



The Impact of Environmental Change on Religion and Beliefs of the Baduy Community

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the impact of environmental changes on the religion and beliefs of the Baduy community in Banten. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, this research was conducted in the Baduy Dalam and Baduy Luar regions over six months. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings show that environmental changes such as deforestation, climate change, and urbanization have significant impacts on the religious practices and customs of the Baduy people. Despite facing considerable environmental pressures, the Baduy community exhibits high flexibility and resilience in maintaining their traditions. They have developed adaptation patterns by adjusting rituals, adopting sustainable agricultural practices, and wisely using modern technology. External support from policymakers and non-governmental organizations also plays a crucial role in helping the Baduy community overcome these challenges. The conclusions of this study underscore the importance of policies that support environmental conservation and cultural preservation to maintain a balance between modernization and the sustainability of traditions. This research provides theoretical contributions to cultural ecology and modernization theories, enriching the literature on cultural adaptation in indigenous communities. Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies and closer collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and indigenous communities.

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INTRODUCTION

The Baduy people in Banten, Indonesia, are known as an indigenous community with a unique and profound belief system and religious practices. They uphold the customs and ancestral beliefs that have been passed down for generations. However, in the context of rapid globalization and modernization, this community faces great challenges related to changes in the physical and social environment, which have the potential to affect their belief structures and practices, as well as change their way of life and cultural identity.

The basic concept of this research involves an in-depth understanding of the function of religion and belief in traditional societies. According to Durkheim (1912), religion functions as a belief system that organizes norms and values within a community (Salihu & Baidoo, 2024). In the context of the Baduy community, their religion and beliefs not only serve as a moral foundation, but also

as a guide in daily life, as seen from the practice of customary rituals, religious ceremonies, and strict social rules.

The cultural ecology theory proposed by Julian Steward (1955) is relevant in this study, which states that the interaction between humans and their environment creates unique cultural adaptation patterns (Sutton & Anderson, 2024). In this case, environmental changes such as deforestation, climate change, and urbanization can affect the religious practices and beliefs of the Baduy community. In addition, the theoretical approach of Clifford Geertz (1973) sees religion as a symbol system that provides meaning and understanding of the world for its adherents, where environmental changes can change these symbols and shift the meaning contained in them (Lee, 2012).

Anthony Giddens' (1990) modernization theory is also relevant to understand how the modernization process can change the social structure and beliefs of society (Braslavskiy, 2023). Modernization often brings technological and economic changes that threaten the sustainability of local traditions and beliefs (Aswani et al., 2018). In the context of the Baduy community, the entry of modern technology and the penetration of outside culture pose a serious threat to the sustainability of their religious beliefs and practices.

The main problem faced by the Baduy community is how they can maintain their religious beliefs and practices in the midst of rapid environmental changes. These changes include deforestation that threatens their natural resources, as well as outside cultural penetration that erodes their values and customs, placing the Baduy community at the crossroads between maintaining ancestral traditions and adapting to changing times. Recent research has shown the impact of environmental change on indigenous communities. Dove (2006) found that deforestation in Kalimantan had a significant impact on the religious practices of the Dayak people (Michael, R., 2006), while Lansing and Kremer (1993) showed that changes in traditional irrigation systems in Bali affected their religious ceremonies (Lansing & Fox, 2011). These studies confirm that environmental change can profoundly affect the social and religious structures of indigenous communities.

The state of the art in this research also includes a study by Syapri Aprianti Aprianti et. al (2023) on the impact of modernization on the Baduy community (Aprianti et al., 2023). Aprianti found that although the Baduy community tried hard to maintain their traditions, outside influences through education and modern technology began to change some aspects of their lives. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the internal dynamics of indigenous communities in the context of changes in the external environment.

Although various studies have examined the impact of environmental change on indigenous communities (Chairuman, 2024), there is still a research gap in understanding in detail how specific environmental changes, such as deforestation and urbanization, affect the religious aspects and beliefs of the Baduy community. Previous studies focus more on the impact of environmental change on social and economic practices, but have not comprehensively explored the transformation of religious beliefs and practices of the Baduy community in response to complex environmental pressures. This research aims to fill the gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the interaction between environmental change and belief dynamics in the context of Baduy community in Banten.

