

KOSTROMA TOPONYMIC LEGENDS AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT TOPONYMY AND THE REALIA REFLECTED IN IT

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Abstract. The article is devoted toponymic legends of Kostroma region, which, as a shining example of folk etymology reflects the mentality of the people who composed them, contain information about the toponymy, including disappearing, and designated it reality.

Keywords: micro-toponymy; toponymical legend; folk etymology; motivation.

Any toponym is, primarily, absolutely motivated due to having the object's nomination reasons and conditions commonly known the moment of its emergence. However, as the time flows, the motivation can become obscure or lost. The aspiration towards clarifying the name's creation history (revealing its inner form) often leads to the development of folk legends highly manifesting folk etymology, amusing but false as usual. Creating legends has something to do also with leading into temptation of creating ambience of mystics around commonly known names. The fact that the information about any place name is not well known to the locals, can also become a reason for legends' origin. Certain toponymical legends of the territory of North of Russia, including the toponymical system studied by us, might have a historically deep origin, possibly connected with the Slavs' immigration into this land, which was at that time settled by different Finno-Ugric tribes [1, 2].

Clarifying geographic objects names, toponymical legends, which are originally a folk oral prose genre, primarily strive towards trustworthiness. Conducting its basic function - being a way to cognitive knowledge transmission - they play an entertaining role as well, which explains their extreme popularity in people's social environment. The Kostroma land toponymical legends, whose content we study in this article, allow revealing both typical and peculiar (based on the local features) characteristics of the studied entity, with the former being more common than the latter.

The legends, as our materials show, are usually attached to certain persons and events, thus being fixed to certain historic periods. In many cases, they appear due to alternative, folksy, interpretation of certain real events. There are tales of contacts with old-times tribes, stories of Rus' suffering from foreign invasions (of which the one held by the Tartars and the Mongols is the most famous), and tales of tsars, princes, nobles, landowners, revered saints etc. They are not to be considered as a source of trustworthy

information (however, a true story can be mistakenly taken for a legend), but they, being a manifestation of spiritual culture of the folk that created them, reflect its peculiarity as well as characteristics of its languages, and its everyday life, and its community's physiographical features.

The legends are not detailed, have no stable introduction and ending, contain few episodes (frequently just one episode), thus being slight by volume. By content, the Kostroma toponymical legends can be divided into several groups. We shall pay attention to the main ones, the most common.

Legends explaining the origin of names with different old-times tribes: Cheremis lake. *Here, the Cheremis people used to live. They were drowned in this lake.* (The village of Pyshchug, Pyshchug; further on in text the speech of the locals is italicized, with specifying Kostroma Region's district). Cheremisy. A hamlet. *The Mari people were first settlers in these places, and the Mari were called Cheremis in the past.* (The village of Pavino, Pavino). New Chude. A hamlet. *Chude, there was such a tribe, they used to live here.* (The hamlet of Yekaterinkino; Kadyi). Mera. A river. *It is called so because the Merya tribe once lived on the bank of the river.* (The village of Aleksandrovskoye, Ostrovskoye). And so on, and so forth. Answering the question about the reasons for names origin, the informants, basing on some sources that were somehow available to them, report, often convincingly and confidence in their being right, the information on tribes that once inhabited the locality.

