という、オリエンタリズム批判から、新たな学問の構築が叫ばれる。そのような西洋中心主義への批判と情念は理解できるとしても、そのように構築された学問の学問性は問題がないのだろうか。オリエンタリズム

批判それ自体がイデオロギーとなっていないだろうか。

AMIC というアジアを中心としたマス・メディア研究の国際学会に毎年のように出かけているが、アジアの学者によるそのような発表に接し、彼らの書いたものを読むとき、違和感を覚える。その様な言説に学問のイデオロギー性を感じる。そのような元気の良い論調は、日本やドイツにとって、なじみのものである。日本もドイツも、遅れてきた帝国主義として、同じ事を過去において行ってきた。「アジアをアジア人の手に」、「大東亜共栄圏」、「雁行理論」、「アジア的価値」、「プチ・ナショナリズム」、学問の「脱西洋化」、学問の「脱アングロ・サクソン化」など、私達は様々なイデオロギーを体験してきた。アジアの二大国である Chindia(China と India)を中心として、その周辺国でも最近勇ましい議論を行う学者が目立つのであるが、このような学者に対して、日本とドイツの過ちを他山の石としていただきたいという気持ちと、その様な言説が世界平和にとって危険性をはらんでいることを警鐘する目的で、2010年6月にシンガポールで開かれた AMIC の学会で口頭発表を行った。その発表と平行して書いたのがこの論文である。

## **1 Triangle, officials, politicians and journalists produce nationalism**

Hegemonic theories of world views of Western countries are increasingly criticized and discredited. Psychological and affective and epistemological decolonization follows territorial, political and economic one. Many problems nowadays like natural resources, global warming, air- and water-pollution, excessive urbanization, explosion of population, food crisis can be solved in the world community. In this sense this world becomes a more peaceful planet which needs more cooperation instead confrontation. So we begin to speak of postcolonialism, postmodernism, end of history, globalization and civil society. In half of internet technology, international communication becomes unprecedented easy and even individuals can communicate each other beyond borders by internet. Easy

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international exchange of goods, capitals and knowledge, workers and students accelerate this process. The low wage countries like China, India and Brazil with huge human potentials become world fabrics. Those countries will become soon members of OECD. Monopole position of the United States and the Western countries and Japan is already broken. Many world issues can be solved only in cooperation with the new world players. This change itself is welcoming and contributes to more democracy and transparency in the world.

The awaken countries will not tolerate the world-view more, imposed from outside, and try to redefine the world. It is natural course of the matter that they want to become also media powers. The above-mentioned countries become already media powers.

Powerful media superpowers like America and England had and have without doubt decisive influence on international communication and build the world frame. Powerful countries try to impose their own understanding of this world on others (hegemony theory). Domestic politics and foreign politics are closely interrelated in the globalized information age. Each nation needs to convince own people that her action is fair and justifiable and serves national and international interest. Which nation state can tolerate the political narrative of other nations in own country? They make therefore efforts to establish own news agency and to send own message by satellites and internet to break monopoly of classical media powers to build own world views. Economic success has enabled those countries to submit own narrative to own people and to people of other countries.

No wonder if scholarship thinks that 'there is a pressing need innovative research methodologies that fully take account of regional and national specificities, as well as the pedagogic necessities warranted by the growing internationalization of students and researchers and the unprecedented growth of media in the non-Western

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1 Thussu, Daya Kishan (2009): Why internationalize media studies and how? In: Thussu, Daya Kishan (2009): *Internationalizing Media Studies* p.2).

world, notably in such large Asian countries as China and India.’<sup>1</sup> Critique to hegemony and orientalism itself is understandable and welcoming, but argumentation to reverse orientalism is by itself occidentalism which has the same problems like the former one. Both are common in its pathological phenomena. Officials, politicians and journalists are political triad in the world. Those are a system to rule over population. To persuade them, ruling class resorts often to nationalism. Once colonized or threatened countries whose national history was deprived by others for decades and even centuries, need to establish own history and narrative. In the modernization process, each government tries to educate own people for unity. They begin to have a strong identification with own country, equipped with ethnocentric understanding of own history. Population becomes nationals. They have introduced draft system and protect own territory. This is the process of nation building.

