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Muslim Sasak Female Scholars: Empowerment and Strengthening of Islamic Education in the Lombok Community, Indonesia

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Abstract. This research explores the critical role of Sasak Muslim Women Scholars in empowering and strengthening Islamic education in the community of Lombok. The primary focus of this study is to identify the impact of the empowerment of female scholars on the local community through the Islamic education approach. Utilizing qualitative research methods, in-depth interviews with female scholars and field observations were conducted to understand their role in empowering the community. The results indicate that female scholars serve as spiritual leaders and act as agents of social change through efforts to empower and strengthen Islamic education. The Islamic education provided by female scholars encompasses not only religious aspects but also addresses social, economic, and cultural issues. The impact is evident in the increased well-being of the community, the formation of Islamic character, and contributions to local economic development. This research has significant implications for the development of education policies and the empowerment of women in the region. By detailing the contributions of female scholars to enhancing Islamic education and empowering the community, this study provides a deeper understanding of the potential role of female scholars in the positive transformation of the local community.

Keywords: transformational leadership; female scholars; empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

The study of women and equality is an ever-present phenomenon in every space and time. Despite being repeatedly discussed in the public domain, there is always a significant effort to refresh the examination of this matter. This is due to a societal construct that seemingly places women in a minor position, possibly from ancient times until the present [1]. This phenomenon still feels awkward in the context of Indonesian reality.

In the Indonesian context, the gender justice movement began in the 1980s and extended to religious issues in the 1990s. Since the 1990s, gender discussions have flourished in religion and religious scholarship. Gradually, women's issues became one of the most strategic and sensitive issues, particularly in pesantren, which in-

directly uphold patriarchal cultures and discriminative interpretations of religious texts [2]. Those advocating critical discourse, especially regarding justice and equality for women in the public sphere, clash with those upholding conservative thoughts inherited from previous generations.

The situation is changing, and societal perspectives on leadership are becoming more dynamic. The public's view of leadership often varies, with responsive communities creating new ideas, especially in understanding the concepts of female leadership and scholarship. Historical records state that during the Prophet Muhammad, women were considered wives or companions and regarded as individuals with equal rights and responsibilities before Allah. Examples include Aisyah (*ummul mukminin*) leading the Battle of Jamal, Ummu Hani, and al-Syifâ, a woman profi-

cient in writing, assigned by Caliph Umar ibn al-Khaththâb as an official handling the market in the city of Madinah [1].

In Indonesia, discussions on Islamic law regarding whether women can hold public positions at the highest and lower levels emerged relatively recently [1]. This topic gained prominence after the reform era, specifically since 2001 when Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid stepped down from the presidency, and Megawati Sukarnoputri became the first female president of Indonesia [3]. Similar phenomena occurred in Pakistan and Bangladesh [4]. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto served as the Head of State of Pakistan for two terms, from 1988–1990 and 1993–1996 [5]. Bangladesh, which separated from Pakistan in 1971, was led by two female heads of state, Khaleda Zia (1991–2006) and Sheikh Hasina, who ruled for two terms from 1996–2001 and from 2009 to the present [6].

Many experts define leadership as an asymmetric relationship that can influence, guide, and direct someone's behaviour toward a specific goal [7]. Hence, the importance of studying female leadership is emphasised in this writing. Nasaruddin concluded that the Quran recognises a distinction between men and women but rejects discrimination. According to [8], five variables can be found:

- a) men and women are both servants of Allah;
- b) men and women have the same function as Allah's representatives on earth;
- c) men and women both bear the trust and accept the primordial covenant with Allah;
- d) men and women, or Adam and Hawa, are both actively involved in the cosmic drama;
- e) men and women have the same potential to achieve excellence.

The emergence of female leaders can open the door for society to think beyond pragmatism in understanding the current situation [9]. Their ability to transform ideas, concepts, and understandings proves that the strategic role of female leadership is equally important. Various empowerment programs have been implemented, yielding positive results in improving the quality of life, especially for the community. Opportunities for women in socio-cultural positions and roles can be seen, creating a conducive environment for the dynamics and self-actualisation of women in various aspects of life, including the religious domain. However, the issue is that women's em-

powerment in the spiritual field is still perceived as inadequate.

