Javanese Woman’s Struggle for Belief in Okky Madasari’s *Entrok* (Brassiere)

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ABSTRACT

Women in Indonesia have long struggled for the better life. The struggle has been started from the colonial period. They struggled for getting freedom, getting education, and getting better economic life. This article concerns with Javanese woman’s struggle for belief in Okky Madasari’s *Entrok*. Okky is one of the woman writers in Indonesia. She has won Khatulistiwa Literary Award, a prestigious award for writers in Indonesia. Sumarni, a Javanese woman, the main character in Okky’s *Entrok*, struggled for her belief, Javanism, among the Moslems community. Javanism is the belief of the Javanese people which is not the religion stated by the government. This article gives the description how Sumarni performs the rituals in Javanism and how Sumarni struggles towards the familial and surrounding objection for believing in Javanism. Sociological literary concept is used to see the reflection of the community in this novel. The result shows that Sumarni still convinces with her belief although her surrounding doesn’t support her and oppose her. Her struggle is performed based on her culture and belief. It is not physical struggle but it is rather than soft struggle. She shows to the society that her belief is good by performing good attitude and deeds to them.

Keywords: Javanese woman, Kejawen (Javanism), woman's struggle.

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1.0 Introduction

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Talking about the struggle especially for women in Indonesia, it has been done since a long time ago. The most famous woman for the struggle is Kartini. Kartini was a Javanese woman who struggled for the freedom by writing letters to her friends in Netherland. At that time, women were not allowed to go to school. They just stayed at home waiting for a man to marry them. Kartini struggled this through her letters. In Indonesia, 21st April is celebrated as Kartini’s day as the symbol of the women struggle in Indonesia (http://www.portalsejarah.com/sejarah-singkat-perjuangan-ra-kartini-semasa-hidupnya.html).

During the colonial period, there were some women heroes who fought the colony. The women’s struggle in Indonesia have been long performed in many places for many purposes. They struggle for a better life, to be accepted in the society, and to be in the same level as men. This article concerns with the woman’s struggle for belief. The belief discussed here is Javanism, a belief by the Javanese people.

At first glance, Javanism, the ancient Indonesian spiritual practice, looks as though it has leapt from the pages of a classic fable. Ritual dances, large-scale mounds of fruits and vegetables hoisted on the shoulders of men in embroidered and ornate costumes, and animal sacrifices all round out the perfect picture. But beyond that is the heart of a philosophy steeped in achieving harmony and balance. Beyond a religion like Hinduism or Buddhism, Javanism represents a lifestyle. Animals are part of a routine sacrifice meant to bring about wealth (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/insight/wp/2014/10/17/blood-balance-and-sacrificial-offerings-the-spiritual-practice-of-javanism-in-indonesia/).

The Javanism also believe in their ancestors. It is stated that the dominant religion in Indonesia is Moslem and the tribe is Javanese. The Javanese are predominantly Muslim, though many are Catholic or Protestant, and many Chinese in Java and elsewhere are Christian, mainly Protestant. The Javanese are noted for a less strict adherence to Islam and a greater orientation to Javanese religion, a mixture of Islam and previous Hindu and animist beliefs (http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Indonesia.html#ixzz44VlSodAN). This belief is called Kejawen or Javanism.

This article discusses Sumarni’s struggle for her belief, Javanism. The belief of Javanism is performed by Sumarni, the main character in Okky Madasari’s novel Entrok. Novel Entrok, the first novel by Okky Madasari, was published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in April 2010. Her first novel Entrok, an epic about life under totalitarian and militarism during the Indonesia’s New Order era, has been translated into English and was published in July 2013 under the title of The Years of the Voiceless (http://idwriters.com/writers/okky-madasari/).

Entrok tells about the diversity of beliefs and arbitrariness of the military during the New Era. This novel tells the story of a mother and daughter who live in very different realms of thought (http://okkymadasari.net/category/entrok/).

Sumarni, the mother, is a javanese woman who lives in Central Java. Sumarni is uneducated, and ancestor worshipper. Her daughter, Rahayu, is a young woman who goes to school, has logical thinking, and a Moslem. The difference makes them feel strangers to one another. Sumarni considers her daughter does not have a soul because of her daughter forgets about the ancestors. Whereas Rahayu, considers her mother Sumarni as a sinner for worshiping ancestors.