Nation state is an imagined community (Anderson) and the national feeling is useful to strengthen the identification with the nation state. For those countries nationalism is an irresistible opium. The countries in Africa, Asia and partly also former communistic countries in Europe, emancipated from colonial and ideological control, took such courses. This movement cannot go without strong nationalism as the history teaches us. Every developed country has experienced almost the same process. Even though I can understand its strong nationalistic feeling and scholars’ ambition to become independent, I assume there are some dangerous tendencies of nationalistic nature.

After World War II, many international conflicts, civil wars and wars of ideology were and are fought. There is a statistic which says the death toll, caused by such conflicts, exceeds that of the World War II<sup>2</sup>. In this sense the Third World War has already happened. The strong nationalistic feeling, interwoven with anti-Western resentment and bad memory of the colonialism, caused conflicts and wars.

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2 [http : //users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat 2.htm](http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat 2.htm)

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The ethnocentrism gives fuel to the conflicts. Intervention into those countries and areas by others have aggravated the situation. Protection of human rights and solving conflicts and rescue of lives are often cited excuse for intervention. Ambition for territory and resources, geopolitical and military interests are not named. A racial group fights against another racial group over hegemony in an area or in a country or beyond the national borders.

There are so many disputes over territory in the world. Nationalism and patriotism are so holy that even criminal acts caused from such motivation are accepted and tolerated and often celebrated as heroic acts. The question is whether we need such strong identification with nation state and nationalism even in the 21. Century. In Europe, 27 countries with 45 language communities are ready voluntarily to abandon their sovereignty. In the near future more countries will join in the European Union. The people in Europe are now on the way to have an European identity. More and more people there, especially younger people begin to express that they are Europeans and feel so. I will not say that those countries have already completely overcome nationalism. In many countries in Europe populists enjoy some degree of popularity and use hate propaganda..

If we look to the East, the situation in Asia is so different. Could you imagine that some Asian say from bottom of heart : I am an Asian? Strong nationalism is not withheld. Development of atomic bombs is accepted with enthusiasm in China, India and Pakistan. Anti-Western demonstrations are directly and indirectly supported by governments. Is nationalism unavoidable? Who has build nationalism and who needs nationalism? Power elites like highranked officials, politicians, journalists and scholarship in authoritarian and soft authoritarian countries use nationalism to keep their power. Therefore they overemphasize cultural difference and uniqueness as the discussion about Asian values or human rights shows. Those power elites are responsible for building of imagined community and nationalism. I would appeal

them to rethink such conflict course.

## **2 Universality of democracy**

Regarding to the influence on the public, journalists must be aware for the danger of manipulation and nationalism. Journalism has a decisive power on building of nation state and nationalism. Journalism produces imagined community and at the same time imagined others. It has a tendency to describe own country positively while it allocates negative images to others. If we think of own country, we can say, we don't have always good relationship to neighbouring countries as dispute over Senkaku-island shows. Those hostile images are also a negative form of nationalism. Journalists should keep in mind that we need peace journalism. Journalists and scholars of journalism are not to support nationalism and to serve authoritarian states but to build a more peaceful world in which we can live together. What we need is not conflict journalism but peace-building journalism. Instead of nationalism, instead of strong feeling of identification with nation state, conciliation and cooperation should be propagated.

We can take notion of democracy as an example. Is democracy an universal notion or a local one? If we observe the reality of democracy, we can watch many variants of democracy, because each nation has different premises, condition and developed level. Who says there must be another type of democracy for our country because our country is not an European country and the historical condition is so different. Therefore we must set some limits on freedom of speech and human rights. This is the logic of power elites. Authoritarian regimes cite often stability and need of control and point out danger of individualism by describing Europe and the USA negatively. Those governments try to persuade own population to follow the specialized notion of democracy. How long we must tolerate such lies. Democracy is an universal institution and an idealistic notion. Each nation should make efforts once to realize true democracy.

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‘When the government fears the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny.’ The famous words of Thomas Jefferson have not lost validity till now. Democracy is a checking system from bottom. Democracy is a circular movement. Transparency and freedom of speech make democracy more democratic and more democracy enables more transparency and more accountability of the society. In the civil society each must be able to decide their will and to participate in the process of public policy making. The civil society is a diverse society with many voices and many ethnic minorities. The free flow of information is sine qua non for democracy. Electorates must be good informed. Each government tolerates civil courage and antigovernmental demonstrations and dissidents. Deliberative democracy on the public arena may cause in an initial stage some chaos and confusion but they begin to learn how to live with conflict situations. It is important for deliberative democracy to inform citizens. Otherwise voting becomes a formality without content. Democracy is an institution to be able to redefine government. If government stops the circulation, it stops also democracy. Whom do the limits of democracy serve, population or government?

