



## A Translation of Cultural Words in Julian Millie's People's Religion Book: An Ideological Perspective

*(Terjemahan Kata-Kata Budaya dalam Buku People's Religion karya Julian Millie: Sebuah Perspektif Ideologis)*

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### **Abstract**

*This study focuses on translation ideology in rendering cultural words from Sundanese into English in a translated book by Julian Millie entitled People's Religion, focusing on Sundanese sermons by the Indonesian preacher AF Ghazali. We investigate how cultural terms are translated and what ideological stances are reflected through the strategies used. The analysis employs a qualitative descriptive method with data drawn from 70 culturally specific words. The study uses Newmark's (1988) taxonomy of cultural categories and integrates translation strategies from multiple theorists to identify patterns. Venuti's (1995) concept of foreignization and domestication is used as the primary ideological framework, supported by Hatim and Mason's (1997) critical discourse approach to interpret the translator's decisions. Importantly, this study introduces a third category, which is a hybrid ideology, to accommodate cases where mixed strategies are used, reflecting the translator's flexible negotiation between source and target culture. The findings from 70 data samples reveal that domestication (30*

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*data) is the most dominant ideology, followed by foreignization (25 data), and hybrid ideology (15 data). These results demonstrate that the translator tends to prioritize readability and accessibility for the target readers yet also retains some cultural authenticity when deemed necessary. The findings suggest that translation of cultural words is a deeply ideological process that requires critical strategy selection to balance cultural authenticity with reader accessibility.*

**Keywords:** cultural words, religious discourse, translation ideologies, translation strategies

## Introduction

In translation studies, the treatment of culture-specific items (CSIs) has long been a central focus, especially in relation to ideological positioning and translation strategy. Translators often experience an ideological dilemma, which involves deciding whether to preserve the cultural uniqueness of the source text (foreignization) or to adapt it for cultural accessibility in the target culture (domestication) [1], [2]. This ideological framework becomes even more critical when translating religious texts that are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural and spiritual fabric of a community [3]. One such case is the Julian Millie's People's Religion book, the English translated and compiled version of a selection of Sundanese-language sermons by the Indonesian preacher AF Ghazali. The Islamic practices in West Java, such as related to specific rituals, beliefs, and local customs, are highlighted in the book with more detailed ethnographic terms. A translator must effectively render the terms to balance accuracy and cultural nuance. This translating process ensures unchanging the intended meaning of the original text [4].

This study focuses on the challenges of applying ideology in the process of translating cultural terms in a religious context. In Indonesia, a country with the largest muslim population and its rich local Islamic traditions, religious discourse is often associated with the cultural identity of the local community. This becomes one of the challenges for translators in translating cultural terms or practices in a religious context. They need to negotiate more carefully when translating religious terms to ensure a faithful yet accessible meaning for the target audience [1], [5]. Therefore, errors in the translation process will fail to convey the intended meaning of the specific cultural terms to the target audience.

Cultural words simply refer to closely related terminology to a specific cultural practice and belief, and are frequently challenging to translate due to the lack of a direct equivalent in the target language [6], [7]. Newmark's [7] classification of cultural words into categories such as ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, and religious terms has become

foundational in identifying and analyzing such items. Misrepresentation or simplification of these items in translation may lead to a loss of meaning, distortion of cultural values, and a diminished representation of the source community's worldview [6], [7], [8]. As such, the accurate and ideologically informed translation of cultural words in religious texts is not only a linguistic issue but a matter of cultural integrity and scholarly responsibility.

In the translation process, the application of ideology is influenced by how the translator applies some strategies in rendering the cultural terms in the source text into the target text. First, foreignization refers to how the translator's ideology preserves authenticity of the source text and introduces the specific and unfamiliar cultural terms to target readers [9], [10]. Such an approach encourages readers to engage with the original content rather than to adapt it to their own cultural norms. There are three strategies aligned with foreignization: preservation, literal translation, and addition. Domestication, on the other hand, is a target-oriented approach where cultural references are modified and adapted to be easily understandable or familiar to the target audience by replacing cultural terms with culturally appropriate equivalents. Although this approach preserves the original meaning, it may sometimes cause the loss of nuance or authenticity [10]. Domesticating strategies in translation mainly aim to make the original text more accessible to the target audience either by using cultural equivalents, generalization, or omission of non-relevant elements. To maintain clarity and coherence, such strategies are purposively adopted. However, in specific contexts, translators may need to employ a hybrid approach that combines foreignizing and domestication techniques (also known as couplets) to strike a balance between preserving the original meaning and ensuring readability.

