

Recovery The Glory of Asa And Ede of Yoruba Language: Library as A Tool

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Article Info

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the current state of asa and ede in the Yoruba language with a view of employing the library as a tool for the recovery of the lost glory. Some of the undermining factors working against the Yoruba language that were established in this study are globalization and westernization, urbanisation and migration, educational policies, socioeconomic pressures and the impact of colonial legacy. However, 'libraries' employed in a wide range of contexts, from digital libraries to physical public libraries play crucial roles in cultural heritage preservation through collection and preservation, digitization initiatives archiving, oral traditions education and literacy Programmes, community engagement and outreach research and scholarly support and leveraging technology. Some successful organizational, institutional and individual cultural preservation programmes were equally highlighted.

Keywords: asa, ede, yoruba language, libraries, preservation

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INTRODUCTION

Encapsulating the essence of the Asa (stories, folklore) and Ede (proverbs, idioms) that have defined the identity and worldview of the Yoruba people for millennia, the Yoruba language is rich in cultural legacy and profound wisdom. It is crucial to protect and revive these cultural components as modernity and globalization are still putting pressure on indigenous languages. Libraries are in a unique position to be crucial to this effort since they are keepers of knowledge and culture. Libraries are essential for maintaining linguistic legacy since they house both written and oral traditions, according to Olaoye (2013). Similar to this, Ojei and Owojuyigbe (2019) emphasizes how libraries may support cultural continuity by giving people access to indigenous knowledge systems and encouraging literacy in their mother tongues.

Concern is developing over the loss of Yoruba Asa and Ede usage, particularly among younger generations. According to Kaul (2012), the loss of these cultural components includes a loss of cultural identity and intellectual legacy in addition to language loss. By actively collecting, preserving, and disseminating Yoruba cultural resources, libraries may buck this trend. Libraries can ensure that Yoruba Asa and Ede are passed down to future generations by reviving interest in and competency in these languages through storytelling sessions, language programs, and digital archives.

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Library technology integration improves the institution's ability to protect and promote Yoruba cultural heritage. Kamba and Buba (2022) asserts that social media and digital platforms have the power to greatly increase the effect and reach of cultural preservation initiatives by opening up resources to a worldwide audience. Libraries may offer dynamic and interactive experiences that connect with local and diaspora communities by utilizing these resources. The restoration of Asa and Ede's splendour in the Yoruba language depends on the thoughtful use of libraries as instruments for cultural preservation and regeneration. Libraries can guarantee that these cultural gems stay lively and significant for future generations by making committed efforts in collection development, community participation, instructional programming, and technological innovation.

Restoring Asa and Ede's prominence and cultural significance in the Yoruba language is a multifaceted endeavour that can greatly benefit from the strategic use of libraries. Therefore, this paper is concerned with how the lost glory of Asa and Ede of the Yoruba language can be restored using the library as a tool of recovery.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach, focusing on the role of libraries in the recovery and preservation of Asa (stories, folklore) and Ede (proverbs, idioms) in the Yoruba language. Descriptive qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study as it seeks to explore and understand the cultural and linguistic decline of Yoruba Asa and Ede, and how libraries can be instrumental in reversing this trend. The goal is to collect, analyze, and interpret non-numerical data related to cultural preservation practices and the effectiveness of libraries as cultural repositories. The data for this study was gathered through a combination of literature review, content analysis of existing archival materials, and case studies of successful cultural preservation initiatives. Primary data was collected from a range of digital and physical libraries that store Yoruba cultural and linguistic materials. These include manuscripts, oral recordings, proverbs, and folk stories that have been digitized or archived for public access. Specific libraries such as the Yoruba Language Centre at the University of Ibadan, the African Heritage Documentation Project, and the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme were analyzed to evaluate their role in preserving and promoting the Yoruba language and culture. Secondary data was collected from scholarly articles, books, and reports that discuss the impact of globalization, Westernization, and socio-economic pressures on indigenous languages, with a particular focus on the Yoruba language. These sources were selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives and their contribution to understanding the cultural dynamics influencing Yoruba Asa and Ede.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Yoruba Culture and Language in History

The Yoruba people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa; they are mainly found in southwestern Nigeria as well as parts of Benin and Togo. The Yoruba language is essential to the community's culture, serving as a means of transmitting its rich cultural heritage. The Yoruba people have traditions, values, and beliefs that have been passed down through the generations.

