



Research on the Transformation of Errenzhuan from the Perspective of Short Videos

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Abstract: This study examines the transformation of Errenzhuan, a traditional Northeast Chinese folk art, through the lens of short video platforms. Confronting a shifting cultural landscape, Errenzhuan's migration to digital media represents a critical case of "creative transformation" for intangible cultural heritage. The research analyzes how platforms like Douyin reconfigure its artistic form, cultural meaning, and communication logic, revealing a dualistic impact. While short videos demolish geographical and generational barriers, creating a participatory ecosystem where users evolve from audience to co-creators through secondary creations and challenges, this adaptation also poses significant risks. The fragmentation of narratives, exaggeration for algorithmic appeal, and dominance of traffic logic often lead to entertainment overload and a dilution of artistic essence. The study concludes that authentic revitalization hinges on upholding integrity while innovating—using the art's core aesthetic values as an anchor to harness, rather than be subsumed by, platform dynamics. Thus, Errenzhuan's journey illustrates a precarious yet promising path for folk arts navigating the digital age, balancing technological empowerment with cultural preservation to achieve sustainable relevance.

Keywords: Errenzhuan Intangible Cultural Heritage New-Media Short-Video

Introduction

The academic research on Errenzhuan began in the 1980s, with early achievements focusing on its historical origins, artistic features, and cultural functions (Wang, 2024). However, existing research often regards "protection" and "development" as opposing categories, emphasizing the preservation of traditional forms while ignoring media technology's role in the "creative transformation" of intangible cultural heritage. In the process of globalization and urbanization, the survival context of Errenzhuan has undergone drastic changes: the dissolution of traditional rural society has led to the shrinkage of its original cultural space, and the intervention of media technology has opened new paths for its inheritance, intensifying the debate between "authenticity" and "innovation" (Wang & Li, 2009). This innovation has opened diversified paths for modern breakthrough. Errenzhuan has expanded from a closed exhibition to a three-dimensional communication matrix of "theater performances + TV variety shows + short video platforms + online live streaming". As Hu (2012) analyzed, Zhao Benshan implanted the comedy elements of the duet into national cultural memory through Spring Festival Gala sketches, while the recent handkerchief dance challenge on short video platforms spurred imitation among new media demographics. This media fusion breaks through physical and intergenerational barriers, forming an interactive ecosystem where the audience transforms from passive receivers to cultural co-creators, reconstructing the aesthetic of intangible cultural heritage reception through secondary creation and interaction (Wang, 2024). Simultaneously, the transformation of folk artists into internet celebrities has given rise to new cultural productivity.

Literature Review

As a representative folk art form in Northeast China, Errenzhuan's artistic characteristics, social functions, and cultural significance continue to evolve in the interweaving of tradition and modernity. Existing research has approached from perspectives such as folklore, sociology, communication studies, and semiotics, delving into topics such as the local roots of Errenzhuan, variations during social transformation, media communication, and the evolution of cultural symbols, forming a rich research spectrum. By reviewing relevant literature and organizing the core framework and theoretical dialogue of existing research on Errenzhuan.

Hu Xuan (2012) analyzed how Zhao Benshan used Spring Festival Gala skits and TV dramas (such as "Liu Laogen") to "de vulgarize" the two characters and inject modern aesthetic elements, elevating them from local art to national cultural symbols. This process is summarized as the "collusion of official, elite, and public powers", and although its commercialization path has sparked controversy, it has promoted the capitalization of folk art. Wang Guohua and Li Ping (2009) supplemented the details of Zhao Benshan's "Green Errenzhuan" reform, emphasizing the role of media technology (such as television and international cultural exchange) in reshaping the image of Errenzhuan. Wang Zhuozhuo (2024) used semiotics as a theoretical framework to analyze the cultural symbols and their evolution process of Errenzhuan. The study found that Errenzhuan's music integrates regional characteristics and diverse elements, and language enhances interaction and humor through dialects, reflecting flexible role transitions and folk aesthetics; Its deep symbols, such as the social criticism of clowns, the expression of popular culture, and the release of carnival emotions, together construct a unique artistic charm. The paper further explores the dynamic balance of these symbols in their historical evolution, emphasizing their innovative development through the integration of tradition and modernity (such as



new media communication and the integration of popular cultural elements), and proposes protection and inheritance strategies, providing theoretical support and practical paths for the sustainable development of Errenzhuan. The current research on Errenzhuan is facing new theoretical challenges and methodological innovations. The method of digital ethnography provides new possibilities for observing the performance ecology in the new media environment. Comparative research perspectives help reveal the similarities and differences in the modernization paths of folk arts in different regions, expand the theoretical perspective of Errenzhuan research through different research directions, and provide important cases for understanding the transformation of contemporary Chinese folk culture.