This research aims to understand the impact of environmental change on the beliefs and religious practices of the Baduy community in Banten, by identifying the most influential environmental factors and how the Baduy community responds to these changes. The result of this research is expected to provide in-depth insight into cultural adaptation in facing environmental change. The urgency of this research lies in the effort to document and preserve the unique cultural richness of Baduy community. The significance of this research is important for academics and researchers, as well as policy makers in maintaining cultural and environmental sustainability. By understanding the impact of environmental change on religion and belief of

Baduy community, it is expected that an effective strategy can be formulated to support the sustainability of their tradition in the midst of changing times.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative design (Prashant, Kumar, 2013) with a case study approach to explore the influence of environmental change on the religion and beliefs of the Baduy community in Banten. The research will be conducted for six months, from January to June 2024, in the Baduy community area, which includes Baduy Dalam and Baduy Luar. The case study approach (Crowe et al., 2011) was chosen because it allows in-depth and holistic analysis of complex phenomena in the context of Baduy community life, which is known to uphold their ancestral customs and beliefs.

Data collection methods in this study include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation (Roque et al., 2023) will allow researchers to directly experience and record religious practices and community responses to environmental changes. In-depth interviews will be conducted with key informants, including traditional leaders, community leaders, and community members who have in-depth knowledge of their religious beliefs and practices. Document analysis (Kutsyuruba, 2023) will be used to review local literature, historical records and official documents related to environmental change and its impacts.

The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis (Squires, 2023), which involves the process of identifying main themes, and in-depth interpretation to understand the patterns and relationships between environmental changes and the dynamics of Baduy community beliefs. With this method, it is expected that this research can provide a comprehensive and in-depth insight into cultural adaptation related to the beliefs of the Baduy community in facing environmental changes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Environmental Change on the Belief Structure of Baduy Community

Significant environmental changes have been observed in the Baduy community area, including deforestation, urbanization, and climate change (Khanifah & Handoyo, 2023). Deforestation, which is caused by deforestation for agricultural land and development, results in the reduction of forests that are an integral part of the spiritual and cultural life of the Baduy community. Increasing urbanization brings the influx of outside cultural influences, especially few in Outer Baduy area, many in Panamping Baduy area, and none in Inner Baduy area (Saragih et al., 2023). Meanwhile, climate change is altering weather patterns and seasons, affecting traditional farming practices that rely on traditional calendars (J. Iskandar & Iskandar, 2016).

The impact of this environmental change on the religious beliefs of the Baduy community is very real. In the context of Clifford Geertz's theory, the transformation of symbols and meanings in beliefs (Fonseca, 2023) can be seen from the changes in the way Baduy people understand and perform their religious rituals. Forests that were previously considered sacred and the abode of ancestral spirits are now threatened by illegal logging, especially by non-Baduy communities bordering the Baduy tribe (Saragih et al., 2023). Religious symbols associated with nature are losing their relevance due to physical changes in the environment.

In addition, Durkheim's theory explains that religion functions as a system that regulates norms and values in a community (Neuhouser, 2022). The shift of norms and values in Baduy community can be observed through the change of their perspective towards customs and beliefs. Modernization and urbanization bring new values that often contradict the old tradition. For example, the use of modern technology and wider access to information cause the young generation of Baduy to be more open to outside ideas, which in turn changes their views on customary values and spirituality embraced by their ancestors (Suartha, 2021).

Changes in the environment also affect the daily religious practices of the Baduy community. Rituals that used to be performed with full belief in the blessings of nature have now begun to adapt to the changing environmental conditions. For example, ceremonies related to agriculture must now consider seasonal changes due to the uncertain climate. This shows how Baduy community tries to maintain their beliefs while adjusting to the changing environmental reality.