The use of religious discourse related to translation ideology have been analyzed by several researchers. For example, Gunawan [11] analyzed translations of Quranic verses into Indonesian and concluded that the ideological orientation of translators was influenced by the socio-political context, which affected interpretative emphasis. Similarly, Syihabuddin and Aryanti [12] discovered that Indonesian translations of Quranic terms related to Muslim women often reflect an exclusionary approach in order to maintain fidelity to the sacred text. The analysis focuses on how ideology influences in shaping translation outcomes. However, most existing research focuses on Arabic-Indonesian translation of classical Islamic texts, while very few

examine how religious and cultural narratives rooted in local vernaculars, like Sundanese, are translated into English in contemporary academic texts, such as in Julian Millie's *People's Religion* book.

The Julian Millie's *People's Religion* presents numerous culturally bound terms related to Islamic traditions, local rituals, and religious expressions unique to West Java, Indonesia. Given its rich ethnographic insights and its relevance to Indonesian religious discourse, an analysis of its translation ideology is essential to understanding how the cultural words including religious concepts and local traditions are mediated in translation. A significant linguistic shift occurred when the Julian Millie's writing was translated from Sundanese into English. It requires careful consideration of how to address cultural and religious aspects. However, there has been limited research in this area, particularly concerning the influence of translation ideology in ethnographic portrayals of Islamic practices. The present study investigates the complex relationship between translators' preference for language, cultural representation, and their ideological position by considering people's beliefs. Therefore, this research overcomes significant research limitations by focusing on how a specific term in a modern religious context is translated.

Referring to Newmark's categorization, this study aims to identify culturally specific terms in *People's Religion* book. It also explores the translation methods used to translate those terms into English, considering if they lead to domestication or foreignization ideological approach. Furthermore, this study observes how these choices influence cultural representation and religious discourse in the translation context. Therefore, this research aims to provide a critical understanding of how the public's understanding of Islam in Indonesia, particularly in West Java, is influenced by translations for international audiences. Such research contributes to the ongoing discourse on translation ideology, religious discourse, and cultural mediation in translation studies.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytical method to examine the ideological dimensions embedded in the translation of cultural words in Julian Millie's *People's Religion*. This ualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of meaning,

context, and interpretation, especially regarding an ideologically and culturally loaded text [13], [14]. It focuses on identifying the application of ideology in translation strategies and how they affect the representation of religious and cultural concepts. The main data sources are the English translation of Julian Millie's *People's Religion* and the original Sundanese text.

In the process of data collection, religious and cultural terms, phrases, and concepts are identified in the original Sundanese text and its English translation based on Newmark's classification [7]. Changes in meaning, translation strategies, and ideological implications are identified through comparative methods. The framework of Venuti's domestication and foreignization strategies [1], as well as Hatim and Mason's critical discourse analysis in translation [15], serve as the foundation for this research. This analysis involves three main steps: identifying Sundanese cultural terms in English translations, analyzing translation approach (domestication or foreignization) based on techniques employed, and conducting an ideological interpretation to determine how translation choices reflect ideological positions on the translation of religious concepts.

This study triangulated various sources and analytical methods to ensure the validity and credibility of the research [16]. These include data triangulation by comparing the results of the study with scientific research on translation ideology and religious translation; theoretical triangulation by applying translation ideology theory (domestication or foreignization); and researcher triangulation by consulting with translation experts.

## Results and Discussion

This section includes the identification of cultural words based on Newmark's categories assessing the preference of translation ideologies (foreignization vs. domestication) applied in transferring the cultural words from Sundanese as the source text into English as the target text. The findings are supported by providing examples of analysis and its explanation.

Based on Newmark's (1988) classification, the 70 cultural words extracted from *People's Religion*, in which each cultural word carries significant meaning and may pose challenges in translation due to its deep-rooted cultural context. The results of the analysis show that there are only four cultural categories discovered; those are ecology, material culture, social culture,

and organization-custom-procedure-concept. Meanwhile, the category of gestures and habits is excluded in the classification table because the data source consists of an excerpt from Ustadz AF Ghazali's lecture, as presented below.