Research method

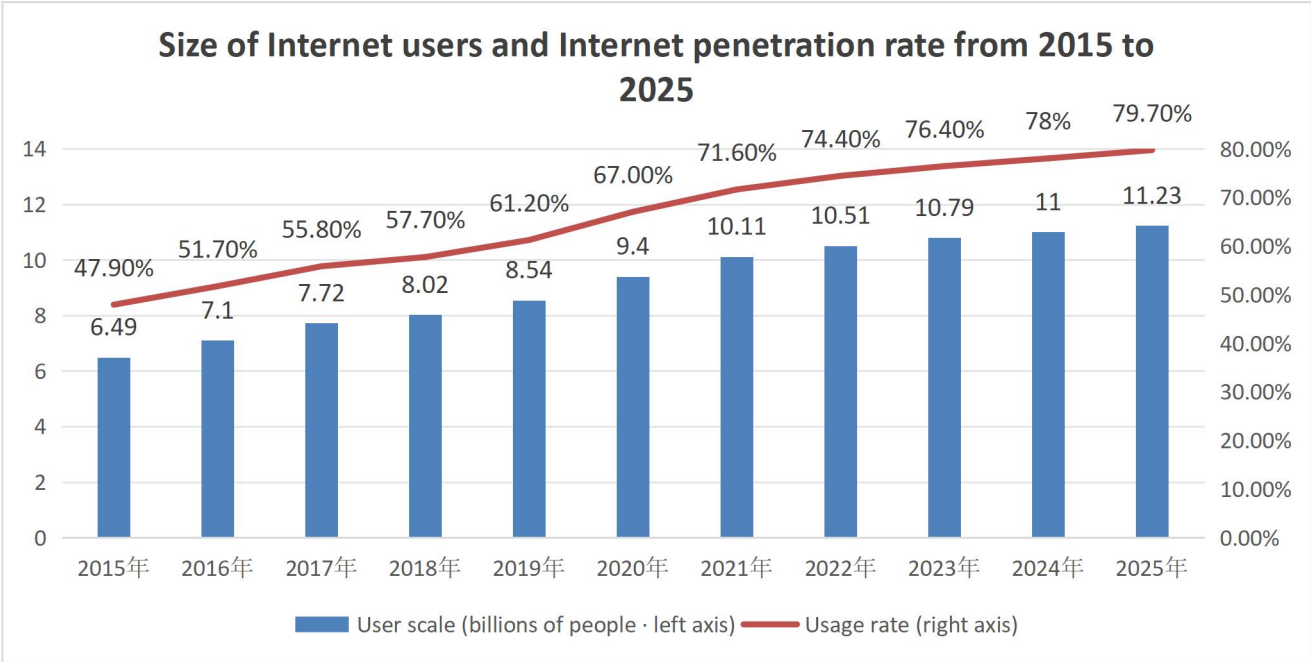
In order to deeply explore the new media transformation path of Errenzhuan, the author uses multi-dimensional research methods to carry out analysis: in the application of the case study method, the Errenzhuan accounts with different communication scales and different content types in the short video platform are selected as typical cases, covering the head traffic account number, middle waist characteristic account number and vertical domain account number, which are deeply deconstructed from the three core dimensions of content production mode, user interaction strategy and commercial cash flow path; At the level of literature analysis, systematically review academic literature and industry reports related to the characteristics of traditional art in Errenzhuan, the laws of new media communication, and the digital transformation of intangible cultural heritage, and construct a three-dimensional research framework of "traditional art new media ecology user needs"; During the implementation of the survey and research method, the mainstream short video platforms such as Tiktok and Kwai are taken as the data collection field, and the short videos related to the duet show and online audio-visual content in recent years are selected as samples to quantitatively collect basic data, and cross analysis is carried out in combination with user profiles, comments, emotional tendencies and other dimensions to provide data support for the research conclusions.