### **3 Lessons from Japan and Germany**

Japan has taken the same false course as I have mentioned in the former chapters. In the 19. Century, after desperate counter-efforts to drive foreigners out of Japan failed, Japan must open her country under pressure of American gun boot policy in 1854. Leading scholars and Samurai worriers try to strengthen the national integration and patriotism. They provide the state ideology of uniqueness of Japan, Kokutai (state-body-ideology, Tennoism) and Wakon-Yosai (Japanese Soul and Western Technology). General education and draft system are introduced and respect of Tenno (emperor) is taught in the school. The Japanese emperor gets the status of God. The imagined existence of unique unbroken heritage of Tenno-families over 2600 years is glorified and mystified, even though this long during mythology itself



is product of the modern time. Japanese schoolchildren are taught that national history, moral codex, Japanese political system and so on must be culturally and traditionally different from those of the Western nations. Japan as a quasi-big family (emperor as leader of the family), has no precedent in the world and Japanese society is a harmonious one. That's why there was no civil revolution in Japan. Politicians have established legal system contradictory to democracy. They borrowed it from Germany not from France or from the United States. They think, Western democracy cannot be matched with Japanese unique culture. Shohin Yoshida, Hiroyuki Katoh, Fumimaro Konoe and Sadao Araki are the ideologues of Kokutai (state-body theory). Kizaburo Suzuki, Minister of Interior before the WW II, talked in 1928 that 'parliamentarism is Anglo-American democratic trend and is not matched with our Kokutai.'<sup>3</sup> Japanese state system was anti-Western and antidemocratic so it was against capitalism and communism. After Japan has won the war against China (1894-1895), Russia (1904-1905) and the World War I (1914-18), Japanese nationalism took further dangerous course and ended with the catastrophic disaster in the World War II. Japan became the first nation with atomic bomb victim. It is not the end of the story. The notion of the unique Japanese culture is not over with the surrender of Japan. After Japan has recovered from the shock of the World War II, Japanese economy grows fast and becomes in 1968 the second biggest economic power after the USA. Over 40 years, Japan has kept this position. Last year, China may have taken over this position. The conservative economists and ideologues used to explain the reason why Japanese economic performance was so successful, with the cultural peculiarity and Japan inc. theory. The last one stems from the former state-body ideology that Japan is as a whole like a big family. According to this notion, Japanese company is like a family in which the workers and the company owner work together and enjoy the harmonious relationship. They

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3 Osaka Asahi Newspaper, 20 February 1928

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dedicate to the company and sacrifice own private life for the sake of the company, if it is necessary. The result is: Japanese workers will not strike and will not request overtime pay and work voluntarily longer (Because overtime work is on the voluntary basis, so one needs not to pay. This is an obvious violation of ILO's ordinance). This is a secret of strongness of Japanese company. This Japanese mythology, circulated by ideologues, is a useful tool for company owners and ruling classes. Conservative politicians, entrepreneurs and high-ranked officials enjoy cosy relationship, so they don't feel any need to change. This is a control and management style which makes Japanese workers workaholic and sometimes forces them to work to death (Karoshi). Many Japanese workers sacrifice private lives and vacations. They are praised and idealized as loyal and hard-working employees. They are rewarded with promotion. Workers also internalized this rigorous working moral as Japanese culture. This is nothing than the exploitation system and nothing to do with Japanese culture. They have internalized the notion and swallowed everything. Till now Japan has not signed many articles of ILO with the reason that Japan has different working culture. Regarding the ranking of acknowledged numbers of articles of ILO, Japan belongs to the lowest groups among the developed countries. All this proves that Japan is not an advanced free democratic country but it has many characteristics of authoritarian regimes. After 15 years during recession and shrinkage of Japanese economic performance, only few power elites dare to insist on Japanese working culture. But it is not the end of the story. People begin to read with nostalgia the old books which published around 150 years ago in which Japanese had strong ambition and big future. They want to remember the glorious era of the past Japan. Here, you can see how strong the influence of such nationalistic ideology is. They sell such ideology with the name of Japanese culture.