This story is placed in the background of the Java community during 1950-1994. During that period, Islam had spread out in Indonesia. Many of the Javanese had left Javanism and became Moslem. The culture and the society have influenced the writer in writing this novel (http://novelentrok.blogspot.co.id/). As social being, Okky as the writer is always influenced by sociological background in the form of social structure. The social structure is the overall link between the basic elements, namely social norms, social institutions, social groups and social strata. Sukri (2001: 16) says the social process is a mutual influence between the economic, political, legal, religious, and so
on. So in the creation of literary works, authors will not be separated from social influences around him. Humans who are in the literature (characters) behave such as human behavior in the real world. They hold social interaction and social processes then a good story grows. She herself wrote in her blog that she was inspired by her grandmother in creating this novel.

It is obviously correct that sociology of literature approach applied in this article. The sociology of literature is a specialized area of study which focuses its attention upon the relation between a literary work and the social structure in which it is created. It reveals that the existence of a literary creation has the determined social situations. As there is a reciprocal relationship between a literary phenomena and social structure.

Sociological study of literature proves very useful to understand the socioeconomic situations, political issues, the world view and creativity of the writers, the system of the social and political organizations, the relations between certain thoughts and cultural configurations in which they occur and determinants of a literary work.

Sociology of literature is the reflective research branch of literature. This theory is much in demand by researchers who want to see literature as a reflection of people's lives. Social life will lead to the birth of a literary work. Many sociological researches discuss the relationship between the author and his social life. Both aspects of the form and content of the work will be shaped by the atmosphere and the social power of a given period. In this case, the literary text is seen as a reflection of the times, as a witness of time. Aspects of imagination and manipulation remain in literature which is also the social aspect that can not be ignored.

Sociology of literature has grown rapidly since studies by utilizing the theory of structuralism considered stagnant. Analysis of structuralism is disregarding the public which is precisely the origin of the making of literature. The literary works must be enabled together with aspects of other cultures, then the only way is back into the middle of society. Understanding is as an integral part of the overall communication system.

Sociology of literature is the research focused on human problems. Because literature often expresses the struggle of mankind in determining its future, imagination, feeling, and intuition. From this view, it appears that the long struggle of human life will always color the Indonesian literary texts. Sociological analysis of literature gives great attention to the functions of literature and literature as a particular society. Consequently, as a reciprocal, literary works should provide input, the benefits, the social structures that produce it (Ratna, 2009: 11).

This article focuses on how Sumarni performs Javanism among the familial and surrounding objection to her belief. The familial objection comes from her only daughter, Rahayu. The surrounding objection comes from her neighbors who mostly are Moslem. Sumarni who believes in Javanism must struggle for her belief among the Moslems community. The community doesn’t allow her to perform her belief. She also gets problems with her only daughter, Rahayu. Rahayu is a Moslem and she doesn’t like to know that her mother believes in Javanism. She tries to make her mother Moslem but Sumarni really convinces with her belief. She struggles by performing good attitude and deeds to everyone who offends her belief. She struggles in a soft way not physically. She wants to show that what she believes is good and right.

2.0 Javanism and Sumarni

The word "Javanism" comes from the Javanese word, a noun which is related to the customs and beliefs of Java (Javaneseness). Javanism is the belief and their way of life that emphasizes on Java inner peace, harmony and balance. In the general context, Javanism is part of the local religion in
Indonesia. Javanism in public opinion contains about art, culture, traditions, rituals, attitudes, as well as the philosophy of the people of Java. Javanism also means spiritualism of the Javanese people.

Javanism philosophy does not usually consider teaching as a religion in the sense as the monotheistic religions, such as Islam, Hindu, or Christian, but more as a set of perspectives and values which are accompanied by a number of behavior. Javanism Doctrines usually do not glued to the strict rules, and emphasizes the concept of balance. In view of this, Javanism has similarities with Confucianism or Taoism (Yana, 2012: 110).