Problem statement

This study focuses on the core issue of "How to reconstruct the artistic form, cultural significance, and communication logic of Northeast Errenzhuan in the transformation of short videos", attempting to break through the single media perspective of traditional art research and explore the adaptive strategies of Errenzhuan's migration from the local stage to multiple media such as film, variety shows, and short videos under the dual effects of media technology iteration and social and cultural changes.

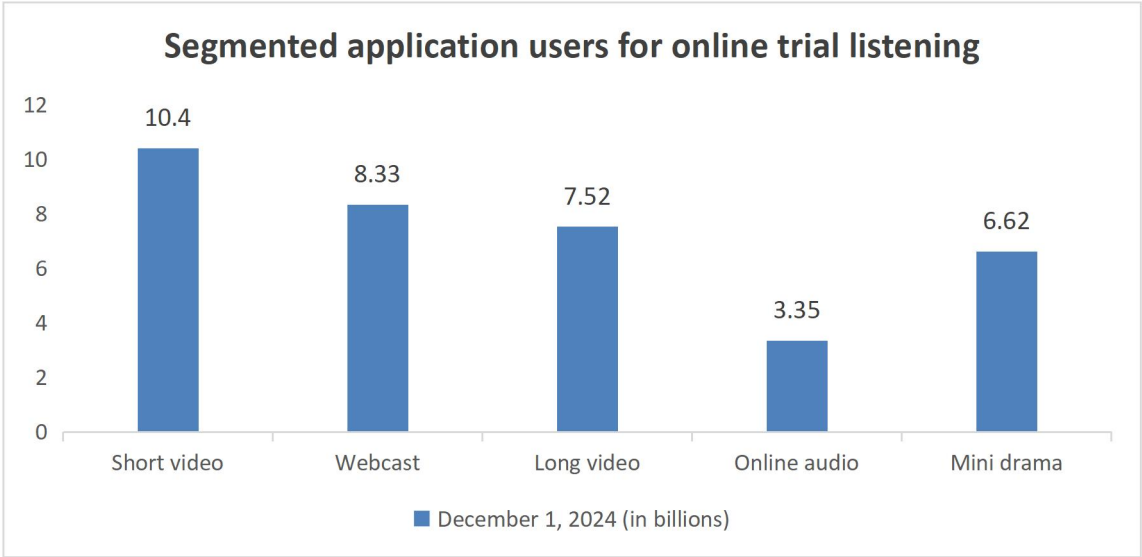
Internet development data

By systematically sorting out the public data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) and other authoritative organizations, and combining the standardized data cleaning and cross validation methods, the author collates the core statistical results of China's Internet popularity in the past 10 years as follows.



Data source: Statistical survey of China's Internet development

From 2015 to 2025, the number of Chinese netizens has shown a sustained and stable growth trend, increasing from 649 million in 2015 to 1.123 billion in June 2025, with a cumulative growth of 474 million people and a growth rate of 73.0%, with an average annual growth rate of 5.7%. This growth trend shows that the Internet user group has achieved significant expansion in the past decade, providing an increasingly broad potential audience base for traditional art forms, including Errenzhuan.



Data source: Research Report on the Development of Online Audiovisual in China

According to statistical data, the user base and market share of the five major sub sectors of China's online audio-visual industry in December 2024 are as follows: short video ranks first with a user base of 1.04 billion; Online live streaming followed closely behind, with a user base of 833 million; Long videos rank third with 752 million users. Based on the above data orientation, this study will conduct in-depth research on the transformation and innovation of Errenzhuan in the new media stage, focusing on the top ranked field of market data.