Furthermore, the interaction between environmental change and cultural adaptation of Baduy community creates a new unique adaptation pattern. According to Julian Steward, this adaptation pattern is the community's response to the environmental changes they face (Drolet, 2021). In the case of the Baduy, such adaptations include changes in the way they manage their agricultural land, more flexible religious practices, and efforts to keep the remaining forests as part of their cultural and spiritual heritage.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that environmental change has a profound impact on the belief structure and religious practices of Baduy community. Although they strive to maintain their traditions and customs, the reality of environmental changes forces them to adapt and change some aspects of their beliefs. Shifting symbols and meanings, changing norms and values, and emerging cultural adaptation patterns illustrate the complex dynamics faced by the Baduy community in maintaining their identity and beliefs in the midst of changing times.

Cultural Adaptation of Baduy Community to Environmental Change

Baduy community shows various patterns of cultural adaptation as a response to the environmental changes they face. Based on Julian Steward's Cultural Ecology Theory, this community develops a unique adaptation pattern to maintain their life sustainability in a changing environmental condition (Sutton & Anderson, 2024). Adaptation to deforestation, for example, is seen through the efforts of the Baduy community in implementing more sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. They adopt agroforestry techniques (Jeyanny Vijayanathan et al., 2022) by planting wood for shelter, rice, bananas, and other fruiting plants that allow them to keep the forest as an integral part of their lives, while still fulfilling their agricultural needs.

The response to climate change also shows significant adaptation. Climate change that results in uncertainty of seasons and weather patterns forces the Baduy community to adjust their farming practices, while still adhering to the Baduy ancestral customs of adherence. The Baduy community has adjusted their farming practices while still maintaining their ancestral traditions through social forestry initiatives. As part of this group, 124 Baduy farmers have gained access to manage the forest and share the profits from the sale of social forest products. This adaptation allows them to fulfill their food needs despite unstable income from agriculture. The close relationship with nature and the sale of forest products help their food security without sacrificing traditional customs. Thus, the Baduy community has successfully adapted their agricultural practices while still maintaining their ancestral heritage (Utami et al., 2023). This shows their flexibility in facing the challenges of a dynamic environment, while still maintaining the agricultural traditions passed down by their ancestors.

Adjustment to urbanization and modernization is also part of the adaptation strategy of Baduy community. Referring to Anthony Giddens' Modernization Theory, Baduy community begins to adapt to the entry of modern technology and information into their lives (Aprianti et al., 2023). However, they still try to maintain a balance between the adoption of modern technology and the preservation of traditional values. For example, they use communication technology to connect with the outside world, but still maintain the traditional practices that are their identity.

Case studies in Inner Baduy and Outer Baduy communities show specific variations of adaptation. The Inner Baduy community, which is more closed and conservative, tends to maintain traditions more strictly and shows greater resistance to environmental change. They apply strict customary rules in managing forests and agricultural land, and keep a distance from outside influences (Hakiki, 2011). In contrast, the Outer Baduy community is more open to innovation and change. They are more flexible in adopting new technologies and more modern agricultural strategies, while still maintaining some traditional elements in their daily life practices (Hakiki, 2015).

Specific adaptation in Baduy community is also seen in the way they adjust to local and global economic dynamics. The Inner Baduy community, for example, relies more on subsistence farming (Mirajiani & Widi, 2022), while the Outer Baduy starts to engage in the local market and develop

handicraft products that have economic value (Muharram et al., 2022). This shows how these two communities developed different adaptation strategies according to their social and environmental contexts.

Baduy community's cultural adaptation to environmental change involves a combination of tradition preservation and innovation. The adaptation patterns they develop not only reflect their ability to survive in changing environmental conditions, but also demonstrate the dynamism and flexibility of their culture. By understanding these adaptation strategies, it has provided a deeper insight into how indigenous communities like the Baduy can face environmental challenges while still maintaining their cultural identity.

Religious Practices and Customary Rituals in the Midst of Environmental Change

Religious practices and customary rituals of Baduy community experience various changes along with the environmental changes that occur. Direct observation of ritual practices shows that some traditional rituals are maintained, while others undergo adjustments. Important rituals such as "Seba," where the Baduy community gives crops to the government as a form of respect, are still practiced with enthusiasm (Hakiki et al., 2020). However, some rituals related to the agricultural cycle, such as "Ngaseuk" (planting rice), have undergone adjustments in the timing of implementation due to changes in seasonal patterns due to climate change (B. S. Iskandar et al., 2018).