Biologically, those holding the title of scholars, with various sociological terms, are primarily men, and none are women. This implies that the dynamics of theoretical and feminist movements in the religious field are still lacking. Therefore, gender discourse, which is consistently produced by scholars, all men, remains a challenge [10]. The reality in Sasak-Lombok society is known for its strong traditions and religious and social values. The intertwining of cultural aspects and spiritual values is so profound that these traditions often have a close connection with the social life of Sasak society, especially regarding the strategic role of women in leadership and their empowerment of the community.

Empirically, several Sasak-Lombok women are known for their leadership and contributions. They have contributed to education, social issues, and religious development. One notable figure is Hj. Siti Raehanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid. As the leader of the Nahdlatul Wathan organisation, she succeeded her father, TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid. Her role as a female religious leader made her name well-known in the archipelago of a thousand mosques. She continued her father's scholarly tradition, and her sensitivity in the field of education continues to the present day. Managing to establish over a thousand madrasahs after her father's passing, she proves that education knows no age limits (long-term education). Therefore, this writing specifically discusses why a Muslim Sasak woman can be recognised for her scholarship, leadership, and contributions to community empowerment.

Given the importance of understanding the transformative leadership of these female scholars, the author attempts to focus on analysing the strategic role of Sasak-Lombok female scholars in leadership and their contributions to community empowerment. Their presence as leaders and scholars can contribute to empowerment by applying measured and directed religious teachings and transformational leadership.

METHODS

The research method employed in this study is qualitative to gain a profound understanding of the role of female Muslim scholars in the Sasak community in the context of empowerment and strengthening Islamic education in Lombok soci-

ety [11]. The research participants were female scholars actively engaged in the region's empowerment and Islamic education activities [12]. Participant selection is intended to ensure diverse representation in terms of experiences and contributions [13].

The data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain the perspectives of female scholars regarding the role of empowerment and Islamic education [14]. Participatory observation involved the researcher in the daily activities of female scholars to understand the context and dynamics of empowerment. Document analysis was carried out on teaching materials, educational records, and other activity outcomes related to empowerment and Islamic education [15].

The research procedures include introduction and initial preparation, interviews with structured question guides, participatory observation in Islamic education activities, and systematic document analysis. The collected data is then analysed using a thematic analysis approach, with coding to identify patterns, relationships, and emerging meanings. Data triangulation ensures the authenticity and reliability of findings from various sources [16].

Research evaluation and validity are maintained through the researcher's reflection on subjective approaches and external validation by confirming research findings with participants. Research ethics are observed by obtaining permission and ethical approval from participants, maintaining the confidentiality of information, and using codes or aliases to protect participant identities [17].

The research results will be presented narratively, incorporating interview quotes and observational findings [18]. Findings will be linked to relevant literature to provide a broader context regarding the role of female Muslim scholars in the empowerment and strengthening of Islamic education in Lombok society [19].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Female Scholars. Islamic education does not solely aim to produce scholars. This goal is peripheral, considering that scholarship is not just a matter of depth of knowledge but also involves ethical conduct and societal recognition.

Therefore, the true aim of Islamic education is to nurture complete individuals, or "insan kamil," encompassing knowledge, social aspects, and religious dimensions. Throughout Islamic history, the number of female students has been significantly lower than that of males, as evidenced by classical Islamic education research conducted by Ahmad Salabi. He concluded that women in the East (Islamic world) and the West had fewer opportunities than men.

Nevertheless, historical records show that women, as thinkers in Islamic discourse, played a crucial role in developing and establishing several madrasas in places like Cairo, Arabia, Syria, and the Middle East [20]. This significance persists to this day, albeit not as extensive as the opportunities afforded to men. Women have proven their presence in various areas of life, including scholarly and religious domains.