Table 1 Cultural Words in People's Religion

No	Category of Culture	Example	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ecology	<i>Keuyeup</i> → Crabs	5	7%
2	Material Culture	<i>Sangu Gaplek</i> → <i>Gaplek</i> rice	23	33%
3	Social Culture	<i>Ulama</i> → Scholar	11	16%
4	Organization, Custom, Procedure, Concept	<i>Puasa fardu</i> → Compulsory fast	31	44%
<b>Total</b>			70	100%

The data reveal that the most frequently occurring category is Organizations, Customs, Procedures, and Concepts (44%), followed by Material Culture (33%). These results suggest that *People's Religion* is rich in references to Islamic terminology, such as related to religious ritual, customary practices and local Sundanese material artifacts which form the narrative backbone. The prevalence of these categories suggests the translator's challenge in mediating between culturally dense content and target reader accessibility.

To understand the translator's ideological orientation in rendering cultural words from *People's Religion*, this study categorizes the data based on three dominant ideologies: foreignization, domestication, and hybrid. Each ideology reflects a specific stance toward cultural transfer, influenced by the strategies used to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps between the source and target texts as illustrated in the chart below.

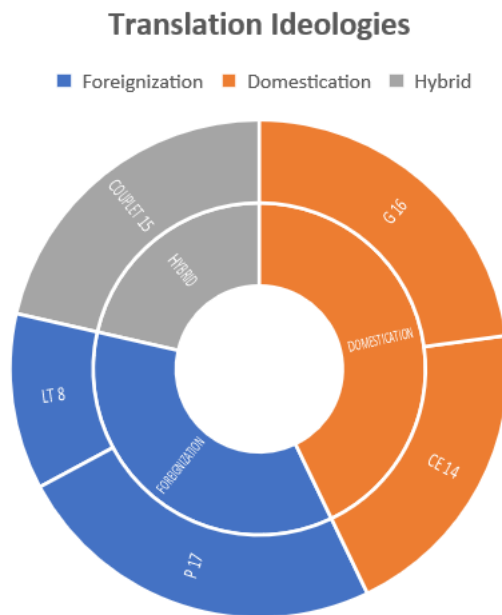


Figure 1 the Application of Translation Ideologies

Based on the sunburst chart above, there are three main ideological orientations applied by translators when translating cultural words in the People's Religion book: foreignization, domesticization, and hybrid approaches. These ideologies are influenced by the specific translation strategies adopted.

First, the orange color indicates the ideology of domestication in 30 data (43%). This is the most used approach for translating cultural terms. First, the ideology of domestication is shown in 30 data (43%). This is the most common way to translate cultural terms. This strategy prioritizes the cultural abilities of the target audience by changing or generalizing certain cultural ideas. As shown in the graph, this ideology is represented by two main strategies: generalization (16 data) and cultural equivalence (14 data). Generalization (G) is the dominant strategy during the domestication process; it transforms rich cultural terms into broader concepts that are more easily understood by the general readers, often resulting in a loss of cultural uniqueness. However, cultural equivalence (CE) allows cultural items to be replaced with comparable cultural items in the target culture that serve the same purpose. This provides readers with an experience that is closer to the culture.

Second, the ideology of foreignization is present in 25 data (36%) colored blue. This shows the translator's intention to preserve the unique culture of the source and resist its

absorption into the target language standard. This ideology aims to introduce readers to new cultural concepts. To maintain authenticity and highlight cultural differences, the preservation strategy (P) includes original cultural terms (such as *gaplek*, *pesantren*, and *santri*) across 17 data sets. However, literal translation (LT), represented in 8 data, translated cultural terms word for word, maintaining a consistent surface structure, even though it sometimes reduced clarity or reader comprehension.

