

A Stylistic Analysis of the Epic of Job

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Abstract

This study is a stylistic analysis of Epic of Job. The Epic of Job is one of the oldest epic poems in Kiswahili poetry. It aims at identifying, analyzing and evaluating the style of the language used in the Epic of Job to pass the intended message. The choice and the uniqueness of the vocabulary and literary forms used to express themes in Epic motivated the researchers to undertake this study. Russian formalism theory by Roman Jakobson 1915 formed the theoretical framework of this study. The Epic of Job formed the primary data of analysis. The researchers read the Epic stanza by stanza analyzing the vocabulary used and other word formation techniques like substitution, consonance, assonance and refrain. The study found out that the language used in the Epic of Job was appropriate in passing the intended message. The author used vocabulary from Kiamu, Kimvita, Kingozi and Arabic languages effectively. The author also used literary forms like similes, irony, euphemism, rhetoric questions among others appropriately to convey the message. Through critical analysis of the Epic of Job, the study concluded that the Epic is relevant to current issues affecting humanity.

1.1 Introduction

Poetry is one of the earliest genres of literature. Epics are some of the early work of poetry. According to Njogu and Chimerah (1999), the term poetry refers to the work of art that presents an idea in a shorter and clear way that attracts the attention of the listener/reader. This genre has elements that make it distinct from other genres. These elements are also called literary forms. Mbatiah (2001) defines these literary forms as the elements of style and art that build up the text, carry the theme and a particular meaning. These literary forms are analyzed in order to find out how certain language rules have been used to pass the intended meaning. The way language is used will determine the effectiveness of the author in communicating the information.

The Epic of Job is one of the oldest epics in Swahili poetry. Other epics include Mwanakupona, Mwanafatuma and Fumo Liyongo. It is believed that the Epic of Job was authored by Umar bin Amin in 1835. Being one of the Swahili classical epics, it adhered to prosodic rules that guided the writing of poetry work. The Epic of Job is a long religious narrative with many stanzas.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Various studies has been done in relation to classical Swahili poetry especially the genre of epic (Omwoyo, 1997; Wesa, 2005). The way language is used in poetic work, will determine how the

listener/reader will perceive it and the success of the author in communicating the intended meaning. Few studies have been carried on the Epic of Job. The Epic of Job is one of the oldest Swahili classical poetry. This study therefore investigated how literary forms have been used to convey meaning in the Epic of Job. There is need to investigate how language was used in classical poetry because this is the genre that laid the basic foundation in Kiswahili literature.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the style of the language used by the author of the Epic of Job in communicating the intended message.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the author of the Epic of Job in communicating the message as a result of the style of the language used.

1.4 Review of Related Literature

Scholars have done research on the use of the literary forms in literature work and found that these forms make the work easier to understand (Mungania, 1985; Mwangangi, 1996; Omwoyo, 1997 and Kasilu, 2003). In his research, Mungania (1985) found that these forms expounded the themes in two of Mnyampala's poetry work; *Waadhi wa Ushairi* (1965) and *Diwani ya Mnyampala* (1965) better.

Mwangangi (1996) study focused on the use of literary forms in Kitsao's play namely *Uasi* (1980), *Malimwengu Ulimwengu* (1987), *Bibi Arusi* (1983), and *Tazama Mbele* (1987). He found that various literary forms used, reflected the writer's point of view and played a great role in conveying the intended message. Some of these literary forms he analysed included plot, characters and the use of language.

Kasilu (2003) researched on the style and themes in modern Swahili poetry with reference to *Mchezo wa Karata* (1997) and *Bara Jingine* (2001) authored by Kithaka wa Mberia. This study revealed that the use of specific literary forms have a great role in formulation of the appropriate themes. The study analysed literary forms like similes, metaphors, refrains, alliteration and apostrophe.

Epics have certain features that differentiate them from other forms of poetry. Most of the epics like the Epic of Sundiata, Epic of Gilgamesh are based on historical and religious themes, such as the history of heroes in the society and other myths. Most of the Swahili epics like Mwanakupona, Mwanafatuma originated from Arabic myths (Wamitila, 2002). Epics are also similar in form and style. They have outstanding characters, present the themes in narrative form and are prosodic. They are also long and heavily worded. Examples of these epics include Ras-al-Ghuli with about 5000 stanzas and more than 960 pages (King'ei and Kemoli, 2001). The stanzas have end rhymes and between six to eleven syllables per line.

