

A Study on the Tune Sources of Han Chinese Folk Songs in Western Sichuan

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Abstract: Through field investigation and literature analysis, this study delves into the source of melody and cultural value of Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan. Research has found that the melody sources of Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan are diverse and flexible, mainly derived from traditional tunes, folk instrumental tunes, opera music, and personal creations by folk singers. These tunes are widely used in different occasions, forming a folk song style with local characteristics. The author pays special attention to the phenomenon of "one song being versatile" and "one song being versatile". Through field research, it was found that the same melody can be used in different lyrics, demonstrating the diversity and flexibility of folk songs. Meanwhile, due to the oral transmission of folk songs, the same melody in different regions has undergone changes during the singing process, but the shadow of the original melody is still retained. This phenomenon not only reflects the stability of folk songs in inheritance, but also demonstrates their diversity and innovation.

Keywords: Tune; One song is versatile; A versatile melody

1. Introduction

Chuanxi refers to the western part of Sichuan, which has been constantly changing due to the administrative divisions of different historical periods. Taking into account the four major aspects of Sichuan map, administrative division, folk recognition, and conventions, the western Sichuan region in this article mainly includes the Chengdu Plain, the western Sichuan Plateau, and the cities surrounding Chengdu to the west. The main urban areas covered include Chengdu, Deyang, Mianyang, Ya', Leshan, Meishan, as well as Wenchuan County, Mao County, Kangding County, etc.

Due to frequent natural and man-made disasters and wars in history, the population of Sichuan has sharply declined. Through several major migration waves such as the "Hubei Guangxi filling Sichuan" campaign, western development, and urbanization, Sichuan has gradually gathered a population of over 60 million people today. Among them, the western Sichuan region covers over 30 million, with the vast majority being Han Chinese[1].

Due to historical population migration, the composition of Han people in western Sichuan has been extensive. This wave of migration not only brought about folk culture in various parts of China, but also made the folk songs of Han people in western Sichuan diverse and inclusive. Based on this, this article mainly focuses on the source of melody in Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan[2].

2. Multiple uses of one song

One song is versatile, also known as one song with multiple words. It refers to the fact that the same melody can be used in different lyrics. When conducting research on "Hakka folk songs" in Luodai and "Wangcong folk songs" in Longquanyi District, Chengdu, the author not only consulted with the inheritor of Hakka folk songs, Mr. Zhao Wenyi, and the representative figure of Wangcong folk songs, Mr. Gao Zhiying, in person, but also followed Mr. Zhao Wenyi to practice singing multiple songs and words on site.

On January 21, 2024, the author consulted with Teacher Zhao Wenyi, the inheritor of Hakka folk songs, on the phenomenon of "one song with multiple words" and "one word with multiple songs" in folk songs.

Taking the melody "Little Peach Blossom" of Hakka folk songs¹ as an example. The excerpt of "Little Peach Blossom" is shown in Fig.1.

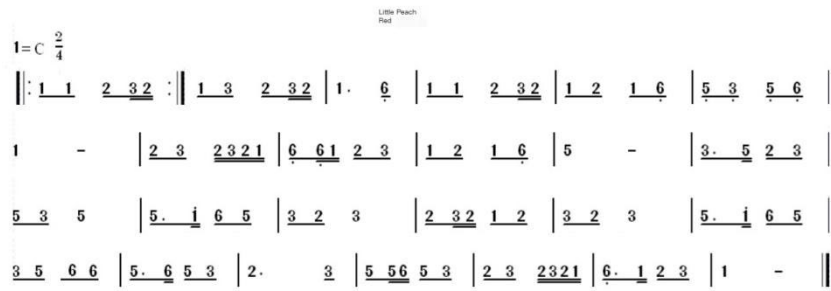


Fig.1 Excerpt from "Little Peach Blossom"

"Little Peach Blossom" is a traditional Chinese opera with a long history, also known as "Wuling Spring", "Lotus Picking Song", "Jiangtao Spring", "Pinghu Music", "Lianli Zhi", "Red Lady", and "Burning Flower". It belongs to Yuediao and is usually used in drama, sanqu sets, and jingling. As for the origin of its name, Volume 4 of the "Ci Pu" mentions that in the words of the Yuan Dynasty anonymous family, there is a phrase "Yi Xiang Xiao Tao Hong", hence the name[3].