Javanism Doctrines vary and adopt the teachings of immigrants, whether Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian. It is estimated that these elements come from the Hindu-Buddhist period in the history of Java, which blend into a philosophy, namely the special system of the basis for the conduct of life. Systems thinking Javanism are complete in him, which contains kosmoslogi, mythology, a set of conceptions on hakikatnay mystical and so forth which is typical of Java, which is, suatau system of ideas about human nature and society, which in turn explains ethics, traditions and styles of Java.

In Javanese philosophy, man co-exists in a world that merges the physical realm with the supernatural or spiritual one. Locals see it as the coming together of the macrocosm and microcosm. The macrocosm is the larger existence, one that covers spirituality and the supernatural, and is laced with mystery and things the naked eye is not able to perceive.

The microcosm is the physical plane – one that encompasses everyday living. Like many traditional beliefs in Indonesia, the aim is to bring these differing philosophies together in perfect union. Having roots in Hinduism and Buddhism, the life principles of Javanism advocate finding harmony – be it while living or in the life thereafter. With strong emphasis on inner peace, finding balance and achieving harmony in everything that one does, the philosophy of this tradition is rich with life lessons that help man live, understand and interpret his existence, be it sein (being) or the werden (becoming). Javanism, right from its inception, has been able to withstand changes from within the Javanese society, due to its enduring qualities that transcend time and space. It is less of a religion, and more of a set of codes that govern life, ethics and worldviews, and is inspired and influenced by the Javanese mindset. The practices are widespread and although Java island is predominantly Muslim, the Javanese people have successfully assimilated their religious beliefs with ancient traditions (https://www.travel3sixty.com/the-mystique-of-javanism/).

Javanism gives a general idea of nature as a thorough body of knowledge, which is used to interpret life as it is apparently. So, Javanism is not a religious category, but showed an ethic and lifestyle inspired by the Javanese values. Most of the Javanese community is Javanism and Moslem. But they do not undergo the duties of Islam as a whole, for example, do not pray five times a day, do not go to the mosque and some do not fast during Ramadhan (fasting month).

The basis of their worldview is the notion that the natural order and the public have been determined in all respects. They assume that the subject’s life and status have been set. The fate is predetermined, so they have to bear the problems patiently. They are closely related to their belief in the supernatural guidance and assistance from ancestral spirits who are considered as God. It caused religious feelings and a sense of security.

Javanism can be expressed well by those who know the secret of Javanese culture. Javanism has often been represented well by the old elite gentry and their descendants who confirm that awareness of their own culture is a phenomenon that is widespread among the Javanese.
This cultural awareness is often a source of pride and cultural identity. To protect from bad things in life, Javanese make worshipping such as providing food for the ancestors spirits. The worshipping usually consists of rice and a variety of other foods, leaves, flowers and fruits.

The existence of character Rahayu and Sumarni reflects values, norms, conventions, and rules governing both written and unwritten about the view of life in Javanese philosophy.

They live in social and cultural environment of Java which is fullled with Javanese philosophy. Javanism is not a religion, but a way of life in the broadest sense, which includes views on God and the universe and the position and the role of man in it. This includes also the view on all aspects of human life, including the view of human cultures and their religions.

Java community believes that God is the center of the universe and the center of all life, since long before the world created, God is the first time there. The definition of the center in this sense is to provide livelihood, balance, and stability, which can also give life and reconnection with the world above. The views of the Javanese about are usually called by Ian Kawula Gusti. That view assumes that the moral duty of man is to achieve harmony with God (Gusti Allah). The men should become the servant for Gusti Allah (Yana, 2012: 16).

The characters, Sumarni and Rahayu in Entrok described as women who live in a Javanese family. The Javanese still consider that women’s position is under the men. The women should be patient, sincere, and nrimo (take everything as fate). It is as proposed by Ciptoprawiro (2004: 24) that the word "woman" is derived from the word wani (want) and tata (regulated). That is, a woman is a person who should be organized or ruled.

Sugihastuti (2010) expressed the opinion that the patience is a game of emotion in an attempt to resolve the conflict. Patience is not innate or natural, but should be studied continuously throughout life. Nrimo attitude can be seen in Sumarni, when she faces Teja who does not want to change his life as porter lifting the goods. Marni takes Teja’s attitude although she has to work very hard to support her family. In addition, Teja is also married to another woman or with a singer. Marni is not angry with Teja’s decision. She considers that it is the nature of a man to have more than one wives.