According to King'ei and Kemoli (2001), for any work of literature to be classified as a poem, it should have:

1. Stanza made of verse (lines).
2. Verses (lines) with both or similar internal and end rhymes.
3. Poetic language and
4. Refrain of the last line in every stanza.

However, some epics have defied these rules and the last lines in the stanzas are not similar. Examples of Swahili epics with this format are the Job, Fumo Liyongo and Mwanakupona.

Njogu and Chimerah (1999) define literary forms as the elements that make up the work of art. These literary forms include time, characters, style, plot, tone and the language used (Msokile, 1993). In order to have meaning, these elements need to relate to each other.

Weber (1985) says that language is a mode of communication among the people that use specific types of sounds that make up words, phrases and sentences. Further, Senkoro (1982) elaborates that language is most important because it differentiates literature and the other forms of art. It is a mode through which artists use to express their feelings. If language is not used well, a communication breakdown will occur.

According to Njogu and Chimerah (1999), the poetic language used is intended to arouse the inner feelings of love, hate, togetherness or sorrow to the listener. In order to achieve this, Wamitila (2002) says that, the author of a certain poem has freedom to select, and come up with new vocabulary that suits the text better. This is because poetic language is distinct in that it is presented in a symbolic and verse form as opposed to narration (Njogu and Chimerah 1999). The author is supposed to use appropriate language as per the level of the audience. This is why the author of a poem has freedom to ignore grammatical rules that govern the word formation and construction of sentences. The author can shorten or lengthen words in order to get the required number of syllables, end rhymes or internal rhymes. Words are selected keenly and an attractive language used to make the listener attentive and interested. This study investigated whether the poet has used the appropriate vocabulary in the Epic of Job as well as evaluating the choice of words used, and the creativity of the author in relation to the context.

If ordinary words can be selected appropriately in a poem, they arouse interest and curiosity among the audience. Therefore, it's important to select and use the vocabulary while taking into consideration the type of characters used and the scenery. The writer should use proper techniques in selecting and using words. The origin of the words, help us to know their meaning. A certain word could have originated from a local or foreign or an official language. This knowledge will help us to understand whether the word has changed, lost or has preserved its original meaning.

This study investigated the origin of the words used in the Epic of Job whether they are borrowed from the other languages like Arabic and their impact on the audience feelings and whether they have fulfilled the authors' intentions. The research done by various scholars reviewed has assisted us to identify some of these literary forms and how they make literature work easier to understand within the context of the Epic of Job.

1.5 Theoretical Background

This study is guided by Russian formalism theory. The major proponents of this theory were Roman Jakobson, Boris Tomashevsky, Boris Eichenbaum and Victor Shklovsky during the rein of revolutionary movement in Russia. The revolutions were led by V.I. Lenin in an effort to start a communism Government. Later, these members split into two groups: The Moscow Linguistic circle led by Roman Jakobson in 1915, and The Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPAJAZ) led by Victor Shklovsky in 1916 (Fokkema and Ibsch 1978, Buchbinder 1991).

The major tenets of Russian formalism are as follows:

1. These theorists discouraged the interpretation of a poetic text from biographical, cultural, sociological or political point of view. They distinguished between the art and everyday events. According to them, the work of art is self-directed and not reality oriented.
2. The work of art is self-contained and has no reference to reality, except as a source of raw material.
3. The theory focused more on structures and dynamics of literary language and forms. The literary language creating the text constituted literary forms such as irony, satire, plot, characters, and similes, among others.
4. There was rebellion against the authors' bibliography and psychology.

The role of the reader is to examine the elements of narration, the conventions of the narrative and how literary forms depend on one another to give meaning. Generally, the Russian formalism theorists intended to make the study of literature more scientific. They discouraged basing interpretation of text on biographical, philosophical and psychological point of view.

However, in this study, the researchers have not isolated themes completely from literary forms when interpreting the Epic of Job, the text under critical analysis. This is because themes and literary forms depend on one another to give meaning to a text. Therefore, the researchers have referred to themes wherever there is need. The researchers have also examined the language used in the Epic of Job independently without considering the intentions of the author. In this study, literary forms refer to plot, style, time, characters, language used and tone.