"Little Peach Blossom" has been applied in both Nanqu and Beiqu, and their word structures are different. The Northern Opera "Little Peach Blossom" has a total of eight lines, for example, it was applied in the Yuan Dynasty Sanqu writer Yanxi Village's Sanqu "Little Peach Blossom · Miscellaneous Odes". The lyrics of the Southern Opera "Little Peach Blossom" have twelve sentence structures and eleven sentence structures, among which the twelve sentence structures can refer to the drama in the legendary "Jade Hairpin" created by Ming Dynasty opera writer Gao Lian. "Little Peach Blossom" is often mentioned in literature during the Yuan and Ming dynasties as well as in modern writings, and is a highly valued musical instrument. In the section on "Ten Methods of Lyricism and Freeze" in "Zhongzhou Yinyun", Zhou Deqing, a Yuan Dynasty opera performer and phonologist, cited "Little Peach Blossom · Emotion" as an example. Ming Dynasty opera theorist and writer Wang Jide mentioned "Little Peach Blossom" twice in Volume 1 of "Qulu". One time, he listed "Little Peach Blossom" as the first piece in "Chapter 52 of Zhenggong Guoqu", and the other time, he mentioned it in "Chapter 45 of Yuediao Guoqu". In addition, "Little Peach Blossom" is also used in Kunqu opera and folk wind and percussion music. For example, in Kunqu opera, "Little Peach Blossom" is a common tune, and the two "Mountain Peach Blossoms" in the famous Kunqu opera "Dream in the Garden" are a collection composed of "Down the Mountain Tiger" and "Little Peach Blossom". In the folk wind and percussion music in the southern and northern regions of Shandong, "Little Peach Blossom" is a widely circulated drum and percussion piece. Currently, only the melody has been preserved, and the lyrics are no longer retained. It has developed into a specialized piece for playing suona, accompanied by sheng, flute, erhu, cloud gong, and other instruments. From the above introduction, it can be seen that the tune "Little Peach Blossom" has a relatively long history and a strong literary atmosphere, with an elegant style. This tune is also used in Hakka folk songs in Longquanyi District, Chengdu City. The version used is from the version of "Little Peach Red" compiled by folk artists in Shicheng County, Hubei Province[4]. The melody displayed here is performed by Xie Jiexing, a folk artist from Shicheng County, Hubei Province, and recorded by Xie Wangchun. This tune can be used in many lyrics of Hakka folk songs. For example, "Song of Farewell to Lang",² "Wang's Persuasion to Husband",³ "Eighteen Changes",⁴ "One Egg, Two

¹Huang Yunqun, editor in chief, "Chinese Hakka Traditional Folk Songs - Integration of Shicheng Traditional Music Culture", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P592

²Edited by Huang Yunqun, "Song of Farewell to Lang", "Integration of Traditional Hakka Folk Songs in Shicheng Traditional Music Culture", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P424

³Huang Yunqun, editor in chief, "Wang's Persuasion to Husband", in "Chinese Hakka Traditional Folk Songs - Integration of Shicheng Traditional Music Culture", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P404

⁴Edited by Huang Yunqun, "Eighteen Changes", "Integrated Traditional Hakka Folk Songs in Shicheng", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P367

⁵Edited by Huang Yunqun, "One Egg, Two Yellow (One)", "Chinese Hakka Traditional Folk Songs - Integration of Shicheng Traditional Music Culture", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P335

⁶Huang Yunqun, Editor in Chief, "Go Out Song", "Chinese Hakka Traditional Folk Songs - Integrated Traditional Music and Culture of Shicheng", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House,

Yellow (One)", ⁵"Song of Going Out", ⁶and so on.

Let's take a more intuitive and typical example below. These few pieces of music are Hakka folk songs such as "Da Gu Pai", "Da Bu Gu", and "He Xin Fang". The excerpts of three folk songs are shown in Figure 2-4.