Germany was also a latecomer of capitalism in Europe. After Germany was united as German Empire in 1871 because of the successful war against France,

nationalism became stronger among population. They used protestantism against catholic France. Priests of Prussia persuaded believers that they must fight against democracy, capitalism and republic in France<sup>4</sup>. Such German-centric thoughts fixed German mythology as country of music and philosophy and Aryan supremacy. In the Wilhelm II era, there was already nationalistic ideology of uniqueness of German race. Once divided country became a strong nation state which won the war against the arch-enemy France. They developed strong nationalism. As Germany was defeated in the World War I, population became hopeless. Hitler used such feeling among people and succeeded to give them nationalism and strong identification with Third Reich. Hitler and co. established Nazi-ideology. It is therefore understandable why people accepted Hitler and the Nazi-party. Such elitist's notion enabled building of the concentration camps and total elimination of Jews, the biggest criminal of human rights in the history. The notion, German as selected race, is the ugliest form of nationalism. To unite nation and to mobilize people, they have erected 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983).

What lessons can we learn from Japan and Germany? Cultural centrism, cultural peculiarity, and uniqueness of own culture have the same root in nationalism and lead to regional and international conflicts. Imagined Germany (Salmi 1999) and imagined Japan have so many problems. How you can say that imagined Asia, imagined China, imagined India should be a healthy notion? Imagined oneness and imagined otherness cannot be harmonized well.

#### **4 So-called Asian values**

We have also long history of discussion about so-called Asian values. Once Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has spoken of Asian values in 1994 :

"Getting the fundamentals right would help, but these societies will not succeed in the same way as East Asia did because certain driving forces will be absent. If

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4 Mueller-Salget, Klaus (1984) :

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you have a culture that doesn't place much value in learning and scholarship and hard work and thrift and deferment of present enjoyment for future gain, the going will be much slower."<sup>5</sup>

But later he denied this notion as the crisis of Asian currency attacked Asian countries.

"Today Lee takes a somewhat different view. At a session on Asia on Jan 27, the white-haired sage repudiated a good deal of what he said back then. 'Confucian' values - the term he now prefers - have become all but obsolete under the demands of the global economy, Lee asserted with exactly the same soft-spoken serenity he displayed in 1994. Indeed, Singapore and Hong Kong performed best in weathering the financial crisis not because of Asian values but because of British colonial ones, especially transparency and the rule of law, Lee said"<sup>6</sup>.

In Japan there are also many supporters of Asian values. Argumentation, that the so-called "soft authoritarian"<sup>7</sup> countries with emphasis on the family like ASEAN countries have a special independent form of democracy, is questionable. According to this notion, there should be many dichotomies which allegedly separate the West and the East. Such separation should lie deep in our cultural understanding. Individualism versus collectivism (Triandis (1995)) and community versus egoism are the famous examples. Such notion is denied by Hirai (2000).

To understand the difference of culture with such easy dualism is too superficial. Culture is much more complex and contradictory. Dichotomy is ideology and prejudice.

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5 March/April, 1994 Foreign Affairs : Culture is Destiny, A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew, By Fareed Zakaria : [http : //www.fareedzakaria.com/articles/other/culture.html](http://www.fareedzakaria.com/articles/other/culture.html)

6 Newsweek, January 28, 2001, Davos, Switzerland By Michael Hirsh NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE, [http : //www.singapore-window.org/sw\\_01/010128\\_nw.htm](http://www.singapore-window.org/sw_01/010128_nw.htm)

7 Erfried Adam(2000) : Media and Democracy in Asia, In : Media and Democracy in Asia, an AMIC Compilation, p.6

As Takashi Inoguchi and Edward Newman writes, '(t)he concept of "Asian values" rests upon a number of presumptions which have serious methodological problems. In fact the phrase "Asian values" implies that the social, economic and political characteristics of certain Asian countries are based upon a shared value system which is identifiable and distinct and which transcends national, religious and ideological differences'<sup>8</sup>.

There are two fundamental critiques to this notion. The first critique is: Is there any common basis in Asia on which people there behave? Asia is the area of diverse cultures, races, religions, histories and so on. What is the commonality in those countries, if someone assume, this area is based on the strong feeling of families and community, while in the Western countries community was lost and families collapse? They think, there are so many cases of divorce and egoistic people in Europe and America and they will not care so much for the community. Such way of thoughts is product of propaganda and imagination. In the United States of America and Europe, everywhere, family and community are the most important part of their life. Mr. Gordon Brown, the former Prime Minister of England talked in his last speech to journalists, as he had lost the national election and must resign :

'As I leave the second most important job I could ever hold, I cherish the first even more: as a husband and a father.'