In his book, Mohammad Akram Nadwi [21] states, "Women known as muḥaddithāt are those with high knowledge in the study of hadiths, rarely mentioned like women proficient in fiqh, fatwa, or tafsir". The author chooses to examine this group of women and their significant contributions to the general dissemination of knowledge, particularly in the field of hadith. He discusses three main issues: first, the overall impact of the Quran and Sunnah in changing attitudes towards women; second, the content of the Quran and Sunnah that safeguards women's rights; and third, the actions taken by women to advocate for their rights. The author also provides examples of female scholars and their efforts in delving into the Quran and Sunnah, practising the teachings of both sources in their daily lives. These muḥaddithāt women fulfil their responsibilities based on Islamic guidance [21].

Transformational Leadership of Female Scholars in Sasak Lombok. Transformational leadership is defined as a form of leadership that focuses on creating positive change and inspiring individuals to achieve their best potential. The importance of transformational leadership can be explained through several interrelated dimensions. First, through inspiration and motivation, transformational leadership can foster a commitment to a shared vision and intrinsically motivate individuals, stimulating the internal drive for growth and contribution [22].

Furthermore, through intellectual stimulation, leaders create an environment that stimulates creative thinking, encouraging individuals to

seek more profound understanding and develop their academic potential. Additionally, by providing personal attention and caring for individual needs, transformational leadership understands the uniqueness of each member and responds to their needs. By setting a positive example and embodying respected values, transformational leaders build emotional connections through influential and convincing leadership [23].

Finally, transformational leadership is oriented towards positive change within individuals and their environment, contributing to societal development and empowering individuals to achieve shared goals. Understanding the essence of transformational leadership is crucial to exploring how female scholars in Sasak Lombok can bring a positive impact through this leadership style, laying the groundwork for further discussion on their characteristics, influences, challenges, and opportunities in the region [24].

Introduction to Female Muslim Scholars in Sasak Lombok. The introduction of female scholars in Sasak Lombok, particularly Hajjah Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Majid, provides an overview of their background, roles, and values shaping their understanding and struggles. The analysis includes several points drawn from the data:

1. Family Background. Hajjah Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Majid, born in 1952, comes from a family with a deep history and influence in the Nahdlatul Wathan organisation in West Nusa Tenggara. Her father, Maulana al-Syaikh TGK H. M. Zainuddin Abdul Majid, founded Nahdlatul Wathan, indicating the family's substantial involvement and commitment to the Islamic struggle [22].

2. Education and early struggles. Sitti Raihanun spent most of her childhood accompanying her father's struggle to uphold Islamic teachings and develop Nahdlatul Wathan. Her unconventional childhood reflects her dedication to the Islamic battle from an early age [23].

3. Family Influence on Understanding and Struggle. Life experiences and guidance from her father shaped a deep understanding of the intricacies of the Islamic struggle, especially within the context of Nahdlatul Wathan. Her father's intelligence and the moral values instilled by her mother became the moral and ethical foundation of her struggle [24].

4. Role as a Mujahidah (Female Fighter). Referred to as a Mujahidah or champion, Sitti Raihanun is

recognised as a champion by her father, indicating respect and trust in the role of women in the Islamic struggle [25].

5. The importance of education in the struggle. Her focus on the battle includes efforts to develop the Nahdlatul Wathan organisation and advance education in line with Islamic teachings and the founding principles of Nahdlatul Wathan [26].

6. Legacy of Moral Values and Etiquette. Guided by her father and mother, Sitti Raihanun inherited moral values and etiquette from her upbringing [27].

This data reflects the importance of the role of female scholars in the Islamic struggle and how family and education values shape a deep understanding and commitment to the cause. Sitti Raihanun is an example of a female scholar with a central role in the development and advancement of Islam in Sasak Lombok, primarily through Nahdlatul Wathan.