Third, the grey color indicates the application of hybrid ideology in 15 data (21%). This category includes couplet strategies, where two or more strategies are combined to balance accuracy, readability, and cultural retention. This approach represents a negotiated stance between foreignization and domestication, indicating that translation is rarely ideologically rigid and is often shaped by context. The strategies that contribute to this hybrid ideology, such as preservation with addition (6 instances), addition with omission (3 instances), preservation with literal translation (2 instances), generalization with omission (1 instance), preservation with generalization (1 instance), preservation with omission (1 instance), and literal translation with cultural equivalent (1 instance). The above-mentioned cases demonstrate the translator's versatile and practical approach. Consequently, it enables the preservation of cultural nuances while maintaining readability for the reader.

The findings indicate that the translation of cultural terms from Julian Millie's book "People's Religion" is clearly the result of careful negotiation between domestication and foreignization. The translator's decision depends on the audience's purpose and their level of understanding of Indonesian cultural and religious concepts. It can be seen by looking at the specific translation strategies used for cultural terms in the text. The following are examples of data related to the application of ideology in translating each cultural terms category from source language to target language (Sundanese to English).

First, ecology category which essentially needs the translator's cultural sensitivity to render the terms accurately encompasses natural geographical elements such as animals, plants, and landscapes, which differ across regions [7], [17]. In the Sundanese cultures, it includes endemic flora, fauna, geographical features, and landforms or environmental elements that are unique or significant to a particular culture or region. The example below shows the



existence of endemic animals (fauna).

#### Data 43

**SL:** Sieuneun **keuyeup** ge kitu mah. (p.74)

**TL:** Even the **crabs** will be scared! (p.75)

Contextually, the word “keuyeup” is based on a Sundanese word referring to a crab. According to Sundanese dictionary, it belongs to a species of freshwater crab that has a distinct life habit and is more often on land, at the edge of ponds or riverbanks in West Java [18]. As the endemic animal, the animal holds ecological and linguistic specificity in Sundanese culture, and its mention may evoke imagery or associations that are culturally bound. The translator decides to replace by its English equivalent “crabs” in the target text without any added clarification or cultural annotation, making it understandable for the target audience without preserving the cultural-linguistic flavor. Considering how the translator chose to preserve the original meaning of the text without altering it for the target culture's norms, the translation of this text demonstrates the application of the ideology of foreignization at a surface level. The significant simplification and cultural weakening are caused by the removal of elements that preserve culture, such as retaining the word “keuyeup” or including a glossary or footnotes. Even though the translation preserves the semantic truth of the original terms, it eliminates the local flavor and uniqueness of the original terms. To maintain clarity and cultural context integrity, a hybrid approach (e.g., combining the English word “crab” with a short descriptive word such as “Sundanese freshwater crab”) becomes advisable in a more culturally sensitive approach.

Second, material culture represents real artifacts, including local foods, clothing, architecture, settlements, and modes of transportation [7]. In the context of Sundanese culture, it can be further categorized as endemic traditional foods, names of buildings or places, and customary attire. The example of analysis below shows the existence of endemic food.

#### Data 4

**SL:** Moal karasa ngeunahna, lamun urang can ngadahar **sangu gaplek**. (p.18)

**TL:** Won't be able to enjoy it if he hasn't eaten **gaplek rice**. (p.19)

“Gaplek” specifically refers to a traditional Sundanese staple food made from dried cassava. Yet gaplek has significant cultural meaning beyond being a food, particularly among rural Sundanese and Javanese communities, where it is often associated with periods of food

shortages and traditional subsistence practices. Rather than omitting or fully replacing the term with a general equivalent, the translator chooses to preserve the term in the target text. However, the word “rice” is included in the literal explanation of the word “sangu” to help non-Sundanese readers understand it [18]. In this translation, the couplet strategy used combines two approaches: preservation, by retaining the original term “gaplek” to preserve its cultural value, and literal translation, by changing the word ‘sangu’ to “rice” to provide a clear semantic context. Although many of the intended readers are unfamiliar with gaplek, the addition of the word “rice” helps them understand what the term refers to. Therefore, this strategy reflects a hybrid ideology because it does not completely domesticate or alienate the terms; instead, they interact with each other to preserve cultural depth while ensuring that readers understand them.

Third, social culture refers to the endemic customs and practices related to community life involving work, leisure, and interpersonal relationships [7]. Based on the findings, the category includes traditional or religious terms of occupation and leisure activity. The example below shows the existence of Islamic endemic occupation.