Differences in cultures today may disappear in the future as the next citation shows :

'A number of East Asian experts have concurred with Jakarta's Dewi Fortuna Anwar that despite the rhetoric about "Asian values" which set Asian societies irrevocably apart from the West...there is no denying that there is an increasing convergence between the two.'<sup>9</sup>

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8 [http : //www.unu.edu/unupress/asian-values.html](http://www.unu.edu/unupress/asian-values.html), p.2 ff

9 Hitchcock p.21

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Second critique is related with human rights. What for discussion about Asian values true is, is also true for the discussion about human rights. 'Countries such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are not signatories to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.'<sup>10</sup> They will excuse by pointing out the cultural and historical peculiarities in those countries. They are not common in culture, religion and history. In what they common is, those all countries are authoritarian countries. This is an only probable explanation why those countries are so reluctant to protect human rights and free speech.

### **5 Science is our common goods**

Daya Kishan Thussu writes: 'There is a need to develop original methodological approaches that encompass new phenomena and identify differences and similarities through comparative and collaborative research.' (Thussu, ed.2009)<sup>11</sup> Therefore he thinks it is necessary to 'decolonize' and to find 'de-Westernizing discourse' (Thussu ed.2009)<sup>12</sup>. There are '(d)ecolonizing thoughts and theory' (Thussu, ed.2009)<sup>13</sup>. Thussu' courageous declaration seems to me to have focused too much on India and China, and other Asian countries. On my opinion, his theory itself becomes a kind of reversed orientalism. Such notion may sound agreeable for ears of non-Western people. Therefore there are many scholars who support such ideas and who have similar notion. For example, Dipesh Chakrabatty describes the behaviour of Western scholars studies as 'asymmetric ignorance' (Chakrabatty 2007)<sup>14</sup>. 'De-Westernizing (to pick up on Curran and Park's book title) resounds with an ambition to make room in media studies for perspectives in the East and South. It

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10 Tang p.29

11 Thussu, Daya Kishan (ed.2009) : *Internationalizing Media Studies.*, p.22

12 Ebenda, p.22

13 Ebenda. P.24

14 Chakrabatty p.5

also implies that we, at the end of the day, give up our Western canons in favour of African, Asian and Latin American ones' (Ekecrantz)<sup>15</sup>. It is true that our perception and world view are influenced by euro-centrism as Said pointed out. Thussu's plan to 'develop original methodological approaches that encompass new phenomena and identify differences and similarities through comparative and collaborative research' as above mentioned may be successful but I am not so sure that it is a useful tool to analyze and explain and bridge cultures. Decolonization and de-Westernization and abandonment of our Western canons in science are absurd.

What can we learn from negative experiences of Japan and Germany? New theories of international communication and journalism study are danger and phantasma, if motivated by nationalism. Journalism and international communication should curb nationalism and serve peace and contribute for civil society in the world. What Inoguchi and Newman said to Asian values that '(a)uthoritarian or semi-authoritarian states use arguments of cultural relativism and home-grown models of democracy, but there is a universalization of ideas and norms,'<sup>16</sup> is also true for discipline journalism and international communication. Knowledge is our common good and should not be limited to certain national and cultural boundary. Sciences and knowledge, born in America and Europe, become also our common assets. Don't think there are many local variants of journalistic sciences and theories. So-called Asian values and Asian democracy which are based on the cultural characteristics are at first glance convincing. Such an assumption can stem from the deep belief the culture should be a stable construction. But as the fact teaches us, the culture itself is changing very fast if we look on our history with high-speed camera. The culture of one hundred years ago and the culture nowadays in the same country are so different. The difference in the same country for one hundred years is much bigger

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15 Jan Ekecrantz In : Thussu 2009 Internationalizing Media Studies p.82

16 Ebenda p.8

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than the difference which lies between the East and the West now. If it is so, then the discussion about theories based on national and regional culture itself becomes obsolete and meaningless. The society of the East and the West is different but there are commonalities and signs of convergence. Youth culture, lifestyles, consumerism, fashion, interracial marriages, study and work in foreign countries, tourism, international NGOs, NPOs, international communication and conferences, student exchanges and so forth are such signs of convergence. Samuel Huntington's theory of clashes of civilization has stressed too much the difference of cultures and ignored the commonalities which lie among cultures. How long we will play with fault line of cultures and theorize from it? It had better to ask to whom such dualism serves?

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