



Assessment of collaborative and multi-level management of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove, Nigeria: A world heritage site

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Abstract

The study focused on assessing the management style of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove - a world heritage site in Osun State. A total of 115 respondents were purposively selected from the randomly chosen stake holders associated with the management of the grove based on willingness and their availability for the study. Questionnaire administration, interview and direct observation were used for data collection. The respondents were stake holders associated with the management of the grove at the Institutional, traditional and Non-Governmental Organizations levels. This study showed that multi-level management in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove (OOSG) exists in four categories which are traditional, institutional, Non-Governmental Organisations and others. The study identified major problems associated with multi-level approach of OOSG as lack of information or delay in disseminating information to other levels of the management for action to be taken, disagreement on decisions to be taken on relevant issues pertaining the grove, poor staff welfare, conflicts in policies and laws governing the culture of the grove. Solutions suggested include human resource development, power restructure, reduction in numbers of agencies involved, better administrative procedures, better infrastructural resources among others. On the basis of the research findings, it was recommended that prompt action be taken in resolving issues pertaining the grove for effective management.

Keywords: Sacred Sites; Collaborative Management; Cultural Tourism; Festival

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1. Introduction

Sacred Natural Sites and are defined as “areas of land or water having special spiritual significance to people and communities” (Wild and McLeod, 2008). Sacred sites are referred to as abode of deities nature spirits and ancestors which are associated with hermits, prophets, saints and visionary spiritual leaders. They can be feared or benign. Most of them are used for traditional ceremonies, prayers and contemplations / meditations. Cultural and historical values are connected to them while some serve as places of relaxation and enjoyment (Wild and McLeod, 2008). In Africa, especially Nigeria, the roots of an extended family, a clan, tribe, religious faith or a whole nation are often linked to one sacred site or another. Sacred sites are often denoted as forbidden forests where restrictions on access (except on special need) and use apply, therefore fulfilling similar roles as legal protected area. As a result, many of these sites remain undisturbed, being in a natural or near natural conditions. Anthropogenic activities in these areas are prevented or greatly reduced over a long period of time thereby ensuring high level of biodiversity.

For protected areas to be effective in fulfilling their role in biodiversity conservation, they must be well managed (WWF, 2004). As is true for much of the natural world, sacred natural sites are suffering widespread losses. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) identifies the broader impact of human use on cultural ecosystem services: ecosystem and cultural services usage by humans is growing has continued to grow, the capability of ecosystems to provide cultural benefits has been significantly diminished in the past century. The rapid loss of culturally valued ecosystems and landscapes can contribute to social disruptions and societal marginalisation”. Protected areas, when governed and managed appropriately and embedded in development strategies, can provide nature-based solutions to this pressure, and take their place as an integral component of sustainable development. The importance of good management cannot be underscore if protected areas are to be effective in fulfilling their role in biodiversity conservation (WWF, 2004).

Collaborative management, or co-management, has been endorsed as a way of connecting the gap between the protected area and local stakeholders and has been defined in different ways. Berkes et al. (1991) defined co-management as ‘the sharing of power and responsibility between the government and local resource users’. Co-management is a continuous problem-solving process, rather than a fixed state, involving extensive deliberation, negotiation and joint learning within problem-solving networks (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005). Co-management settings have been recognized as one of the most effective ways to mobilise conservation-relevant resources when they are successfully enlisted and implemented (IUCN, 2003). This study intend to describe the different levels of management existing in OOSG and identifies tasks and roles of each of the stakeholders involved in the co-management of OOSG. It also identify the problems and associated with multi-level approach of OOSG and solutions.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. The study area