Yoruba culture is distinguished by its complex framework of traditions, artistic expression, and social structure. The hierarchical structures and kinship ties that make up traditional Yoruba society. The Yoruba people are renowned for their vivid festivities, such as the Osun-Osogbo festival, which honours the river goddess Osun, and their exquisite carvings and beading. Yoruba culture is heavily influenced by religion. Its belief system, known as Ifá, is composed of a complex system of divination and a pantheon of deities known as Orisas. These facets of Yoruba culture have been well recorded by academics such as Jacob K. Olupona and Toyin Falola, who have brought attention to the profoundly spiritual and ritualistic features that characterize the Yoruba way of life (Olupona, 1993; Falola, 1999).

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Yoruba (Èdè Yorùbá) is a tonal language belonging to one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. It has many mutually understandable sub-dialects in addition to its three main dialects. In addition to serving as a means of communication, the language serves as a storehouse for the folktales, philosophy, proverbs, and oral literature of the people. Aina (2019), highlighted the significance of the Yoruba language in preserving cultural identity. Yoruba oral traditions are essential to the community's cultural expression; these include music, storytelling, and poetry. The fact that these customs are frequently carried out in the original tongue guarantees the preservation of cultural knowledge and values. A lot of work has gone into recording and maintaining Yoruba language and culture over the years.

Initiatives like the digitization of Yoruba manuscripts and the promotion of Yoruba language programs in schools and universities are crucial in maintaining the vibrancy of Yoruba culture. Libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions play a critical role in these preservation efforts. They serve as repositories for books, manuscripts, and artefacts that are essential for cultural education and research. Yoruba language and culture are intricately entwined and mutually supportive. The preservation of the Yoruba people's cultural and linguistic legacy is becoming more and more crucial as they continue to face the difficulties posed by industrialization and globalization. The rich legacy of the Yoruba may be preserved for future generations with the cooperation of academics, cultural organizations, and the community.

Contributing Factors to the Decline of Asa and Ede

The Yoruba peoples' traditional practices and language use have been undermined over the past few decades by some interrelated factors, including globalization, urbanization, educational policies, and the influence of mass media. Asa (culture) and Ede (language) are essential components of Yoruba identity, but both have experienced significant declines as a result of these identified interrelated factors which will be discussed in turns.

Globalization and Westernization as a Factor Undermining Yoruba Language

Yoruba is one of the many indigenous languages that have been profoundly impacted by globalization and westernization. The prevalence of Western cultural values and languages has been made easier by these factors, which have had a big impact on Yoruba usage and transmission. This reduction is caused by a number of interconnected causes, such as the widespread use of English, the impact of Western educational institutions, and the widespread availability of Western media. The globe is now more interconnected than ever thanks to globalization, and English has become the universal language of science, technology, and worldwide business. Yoruba and other indigenous languages have been devalued as a result of this worldwide shift; since socioeconomic development is now believed to need fluency in English. Yoruba's prestige has been damaged by the emphasis placed on English in professional and educational contexts, according to Fabunmi and Salawu (2005). This has made Yoruba less appealing to younger generations who identify English with success and modernity.

This trend has been made worse by Westernization, which is strongly related to globalization. The Western education system prioritizes English as the main language of instruction. It was established during the colonial era and has continued since independence. Indigenous languages are frequently neglected in favour of English. According to Owolola, (2018), Yoruba and other regional languages are marginalized in favour of English competency in many Nigerian schools' curricula. Because of this, Yoruba is not as often used or transmitted in academic settings, where pupils are less exposed to it. Another important consideration is the widespread impact of Western media. English and Western cultural standards are mostly included in digital content, music, movies, and television. Young Yoruba people's identities and goals are shaped by

this overabundance of media, and they may start to see their native language and culture as archaic or inferior. Kente, Agbele, and Okocha, (2023) emphasize that as younger generations increasingly adopt Western lifestyles and desires, continuous exposure to Western media content causes the destruction of indigenous cultural values and language practices.