#### Data 17

**SL:** *Urang nyalindung we kana katerangan **ulama** gede. (p.40)*

**TL:** Let's turn for help to the explanation given by an important **scholar**. (p.43)

In a religious context, the term “ulama” explicitly refers to respected Islamic scholars who share their deep knowledge of Islam within Muslim communities [19]. Based on the analysis, the culturally and religiously specific term *ulama* is translated as *scholar* in the target text which domestically conveys the general role of a religious intellectual, though the nuance of Islamic scholarship is generalized. Translating the word “ulama” literally as ‘scholar’ leads to a certain level of generalization that eliminates its unique religious and cultural meaning. ‘Scholar’ can refer to any individual involved in academic or intellectual pursuits, whether in history, philosophy, or other unrelated fields [20]. Although the translation is technically correct, it removes important religious characteristics and reduces the cultural and theological meaning of the term “ulama” in the broader context of Islam or Sundanese culture. This case leads to domestication, an attempt to make the concept easier to understand for readers who are less

familiar with Islamic terms. To provide more acceptable meaning, the terms such as “religious leader” or “Islamic scholar” can help readers understand the meaning of its original term. Thus, this choice illustrates how domestication, while making the text more digestible for the target audience, can dilute the richness and fidelity of culturally loaded terms [21].

Fourth, social organization encompasses the endemic customs, procedures, concepts, and practices and may be linked to various domains, including religion, politics, governance, or arts [7], [8]. In the Sundanese context, the example below provides the existence of the endemic religious concept.

#### Data 24

**SL:** *Geus aya puasa fardu.* (p.54)

**TL:** **Compulsory fast** exists. (p.57)

In this case, the term “puasa fardu” refers to an obligatory fasting in Islam, which is usually done during the month of Ramadan. In Islam, the term “fardu” specifically refers to a religious obligation that is divinely ordained [19]. It is considered a literal translation if each phrase is translated directly from the original language into English. The translator disregards the religious and theological meaning of the original phrase. Although the translated phrase is grammatically correct and generally understandable, it is unclear and lacks the necessary cultural nuance, especially for readers with no familiarity with Islamic doctrine. This situation demonstrates how a literal translation, even if it preserves the surface meaning, can diminish both the accuracy and clarity of the message in the target language. In line with Gunawan’s research, it is stated that literal translation often fails to capture the deeper contextual and cultural background of the source language, resulting in a version that is technically correct but not effective in communication [11]. Due to its linguistic proximity to the original text, this method tends to be ideologically foreignized. However, less detailed explanations are needed to bridge cultural differences. This shows that a strict literal translation method has limitations. A more accurate and culturally sensitive translation, such as “obligatory religious fasting” or “Islamic obligatory fasting,” would provide a better explanation of the original term.

Despite some instances of foreignization, the translation of cultural terms in People's Religion shows a tendency toward domestication. This shows that translators tend to prioritize

readability and cultural appropriateness for the target audience while aiming to preserve relevant cultural aspects of the source text if needed. According to Hatim and Mason's framework of critical discourse analysis [15], translation is never ideologically neutral. In other words, this process does not only serve as a linguistic act; it also works as a discourse that reveals the relationship between cultural stance, social ideology, and power. Here, the translator seems to have used a target-oriented approach to adapt the text to the cultural norms and beliefs of the target readers.

Each lexical or syntactic choice reveals a certain orientation, whether adhering to the cultural context of the original or adapting to the norms and expectations of the target audience. The prevalent use of domestication strategies, especially generalization and cultural equivalence, demonstrates an inclination toward reducing cultural distance. For example, generalization involves translating words such as "ulama" into "scholars." Although this makes the target audience more accessible, it remains weakening to the specific Islamic aspect. Ideologically, the translator's stance becomes clear when they attempt to adapt the original term to the cultural and ideological context of the intended audience. To expand access or meet the expectations of global readers, unfamiliar cultural references are often simplified or replaced for clarity. Such a choice supports the idea that translation can reconstruct discourse by adapting or neutralizing ideological meaning. This tendency toward domestication mirrors findings in the study of Islamic cultural terms [22], [23], where most translations used generalization and cultural equivalents to make texts more accessible for non-Muslim international readers. This shows that domestication can help inclusive communication without sacrificing cultural uniqueness.