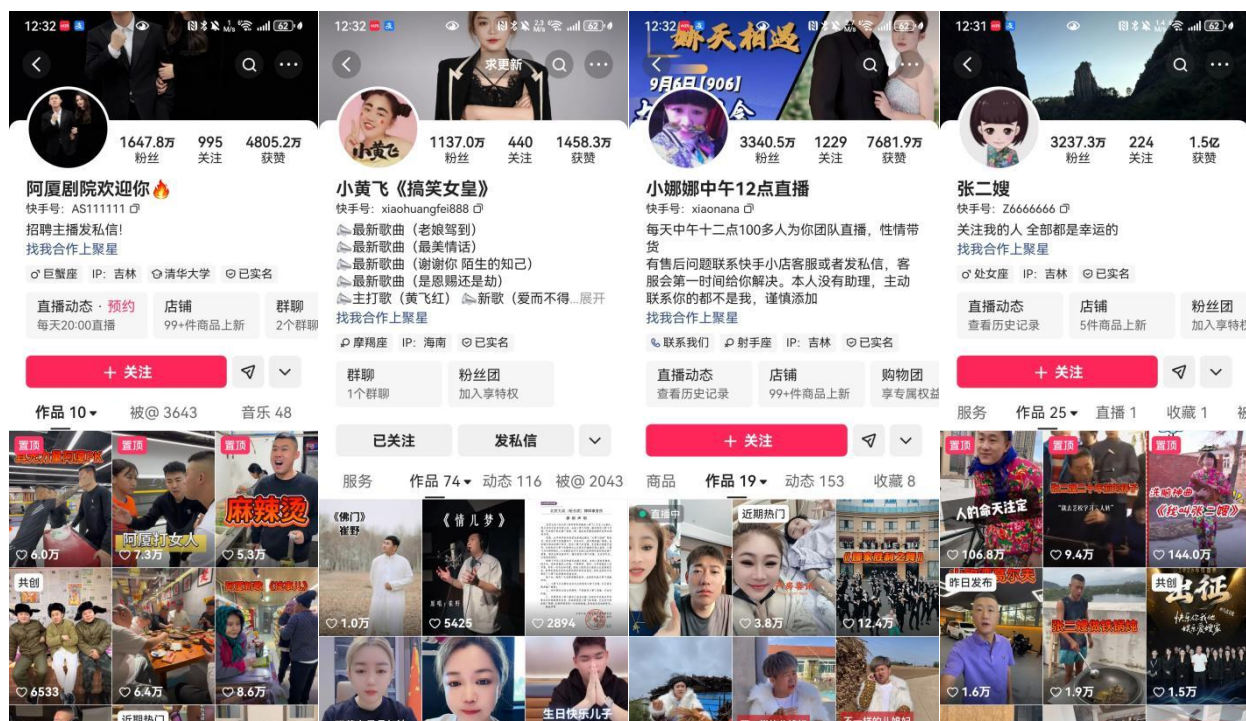
Analysis of the Conversion Status of Short Videos

The 2025 Tiktok Intangible Cultural Heritage Data Report shows that up to now, there are 1294 certified inheritors of intangible cultural heritage on the Tiktok platform, 14 million netizens share the experience of intangible cultural heritage through this platform, and the relevant short videos are played 749.9 billion times, with an average of 65000 live broadcasts of intangible cultural heritage every day. The innovation of digital communication technology is opening up a new path for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage arts such as Northeast Errenzhuan; Compared with the temporal and spatial limitations of traditional interpersonal communication models, modern digital technology not only reconstructs the temporal and spatial dimensions of artistic presentation, significantly improves communication efficiency, but also promotes the audience to upgrade their viewing experience. Observing the content ecology of the Errenzhuan on short video platforms, it is not difficult to find that the creator group presents obvious hierarchical characteristics: one group is actors who are engaged in the Errenzhuan industry themselves, including celebrities from well-known institutions such as Benshan Media, as well as grassroots practitioners; One type is official media accounts such as television stations and professional theaters; Another type is ordinary individual users who record and share Errenzhuan. These three types of creators have significant differences in content production logic, presentation methods, and dissemination goals, but together they form a diverse landscape of Errenzhuan new media communication.