Aside from this, migration patterns favouring metropolitan centres where English is more widely used in public and professional domains have been brought about by economic globalization. According to Danladi (2013), Yoruba usage is further limited in cities like Lagos and Ibadan where English is frequently the preferred language in social and professional contexts. The Yoruba language has been severely weakened by globalization and Westernization as a result of the prevalence of English, the Western educational system, and Western media. Promoting Yoruba through educational programs, media coverage, and community actions that uphold and maintain indigenous languages and cultures is crucial to bucking these trends.

Urbanisation and Migration as a Factor Undermining Yoruba Language

The decline of Yoruba language has been attributed to factors such as urbanization and migration. English and other dominant languages have gradually replaced indigenous languages as a result of these processes that have altered social and linguistic landscapes. Multiple interconnected causes, including changes in language preferences, adjustments in socioeconomic dynamics, and the marginalization of indigenous cultural practices, can be used to understand how urbanization and migration affect the Yoruba language's vitality.

Nigeria's population has shifted significantly as a result of urbanization, especially in urban centres like Lagos and Ibadan. According to Vaisanen, Jarv, Toivonen, and Hiippala, (2022), these urban areas draw people from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds because they are hubs for economic activity and educational opportunities. In these urban settings, English becomes the language of choice for communication in public spaces, workplaces, and schools, marginalizing indigenous languages like Yoruba to informal, familial, or ceremonial contexts. Yoruba language marginalization is further exacerbated by migration trends. When people from rural areas move to cities in pursuit of better employment opportunities, they come into situations where speaking English is considered necessary for social progress. To assimilate into metropolitan economic and social networks, Agbeleoba, Dada & Ogunlade (2023), claim that immigrants and their descendants frequently choose English as their major medium of communication. This adoption process lessens the likelihood of Yoruba being passed down across generations and decreases its use in immigrant communities.

Urbanization-related and socio-economic problems also contribute to the Yoruba language's decline. Urban areas provide access to consumer products, work opportunities, and formal education all of which are frequently linked to English language proficiency. As a result of this, parents could place a higher priority on their kids' proficiency in English since they see it as a means of achieving both academic and socioeconomic advancement. A generational shift away from Yoruba language use and proficiency is facilitated by this focus (Olatunji 2023).

Migration and urbanization have a significant impact on the Yoruba language's survival. In urban situations, these trends marginalize indigenous languages like Yoruba while advancing the dominance of English and other global languages. To address these issues and ensure that Yoruba language and culture are preserved and revitalized in urban environments, as well as that they remain relevant and vibrant for future generations, comprehensive measures are needed.

Educational Policies as a Factor Undermining Yoruba Language

Language dynamics in Nigeria have been greatly influenced by educational policies, especially with regard to the status and usage of indigenous languages like Yoruba. These policies, which have been shaped by historical and modern reasons, have frequently neglected the use of Yoruba in formal educational settings and favoured English as the language of instruction. Yoruba

language undermining is caused by many interconnected variables found in educational policies, including curriculum development, the language of teaching policies, and the socio-political environment of language use.

English has been the official language of administration, education, and business in Nigeria since the colonial era. English proficiency is highlighted as being necessary for academic performance and job advancement in educational policies, which are still influenced by this historical precedent. According to Ajepe and Ademowo (2016), within formal educational contexts, Yoruba and other indigenous languages are marginalized while English is elevated as a result of the colonial legacy.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education recognizes the value of mother language instruction for cognitive growth and cultural preservation. Nevertheless, there has been uneven application of this principle, with many schools giving English precedence over native tongues. According to Ugwu, E. O. (2021), despite initiatives to support mother tongue education, English continues to be the primary language of teaching in Nigerian schools, which restricts the chances for pupils to acquire and apply Yoruba.

Curriculum development also plays a key influence in establishing linguistic attitudes and preferences among pupils. Educational materials and textbooks predominantly use English, reflecting a bias towards Western knowledge systems and perspectives. This curriculum bias promotes the impression that fluency in English is synonymous with academic performance, while Yoruba language abilities are generally underestimated or consigned to non-academic realms (Adesoye, 2016).