In contrast, there are 25 cases of foreignization where the translator chooses to preserve or translate literally, demonstrating a clear commitment to maintaining the cultural uniqueness of the original text. This involves actively striving to preserve the cultural identity of the original rather than incorporating all elements into the target culture. Such method is considered an anti-hegemonic approach because it opposes the dominant language standards in the target and prioritizes the cultural context of the source text. Some examples include keeping terms like *keuyeup* or *santri* with preservation and literal translation. The retention of such terms enables

readers to understand the cultural characteristics of Sundanese-Islam though it requires more effort to comprehend them. Such cases align with the research of Syihabuddin and Aryanti [12], who argued that preserving original terms can denote an ideological choice to assert minority voices and maintain cultural visibility in translation.

Last, the use of hybrid strategies (15 examples) demonstrates the translator's careful approach where clarity and authenticity are balanced. The Couplet strategy, such as combining preservation and addition (like *gaplek rice*), are often used under this hybrid ideology to maintain cultural identity while providing clarity.

While translating, a translator effectively balances the preservation of cultural nuances with the reader's need for readability by using a combination of preservation and addition or shifting between literal translation and cultural equivalence. These choices reflect a subtle discursive awareness; decisions are rarely binary and depend on context, communication goals, and the intended audience. In fact, translators act as mediators within the text in this hybrid framework to interact with discursive power dynamics and ideological influences beyond the language itself. This is consistent with previous research, which found that foreignization and domestication methods were used to translate religious words and phrases in Arabic novels [24]. Hybrid strategies demonstrate an adaptive approach in which translators combine two strategies according to the requirements of each situation rather than fully domesticating.

The translator's philosophical position varies based on cultural terms, the knowledge of the target audience, and the general sociocultural purpose of the text. This position varies depending on the situation. Even though domestication is the most used method, the significant use of foreignization and hybridization approaches shows that translators are committed to preserving cultural nuances and complexities. Rather than being a neutral act, this balance supports Hatim and Mason's view that translation is an ideologically loaded work, where decisions reflect deeper considerations about intercultural communication, identity, and power. Compared to previous research, this ideological approach is in line with Ebrahimi's findings [25]. He argued that domestication dominated religious-cultural translations of Persian Islamic texts with the aim of reducing misunderstandings among readers worldwide. Meanwhile, Abdo [26] reported that literary translations involved a stronger process of foreignization, which prioritized

preserving cultural authenticity. This contradicts Ebrahimi's findings. This contrast demonstrates that the intended audience and the type of text significantly shape the ideology of a translation. Consequently, the translator's decisions reveal a clear awareness of the ideological consequences of language choice.

## Conclusion

In Julian Millie's book "People's Religion," the translator employs domestication, foreignization, and/or a combination of both based on findings and discussions. This context-sensitive hybrid approach allows the translator to balance cultural loyalty with reader accessibility. This shows that cultural texts are always translated in different ways, indicating that the ideology in translation is not always fixed, but changes depending on the culture, text, and audience.

This study enhances our understanding of how translation strategies reveal and shape ideological positions, especially when translating religious and culturally rich texts. In-depth analysis shows that the translator of People's Religion predominantly uses domestication strategies when translating cultural terms. This is reflected in the frequent use of generalization and cultural equivalence strategies, which demonstrate a clear intention to facilitate the target reader's understanding. It often changes certain cultural expressions into more familiar concepts, although this sometimes causes the source text to become less cultural. However, foreignization, especially in literal translation and preservation methods, shows the translator's efforts to retain cultural elements from the original text to maintain the level of cultural authenticity in the translated work. This shows recognition of the cultural value of the source and an effort to introduce or preserve cultural nuances for the target audience. The hybrid approach, on the other hand, shows a more flexible and adaptable attitude, indicating that the translator is deeply involved with the context, audience expectations, and cultural relevance.

In short, the critical discourse framework developed by Hatim and Mason demonstrates that translators' awareness is crucial in selecting appropriate strategies that align with communicative goals and cultural sensitivities. Any future studies should look at the quality

assessment of translations related to these ideological choices or compare ideological shifts among different religious texts. As a result, a better understanding of translation ideology can help intercultural communication and preserve cultural diversity in global discourse.

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