Environmental factors that influence this change include deforestation, climate change, and urbanization. Deforestation that reduces the forest area forces the Baduy community to move to outer Baduy to adjust the sacred places used in rituals (B. S. Iskandar et al., 2018). Climate change, which causes seasonal uncertainty, also changes the schedule and manner in which agricultural rituals are performed (J. Iskandar & Iskandar, 2016). Urbanization brings the influx of technology and outside cultural influences, which affect the younger generation's perspective on religious traditions and practices, such as adherence to the *pikukuh* or customary rules of Baduy (Santa Lorita Simamora & Rizki Briandana, 2021).

In-depth interviews with key informants, including traditional leaders and community members, provided valuable insights into their perceptions of these changes. Traditional leaders stated that despite pressures from environmental changes, they strive to maintain the essence of ancestral rituals and beliefs. One traditional leader said, "*Kami berusaha menjaga tradisi ini karena ini adalah warisan leluhur kami. Perubahan lingkungan membuat kami harus menyesuaikan beberapa aspek, tetapi inti dari kepercayaan kami tetap sama. (We try to keep this tradition as it is our ancestral heritage. Changes in the environment mean we have to adjust some aspects, but the core of our beliefs remain the same).*"¹

Baduy youth leaders also expressed the same view on adaptation. They expressed "*Kami sekarang harus lebih fleksibel dengan waktu dan cara kami melaksanakan ritual. Teknologi membantu kami berkomunikasi lebih baik, tetapi kami harus berhati-hati agar tidak kehilangan nilai-nilai yang diajarkan oleh leluhur kami.*" (*We now have to be more flexible with our timing and how we perform rituals. Technology helps us communicate better, but we have to be careful not to lose the values taught by our ancestors*). This view reflects the Baduy community's awareness of the need for adaptation while still adhering to traditional values.²

Thematic analysis of the interviews shows that there are main themes that emerge, namely protection of cultural identity and flexibility in adaptation. The Baduy community shows a collective effort to maintain their cultural identity amidst environmental changes. They develop a flexible approach that allows them to adapt to changes without sacrificing the essence of their *luluhur* religious beliefs and practices, which are depicted in the oral teachings of *Pikukuh*.

The existence of Baduy community groups into Inner Baduy, Outer Baduy, Panamping Baduy is a clear evidence of the changes in the side of Baduy community life, including the difference in the level of compliance with Baduy's ancestral beliefs (Hakiki, 2011). Religious practices and

¹ Interview with one of Puun Baduy (Baduy traditional leader), March 3, 2024.

² Interview with a Baduy youth leader, March 10, 2024.

customary rituals of the Baduy community have undergone changes in response to environmental changes. Although there are adjustments in the implementation of rituals, the essence and meaning of their beliefs are still maintained (Hakiki, 2015). This adaptation reflects the ability of the Baduy community to innovate and survive amidst challenges, while still maintaining a rich and profound cultural heritage. This research provides important insights into the dynamics of cultural adaptation in indigenous communities facing significant environmental pressures.

The Dilemma of Modernization and the Sustainability of Tradition

The Baduy community faces a big dilemma in maintaining their traditions in the midst of increasingly strong modernization (Aprianti et al., 2023). The main challenge they face is the impact of modern technology and the penetration of outside cultures into their communities. Modern technology, such as mobile phones and the internet (Adrian & Briandana, 2023), has changed the way communication and interaction among community members, especially the younger generation (Setijadi, 2023). Information and outside cultures that are increasingly accessible through technology have begun to influence the way they view the traditional values of their ancestors.

The conflict between the need to adapt to the changing times and the effort to preserve the customs becomes increasingly apparent. On one hand, modernization brings economic opportunities and wider access to information, which can improve the quality of life of Baduy community (Khaeruman et al., 2022). On the other hand, however, there are concerns that adaptation to modernization may erode the cultural values and religious practices that have long been their identity. The younger generation, in particular, is at a crossroads between maintaining their cultural heritage and pursuing the advancements offered by the modern world.