Legends that connect the toponyms origin with some historic events (the Tartar-Mongol invasion is the most common meme). Krasnoye (literally either "scarlet" or "gorgeous" in Russian). An urban locality. *A gruesome war with the Tartars once occurred in the Volga hamlets, and there were so many dead and wounded that the earth got scarlet of the spilt blood.* (The urban locality of Krasnoye on the Volga; District of the Red Village). Zdemirovo. A hamlet. *On the upland where Zdemirovo is, a hatchet was buried during the Tartaric-Mongol invasion. "Zdemirovo" is in fact a distorted Russian phrase "zdes' mir" which means "there's peace here".* (The village of Zdemirovo; District of the Red Village). Khalaburdikha. A hamlet. *An old settlement where, according to a legend, the Tartars managed to reach the ancient town of Unzha. That was the time of the Tartars' invasion of Rus'. Having bypassed the town, they crossed the Unzha river. Then, a part of the Tartar troops worked their way up to the village of Timoshino. The Tartars settled down in the upland of these surroundings and ousted the Russians who lived there. "Khalaburdikha" is a Tartar word whoses meaning is unclear.* (The village of Timoshino; Makaryev). Cheremis. A lake. In fact, a pool on the river Pyshchug. *They say, in the plague times, the Cheremis people simply threw their dead into the river. No man would fish in Cheremis lake.* (The hamlet of Noskovo; Pyshchug). Babayevo. A hamlet. *It was the Khan, Babay by name, who founded our Babayevo in the time of the Tartar-*

Mongol invasion. (The hamlet of Fomkino; Nerekhta). Tatarskoye (literally “Tartaric” in Russian). *This name has come from the time of the Tartar-Mongol invasion, as a Tartar camp was set in this place.* (The village of Tatarskoye; Nerekhta). Vorvazh. A river. *Why Varvazh? A long time ago, the barbarians - Mongols-and-Tartars - passed by these surroundings.* (Urban locality of Vokhma; Vokhma). Nekrasov lake. *In the past, it was called Saint(or ‘Holy’) Lake. Formely, Nekrasov Lake (after the great Russian poet Nikolai Nekrasov, who had an estate not far from here) was called Holy Lake. It was there that the Russian troops crushed the Tartars in the twelfth century.* (The village of Shunga; Kostroma). Pogrebnoye. A hamlet. *The hamlet originated on the place where Mongols-and-Tartars were buried.* (A letter-combination “pogreb” is associated with shoveling earth up a burial for a Russophone.) (The town of Soligalich; Soligalich). Pustynya. (Literally „devastation“.) *Il’ynskoye was once called Pustynya, you know. The Tartars are said to have passed by the surroundings and burnt everything to the ground, so the country was called Pustynya.* (Il’ynskoye; Chukhloma). Interrogator’s pine wood. *During the Poles’ invasion peasants captured a few Poles and forced them to talk – here an interrogator came on the very nick of time.* (Urban locality of Vokhma; Vokhma). Zaseki. (Literally “abatis”). Idem Pozhnya. (Literally “stubble”). *When the Poles attacked Rus’, the inhabitants of Sovega, in an attempt to save themselves from them, began heaping way up with felled trees, making abatis.* (The village of Sovega; Soligalich). And so on, and so forth. Legends of such type usually sound more detailed than tales of old-times’ tribes. Narrations of struggling enemies, showing certain likeness to the famous Russian “bylinas”, are certainly ended with message of defeating any conquerors. The nominations are often balanced against the lexis present in patois.

Legends according to which the names are dedicated to real historic persons (more commonly, to Catherine II; most commonly, it is told of her journeys). The New Village of the Count. *At first, the little village was called simply New, but then, was said to be given by Catherine the Second to her minion, Count Zubov, as a present, together with some other settlements, then it began being called the New Village of the Count.* (The town of Buy; Buy). Catherine’s high road. *The road constructed by Catherine the Second many years ago but hasn’t become an overgrown path yet. This is a trade route from Veliky Ustyug to Vyatka.* (The village of Tikhon; Vokhma). Yekaterinkino. A hamlet. Catherine’s alley. Idem Birch Alley. *Tsarina Catherine was said to pass through the hamlet, then the hamlet was named after her.* (The hamlet of Yekaterinkino; Kadyy). Tsaryovo. A hamlet. *The name originated from its owner. Tsar Boris Godunov bestowed the little village on a monastery.* (The village of Borok; Buy). Knyazhevo. (Literally “the prince’s”). A hamlet. *The first owner, a prince, you know, was granted this hamlet by Tsar Romanov.* (The town of Makaryev; Makaryev). And so on,