The study was carried out in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove (OOSG) which is located along the bank of Osun River in Osogbo Local Government Area of Osun State in South Western Nigeria. Its geographical coordinates are 7°45' 02" N and 4°33' 08" E. It covers an area of 75 hectares and is encircled by a buffer zone of 47 ha (IUCN, 2005). The sacred grove is situated on the margin of the southern forests of Nigeria on a raised parcel which is about 350 meters above sea level. In the east, it is bounded by Osun State Agricultural Farm Settlements. The grove is bounded in the North by Laro and Timehin Grammar Schools, the South by entrance of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) which runs parallel to form a western boundary (NCMM, 2010). The Osun- Osogbo Sacred Grove is a sacred forest that form part of Yoruba cultural tradition dedicated to Osun goddess of fertility. The sacred grove is an organically evolved cultural and landscape site associated with the Yoruba traditional religion and culture. The site consists of 40 shrines, 2 palaces and several sculptures and artworks in honor of the Osun goddess and other deities. It harbors over four hundred species of plant of which two hundred are found to be of high medicinal value to the Yoruba people and others alike who believe in its efficacy. The sacred grove is a Nigerian National Monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2005. The grove consists of an exceptionally rich flora and fauna life. The number of flora population encountered in Osun grove is 400 species belonging to 63 families. The grove is a mature, reasonably undisturbed forest canopy which supports a broad diversity of small mammals, birds, reptiles and associated insects (NCMM, 2010).

2.2. Population and sampling procedures

The location of the study was the Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove in Osogbo Osun State Nigeria. Three methods were used for data collection namely; structured questionnaire administration, interview and direct observation. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaire that were administered on respondents of this study. The respondents were stake holders associated with the management of the grove at the Institutional, traditional and Non-Governmental Organizations levels. A total of 115 respondents were purposively selected from the randomly chosen stake holders associated with the management of the grove based on willingness and their availability for the study. The questionnaires consisted of questions on personal information of respondents. The work of Pahl-Wostl et al. (2010) proved particularly relevant during this stage because the questionnaire for assessment was adapted based on the principles of Co-Management and Transition Framework developed by this author. Primary data was collected to elicit information on issues bothering performance level of involvement efficiency and the effectiveness of collaboration among various stakeholders in management of the grove. In addition, problems, conflicts and challenges of each stakeholders involved in the management of the grove was also investigated through the questionnaire. Questions were arranged into four broad categories: multi-level management style of OOSG, power and authority, challenges and problem solving of multilevel co-management.

2.3. Instruments for data collection

Primary data were utilized in this study. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaire that were administered on stake holders associated with the management of the grove at the Institutional, traditional and Non-Governmental Organizations levels.

2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive analysis was employed as the statistical tools in analyzing the data collected. Data were coded, analyzed, interpreted and discussed in accordance with the objectives.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Most (70%) of the respondents were male, 38.3% were between the age group of 31-40 years of age. This agrees with National Bureau of Statistics 2014 who found out that in 2013, the labour force participation rate in Nigeria was 64.5 per cent for women and 70.3 per cent for men between age 15-64. Gayawan and Adebayo (2015) also confirmed this fact that Nigeria has a male-dominated professional congregation. Majority of the respondents were in the age bracket 31-40 which is an indication that different age group participate in multilevel management activities in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove. Approximately 70% of them were married and the level of education among the staff were Primary School Cert./Others (8.3%), SSCE (10.8%), NCE/ND (20.0%), B. Sc./ B.Tech. (29.2%) and PhD (4.2%). This is an indication that education level of stakeholders is of formal and of standard. It is believed that all of them may have possessed the required education to undertake their respective responsibilities in the management system of the Sacred Grove. A practical Guide on Management Plans for World Heritage Sites state that in terms of the number of staff, plan should explain whether and how many staff members are available for conservation, research, administration, visitor services and education, list their academic and technical qualifications and specify whether they possess special training. The plan should also indicate whether access to specialist knowledge from competent authorities and institutes is available and which training offers are provided (Ringbeck, 2008). Almost all of the stakeholders (93%) were aware of the management style in place for Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove as reflected in Figure 1. This may be attributed to the level of information they receive as a result of their education.