Education policies on Yoruba language are further influenced by the socio-political environment of language use. In Nigeria, a multicultural and multilingual nation, discussions around language policy frequently mirror deeper socio-political conflicts. Language policy, according to Odugu, (2011), can turn into divisive topics that reflect the power structures and cultural identities present in Nigerian society. These conflicts could be a factor in the marginalization of Yoruba and other indigenous languages in educational environments where policies favour linguistic assimilation over linguistic variety.

Therefore, Yoruba language status and usage have been significantly impacted by Nigerian educational regulations. The colonial legacy's historical effects, modern sociopolitical dynamics, and curriculum biases have all played a part in Yoruba people's marginalization in formal education. Comprehensive reforms that support bilingual education, honour indigenous languages; and guarantee equal access to educational opportunities for all linguistic communities in Nigeria are necessary to address these issues.

Socioeconomic Pressures

Yoruba and other indigenous languages in Nigeria have been marginalized and are in decline due in large part to socioeconomic factors. The pressures resulting from globalization, urbanization, and economic inequality have an impact on Yoruba speakers' attitudes and language use. The Yoruba language is being undermined by several interconnected socioeconomic variables, such as cultural perceptions, employment possibilities, educational achievement, and social mobility.

One of the main factors influencing language dynamics in Nigerian society is economic inequality. Because of their resources and economic potential, urban areas sometimes place a premium on English fluency as a need for both job and educational success. Socioeconomic differences, according to Munandar (2015) and Ashcraft (2023), encourage people and families to place a high value on learning English since they see it as necessary for both economic and social mobility. The usage and spread of Yoruba among younger generations who hope to become integrated into metropolitan economic networks is hampered by this prioritizing.

The level of education has an impact on linguistic attitudes in Nigerian communities and is strongly correlated with socioeconomic factors. The formal education system prioritizes English as the language of instruction due to the effects of colonial legacies and current

globalization trends. According to Ibrahim and Gwandu (2016), curriculum biases and educational policies uphold a linguistic hierarchy by favouring English competency and marginalizing indigenous languages like Yoruba in official educational contexts. The idea that fluency in English is required for both professional and academic success is strengthened by this educational bias, which further erodes Yoruba language proficiency among educated populations.

Yoruba speakers' language preferences are also influenced by employment and professional opportunities. English language competency is frequently required for employment in a variety of industries, including business, administration, and technology, in urban areas where labour markets are concentrated. According to National Open University of Nigeria (2020) Yoruba language use is restricted to informal or domestic contexts as a result of socioeconomic constraints forcing people to prioritize English language proficiency for job advancement and economic survival.

Language attitudes and usage patterns among Yoruba speakers are further influenced by social mobility and cultural perspectives. Perceptions of linguistic status and identity are influenced by the adoption of Western cultural norms and values, which are propagated through the media and educational systems. Socioeconomic factors, according to the National Open University of Nigeria (2020), contribute to the idea that people who speak English are more sophisticated and cosmopolitan than people who use Yoruba, an indigenous language, who may be seen as less intelligent or backward. These cultural beliefs support the younger generation's linguistic move toward English, thus marginalizing Yoruba's position and use in Nigerian culture.

In conclusion, the Yoruba language in Nigeria is seriously threatened by socioeconomic forces. The marginalization of Yoruba in urban areas and larger societal contexts is a result of a variety of factors, including economic inequality, prejudice in education, employment possibilities, social mobility, and cultural beliefs. To address these issues, comprehensive policies that support indigenous languages, encourage bilingualism; and ensure that all linguistic communities in Nigeria have equal access to economic and educational opportunities are needed.

Impact of Colonial Legacy

Yoruba is one of Nigeria's indigenous languages, and its status and usage have been greatly impacted by the colonial past. During British rule, English was imposed as the primary language of administration, education, and governance through colonial laws and practices. The marginalization and decrease of Yoruba language proficiency among Nigerian populations can be attributed to the long-lasting effects of historical precedence on language dynamics. Language attitudes and usage patterns are still shaped by some interconnected aspects of the colonial heritage, such as educational systems, cultural perspectives, and social hierarchy.