Playing dominoes (1)

Zhu Lianqin's Memoirs

Liu Faxiu sings

Xie Wangchun's Record

$I = G \quad \frac{2}{4}$

||: (2 3 2 1 | 6. 1 | 5 6 1 2 | 6 :|| 1. 3 | 2 3 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5) |

1 2 3 5 | 2. 3 | 1 2 3 5 | 2 | 1. 2 | 5 6 5 3 | 2 1 6 | 1 |

Sisters stay hey room in Hey, hit bone brand Yo Hey,

6 5 6 1 | 2 2 3 | 1 2 1 6 | 5. 6 | 1 2 3 | 2 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5 |

only see kiss Brother embroidery room Come on, small Sister hit bone brand Yo Hi,

6 5 6 1 | 2. 3 | 1 2 3 5 | 2 3 5 | 6 5 1 6 | 5 :||

Oh, my goodness, small Sister hit bone brand Yo Hi.

Fig.2 Excerpt from "Da Gu Pai"

Playing dominoes (1)

Liu Guozhen memorizes lyrics

Chen Yutang Sings

Xie Wangchun's Record

$I = G \quad \frac{2}{4} \quad \frac{3}{4}$

||: 2 3 2 1 | 6. 1 | 5 6 1 2 | 6 :|| 1. 3 | 2 3 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5 |

1 2 3 5 | 2. 3 | 1 2 3 5 | 2 | 1. 2 | 5 6 5 3 | 2 3 2 6 | 1 |

new Zha hey Crepe yarn Hey, three ruler Sanya Yihehe,

6 5 6 1 | 2 2 3 | 1 2 1 6 | 5. 6 | 1 5 3 | 2 3 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5 |

small Sister head upper To pull back three ring ah wind blow two edge Danya Yihehe,

2 3 2 1 | 6. 1 | 2 3 2 1 | 6 | 1 5 3 | 2 3 5 | 3 4 | 6 1 6 | 5 3 | 5. ||

Oh, my goodness, Oh, my goodness, The wind blows on both sides Gaitasker Oh, hey.

Fig.3 Excerpt from "Da Bu Gu"

He Xinfang

Zhu Yihuan's Memoirs

Liu Faxiu sings

Xie Wangchun's Record

$I = G \quad \frac{2}{4}$

1 2 3 5 | 2. 3 | 1 2 5 3 | 2 | 1. 6 | 5 6 5 3 | 2 3 2 6 | 1 |

elastic Qin hey blow sing hey He new Fang Yayi Hehe,

6 5 6 1 | 2 2 3 | 1 2 1 6 | 5. 6 | 1 5 3 | 2 3 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5 |

Hexi Newcomer With New Lang, Flower candle Yinghua Tang Yo Hey,

6 5 6 1 | 2. 3 | 1 3 | 2 3 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5 | (2 3 2 1 | 6. 1 |

Oh, Yizi, Flowers and candles reflect the splendor Don, hey.

5 6 1 2 | 6 | 2 3 2 1 | 6. 1 | 5 6 1 2 | 6 | 6 1 2 3 | 1 2 5 | 6 5 6 1 | 5 :||

Fig.4 Excerpt from "He Xin Fang"

These three melodious tunes are all carefully selected from the profound cultural heritage of China - the Hakka traditional folk song Treasury "Shicheng Traditional Music Collection", which is the bright pearl of Hakka culture music art. In view of the fact that Hakka folk songs transcend geographical boundaries and show a high degree of similarity and resonance among Hakka groups widely spread around the world, its unique musical charm is self-evident. In the process of in-depth research, I had the honor to meet Mr. Zhao Wenyi, an outstanding inheritor of Hakka folk songs located in Longquan, Chengdu. With his deep feelings and exquisite skills of Hakka culture, he frequently uses this precious Collection of Traditional Music of Shicheng as a teaching blueprint and selflessly teaches Hakka folk song lovers in Chengdu. It greatly promoted the inheritance and development of Hakka music culture.