3.2. Different levels of management existing in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove

The levels of management style existing in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove is presented in Table 2. The level of management is made up of four levels. They exist as traditional (29.6%), institutional (27.0%), Non-Governmental (23.5%) and others (20.0%). Table 3 gives detail of these levels of management. This is an indication that multi-management exist at four categories which are traditional, institution, Non-Governmental Organisations and others. This is consistent with Guidelines for protected areas of sacred

natural sites that “Custodians”, of sacred natural sites are in a single word, complex and often multi-layered management, ownership, and institutional situations (Wild and McLeod, 2008).

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N=115)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	58.3
Female	45	37.5
Age		
16-20	5	4.2
20-30	19	15.8
31-40	46	38.3
>40	44	36.7
Marital Status		
Single	32	26.7
Married	79	65.8
Divorced	3	2.5
Level of Education		
Primary School Cert./Others	10	8.3
SSCE	13	10.8
NCE/ND	24	20.0
B. Sc./B.Tech.	35	29.2
PhD	3	4.2

Source: Field Survey, 2016

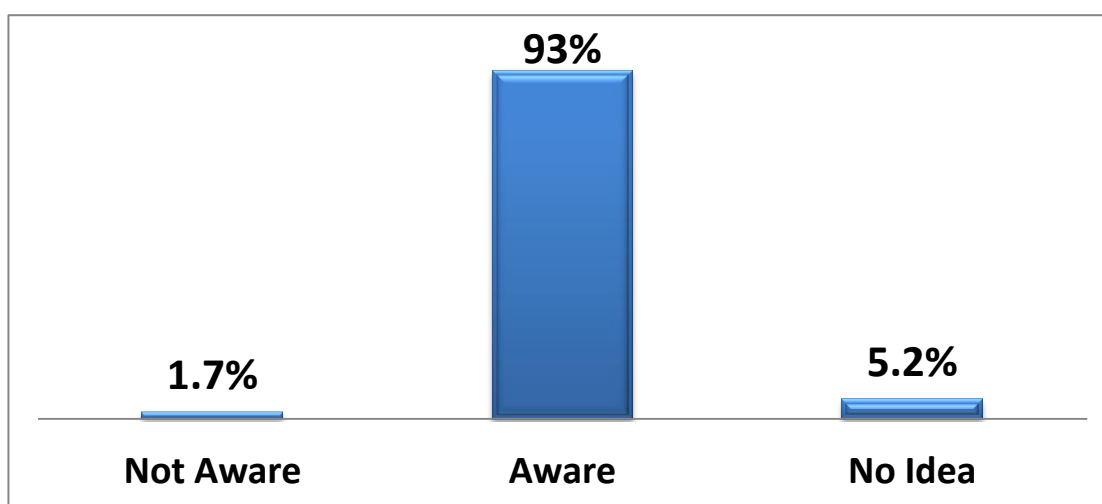


Figure 1. Stakeholders Awareness of OOSG Management Style (Source: Field Survey, 2016)

Traditional Institutions includes Ataoja of Osogboland, Traditional Chiefs in Council, Iya Osun (priestess) and Aworo Osun Priest, Priests and Priestess of other Shrines and Ifa Divination Practitioners etc. Institutional Stake holders includes National Commission for Museum and Monuments (NCMM), Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation, Forestry Department of the Osun State Ministry of Agriculture, National Orientation Agency, National Council for Arts and Culture and National Gallery of Arts etc. Non-Governmental Organisation includes Osogbo Cultural Heritage Council, Adunni Olorisa Trust and Association of Tourism Practitioners of Nigeria etc. Others are Secondary school Teachers and student, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, and the Africans in Diaspora, Tourists and Tour Operators etc (Table 3).