The Network Transformation of Errenzhuan Practitioners

In this communication context, a group of professional duet performers such as Zhang Ersao, Siping Asha, Kwai Xiaonana, and Xiaohuang Fei have successfully transformed into top online celebrities, and their popularity has also made more duet practitioners aware of the development opportunities contained in the Internet. Based on the adaptation and dissemination practices of four internet celebrities' Errenzhuan, it presents distinct common patterns in content creation, performance forms, inheritance logic, and audience characteristics, providing a valuable experience paradigm for the short video dissemination of traditional art. In the dimension of adapting jokes, the four individuals jointly demonstrate distinct innovative features: in terms of language style, they abandon the overly dialectal and obscure expressions in traditional Errenzhuan, and instead adopt a language system that is easy to understand and closely related to online culture, incorporating a large number of popular internet slang and joke cultural elements, significantly enhancing the acceptance of content among young people; The narrative structure presents a fragmented characteristic, breaking the traditional framework of complete starting, ending, and ending in two person turns. The story core is broken down into several

independent humor units, each with clear baggage design and emotional climax. The audience's attention is quickly captured through 15-30 second duration control; In terms of topic selection, we closely follow the pulse of the times, keenly capture social hotspots, and integrate modern life elements such as current affairs news, online events, and popular culture into our creations. This down-to-earth expression resonates strongly with traditional art and contemporary contexts. In terms of innovative performance forms, the four individuals have also formed a unified direction of innovation: the acceleration of performance rhythm has become an inevitable choice, and due to the limitation of short video duration, it is necessary to reach climax in a very short time, generally compressing the preparation time and directly entering the laughter or tears points; The exaggeration of facial expressions and actions is particularly prominent, in order to adapt to the language of the camera, especially for close-up shots.



However, it should be noted that although the practice of top internet celebrities demonstrates the positive value of the conversion of Errenzhuan short videos - the significant improvement in dissemination efficiency allows intangible cultural heritage to reach a wider audience, and the younger audience structure breaks through the age barrier of traditional art, it also exposes industry difficulties that cannot be ignored. This dilemma is mainly reflected in the contradiction between "entertainment overload and loss of artistic essence": the fragmented dismantling of the complete narrative in the adaptation of jokes not only improves communication efficiency but also dissolves the cultural depth and emotional depth of the work; The excessive reliance on camera language in performance form has to some extent weakened the presentation of traditional skills; The accumulation of commercial elements and the dominance of traffic logic in secondary creative content have led some works to become a patchwork of vulgar jokes; Fans' cognition generally remains at the entertainment level, lacking a deep understanding of the artistic essence of "singing, reciting, doing, and fighting" in Errenzhuan. Traditional inheritance is sometimes alienated into simple replication of symbols such as "fake headgear" and "red headscarves". For traditional art, short video platforms have always been a double-edged sword. They are not only a "breaking opportunity" to break through regional and circle limitations, but also a "alienation trap" to dissolve artistic value. The true transformation should not be to cater to the entertainment needs of short videos in a "cut to fit" manner, but should return to the essence of "upholding integrity and innovation" - using the core values of traditional art as anchor points, on the basis of preserving singing rhythm, narrative wisdom, and technical essence, and activating its internal vitality with the dissemination logic of short videos.

Content production of official media

Unlike the dissemination model of actors and internet celebrities who focus on personal IP creation, companies and media place more emphasis on the original presentation of content when promoting traditional operas such as Errenzhuan. The videos it shoots not only cover classic performance clips, but also deeply record scenes such as behind the scenes rehearsals and backstage preparations, enhancing the audience's cultural identity by showcasing the complete ecology of traditional Chinese opera art. In this process, the special support of short video platforms and the policy guidance at the national level have formed a joint force, opening up a new development space for traditional opera as a "cloud stage". The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has long been committed to promoting the modernization and transformation of traditional Chinese opera. In 2019, it guided the launch of the "Art Broadcasting Plan" to build a cooperation bridge between traditional cultural and artistic troupes and online live streaming platforms; This plan was officially included in

the "14th Five Year Plan" for the development of cultural and tourism markets in 2021, which clearly requires "fully utilizing market forces to promote the digital transformation of excellent traditional Chinese culture". In December 2024, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism further proposed in its policy response to "vigorously develop a digital creative performance pattern that combines online and offline, and integrates performance and broadcasting". Through activities such as "script entertainment into scenic spots" and "following performances to travel", it aims to enrich new scenarios for the dissemination and consumption of traditional Chinese opera. In the specific implementation, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has taken a series of measures to build a policy support system: build an exhibition platform, for example, during the grand ceremony of drama (Kunshan), launch a drama tour of "watching drama and visiting Jiangsu", and create a China-Chic living street where "all corners are dramas"; Strengthen talent cultivation, implement projects such as the National Leading Talent Training Program for Traditional Chinese Opera Performance, and build a senior, middle-aged, and young talent echelon; Promoting technological integration, supporting cooperation between national Peking Opera troupes and new media platforms, and achieving online "breakthrough" dissemination of classic plays, these policies provide institutional guarantees and path guidance for the digital development of traditional Chinese opera.