Therefore, in the vibrant land of Chengdu in western Sichuan, Hakka folk songs have integrated into the local cultural ecology with their unique charm, and these three songs have become frequent visitors in the performance and teaching of Hakka folk songs in Chengdu, and frequently echoed in rural fields and community activities. It is particularly worth mentioning that the transmission of these songs mainly relies on the ancient way of oral transmission, this pure and simple means of communication, although the melody is inevitably integrated into the personal style and regional characteristics of the singer from generation to generation, resulting in certain changes and interpretation, but carefully listening, they can still clearly identify their common root and melody skeleton. Undoubtedly, it is a vivid example of the same song being repeatedly sung, constantly innovated and interpreted in different time and space, showing the strong vitality and cultural adaptability of Hakka folk songs[5]. In fact, this melody is used in many lyrics of Hakka folk songs. For example, "Little Sister Playing Solitaire", "Jinling Playing Solitaire", "On the 15th day of August, the Gate opens", "Making a fuss about the new house", "Making a fuss about the bridal chamber", "He Huatang", "Zhao Xinxing Song", ⁷and so on.

An example of this in Hakka folk songs is also the tune "Embroidered Lotus Bag", which is widely used in songs such as "Five Embroidered Lotus Bags", "New Flower Drum", "Singing the Top Scholar Red in December", "Embroidered Fragrant Bag", "Singing the Top Scholar Red in Flower Lanterns", "Flower Drum New Year Song", "Ten Songs of Bamboo Music Platform", ⁸and so on.

In fact, the phenomenon of one song being used multiple times is very common in the transmission of Chinese folk songs, including Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan. In addition to the examples mentioned above, in the author's research process, there are also many examples of the phenomenon of one song being used multiple times.

3. A versatile song

Due to the fact that most ancient Chinese folk songs were passed down by word of mouth, folk singers did not know the scores. Some score changes occurred during the process of transmission, but it can still be seen that their melodies originated from the same melody, which has led to the phenomenon of multiple variations in a single song in Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan.

For example, "Sing loudly" sung in Yucheng District, Ya'an, western Sichuan, and "Wake up in the early morning with heavy fog" sung in Wawushan Town, Hongya County, Meishan.

The excerpt "Sing loudly and loudly" is shown in Fig.5.⁹

⁷Edited by Huang Yunqun, "Chinese Hakka Traditional Folk Songs - Integration of Shicheng Traditional Music Culture", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P12-24.

⁸Huang Yunqun, editor in chief, "Chinese Hakka Traditional Folk Songs - Integration of Shicheng Traditional Music Culture", Nanchang: Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House, November 2022, P25-29.

⁹Wan Guangzhi, Collection of Sichuan Folk Songs, Chengdu: Bashu Book Society, October 2017, P2085. Hou Xuefen (born in 1938) sang, recorded by Zhou Xiang on July 13, 2005.

Sing high and loudly

1=D $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$
Medium speed slightly free

0 5 | 6 0 2̣ 6 1̣ 2̣ 2̣ . 1̣^w | 2̣ 6 1̣ 6 5 . 6 |

(I) Sing to sing (yo) tall (oh hey) sound, (me)

Line 6i66i \$2i6-6626iz2

When playing drums, one should be careful. As an official, I need to do (yo)

2̣ 6 1̣ 6' 5 - | $\frac{3}{4}$ 6 2̣ 2̣ 1̣ 6 6 1̣ 1̣ 6 | $\frac{4}{4}$ 2̣ 1̣ 6 5 - ||

Bao Wen (oh hello) Zheng, (I) observe Yang during the day and Yin at night (yo hey)

Fig.5 Excerpt from "Sing loudly and loudly"

The excerpt "Getting up in the Morning with Heavy Fog" is shown in Fig.6.¹⁰

In the early morning, the fog is heavy and heavy

1=D $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$
Medium speed

2̣ 1̣ 6 | 6 1̣ 1̣ 2̣ | 2̣ . 1̣ 2̣ | 1̣ 1̣ 6' | 5 - | 6 6 2̣ 1̣ 1̣ 2̣ |

Getting up early in the morning (yo), the fog sank (yo), and I mistakenly placed the tree stump

$\frac{3}{4}$ 1̣ 6 . 6 1̣ 6 | $\frac{2}{4}$ 5 - | 2̣ 1̣ 6 | 1̣ 6 2̣ 2̣ . 1̣ 2̣ | 2̣ 1̣ 6' |

When an adult (yo ho hey). Hold onto the tree stump and kiss it

5- | 66222 | 12 | 16616 | 5- Mouth, then (la)
remembered (she) the funny person (oh haha).