Yana (2012: 15-16) says that, most Javanese are still not able to separate the myths from their lives. The meaning of the Javanese are people whose native language is Java language and in a native of central and eastern parts of the island of Java. Based on social groups, the Javanese are divided into:

1. Wong cilik (poor people), consisting of farmers and those with low incomes.
2. The gentry, composed of employees and intellectual people.
3. The nobles, the lifestyle is not far from the gentry.

In addition to differentiated social groups, the Javanese also differentiated on the basis of religion in two groups:

1. Javanism Java, which is often referred to as Jawa Abangan in consciousness and way of life is determined by the pre-Islamic Javanese traditions.
2. Santri (Students in Islamic school) who understands himself as a Muslim or a strong orientation toward the Muslim faith and seek to live according to the teachings of Islam.

Sumarni keeps the phylosophy of Javanism in her life like doing the ritual, praying to the ancestral spirits, patient, and nrimo. Related to the Java world view closely with psychotherapy, Niels Mulder (1999: 62-64) reveals that the vital core of Javanism is psychotherapy, namely the development of an inner life and one's deepest self. Innermost self actually makes up a microcosm of life that includes everything. In Javanism, movements themselves must flow from the outside to the inside, from the control that was born into the development of the mind, becoming truly aware of the social situation to be sensitive to the presence of "Life" and the embodiment of "Life" in the mind,
Natural Javanese mind formulates human life in two cosmos (nature) that macrocosm and microcosm. Macrocosm in the Javanese mind is the attitude and outlook on life to the universe that contains supernatural powers and filled with things that are mysterious. While the microcosm in the Javanese mind is the attitude and outlook on life to the real world. The main goal in life is to find and create harmony or balance between the macrocosm and microcosm of life.

In the realm of the macrocosm, the center of the universe is God. The universe has a level intended by their natural level Javanese life and their levels of more perfect world. The universe consists of four main directions plus the center is God who unites and gives balance. Attitudes and views of the real world (microcosm) can be reflected in the lives of humans and the environment, the structure of human society, human life system everyday and everything that can be seen by the eye. In the face of life, good and right deed in this world depends on the strength of mind and soul.

God is the center of the macrocosm, while the king is the manifestation of God in the world so that in him there is a balance of the various forces of nature. So the king is the center of the world community as well as the king becomes a microcosm of God with the palace as a royal residence. Kraton (Palace) is a sacred center of the kingdom and where the king live because the king is a source of natural forces flow into the area and bring tranquility, justice and fertility.

Javanese philosophy sets out in the text of the realities that exist in the Java community. Even so, Javanese philosophy of the text is not the reality of Javanese philosophy of life, but only reflections, images, or pictures. As for the Javanese philosophy of the text starting from the distinction between the two fundamental aspects, namely in terms of birth and spiritual terms. As a creature of nature, humans are physical beings, it has a dimension of birth. We understand other people first through the birth dimension. But behind the birth of the dimensions the inner dimension covered (Franz Magnis-Suseno, 2001: 117-118).

Javanism was first introduced to Sumarni by her mother, Si Mbok. It is inherited from their ancestors. Her mother used to teach her the rituals in Javanism. One of the rituals her mother used to teach her is nyuwun, praying to the ancestor. It can be seen from the dialogue:


From the dialogue, it can be seen that her mother used to ask her to nyuwun. Her mother told her that everything in this world belongs to the ancestors. She must pray to the ancestors so they give her good life. Her mother used to wake her up at night and sit under a big old tree while praying.

Javanism believes that sadness and happiness comes from the ancestors. They still believe in the spirit of the ancestors. The spirits can cause dangers like accident or diseases if the spirits get angry with us. To avoid them from those things, they have to give sesajen, sacrifice to the spirits. The sacrifice is made of food, fruits, leaves, and flowers. It is placed on a big tray and put on the sacral places like big trees and graves where the spirit of ancestors stay. Sumarni as a Javanism follower also perform the sacrifice.