Artistic innovation of expert users

When the entertainment brought by short videos became the norm in people's lives, Errenzhuan, rooted in the black soil of Northeast China, ushered in an unprecedented wave of dissemination in the era of short videos with its inherent entertainment genes. The lyrics that carry the smoke and fire of life, the lively handkerchief skills, and the down-to-earth humor "speaking" have crossed the boundaries of geography and age through mobile phone screens, not only allowing audiences outside Northeast China to appreciate the humorous nature nurtured by the black land, but also successfully attracting a large number of young people to become new fans of this traditional folk art.



Picture source: adaptation of Tiktok Errenzhuan "Dashen Tune"

On content creation platforms such as Tiktok, # Errenzhuan topic has gathered 287000 creators to participate in content production, with a cumulative broadcast volume of more than 18.1 billion times, forming an ecology of universal participation led by professional troupes and carnival of grassroots users - professional troupes such as Jilin Errenzhuan Art Theater have accumulated millions of fans through live online performances, while ordinary users use their mobile phones to record scenes of Errenzhuan in their lives. This "professional+grassroots" creation matrix has truly enabled Errenzhuan to enter the public daily life. In addition to traditional content, more creative adaptations continue to emerge, among which the modern adaptation of the Errenzhuan drama Da Shen Diao is particularly impressive. The # Northeast Shen Diao topic attracted 9195 people to participate in the creation, generating 760 million views and achieving excellent dissemination results, becoming a typical example of the integration of traditional folk art and contemporary media. The adaptation and innovation of Northeast Divine Tune is essentially a modern transformation practice of traditional folk

culture. As a accompaniment tune originating from the Northeastern shaman's "Jumping the Great God" ceremony, the traditional divine tune already carries a strong religious sacrificial attribute. Its singing style is deep and distant, and the lyrics often revolve around folk beliefs such as "inviting the gods" and "sending off the gods". During performance, it is necessary to use ritual props such as divine drums and waist bells to complete the complete ritual. In the era of short videos, adaptations have cleverly stripped away its obscure sacrificial shell, accurately retaining the core characteristics of "high pitched melody, dynamic rhythm, and free sentence structure", and turning towards a new creative path of "life oriented and entertainment oriented". At the level of content theme, the creators creatively transformed the traditional "worship narrative" into "life roast", and incorporated contemporary issues such as workplace anxiety, family fun, social hot spots into the lyrics, such as "get up early in the morning to catch up with the class, the subway is crowded into sardines, the boss's pie is turned upside down, and the salary at the end of the month is not seen". The current situation of migrant workers' life is interpreted with the distinctive high pitched tune of Shendiao, forming a strong sense of contrast and humor. These users are not only consumers of content, but also participants in cultural dissemination. Through likes, comments, and secondary creations, they have transformed Northeast Shendiao from a regional cultural symbol to a popular entertainment carrier that spans across the north and south and connects generations. They have also provided useful references for the modern dissemination of other traditional folk arts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the transformation of Errenzhuan on short video platforms embodies a critical process of "creative transformation" for intangible cultural heritage in the digital age. The analysis reveals a dualistic outcome: while short videos facilitate unprecedented dissemination, breaking geographical barriers and fostering participatory engagement through viral challenges and user co-creation, they simultaneously pose a threat of cultural dilution through entertainment-centric fragmentation and algorithmic pressures. The central finding is that sustainable revitalization hinges on maintaining a dialectical balance—leveraging technological reach while anchoring innovation in the art's core aesthetic and cultural essence, such as the vitality of its "speaking, singing, and dancing." This practice challenges Walter Benjamin's anxiety about the loss of "aura," proving that the authenticity of folk art resides not in static form but in the transmission of its living spirit. Ultimately, Errenzhuan's journey offers a replicable paradigm: the future of traditional art lies not in resistance to change, but in strategic adaptation that ensures cultural integrity guides technological integration.

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