Table 2. Different levels of management existing in OOSG

Levels of management	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional	34	29.6
Institutional	31	27.0
Non-Governmental	27	23.5
Other	23	20.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 3. Levels and Sub levels of management existing in OOSG

Traditional Institutions	Institutional Stake holders	Non-Governmental Organisation	Others
Ataoja of Osogboland	National Commission for	Osogbo Cultural Heritage	Secondary school Teachers
Traditional Chiefs in	Museum and Monuments	Council	and students
Council	Nigeria Tourism Development	Adunni Olorisa Trust	Obafemi Awolowo
Iya osun (priestess) and	Corporation	Osun Groves Support	University, Ile Ife
Aworo Osun Priest	Forestry Department of the	Group	Osun State University,
Priests and Priestess of	Osun State Ministry of	Association of Tourism	Osogbo
other Shrines	Agriculture	Practitioners of Nigeria	Fountain University,
Ifa Divination	National Orientation Agency	Infogem Nigeria Limited	Osogbo
Practitioners	National Council for Arts and		Ladoke Akintola
Aborigine Ogboni	Culture		University, Osogbo
Fraternity	National Gallery of Arts		Campus
World Orisa Congress	National Environmental		The Africans in Diaspora
Devotess and Ifa adepts	Standard Regulation and		Tour Operators
Traditional Artists (New	Enforcement Agency		Tourists
Sacred Art Movement)	Osun state Art Council		
The Osogbo Community	Osun State Tourism Board		
	UNESCO		

Source: NCMM, 2010

Each of these category works together to achieve the conservation management plan of the Sacred Grove. According to Guidelines for protected areas of sacred natural sites, sacred natural sites require an integrated research and management system. Since sacred natural sites combine the preservation of the environment and its biotic resources, as well as the living cultural manifestations and belief systems of local and indigenous communities, a truly integrated management system is needed. This management system will ideally be capable of understanding, and caring for, both the natural and the cultural space (Wild and McLeod, 2008). Over the past 25 years, forests management systems in many developing countries have decentralized, allowing local actors and institutions to have increased rights, responsibilities and decision making power over the natural resources they manage or control (Phelps et al., 2010; Agrawal et al., 2008). Various authors (Berkes, 2008; Gibson, 2004) have pointed out that decentralized forest management and local institutions are crucial for sustainable forest conservation and community livelihood development.

Each of the multi-management level have their task and responsibility which is in line with UNESCO guideline for World Heritage Sites. National Commission for Museum and Monuments (NCMM) is charged with the responsibility to promote adequate staff that will ensure full control and protection of the buffer zone and core zone of the site and update the inventory of Flora and Fauna in the grove as well as all heritage in Osun State in conjunction with relevant organisations and to ensure adequate management and constant conservation of the various cultural and natural components of the site. Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation is to provide strategies and logistics for the marketing of the site to the benefit of the nation and entire universe, provide funds for the expansion and reconstruction of the pavilion in accordance with UNESCO and NCMM specification and guidelines and will constantly promote the Osun-Osogbo Festival as a designated national festival in the interest of cultural tourism. Osun state Government will constantly support the Osun-Osogbo festival and other activities that will make Osun-Grove a pivot of cultural tourism development in the state and will provide laws that will protect the core and buffer zones of the site in addition to the federal laws.

The Kingship of Osogboland, Ataoja in Council provides all traditional protection and rights that will ensure the continuity of all forms of values, norms and myth as highlighted in the history and development of the site and will co-operate with NCMM to uphold all forms of authenticity of the site and maintain its integrity at all times. Adunni Olorisa Trust which is named after Susanne Wenger has the task to collaborate with other agencies or NGOs whose interest in the preservation of the grove are specified in accordance with the approval of NCMM. Traditional Worshippers and devotees will constantly practice their traditional religion and offer necessary assistance that will promote traditional religion and wellbeing of Osogbo Community and will ensure that all the values of the traditional religion are kept sacred and held in high esteem to the upliftment of the religion. They will however ensure transmission of these values to the future generations through practice and involvement of the youths and adherents. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) will all source for fund for the developmental projects in the Grove in accordance with the specifications of UNESCO and NCMM. All of these agree with Wild and McLeod (2008) who states that Multidisciplinary approach promote a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to the management of sacred natural sites calling on, for example, local elders, religious and spiritual leaders, local communities,

protected area managers, natural and social scientists, artists, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Although much focus is on the local scale, where issues of management performance are felt most directly, adaptive co-management is a flexible system for environment and resource management that operates across multiple levels and with a range of local and non-local organizations. Key features of adaptive co-management include a focus on learning-by-doing, integration of different knowledge systems, collaboration and power sharing among community, regional, and national levels, and management flexibility (Olsson et. al., 2004).