The examples of religious activities in the Java community, especially Javanism is fasting. The Javanese have habit of fasting on certain days, eg Monday-Thursday, or on the day of birth. By doing this, people can become more diligent and will soon get a reward. Sumarni as a loyal Javanism performs the fasting. She performs it every Monday and Thursday and on her birthday. Besides fasting on her birthday, she also performs Selametan, the main ceremony in Javanism. Selametan is inviting people to come to our house to give blessings and pray for our life. This ceremony is held to celebrate something like a baby birth, graduation celebration, entering new house, getting promotion, and others. It is like a small feast because we provide food for the guests. Usually the guests also bring home food in a basket (besek). This is the most common ceremony among the Javanese community. This ceremony has been mixed with Islamic lessons.


Another activity of the Javanism is meditation. Meditation is usually done together with asceticism in the places that are considered sacred, for example in the mountains, tombs, sacred space, and so on. In general, people do meditation to get closed or unite themselves with God.

The worshipping of spirits of the dead, especially the ancestors or what is called the forerunner, founder of the former village, plays an important role in Javanism. The ceremony is called Ziarah (going to a sacred graves and pray). This ceremony was done by Sumarni by visiting graves on the mountain.


Many graves of saints in Java are considered sacred. Thousands of people from all corners of the island of Java come to the graves to be blessed by the spirits of the saints. A tribute to the dead is expressed by cleaning the graves. Sumarni goes to the holy grave with her friend, Koh Cahyadi, a chinese man. Koh Cahyadi tells her that many businessmen come to that grave to ask for a success business and many of them get what they want. Sumarni goes there to ask for the success of her business. Her business is lending money. She lends money to the people who need it and take the interest from the money lent. Her job is called riba, and it is not allowed in Islam.

http://www.theartsjournal.org/index.php/site/index
They bring sesajen to the grave. On the grave, they meditate for one night. During the meditation they are not allowed to speak, eat, and drink. They also may not think bad things. They mainly have to pray asking blessing from the spirit of the grave.

Javanism also believes in Dukun, the man who can control the spirits. Sumarni once goes to Dukun when her daughter wants to go for studying in town. She goes there to ask for Jimat, a sacral thing, for Rahayu so she will be safe during her study. Jimat given by the Dukun is sugar. The sugar has been prayed with magic spell. Rahayu just has to eat the sugar and the spirits will take care and protect her from bad things.


3.0 Sumarni’s struggle for Javanism

Sumarni’s struggle for Javanism can be divided into two parts. The main part which is the most difficult one is struggling from familial objection, her only daughter Rahayu. Rahayu is positioned as a Javanese woman who lives in more progress life where she gets education but she is still exposed Javanism by her mother Sumarni. As an educated child (especially Islam), Rahayu then grows into a modern Javanese woman. The difference between them often caused quarreling. But as a mother Sumarni still loves her daughter very much. She gives the best for Rahayu’s life. Although they are close related but each of them still convinces with their own belief, Sumarni with Javanism and Rahayu with Islam.

Rahayu is ashamed of her mother because all the people in the village know that her mother is a javanism and not a Moslem. She hates her mother, really hates since Her friends at school and her religion teacher often tells that her mother is sinner.

Aku membenci Ibu. Dia orang berdosa.
Aku membenci Ibu. Kata orang, dia memelihara tuyul.
Aku membenci Ibu, karena dia menyembah leluhur.

Rahayu is ashamed of her mother because one day Mr. Wiji, the religion teacher at her school, tells her in front of the class that her mother doesn’t have religion. He also tells that Sumarni worshipping the spirits and feeding the sattans. These words really make Rahayu ashamed and angry with her mother. When she arrives at home, she tells it to her mother. But Sumarni doesn’t say a word. She just keeps silent and goes out from her room.


Ibu menyerah. Dia keluar dari kamarku, menuju halaman belakang, melakukan apa yang telah sejak dulu dilakukannya. Melanjutkan apa yang telah bertahun-tahun dijalaninya. ia sama sekali

Sumarni keeps doing the rituals. She never gives up with any objection. She has done it for years since she was still a child and her mother also did it. She never leaves what she has believed. Meanwhile, Rahayu keeps hearing what sin and hell are from Mr. Wiji at school. Rahayu learns how to pray in Islam, something which has never been understood by her mother Sumarni. Sumarni and Rahayu are completely from different worlds. Rahayu states that her religion is the right one since she gets it from school. She gets the knowledge from educated person, Mr. Wiji, while her mother is someone that even can’t recognize one letter. Rahayu then hates her mother until she decides to study in town and leave her mother in the village. The relationship between mother and daughter has been broken by this situation.