1.6 Research Methodology

This study is purely library based. The researchers critically read the Epic of Job, various theses and other literature related to the study. The researchers identified various elements of literary forms that the writer has used in the Epic of Job. They also investigated and analyzed how vocabulary has been used, techniques used in word formation and rhyming in the Epic of Job.

1.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the stylistic analysis of Epic of Job, the researchers focused on vocabulary used, literary word formation, use of similes, repetition, use of euphemism, apparition, rhetoric and irony to unravel the message of the author of the epic.

1.7. 1 Language Use in the Epic of Job

The Epic describes the life of Job and the tribulations he faced in the hands of Satan. Job was a stout believer in God. The author has chosen words that have aroused the feelings of mercy, sorrow and sadness among the listeners. Among the words used that arouse the feelings of mercifulness are:-

Turuzuku tu wajao (save us we are your children) stanza 9.

Mali nimeyangamiza (I have destroyed all their property) stanza 54.

Hulia zijana zako (your children are crying) stanza 56.

Mali nimeyangamiza yote sijakusaza (I have destroyed everything) stanza 74.

Kuangamiza auladi (killed the children) stanza 77.

Ua (kill) stanza 78.

Wanao wafie wote (all their children are dead) stanza 98.

Zidonda zikafunuka (wounds developed) stanza 113.
Mwiliwe kuoza (his body rot). Simazi (sorrows) stanza 154.
Matozi humdondoka (tears flowed down) stanza 155 n.k.

These words have been used throughout the epic except the last stanza where encouraging words are used. Examples of these words are:-

Yarabbi atakupoza (God will heal you) stanza 182.
Afya takurejelea (he will restore your health) stanza 282.
kukushushia afua (he will receive you) stanza 295.
Mateso yameisha koma, yeo ni afua (tribulations have ended, today is relieve) stanza 296.
maradhi kapoa (diseases have healed) stanza 304.

These words motivate the reader too read and get to know the end result. The author has also selected appropriate adjectives to describe the behaviour of various characters used in the Epic.

The following words have been used to refer to God:

Jalla wa alla Jalia (stanza 7),
Arhaman (stanza 8),
Mpayi (stanza 18),
Molawe Sarimada (stanza 27),
Maunani (stanza 283,312),
Jahihi Mola Rabbuka (stanza 163) among others.
Job has also been referred by these names :Sayyidina (stanzas 148,174,226),
mfadhala (stanzas 212, 321).

Rehema has been given the following names:-Mwema Mzawa wa wema (stanza 124), Mngwana mwana Rehema (stanza 139) Mwenye nasabu n.k.

The author has also used slanderous words to describe bad characters. Satan has been given the following names:

Asi wa Mungu (stanza 177)
Mlaaniwa (stanza 100)
Mud (stanza 181).

These names describe the evil behavior of Satan. The author has succeeded in describing the cunningness of the devil towards human beings. The author has also succeeded in pinpointing the patience of Job, and the need for people to have patience because patience pays. These words and names used to describe various characters are just ordinary words. However, most of them are borrowed from other languages like Arabic and are religious based. This can be an impediment to the reader if he/she has no background knowledge of these words and names.

Other words have been borrowed from Kiamu, Kingozi and Kimvita dialects. We have analyzed words from these languages to help the reader understand the verse easily.

Kimvita is one of the dialects of Kiswahili language. In this dialect the sound /t/ replaces /ch /.
Examples of words borrowed from Kimvita dialect are:

Kuteka instead of kucheka (stanza 79)
 Utukia instead of kuchukia (stanza 145)
 Matozi instead of machozi (stanza 99, 91, 146, 300)
 Kitwani instead of kichwani (stanza 127)
 Matungu instead of muchungu (stanza 177),

The sound /nd/ is used instead of /nj/. Examples are:
 Ndia instead of njia (stanza 32, 36, 69, 119, 134)
 Ndooni instead of njooni (stanza 39)
 Ndaa instead of njaa (stanza 147, 286)

The Epic of Job has borrowed words from Kingozi dialect. In this dialect the sound /s/ is used instead of the sound /sh/. Some of the words include: Katiti small (stanza 59) plural zititi, Kwise (finish) (stanza 59), mwisowe. Other words used are pulikiza (listen) stanza 174, niwene (I saw) stanza 177, 342, Uwenezo (the ones you saw) stanza 246 mbewene (I saw) stanza 340. The syllable /to/ comes at the end of the word for emphasis. Examples of the words include wakamwambiato (they told him/her) stanza 233, fahamuto (remember) stanza 261.