Fig.6 Excerpt from "Getting Up in the Morning with Heavy Fog"

From the score of these two folk songs, it can be seen that they mainly use the three tones of la, re, and do (621), and some of the melodic short sentences have the same form, indicating that the melody of these two folk songs originally came from the same melody, but changed during the singing process in different regions.

According to ¹¹further research by the renowned Chinese folk song research expert Wan Guangzhi, the melodies of these two songs, as well as more than ten folk songs passed down in the Sichuan region, including "Ba Shan Dou Er Ye Chang" and "Wind Blows Cedar Trees Around the Mountain Huai" from Shekua Village, Lugu Town, Yanyuan, Sichuan Province, "Shi Niu Shan Ge" from Gaoyang Town, Wangcang County, Sichuan Province, "Shan Ge is Easy to Sing but Hard to Start" from Yunv Village, Lingjiang Town, Cangxi County, Sichuan Province, "The Sun Rises on the Mountain Slope" from Liuba Village, Yanmen Town, Jiangyou, Sichuan Province, and "Big River Rises and Small River" from Qingchuan County, Sichuan Province, are basically consistent in terms of melody and melody¹².

The variation of single song is also a common and significant cultural phenomenon in the field of Han folk songs in western Sichuan. It is like a colorful tapestry, showing the subtle and profound changes

¹⁰Guangzhi, Collection of Sichuan Folk Songs, Chengdu: Bashu Bookstore, October 2017, P896. Zhang Fujun (born in 1963) sang, recorded by Zhou Xiang on December 3, 200.

¹¹Wan Guangzhi (May 2, 1943–February 4, 2023), male, Han ethnicity, from Chengdu, Sichuan. He is an expert in the history of ancient Chinese literature, a Chinese ci and fu scholar, and a folk singer. He is also the director of the Folk Song Research Institute at the School of Arts and Sciences, Sichuan Normal University. He lived for 10 years and collected over 3000 Sichuan folk songs throughout the province, and published a 10 volume collection of "Sichuan Folk Song Collection Record".

¹²Wan Guangzhi, Collection of Sichuan Folk Songs (Part 1), Chengdu: Bashu Book Society, October 2017, P107-109.

experienced by the same song after being widely sung across different regions. This change not only retains the basic essence of the original song, but also integrates the unique local customs and singer's personality color. These changes can largely be attributed to the personal preferences and aesthetic tendencies of the folk singers, who have made subtle or significant adjustments and recreations of the original songs according to their own understanding, emotions and the cultural characteristics of the region. In addition, the remoteness and isolation of the transmission area is also one of the important factors promoting the phenomenon of single variation. In those areas where transportation is inconvenient and information is blocked, the transmission of songs often relies on oral transmission. This primitive and simple mode of communication makes every transmission and singing a new creation. As time goes by, the original melody form changes in the continuous transmission and evolution, and even reaches the level of qualitative change, forming a phenomenon of variability with unique local characteristics.

4. Fixed Qupai

Fixed tunes are an important source of melody in Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan. This type of fixed tune has a relatively wide range of sources, including classic opera music, famous folk instrumental tune, classic folk song singing section tunes, and so on. The use of some classic and fixed musical instruments in various occasions is also more common in other folk operas, instrumental performances, and other situations in China. For example, the commonly used Hu Qin tunes in Peking Opera include "Xiao Men Men", "Wan Nian Huan", "Liu Yao Jin", playing tunes such as "Yi Zhi Hua" and "Jiang Jun Ling", Kunqu tunes such as "Shan Shan Yang", "Chuan Pai Zhao", "Bian Zhuang Tai", Yue Opera tunes such as "Chi Tiao Tune" and "Xian Xia Tune".