Characteristics of Transformational Leadership. Several transformational leadership characteristics can be identified in Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, a female scholar who has successfully led for 20 years. The analysis includes characteristics evident in the provided information:

1. Inspirational Motivation. Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid demonstrates the ability to inspire her subordinates. For instance, her leadership in actively guiding and mobilising subordinates and achieving significant breakthroughs in organisational development during her 20-year leadership reflects inspirational leadership qualities [28].

2. Intellectual Stimulation. Transformational leadership often involves intellectual stimulation and encouraging creativity and innovation. Establishing 280 educational institutions, including schools and pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), indicates that Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid has promoted intellectual and academic development within her organisation [29].

3. Individualised Consideration. Transformational leadership also includes individualised attention to team members. While not explicitly detailed, Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid's success in establishing ten definitive regional offices and three representatives in various provinces in Indonesia suggests attention to develop-

ing individuals and groups under her leadership [30].

4. Idealised Influence. Transformational leaders tend to be models followed and respected by their subordinates. Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, by successfully establishing hundreds of schools and pesantren, including the Syaikh Zainuddin NW Anjani Lombok Timur Islamic Boarding School, sets an example of idealised influence through her dedication to education and community development [31].

5. Charismatic Leadership. The leadership of Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid can also be associated with charismatic leadership, where she can motivate and lead with her charm. Managing the largest pesantren ever established by a woman indicates her strong influence and appeal [32].

In summary, Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid can be considered a successful transformational leader who inspires, intellectually stimulates, provides individualised consideration, and has significant idealised influence. Her success in shaping educational institutions and organisations indicates the positive impact of her leadership on community development and education in Indonesia.

Impact on Society. Transformational leadership, as reflected in the case of Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, can have significant positive effects on society. Here are some ways in which transformational leadership can contribute to positive change and set examples of transformation or specific improvements in society:

1. Improvement in Education. Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid's transformational leadership is evident in establishing hundreds of schools and pesantren. The direct impact is improving the community's educational access, especially in areas where these institutions were founded. This transformation creates new learning opportunities and empowers the community through increased knowledge and skills [33].

2. Empowerment of women. As a successful female scholar leading transformationally, Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid may have contributed to social changes related to the role of women in society. Her leadership could inspire other women to take active roles in various fields, including education and religious affairs [34].

3. Local Economic Development. The establishment of 10 definitive regional offices and three representatives in various provinces can be interpreted as an effort to develop the presence and economic potential at the local level. This transformation may include increased employment opportunities, empowering small businesses, and supporting the local economy [35].

4. Improvement in Social Conditions. Transformational leadership can impact positive social changes, such as improvements in norms and values within the community. By building educational and religious institutions, Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid may have contributed to her community's moral and social ethics [36].

5. Enhancement of Quality of Life. Through establishing the Syaikh Zainuddin NW Anjani Lombok Timur Islamic Boarding School, Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid's contributes to enhancing the quality of life for students and their families. Education is critical in improving opportunities and quality of life, and her leadership in this area is transformative [37].

Challenges and opportunities. While Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Majid's leadership embodies transformational qualities, there are likely challenges and opportunities associated with her role as a female scholar in Sasak Lombok:

1. Challenges: Gender Bias and Stereotypes. The traditional nature of some societies may pose challenges for female leaders, particularly in religious or community affairs. Gender bias and stereotypes may hinder the acceptance of female scholars in leadership roles.

2. Challenges: Resource Constraints. Establishing and managing educational institutions and regional offices requires substantial resources. Resource constraints may pose challenges to sustaining and expanding the impact of her leadership.

3. Societal Resistance to Change. Transformational leadership often involves introducing changes or innovations. Societal resistance to change, especially in conservative societies, may pose challenges to successfully implementing new ideas or practices.

4. External pressures and conflicts. External pressures, whether political or social, can impact the ability of leaders to navigate and implement their vision. Conflicts within or outside the com-

munity may challenge maintaining a positive and transformative trajectory.

Opportunities:

1. **Advancement of Female Leadership.** Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid's success opens opportunities for the advancement of female leadership in religious and community affairs. Her accomplishments can catalyse changing perceptions about women's roles in traditionally male-dominated spaces.