The main dialect used to write the Epic of Job is Kiamu. Some of the words used from this dialect are; zijana instead of vijana (stanza 25, 48, 56), zitu instead of vitu (stanzas 104, 389) zidonda instead of vidonda (stanza 113). In Kiamu dialect, the syllable /zi/ is used instead of /vy/ and /v/. There is also no /j/ sound in Kiamu, instead the sound /ly/ is used. Examples are yuani instead of juani (stanza 48), tuwatayao instead of tuwatajao (stanza 16), ayapo instead of ajapo among many others.

In Kiamu, there is the use of sound /d/ instead of sound /z/. Examples are kwanda instead of kwanza (stanzas 20, 369), mapendi instead of mapenzi (stanza 251). Other words take the sound /n/ instead of /m/. Examples include nkate instead of mkate (stanza 144), ntu instead of mtu (stanza 155, 383) ntikati instead of mtikati (stanza 206). The sound /s/ is used instead of the sound /h/. For example, sayo instead of hayo (stanza 45, 259) sayo instead of hayo (stanza 46, 59, 118).

The Epic of Job has also borrowed words from Arabic language. Most of the words used have Islamic background because the target audience was Muslims. Some of the words include Qatam (pen) stanza 1, Rasua (prophet) stanza 14, Auladi (children) stanzas 26, 29, 34, 58. Asitaradidi (couldn't continue) stanza 29, Askuti (keep quiet) stanza 31, 36, Subbana (God) stanza 78, Wahhabu (God the provider) to name a few.

Literary Techniques used to form words

According to Mweri (2010), every word found in any language is either made of one or more morphs. Words can either be borrowed from other languages, formulated as a result of discovery of different items from the environment or by using scientific and technological techniques. In the Epic of Job, the author was forced to come up with vocabulary that adhered to prosodic rules guiding the work of poetry.

The following are some of the literary techniques used to form words in the Epic of Job:

1. Shortening of words and addition of syllables

The number of syllables in some words is reduced in order to get the terminal assonance, similar final syllable or the required number of syllables. The earlier poetry was written in such a way that it obeyed certain prescribed structural rules like rhyming endings. It was characterized by pleasant rhymes and ordered rhythm purposely to appeal the ear of the listener.

The verses had to follow a definite pattern. In order to obey all this and conform to the conventional form, some syllables were either removed from the word or added without changing their meaning. Examples of words with reduced syllables include:

Atayekuya instead of Atakayekuja
Wosojua instead of wasiojua (stanza 4)
Kuweleza instead of kuwaeleza (stanza 5)
zondoshiye instead of zimeondolewa (stanza 65)
vua instead of mvua (stanza 144)
kupoa instead of kupona (stanza 347) among others.

Examples of words with additional syllables in the Epic of Job are:

Makanywani instead of vinywani (stanza 49)
komele instead of koma (stanza 152)
Reheman instead of Rehema (stanza 243)
nondowe instead of niondoe (stanza 285)
wakafurahika instead of wakafurahi (stanza 375)
Kiswahilia instead of Kiswahili (stanza 378).

2. Substitution

It is a technique where the writer substitutes some syllables with others at the end of the word to get either internal or terminal assonance or similar final syllables. The author of the Epic of Job has succeeded in using this technique. Examples of words include:

Kukuabudi instead of kukuabudu [worship] (stanza 29)
ukiabudi instead of ukiabudu [worshipping] (stanza 64)
Mtumi instead of Mtume [prophet] (stanza 94)
kutakalama instead of kutakalamu (stanza 180)
nieleza instead of nieleze (stanza 210)
kupatakwe instead of alipopata (stanza 259) among many others.

The author of an art of poetry has freedom of using vocabulary, techniques and artistic skills to construct his work (King'ei & Kemoli, 2001). Beckson and Ganz (1960) say that this freedom ranges from the way words are selected and used, and the way the author selects and used proverbs, riddles and similes. We have taken the freedom of the author to mean the authority to use language as one wishes, but adhering to prosodic rules governing metric verse writing.