3.3. Tasks and roles of stakeholders involved in the co-management of OOSG

The tasks and responsibilities of different stakeholders include; promotion of adequate staff that will ensure full control and protection of the buffer zone and core zone of the site; updating the inventory of Flora and Fauna in the grove as well as all heritage in Osun State in conjunction with relevant organisations, constant promotion of the Osun Osogbo Festival as a designated National Festival in the interest of Cultural Tourism. Some stakeholders are to provide all traditional protection and rights that will ensure the continuity of all forms of values, norms and myth as highlighted in the history and development of the site, construct an Artist Village in the buffer zone that will provide employment for craftsmen, artists and artisans. It will also create avenue for continuity of traditional skills and indigenous knowledge, and collaborate with National Commission of Museums Monuments to create a befitting gallery craft shops for sale of souvenirs, craft works and others to visitors. In addition, interview report reveals that the State Government of Osun state release fund on yearly basis for the entertainment of guest.

3.4. Stakeholders perception on multi-level approach of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove

Stakeholders' perception revealed that all the stakeholders agreed (92.2% strongly agreed and 7.8% agreed) that the management style of Osun Osogbo grove is a multi-level-co-management (Table 4). This is an indication that they are aware of the type of management system in place in OOSG. Also, 33.9% strongly agreed and 59.1% agreed that multi-level-co-management style has created an enabling working condition for the various levels involved in the management approach in OOSG. However, none of the stakeholders agreed that government alone or the locals alone can ensure the accomplishment of OOSG conservative objectives and social requirement while a greater percentage 57.4% disagreed. This is consistent with Chandrasekhar and Sankar, (1998) that many stakeholders have an interest and role to play for ensuring effective management of such systems. Majority opined that that there has always been a fair and respectful relationship between the various stakeholders in this management style and that they are satisfied by the way in which the various management level discharge their duties (Table 4).

Table 4. Stakeholders' Perception on Multi-Level Approach of OOSG

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	S.D
The management style of Osun Osogbo Grove is a multi-level-co-management	92.2	7.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.92	0.27
This style has created an enabling working condition for the various level involved in the management	33.9	59.1	6.1	0.0	0.0	4.55	2.92
Government alone or the locals alone can ensure the accomplishment of OOSG conservative objectives and social requirement	0.0	0.0	8.7	57.4	33.9	1.51	0.65
Do you agree that there has always been a fair and respectful relationship between the various stakeholders in this management style	0.0	59.1	10.4	15.7	14.8	3.13	1.67
Are you satisfied by the way in which the various management level discharge their duties	7.0	66.1	0.0	13.0	13.9	3.40	1.21

KEYS: S.A – STRONGLY AGREE, A = AGREE, N= NEUTRAL, D= DISAGREE, SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE M=MEAN,S.D=STANDARD DEVIATION (Source: Field Survey, 2016)

Furthermore, this study shows that the major problems associated with multi-level approach of OOSG are lack of information or delay in disseminating information to other levels of the management for action to be taken., disagreement on certain decisions to be taken on relevant issues pertaining the grove, poor staff welfare, Conflicts of policies and laws (i.e. federal government policy) contradicting the cultural laws of the grove and dominance among the levels of management in discussions and result (Table 5). The suggested solutions to the problems mentioned above are human resource development, power restructure (reduction in numbers of agencies involved), better administrative procedures, grove should be guided solely by the traditional laws and better infrastructural resources (Table 6). It should be recognised that different individuals and groups have different levels of legitimacy and authority in decision making about sacred natural sites; where relevant and appropriate, use conflict management, mediation and resolution methods to promote mutual understanding between traditional custodians and more recent occupants, resource users and managers (Wild and McLeod, 2008). It is necessary to establish the procedures for cooperation,

negotiating and setting up co-management agreements that organize the rights and responsibilities of involved parties or stakeholders (local groups, the State, commercial actors, and others) to reduce conflicts and serve as further long-term problem solving mechanism (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005).