2. **Collaboration and networking.** Building on the established regional offices and representatives, there are opportunities for collaboration and networking. Strengthening connections with other organisations and leaders can enhance the overall impact and reach of her transformative initiatives.

3. **Capacity building and skill development.** Investing in capacity-building and skill-development programs can be an opportunity to sustain the impact of educational institutions. This includes training teachers, administrators, and community leaders to ensure the continued success of the established institutions.

4. **Community Engagement and Participation.** Encouraging community engagement and participation can further amplify the positive impact of transformational leadership. Involving the community in decision-making processes and development initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

5. **International Collaboration.** Exploring opportunities for international collaboration can bring in additional support and resources. Partnering with international organisations or seeking assistance from global networks can enhance the scale and effectiveness of her transformative initiatives [38].

In conclusion, Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, a female scholar leading transformationally in Sasak Lombok, provides a valuable example of the positive impact such leadership can have on education, community development, and societal norms. Her journey reflects transformational leadership, Islamic values, and a commitment to positive change. While challenges exist, the opportunities for advancing female leadership, collaboration, capacity building, community engagement, and international collaboration present a hopeful outlook for the continued success of her transformative initiatives. The legacy of

Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid contributes not only to the local context of Sasak Lombok but also to the broader discourse on the role of female scholars and transformational leadership in shaping societies for the better.

Transformational Leadership of Female Scholars in Sasak Lombok. Transformational leadership is of utmost importance in the context of female scholars in Sasak Lombok. The inspiration and motivation generated by transformational leadership play a central role in shaping commitment to a shared vision. Female scholars who can provide positive examples and radiate respected values can build emotional connections, making it easier for the community to grow and contribute.

Introduction of Muslim Female Scholars in Sasak Lombok. The research findings offer profound insights into female scholars' background, education, and struggles in Sasak Lombok, particularly Hajjah Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Majid. Coming from a family with a strong history in the Islamic struggle, Sitti Raihanun's role in accompanying her father's struggle reflects her dedication from an early age.

Characteristics of Transformational Leadership in Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid. Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, as an exemplary female scholar leader, demonstrates several crucial characteristics of transformational leadership:

1. **Inspirational Motivation:** Her ability to lead and create breakthroughs is meaningful.

2. **Intellectual Stimulation:** Establishing 280 educational institutions indicates efforts to stimulate academic growth.

3. **Individualised Consideration:** Successfully establishing ten regional offices and three representatives shows attention to individual development.

Impact on Society. Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid's transformational leadership has significantly impacted Sasak Lombok's society.

1. **Educational Improvement:** Establishing hundreds of schools and pesantren enhances educational access.

2. **Empowerment of Women:** As a female scholar, Sitti Raihanun may inspire other women to take active roles.

3. Local Economic Development: The education provided contributes to local economic development.

4. Social Condition Enhancement: By building educational and religious institutions, she contributes to social, moral, and ethical improvement.

Challenges and opportunities. Challenges in female scholar leadership involve patriarchal social structures, illegal competing leaders, and human resource weaknesses. However, opportunities for education strengthening, human resource development, collaboration, and advocacy can be strategies to overcome these challenges. The role of transformational leadership by female scholars in Sasak Lombok creates positive impacts through education, women's empowerment, and local economic development. Despite facing challenges, opportunities for education strengthening and advocacy are keys to sustaining positive societal changes. Female scholars like Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid are not only organisational leaders but also agents of change who positively impact society.

Strengthening Islamic Education in Sasak Lombok's Community. Islamic education plays a central role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of individuals and communities in Sasak Lombok. A profound understanding of Islamic teachings as the foundation of religion and a focus on moral and ethical aspects are essential in shaping the identity and values of the Sasak community.