and so forth. The stories like these are more usually filled with the narrators' pride of their homeland, which dignitaries deigned to visit or to grant someone; with full of respect towards these officials. There are, however, names of some other kind: Kate's thoroughfare. A part of the road that, according to the legend, was passed and used for diversion by Empress Catherine. *Kate's thoroughfare, after Catherine the Second, you know.* (The hamlet of Fyodorovskoye; Makaryev). Kate's road. *This is a part of the road behind the hamlet of Ivanovskoye, along which Catherine II passed to the town of Kologriv at old times.* (The village of Vozherovo; Neya). And so on, and so forth. Certainly, Catherine II was unlikely to have ever been to the majority of these places; however, the opinion that she was going to travel all over her domain and the people were preparing for it, awaiting her arrival, is current amidst the common people. That is why roads and some other objects under repair and construction were named after the empress, and her use of them was reported even if it was false (indulging in wishful thinking and heaping up legends).

Legends narrating of monks, saints, miracles. The Saint Pool. *There was a church on this pool on the river, but it got down under the water. The residents are sure that waters in the pool are the tears of the deceased, and that it's holy as it's very clean.* (The hamlet of Zakharovo; District of the Red Village). Parfentyevo. A village. *Named after Parfeny the Monk who had founded a monastery on the hill.* (The village of Parfentyevo; Parfentyevo). Yerman's Mount. A hill. *Named after Hermann the Priest, who wanted to build a church on it. Even some working tools were found at this place. The Icon of Our Lady of Smolensk was brought here but it somehow found itself by the Sand Hamlet, which was a very low and swampy place at that. That's why it was not advisable that a monastery would be built there. Where the icon appeared, a spring started spouting.* (The hamlet of Zarubino; Kostroma). Olyosha's path. *Saint Olexy used to walk here, so it was named like this.* (The hamlet of Yekaterinkino; Kadyy). Hermitage. A hamlet. *Named so because a hermit, a sorcerer, lived there deep in the woods.* (The village of Georgiyevskoye; Mezha). Monk's lake. A lake. *Monk lake, it's near the hamlet of Kilyakovo. They say, a monk used to live there. The church still remains.* (The village of Verkhne-Spasskoye; Pyschug). Gromovatik. (Sounds quite similar to the Russian word "grom" which means "thunder"). A spring. *Lightning struck right against this point, and water got holy.* (The village of Nagor'e; Chukhloma). Fair. A wetland. *It was a lake. While rowing across it, monks had the misfortune to get into nasty weather and drowned. The lake has become waterlogged long ago and turned into a wetland.* (The town of Chukhloma; Chukhloma). The White stone. A boulder near the hamlet of Glebovo. *The White stone wouldn't darken. They say, miracles happen by this stone: good people have visions of saint monastic elders, and wicked ones - of the dark forces of evil. Maybe, it is connected*

with the old believers' cemetery that used to be around here. (The urban locality of Sudislavl; Sudislavl.) And so on, and so forth. Legends of such kind usually contain concrete saints' names, both the widely known and the local ones, as well as the names of icons, religious feasts, etc. People believe in healing thanks to the saints, in the healing power of the holy water that became such due to some sacred deeds, etc.