The author can reorganize morphological, semantic and other grammatical rules or defy them in order to get rhyming in poetic verses (Wamitila, 2002). In this study, the researchers investigated how the author of Epic of Job has succeeded in conveying the intended message after defying and reorganizing the grammatical rules on word formation. The poet has successfully used various literary techniques mentioned earlier to get the rhyming. The morphology of words has also been

changed in various stanzas and verses leading the formation of new words without altering their initial meaning.

The author has also used similes, apostrophe, metaphors, hyperboles, satire, repetition, analogy, euphemism among many others to come up with the appropriate rhyming. Generally, in a free verse the author has freedom to use various techniques and defy some of the grammatical rules in order to come up with this type of an Epic.

The author of Epic of Job has not followed strictly morphological, syntactic, semantic and other grammatical rules when writing the Epic. However, poet has come up with a good epic and the intended message has been communicated well and themes are clearly understood.

Use of similes

Korg (1959) describes similes as words or phrases that are used to compare things or items with others by using the words like; same as, to name a few. The author uses these words to draw a figurative picture in the minds of the audience. The author of the Epic of Job has used several similes to compare different situations and has succeeded in passing the intended message.

For example:

Verse 3; Pumzi alizotoa

Ayubu zikampata

Kana mvi kuvukuta – [simile]

Wa Jahanama sikia.

The above simile is used to compare the danger that was to befall Job with the fire found in hell.

Stanza 115 line 3; Na wasakha utokao

Mwilimwe upitao

Kana wai wa muyao [simile]

The simile is used to compare the flow of fluid coming from the wounds on the body of Job with the way rain falls. This emphasizes the suffering and tribulations that Job underwent. This showed the degree of anguish that Job faced.

Stanza 123: Muumba umuumbiye

Kana sura babiye – [simile]

Za Yusufu fahamia.

This simile is used to compare the beauty of Rehema with that of Yusufu's grandmother. This stresses beauty as one of the traditional portrayals of woman in African literature.

Verse 372: Na wana wakashadi

Wakawa kama asadi – [simile]

Verse 373; *Ukiwaona rijali na kama samba kamili* – [simile].

These similes are used to compare the good health and the strength of the children of Job with that of a lion. In our view, the author has selected and used these similes effectively according to the context.

Repetition

Repetition is used to put more emphasis. Assonance, refrain, alliteration and consonance are some of the repetitions used in the Epic of Job. Examples of repetition are:

1. Refrain

This is repetition of a line, phrase or a stanza at regular intervals. For example:

Stanza 63 “Ewe bwana ewe bwana.

Stanza 181 “ Ni mui dhama ni mui.

Stanza 30 “ Naapa thumma naapa.

Stanza 93 “ laiti nini laiti.

2. Consonance

It is the repetition of consonant sounds. For instance, Stanza 7, Jalla wa Allah Jalia – sound / l / stanza 385, mtaajabu ajabu–repetition of sound / j / & / b /.

3. Assonance

This is the repetition of vowel sounds. For example,

Stanza 61; Nyao wachambuachambua – repetition of vowel ‘u’ and ‘a’

Stanza 124: Mwema mzawa wa wema – repetition of vowel ‘a’.

Stanza 13;. Kumzunguazungua – repetition of vowel ‘u’.

All these repetitions have been used effectively in the Epic of Job. The author has used them to stress on the main issues of doing good among others.

Euphemism

Euphemism is an indirect word or phrase that is used to refer to an embarrassing or unpleasant situation to look more acceptable than it really is. Euphemism is used to neutralize the effect of a hurting statement (Senkoro, 1982).

According to Syambo and Mazrui (1992), different communities have different ways of expressing embarrassing or unpleasant statements in a more acceptable way. They used soft and friendly language that could reduce the psychological pain that could have been caused by such unpleasant language. A good example is the use of the phrase: to help oneself instead of using the words ‘to urinate’. Examples from the Epic of Job are; Stanza (89). Wamegura dunia meaning that they are dead. Stanza (93) line 2. Yamewakuta mauti- they are dead. These phrases are used indirectly to refer to the death of the children of Job.