Impact of Strengthening Islamic Education. Strengthening Islamic education in Sasak Lombok is expected to have positive impacts, including:

1. Formation of Islamic Character: Focus on moral and ethical aspects to shape a solid Islamic character.
2. Inculcation of Human Values: Islamic Education as a Foundation for Instilling Humane Values
3. Poverty Alleviation: Education as a Key to Assisting Poverty Through Skill and Knowledge Enhancement

Challenges and Efforts to Overcome. Challenges in strengthening Islamic education involve a lack of resources, a curriculum mismatch, and parental participation. Concrete efforts may include collaboration with international institutions, the development of locally-based curricula, and com-

munity awareness campaigns. Strengthening Islamic education in Sasak Lombok is a crucial step in shaping a future that is strong morally and spiritually. Islamic education is expected to become a primary pillar in developing an empowered and morally upright Sasak Lombok community through concrete steps in infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, and community participation.

Theory Construction from Research Findings Discussion. Based on the elucidated research findings, a theoretical framework can be constructed to illustrate the importance of transformative leadership by women scholars (Ulama Perempuan) in Sasak Lombok and its positive impact on society. This theoretical construction can be detailed as follows:

1. Transformative Leadership of Women Scholars. Transformative leadership by women scholars, exemplified by Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, plays a central role in positive change. The focus on education, women's empowerment, and local economic development are the primary drivers for achieving a significant impact [39].

2. Overcoming Challenges. Despite facing challenges such as patriarchal social structures, illegitimate leaders, and human resource weaknesses, the theoretical framework indicates that opportunities for strengthening education and advocacy are effective strategies for addressing these issues [40].

3. Focus on Strengthening Islamic Education. Strengthening Islamic education in Sasak Lombok becomes the primary focus in shaping individuals' and society's character, morality, and spirituality. Concrete steps such as improving educational infrastructure, religious teacher training, developing relevant curricula, and active participation of parents and the community serve as the foundation for implementation [41].

4. Expected Positive Impact. The theoretical framework suggests that strengthening Islamic education can create positive impacts, including forming Islamic character, instilling humanitarian values, and contributing to poverty alleviation through skill and knowledge enhancement [42].

5. Challenges Addressed Through Concrete Efforts. Challenges such as resource shortages, mismatched curricula, and lack of parental participation are identified as elements that need to be addressed through concrete efforts, such as

international collaboration, locally-based curricula, and community awareness campaigns [43].

6. Role of Women Scholars and Strengthening of Islamic Education as the Foundation for Community Development. Overall, the theoretical framework emphasises that the role of women scholars and strengthening Islamic education in Sasak Lombok create a strong foundation for empowered and morally upright community development [44].

7. Hope for Positive Change through Hard Work, Collaboration, and Dedication. Through hard work, collaboration, and dedication, this theoretical framework is expected to create a foundation for sustainable positive change, providing a long-term impact on the Sasak Lombok community [45].

CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion delves into the significance of transformative leadership by women scholars (Ulama Perempuan) in Sasak Lombok, focusing on the exemplary case of Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid. This leader has positively impacted through education, women's empowerment, and local economic development. Despite facing challenges such as patriarchal social structures, illegitimate leaders, and human resource

weaknesses, education strengthening and advocacy opportunities emerge as strategies to address these issues.

Strengthening Islamic education in Sasak Lombok becomes a crucial focus for shaping individual and societal character, morality, and spirituality. Concrete steps, such as improving educational infrastructure, religious teacher training, developing relevant curricula, and active participation of parents and the community, are identified as profound efforts to achieve these goals. The expected positive impacts include forming an Islamic character, instilling humanitarian values, and contributing to poverty alleviation through skill and knowledge enhancement.

However, challenges such as resource shortages, mismatched curricula, and lack of parental involvement need to be addressed with specific efforts such as international collaboration, the development of locally-based curricula, and community awareness campaigns. Overall, the role of women scholars and strengthening Islamic education in Sasak Lombok create a robust foundation for the community's empowerment and morally upright development. Through hard work, collaboration, and dedication, it is hoped that positive changes will continue to evolve, providing a long-term impact on the Sasak Lombok community.

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