English language domination at the detriment of local languages was greatly aided by colonial education programs. With the advent of Western-style education, Yoruba and other regional languages were relegated to supporting roles in formal educational settings, with an emphasis on English as the language of instruction. Mart (2011) claims that the goal of colonial schools was to create an elite trained in the West who could speak English well. This created a linguistic hierarchy that promoted English as a sign of modernity and advancement. Because educated Nigerians saw English knowledge as necessary for both social development and career possibilities, Yoruba language proficiency was declining as a result of this educational bias.

Language attitudes in Nigerian society were further influenced by cultural beliefs and socioeconomic structures that were formed during colonial administration. English was pushed by the colonial government as a symbol of elite status and cultural superiority, which served to confirm the belief that people who spoke it were better educated and more sophisticated than those who spoke native tongues. According to Mishina and Iskandar (2019), colonial ideology shaped the linguistic preferences and aspirations of Nigerian citizens by associating English with intelligence and prosperity. The marginalization of Yoruba in formal and public arenas due to

cultural bias has resulted in a language shift towards English among educated and urban Nigerians.

In Nigeria after independence, language planning and policy were also influenced by the legacy of colonialism. According to Dascomb (2019), English continued to be given precedence in government institutions, the media, and educational systems due to language policies carried over from colonial governments. The marginalization of Yoruba and other indigenous languages was sustained by this policy continuity, which also reduced their institutional and official backing. The legacy of colonial language regulations has presented substantial hurdles to the revival and maintenance of Yoruba language and cultural identity, despite efforts to support bilingual education and cultural preservation.

Nigeria's Yoruba language is still being undermined as a result of the colonial past. English has been the primary language of government, education, and social mobility since its establishment by colonial education policies, cultural beliefs, and institutional structures. To overcome these historical obstacles, comprehensive plans that honour indigenous languages, encourage linguistic variety, and create fair language laws that strengthen linguistic communities including Yoruba speakers in the multicultural setting of contemporary Nigeria are needed.

Role of Libraries in Cultural Preservation

These days, it seems that the term "library" is employed in a wide range of contexts, from digital libraries to physical public libraries. The various types of libraries; are dynamic, ever-changing spaces where librarians assist patrons in locating the most reliable source of information, be it a book, website, or database entry. According to ODLIS (2024), a library, derived from the Latin word *liber* meaning "book," is a collection of print and non-print materials organized for purposes like reading, research, study, and consultation. In Greek and Romance languages, it is referred to as a 'bibliotheca'. Libraries are often managed by trained librarians and staff to meet the needs of a specific group of users. It is a home for cultural preservation.

Libraries serve as repositories that protect and spread cultural knowledge and traditions, making them vital institutions for the preservation of cultural heritage. Manuscripts, rare books, oral histories, photos, and other items that encapsulate the spirit of a community's cultural and historical identity are kept in its collections. Libraries are essential to the preservation of Asa (Yoruba culture) and Ede (language), guaranteeing that these rich customs endure and are available to future generations.

In the spirit of cultural preservation, the library plays the following roles:

- ❖ **Collection and preservation:** Libraries create vast archives containing customs, songs, proverbs, and other cultural manifestations by methodically gathering and preserving cultural items. This lessens the likelihood of significant cultural items and information disappearing. Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma, (2011) assert that libraries serve as memory institutions by using their holdings to preserve society's collective memory.
- ❖ **Digitization Initiatives:** One essential component of contemporary library operations is the digitalization of cultural artifacts. Digitization makes cultural content more widely available and enables the preservation of delicate documents. According to Nkechinyere and Udensi (2024), digitalization initiatives can improve access to cultural heritage items worldwide while reducing the danger of physical deterioration and loss.
- ❖ **Archiving Oral Traditions:** Libraries can capture traditional Yoruba Asa (tales, folklore) and Ede (proverbs, idioms) by elders and cultural guardians on audio and video. Putting these recordings into written transcriptions to provide a permanent record. Yoruba literature is the curation and expansion of manuscripts, books, and other Yoruba-written literature collections. Converting fragile and rare documents to digital format to guarantee their accessibility and preservation.