To maintain the sustainability of tradition, Baduy community has made various local efforts. One of the initiatives taken is by way of habituation to obey the ancestral teachings (pikukuh) both when living in Baduy or outside Baduy. This habituation is done from an early age until they grow up (Sumawijaya et al., 2020). This method aims to instill cultural and religious values to the younger generation from an early age. Through this method, it is hoped that the younger generation can understand and appreciate their ancestral heritage, so that they can preserve it in the midst of modernization (A'la et al., 2023). In addition, the Baduy community also continues to carry out various rituals and traditional ceremonies that are an integral part of their lives, although in some cases adjustments are made in accordance with changing environmental conditions.

External support and the role of government policy also play an important role in efforts to preserve the traditions of the Baduy community (Alfira & Uekita, 2023). Government policies that support the protection of indigenous peoples' rights and sustainable environmental management are necessary to maintain a balance between modernization and preservation of traditions. Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGO) can contribute by providing platforms for dialogue between indigenous peoples and the outside world, as well as providing technical and financial assistance for cultural preservation initiatives.

This cooperation between Baduy community and external parties is becoming increasingly important in facing the challenges of modernization. The right support can help the Baduy community develop adaptation strategies that allow them to retain their cultural identity, while benefiting from advances in technology and information. For example, economic empowerment programs based on local wisdom can help Baduy people improve their welfare without having to sacrifice traditional values.

The dilemma of modernization and tradition sustainability in Baduy community is not an easy thing to overcome. However, with a wise adaptation strategy and strong support from various parties, Baduy community can find a way to keep their tradition alive in the midst of changing times. Successful adaptation will not only help them survive in the face of environmental and social challenges, but also enrich the cultural heritage that is an integral part of their identity.

Comparison with Related Studies

This study provides deep insights into how environmental changes affect the religion and beliefs of the Baduy community in Banten, and how they adapt to these changes. A comparative analysis with Dove's (2006) research on Dayak communities shows some significant similarities and differences (Michael, R., 2006). Dove found that deforestation in Kalimantan has had a major impact on the religious practices of the Dayak people, as the forest is central to many of their rites and beliefs. Similar to our findings, the Baduy also experienced changes in their religious practices due to deforestation. However, the Baduy showed different patterns of adaptation, such as the development of agroforestry practices to maintain the sustainability of their forests and farmlands.

Lansing and Kremer's (1993) study of changes in irrigation in Bali also offers an interesting perspective for comparison. Lansing and Kremer examined how changes in traditional irrigation systems in Bali affected religious ceremonies associated with agriculture. They found that changes in irrigation technology had both positive and negative impacts on religious ceremonies (Lansing & Fox, 2011). In the context of Baduy community, environmental changes, particularly climate change and urbanization, force them to adjust the time and way of performing agricultural rituals. Despite the adjustments, the Baduy still try to maintain the essence of their rituals, similar to the efforts of the Balinese studied by Lansing and Kremer.

In addition, a comparison with Dove's (2006) study reveals that Dayak adaptation to deforestation involves changes in rituals that use forest resources. For example, certain rituals that require materials from the forest must be adapted to the availability of these materials (Michael, R., 2006). The Baduy also experience similar challenges, but they respond by emphasizing the importance of forest conservation and using sustainable agricultural practices. This shows that although both communities face the same threats, their adaptive responses may vary depending on their cultural and environmental context.

Furthermore, findings from Lansing and Kremer's (1993) research suggest that technological modernization does not necessarily threaten the sustainability of religious traditions, but can create new forms of adaptation that facilitate their survival (Lansing & Fox, 2011). In Baduy community, modernization and urbanization force them to balance between maintaining tradition and accepting new technology. The younger generation of Baduy, for example, has started using modern communication technology to strengthen community networks and disseminate information about their customs. This shows that modernization can be a useful tool for cultural preservation if used wisely.

Although there are differences in context and adaptive responses, both Dove's (2006) and Lansing and Kremer's (1993) studies underline the importance of cultural flexibility in dealing with environmental changes. In this study, the Baduy community shows the same flexibility by adjusting their religious practices without losing the core of their beliefs. They show how cultural adaptation can go hand in hand with tradition preservation, a lesson that can be applied to other indigenous communities facing similar challenges.