On the other side Sumarni convinces that her belief is the best because she inherited it from her mother and they have performed the belief since a long time ago. Sumarni sometimes is sad because the people around her dislike with what she is doing. She just works hard to get much money so she can be rich then the people will not underestimate her. What Sumarni is doing is forbidden in Islam. She lends money and takes the interest from the lending. It is called Riba in Islam. The moslems in the village doesn’t like it, espescially Mr. Wiji, the religion teacher.

The second part of her struggle is struggling against surrounding objection. The one who often offends her is Mr. Wiji. Sumarni convinces that what she believes is right. It can be proved when she always gets what she wants after doing worshipping to the ancestors. She said that how she can believe in Allah if she has just known Allah lately and how she can believe in Allah if she never knows Allah. She also doesn’t know how to worship Allah. Despite, she has known Javanism since a very long time. It can be seen from the text below:

Duh, Gusti, apa salah kalau aku mau cari rezeki, punya harta, biar tidak dihina-hina orang! Akukan tidak membunuh orang, tidak mencuri, tidak merampok. Aku hanya bakulan, menyediakan apa yang dibutuhkan orang, mengambil upah buat tenaga dan modalku. Lha kok malah semua orang ngrasani. Lha anakku sendiri, anakku satu-satunya, ikut ikutan menyalahkanku.


The people in her village consider her doing pesugihan (sacrificing someone’s life for the succesful). The death of Teja, her husband, and Bejo, her driver, was regarded as the sacrifice. Rahayu, her only daughter also considers the same as the dialogue states below:


In spite of the family and people objection to her belief, Sumarni still behaves good to them. To Rahayu, Sumarni still loves her as her daughter. She sends Rahayu to school and university. She doesn't want her daughter to be uneducated like her. She gives the best for her daughter although her daughter hates her. At the end of the story, Rahayu comes back to her mother in the village with a very bad condition. She gets psychiatry illness for the bad experiences she gets in town. Sumarni with the love of a mother takes care Rahayu.

To Mr. Wiji, Sumarni never hates him. She helps Mr. Wiji by lending him money. It is stated before that Mr. Wiji always says that Sumarni’s business is not allowed in Islam but when he needs money, he goes to Sumarni and borrows money from her. Sumarni, with her good hearted lends him money. She never takes revenge to everyone who hates her. Sumarni also helps her neighbors whenever they need her. For example Sumarni gives donation to her neighbor whose husband is dead. She lends her car to her neighbors to take them to the hospital in town.

Sumarni’s struggle is not done physically. Sumarni’s struggle is performed by applying what Javanism teaches her. Javanism teaches her to do good deeds to everyone, never takes revenge, and takes the faith. Although Rahayu and the people around her always offend her but she never takes revenge to what they have done to her. This story also tells us that what kind of belief you have, you must obey all the rules in that belief, since there is no belief teaching bad things.

4.0 Conclusion

Javanism actually gives good philosophy in life. The teaching on the balancing of men, nature, and God sticks to the Javaness people. There are some ceremonies and rituals that must be performed to keep the balancing. The ceremonies are performed to give worshipping to the ancestor spirits. They believe that the ancestor spirits will keep their lives away from bad things and luck. Besides ceremonies, Javanism has some philosophy like being patient, sincere, and nrimo. All of these can be seen in Sumarni as the character in Okky’s Entrok. Keeping the Javanism belief for her life is not easy among the Islamic surrounding. Sumarni gets many protests from the people around her. Even the protest comes from her only daughter. Although they have different point of view, Sumarni and Rahayu still love each other. Sumarni loves Rahayu as her daughter and Rahayu respects Sumarni as her mother. Sumarni’s struggle is shown through her attitude. She doesn’t struggle offensively but she just shows to the people that her belief is good. She performs good attitude and deeds based on Javanism teaching. She helps all the people who have insulted and underestimated her without any hatred and revenged. This is the picture of Javanese woman’s struggle who performs Javanism. The struggle of Javanese woman who is known as loyal, obedient, and softhearted woman. The struggle reflects the culture and the belief of the Javanese woman, Sumarni.

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