Table 5. Problems associated with multi-level approach of OOSG

	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	S.D
Do you agree that policies of a particular level of management affects the performance of other level	4	16.5	6.1	25.2	48.7	2.24	1.11
Lack of information or delay in disseminating information to other levels of the management for action to be taken.	32.2	60.9	7.0	0.0	0.0	4.25	0.57
Disagreement on certain decisions to be taken on relevant issues pertaining the grove.	14.8	45.2	13.0	13.0	13.9	3.35	1.26
Distance between those who formulate management strategies and those who are to live and act in the physical ground of OOSG.	11.3	53.0	13.9	7.8	13.9	3.46	1.11
Conflicts of responsibilities among the various levels.	0.9	1.7	20.0	37.4	40.0	1.88	0.85
Conflicts of policies and laws, i.e. Federal Government policy contradicting the cultural laws of the grove.	8.7	33.9	17.4	11.3	28.7	3.0	1.20
Unsupportive attitude among the different of co- management staff.	20.9	40.0	17.4	10.4	11.3	3.50	1.24
Imposing policies	1.7	25.2	23.5	12.2	37.4	2.67	1.04
Working with egoistical boss	4.3	12.2	25.2	16.5	40.9	2.81	3.92
Poor Staff Welfare	23.5	52.2	14.8	1.7	7.8	3.88	0.92
Insufficient involvement in decision making	0.9	18.3	23.5	23.5	33.9	2.39	1.06
Do particular level dominate discussions and result	18.3	54.8	16.5	0.9	8.7	3.91	1.35
Willingness to participate in co-management	0.9	14.8	22.6	18.3	43.5	2.69	3.82

KEYS:
S.A -

STRONGLY AGREE, A = AGREE, N= NEUTRAL, D= DISAGREE, SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE M=MEAN, S.D=STANDARD DEVIATION (Source: Field Survey, 2016)

Table 6. Solution to problems associated of multi-level approach of OOSG

Solutions	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	S.D
Human resource development	33.0	55.7	8.7	0.0	2.6	4.19	0.70
Power restructure i.e. reduction in numbers of agencies involved	40.9	35.7	16.5	0.0	7.0	4.10	0.92
Better administrative procedures	19.1	60.0	9.6	0.9	10.4	3.86	0.88
The grove should be guided solely by the traditional laws	6.1	23.5	14.8	20.9	34.8	2.59	1.22
Better infrastructural resources	55.7	41.7	2.6	0.0	0.0	4.53	0.55

KEYS: SA - STRONGLY AGREE, A = AGREE, N= NEUTRAL, D= DISAGREE, SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE M=MEAN, S.D=STANDARD DEVIATION (Source: Field Survey, 2016)

4. Conclusions

This study has shown that most of the staff were males with the following categories of education level among the staff were Primary School Certificate/Others SSCE, NCE/ND,B. Sc./B.Tech. and PhD. Multi-management level in OOSG exist at four categories which are traditional, institutional, Non-Governmental Organisations and others. Furthermore, findings from this study identified the major problems associated with multi-level approach of OOSG as lack of information or delay in disseminating information to other levels of the management for action to be taken., disagreement on certain decisions to be taken on relevant issues pertaining the grove, poor staff welfare, Conflicts of policies and laws (i.e. Federal Government policy) contradicting the cultural laws of the grove and dominance among the levels of management in discussions and result. However, possible solutions suggested were development of human resources, power restructure (reduction in numbers of agencies involved), better administrative procedures, better infrastructural resources among others.

5. Recommendations

On the basis of the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1- Problems such as delay in disseminating information to other levels of the management for prompt action, poor staff welfare, and disagreement on certain decisions to be taken on relevant issues concerning the grove among others should be addressed for effective management.
- 2- In addition, power sharing among the management levels should be done appropriately in a way to achieve maximum management productivity without going against the guidelines of UNESCO for World Heritage site. One of the suggestions on power sharing is that authority should be transferred to the lowest suitable level.

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