Overall, the comparison with related studies shows that although each indigenous community has unique contexts and challenges, there are common patterns in how they adapt to environmental change. Flexibility, innovation in traditional practices, and wise use of technology are key strategies that enable indigenous communities, including the Baduy, to maintain their cultural identity amidst dynamic environmental changes. These findings confirm the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in understanding and supporting the cultural sustainability of indigenous communities around the world.

Implications of Research Findings

The findings of this research have significant theoretical implications, especially in its contribution to cultural ecology theory and modernization theory. By observing how Baduy community responds to environmental change through innovative cultural adaptation, this research enriches the theory of cultural ecology proposed by Julian Steward. The adaptation pattern found in Baduy community shows that the interaction between human and their environment

creates a dynamic and contextual cultural response. This research also makes an important contribution to modernization theory by highlighting how traditional communities can adapt to technology and social change without losing their cultural identity, supporting Anthony Giddens' view of modernization as a process that does not completely erode tradition.

In addition, this research enriches the literature on cultural adaptation and indigenous peoples' beliefs by providing an in-depth case study of the Baduy community. The findings show how indigenous people can maintain their religious beliefs and practices amid significant environmental pressures. Thus, this research adds new insights in understanding the dynamics of indigenous peoples' beliefs and how they adapt to external changes. This literature can be an important reference for other researchers interested in exploring similar topics in other indigenous communities.

The practical implications of this research are also highly relevant for policy makers who play a role in supporting cultural preservation. This research underscores the need for policies that support environmental conservation and the protection of indigenous peoples' rights. Policymakers need to develop programs that not only focus on economic development but also consider cultural and environmental sustainability. For example, policies that encourage sustainable agricultural practices and community-based forest management can help the Baduy community maintain a balance between modernization and preservation of their traditions.

For the Baduy community, this research provides practical strategies in dealing with environmental changes. One of the main recommendations is the importance of continuous indigenous education for the younger generation. Through education that emphasizes traditional values and ancestral beliefs, the young generation of Baduy can be prepared to be the guardians of their culture in the future. In addition, selective and wise adoption of technology can help them overcome environmental challenges without sacrificing their cultural identity.

Another strategy that can be adopted by the Baduy community is to strengthen community networks and cooperation with external organizations. By building alliances with NGOs and research institutions, Baduy community can obtain technical and financial support for cultural and environmental preservation programs. Initiatives such as culture-based ecotourism programs can also be an additional source of income as well as a means to introduce and preserve their cultural heritage to the outside world.

Overall, the implication of this research finding shows that although Baduy community faces great challenges due to environmental changes, they have the capacity to adapt and maintain their traditions. Proper support from policy makers and cooperation with external organizations can strengthen their efforts in facing these challenges. This research confirms the importance of a holistic approach that combines ecological, cultural, and social aspects in designing effective and sustainable conservation strategies for indigenous communities such as the Baduy.

CONCLUSIONS

This research reveals that environmental changes, including deforestation, climate change, and urbanization, have a significant impact on the religious beliefs and practices of the Baduy community in Banten. The main findings show that the Baduy community has developed various adaptation patterns to maintain their traditions, despite facing great environmental pressures. They adjust the time and way of performing rituals, adopt sustainable agricultural practices, and utilize modern technology wisely to maintain the essence of their beliefs. This study also found that the young generation of Baduy began to be open to outside influences, but still tried to maintain their cultural identity.

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that Baduy community shows high flexibility and resilience in facing environmental changes. Their cultural adaptation reflects their ability to integrate modern elements without sacrificing traditional values. This research also shows that external support from policy makers and non-governmental organizations is crucial in helping Baduy community overcome this challenge. Policies that support environmental conservation and

cultural preservation can provide a stronger framework for indigenous communities to maintain their heritage amidst the current of modernization.

For further research, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted on other indigenous communities to understand different adaptation patterns in the face of environmental changes. Longitudinal research is also needed to monitor long-term changes in the religious and cultural practices of the Baduy community. In addition, collaboration between researchers, policy makers, and indigenous communities should be strengthened to design more effective preservation strategies. For the Baduy community, it is important to continue developing indigenous education and strengthen cooperation networks with external organizations. Appropriate technical and financial support can help them face environmental challenges while still maintaining their rich cultural identity.

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