Apparition

Wesa (2005) defines apparition as a situation similar to a dream. It exceeds the ability of an ordinary human being. Some of the incidences that took place in Epic of Job were beyond human control.

Some of the characters were abnormal and could not be found in an ordinary set up. For example:

Stanza 49: Wakatoa mivukuto

Makanwani yao moto

Wasikupata upito

Mbuzi na watunga pia.

Verse 49 describes how the devil breathed out fire and the herders and their goats had nowhere to go. This is an extraordinary situation. The characters are also devils. It is a situation that is beyond human control.

In Stanza 239, Rehema encounters an unusual eventuality. She saw a human being come down from heaven and stood before her. The stanza reads:

Ikazidii kufuruka
Uwene mtu kushuka
Yuu la mbingu kutoka
Kimo kimsimamia

Although this is a religious epic, such abnormal incidences are scaring and difficult to believe. This mostly happens in a dream.

In Stanza 306, image is portrayed where water comes out from dry sand and flows like a stream. This water flows over Job's wounds and he just stared at it. The verse reads.

Yakitoka kwa zishindo
Mai yakaenda mikondo
Ya kamamkoma maondo
Ayubu kayaangalia

This is a difficult situation to belief: water flowing forcefully over somebody's wounds.

Rhetorical Questions

These are the questions asked to the audience without requiring answers. According to Beckson and Ganz (1960: 209), these questions are purposely used to stress on an issue. Rhetorical questions creates curiosity among the audience and attracts their attention and involvement. For example in the Epic of Job, these questions include: Stanza 55; line3. Huabudu hata lini?

The devils asked Job for how long would he continue praying, with an aim of demoralizing him.

Stanza 98; Ni nini kukosa kite
Na wanao wafie wote
Amekuwa teuteu
Kana mtu asozaa

Why are you not mourning when all your children are dead?

You are behaving like a barren?

Stanza 321; line 2, Rehema is asking the whereabouts of Job.

Kizingi kitaajabu
Amba uwapi Ayubu

She wondered; where are you Ayubu?

In our view, these questions have been used to break the monotony of continuous narrations and involve the audience.

Irony

Irony is a strange aspect of a situation that is very different from what you expect. It is the use of words that say the opposite of what you really mean, often as a joke (Msokile, 1993). Mbatiah (2001) views irony as an expression whose meaning is opposite of what is being said. Wamitila (2008: 41) identifies three categories of irony namely ironic expression, sarcastic statement and situational irony.

A sarcastic statement is aimed to hurt. It is a statement that is so much hurting and painful (Senkoro 1982: 20). This is the definition we have adopted in this paper. The following are examples of ironic statements in the Epic of Job.

In Stanza 52 we read:

Hapo akaibawibu
Shuti kiyongo kidhabu
Akanenda kwa Ayubu

This verse explains how Satan changed his form to resemble Job's shepherds. He joins Job in mourning after he informed him about his (Job) flocks destruction. This is ironical because it is the same Satan who struck the flock with death. However, Job recognizes the Satan and sends him away.

Another case of irony is found in Stanza 63:

Iblisi kaja tena
Kwa Ayubu akanen
Ewe bwana ewe bwana
Nyama wametusia

In this verse the Satan came again to Job pretending to be one of his servants mourning because of the death of Job's horses and camels. This is again ironical because it is the same Satan who has killed them.

1.8 Conclusion

The author the Epic of Job has used words from both local and foreign languages to enrich his vocabulary. The author has used vocabulary from Swahili dialects like Kiamu, Kingozi and Kimvita as well as borrowing some words from Arabic language. However, the author has mostly used words from Kiamu dialect.

The author has also used various literary techniques to adhere to prosodic rules guiding writing of metric verses. These techniques include shortening and addition of syllables to words in order to get rhyming ends or the required number of syllables in a line, and substitution. The author has also used similes, repetition, refrain, consonance, assonance, euphemism, apparition and irony to enrich the language used and attract the attention of the listener. These have been used effectively, in the Epic of Job to communicate the intended message. Although the Epic of Job is one of the earliest epics, it is still useful and relevant in today's society because it communicates themes such as patience, faithfulness, faith and humility which are the pillars of today's moral society.

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