The melody of traditional folk songs is also a source of fixed tunes, which have been passed down and developed for thousands of years, forming unique regional and ethnic styles. The melodies of these traditional folk songs are often closely related to the local history, culture, and lifestyle, and are improvised and sung by the people in labor, life, and entertainment.

Folk instrumental tunes are also an important source of Chinese folk song melodies. These qupai are usually used for folk instrumental performance, such as flute, erhu, guzheng, etc., and later gradually applied to song singing. These tunes have beautiful melodies and rich expressive power, providing rich materials for the creation of folk songs. Opera music is an important component of traditional Chinese music, which contains a large number of folk song elements.

The melody, rhythm, and performance form of traditional Chinese opera music have had a profound impact on Chinese folk songs. Many folk songs are directly derived from traditional Chinese opera music, or have been adapted and re created based on traditional Chinese opera music. In history, foreign music has also had a certain influence on Chinese folk songs. For example, the cultural exchange along the Silk Road led to the introduction of music and culture from Central and West Asia to China, which had an impact on local folk music. In addition, since modern times, Western music has gradually been introduced to China and has been integrated and innovated with Chinese folk music.

5. New Tune

The melody sources of Han folk songs in western Sichuan are diverse, and these sources blend and influence each other, forming a rich and colorful style and characteristics of Han folk songs in western Sichuan. Folk innovation, in addition to using existing melodies, folk singers also create new melodies for folk songs. Although compared to newly created lyrics, there may be fewer new melodies, during the author's research process, it was found that as the singers of folk songs become familiar with them, both young and elderly individuals tend to have the desire and behavior to create new melodies for folk songs.

For example, during the author's research on the "Hakka folk songs" in Luodai, Longquan, Chengdu, it was found that there is a folk song called "Luodai Tiaofu Ge". In fact, during the 20-year collection process, Zhao Wenyi, the inheritor of the Hakka folk songs in Luodai, only told her about the folk songs, action forms, and historical background of "Tiaodan". There was no music or melody part, including the folk songs of "Tiaodan", which were more like recitation and recitation. And the musical melody of this folk song, from beginning to end, was created by Teacher Zhao Wenyi himself. Moreover, during the author's research process, the creation of the melody part of this folk song has not yet been completely completed.

Similarly, during my research on "Wangcong Mountain Song" in Pidu District, Chengdu, representative figure of Wangcong Mountain Song, Ms. Gao Zhiying, also mentioned to me that she is currently creating a folk song, which includes not only the lyrics but also the melody. Unlike professional or professional composers, folk singers do not have as many traces of academic formalization in their creation of folk song melodies. Instead, they rely more on the folk singer's decades of accumulated folk song feelings and create new works that can preserve the characteristics and charm of local folk songs to the greatest extent possible. But compared to the new creation of folk song lyrics, this new creation behavior for folk song melodies is still much less. On the one hand, this is because the difficulty of creating melodies is higher, requiring creators to have a more professional musical background; On the other hand, it is also the reverence of folk artists for the inheritance of folk song tunes; Finally, whether it is the creator or the audience of folk songs, what people are more interested in is the lyrics, which are easier to understand and accept.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the melody sources of Han ethnic folk songs in western Sichuan are rich and diverse. They not only carry profound historical and cultural heritage, but also are the crystallization of the emotions and wisdom of the people on this land. From the delicate depiction of the lyrics of Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan, to the melodious and moving music melody, and to the flexible and varied melody and form, Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan demonstrate unique artistic charm.

These folk songs are not only a representation of music, but also a vivid portrayal of the way of life, historical traditions, and aesthetic taste of the people of western Sichuan. In this region, people from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds communicate and integrate with each other, jointly giving birth to the rich and colorful cultural treasure of Han folk songs in western Sichuan.

Every tune and melody of Han Chinese folk songs in western Sichuan seem to tell the story of the land, conveying the people's longing and pursuit for a better life. Therefore, Han ethnic folk songs in western Sichuan not only have high artistic value, but also are important resources for studying Chinese folk music culture.

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