- ❖ **Education and Literacy Programmes:** Providing Yoruba language instruction through seminars and workshops, emphasizing both traditional and modern usage. Yoruba and English dictionaries, grammar manuals, and instructional materials are available as bilingual resources to support learners. Arranging frequent storytelling events in which the community is introduced to Asa and Ede, promoting knowledge transfer between generations. Creating children-friendly activities that use games, songs, and stories from the Yoruba culture.
- ❖ **Community Engagement and Outreach:** Recordings of traditional music, dance, and storytelling from cultural events honouring Yoruba ancestry. Presenting workshops on Yoruba art, traditional crafts, and cultural customs. Partnering with educational institutions, museums, and local cultural organizations to promote Yoruba heritage. Fostering communication and cooperation with academics and people who speak Yoruba (PHOEBE A. HEARST MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY 2004).
- ❖ **Research and Scholarly Support:** Provide supports for studies pertaining to Yoruba language and culture. Promoting and aiding in the dissemination of research findings via print and online media. Organizing conferences that study and advance Yoruba language and culture by bringing academics, students, and community members together. Arranging symposiums with the goal of bringing Asa and Ede back to life and stressing their significance.
- ❖ **Leveraging Technology:** This could include online libraries and mobile apps. Online libraries involve creating online repositories of Yoruba literature, oral histories, and educational resources which can be transmitted from one generation to another. Whilst mobile apps refers to the development of apps that teach Yoruba language and culture through interactive stories, games, and quizzes Ajani et al (2024). Also, technology leverage can equally go through social media campaigns and online discussion forums. Social Media Campaigns as to do with using social media to promote Yoruba language and culture, share stories, and connect with a global audience. While online discussion forums entails creating online forums and discussion groups where people can share and discuss Yoruba cultural heritage.

Some Successful Cultural Preservations through Libraries

There are certain programmes that some organizations, institutions and even some individuals have established for cultural preservation. Some of such programmes are:

- **The Yoruba Language Centre at the University of Ibadan:** One excellent example of how libraries can successfully preserve cultural heritage is the Yoruba Language Centre at the University of Ibadan. The institution is home to a sizable collection of Yoruba literary works, including translations, modern works, and classical writings. To preserve the Yoruba peoples' rich oral heritage, it also keeps audio recordings of oral traditions including poetry and traditional tales. The centre also hosts cultural events, seminars, and workshops to encourage Yoruba language use and study. These initiatives emphasize the value of cultural preservation by fostering a sense of pride and identity in students and the larger society.
- **The British Library's Endangered Archives Programme:** A further noteworthy instance of cultural preservation is the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) of the British Library. The British Library funds global initiatives to digitize and document cultural assets that are in danger of being lost or destroyed through this programme. One such initiative digitised and saved historical documents, rare manuscripts, and recordings of traditional music from Yoruba-speaking communities in Nigeria. Through the digital platforms of the British Library, this endeavour has not only preserved these documents but also made them available to researchers and the general public British Library (ND).

- **The African Heritage Documentation Project:** To document and preserve indigenous cultural history, the African Heritage Documentation Project (AHDP) works with regional libraries and cultural organisations throughout Africa. The AHDP has digitized Yoruba cultural relics in Nigeria, including traditional fabrics, ceremonial objects, and old photos, in collaboration with some libraries. Through cooperation, a digital archive has been established, which is a priceless tool for academics, teachers, and the Yoruba community at large. The initiative emphasizes how libraries may use community involvement and digitization to create sustainable models for cultural preservation.

CONCLUSION

Libraries serve as archives that protect communities' historical and cultural narratives, which is why they are essential to the preservation of cultural heritage. Libraries sustain and promote Yoruba traditions like Asa and Ede by collecting and preserving cultural materials, launching digitization projects, and offering educational activities. Examples of effective library efforts to preserve cultural heritage include the Yoruba Language Centre at the University of Ibadan, the African Heritage Documentation Project, and the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme. Libraries may contribute to the preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba and other indigenous groups for future generations by supporting and growing these projects

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