Legends explaining a name's origin by the first settlers or owners (often, it is a matter of landowners, both really living once and fictional). Froly. A hamlet. *Originated from the first settler's name - Frol.* (The hamlet of Medveditsa; Pavino). Seryoga's ravine. A ravine. *After the name of Seryoga, who found this place and built the first house.* (The hamlet of Medveditsa; Pavino). Ushenikha. A hamlet non-existent anymore. *Formerly, many years ago, a landowner lived here, Ushenya by name.* (The hamlet of Brenikha; Ney). Pan'kovo. A hamlet. *The settlement was founded long ago. The land around was owned by a rich lord. He bequeathed the acres to his wife Panya. They got the name "Panya's", with the settlement being named Panovo. It was later renamed into Pan'kovo.* (The hamlet of Pan'kovo; Kady). The Yermolovka. A rivulet starting in a mire. *The Yermolovka was named after the landowner Yermolayev.* (The rural locality of Vyoshka; Kady). Panin's field. *There was a landowner Panin once, and it's named after him for sure.* (The rural locality of Tekun; Kady). Zakharovo. A hamlet. *Named so because Zakhar the landowner lived there.* (The village of Shunga; Kostroma). Parunovskaya. A couple of fields. *These are the fields next to the hamlet of Gobino. They are named like this because the house of the landowner Parunov stood there once, and Parunov owned these acres.* (The village of Chernyshevo; Kady). Fominskoye. A village. *It got its name after Fomah the landowner.* (The village of Sandogora; Kostroma). Yablokovo. A hamlet. *There was the hamlet of Yablokovo, the landowner Yablokov lived there.* (The hamlet of Zarubino; Kostroma). Dolgoye. A field. *This field belonged to the landowner Dolgov who lived in the hamlet of Pukhovitsino where his estate was.* (The village of Sovega; Soligalich). Maslov's hillocks. *The forest is named after the landowner Maslov.* (The hamlet of Pochinok-Chapkov; Kostroma). The lords' forest. *Noble, rich lords used to live in the forest, that's why it's such a name.* (The urban locality of Krasnoye on the Volga; District of the Red Village). And so on and so forth. These legends might be based on real events as well, but the knowledge about them was lost with time, underwent different shifts in the stories that were passed on orally, has acquired all kinds of additions, including those based on the reality as well.

Legends testifying to connection of their names with robbers. Varzha. A hamlet. *In honour of the robber who perished in these parts.* (The hamlet of Tikhon; Vokhma). Female Robber. A hamlet. *Highwaymen with looted gold arrived from somewhere and founded this hamlet. They robbed ships*

navigating along the river Vokhma. The trade route used to pass from Veliky Ustyug to Kotelnich. The evildoers came upon strings of carts and robbed them. Those robbers were fugitive outlaws in the days of Catherine the Second. (The village of Tikhon; Vokhma). Pan'kovo. A hamlet. Named after Mary Pan'ya, the female robber. (The urban locality of Kady; Kady). Soldier's wetland. A wetland. According to the legend, a battle of local residents against robbers happened at this place. (The village of Medveditsa; Pavino). Babye village (Women's village). A hamlet. *Разбойники* The robbers in flight from authorities settled down to married life but were still careful not to live with their families and founded a hamlet for their wives and children. (The urban locality of Vokhma; Vokhma). The Orlovitsa. A river. It was named after the robber Orlov, or Orlik. He perished - drowned in the creek. So the name was like this. (The village of Tikhon; Vokhma). Gold pine. Just a free-standing pine. Robbers rowed along the river Vokhma, brought gold and gems in the boats. They did hurry as they were fleeing, but the load was heavy. Rowing by, they saw a nice pine on a high hill and quickly hid a chest of gold under it. So the pine became the guard of their gold. It still stands in the hamlet of Hill on the bank of the river Prutomoyka, guarding its riches. (The urban locality of Vokhma; Vokhma). Karachukha. ("Karachun" means "death".) It's a road that climbs along the gully from the Highway to the hamlet of Synkovo. Highwaymen used to run riots all way through it, came upon passerby's and robbed them - some were killed by them. (The village of Toltunovo; Galich). And so on, and so forth.

Legends of love (more common unhappy, tragic). Lake of Love. A lake. It's a deep lake where, from hearsay, a young loving couple drowned. (The town of Nerekhta; Nerekhta). The Vetluga. A river. It's rumoured that there lived a guy. He fell in love with a girl - Luga by name. Only they weren't allowed marrying. The girl hung herself from grief by the river on some trees, you know. The river was started being called the Vetluga with time. (The village of Verkhne-Spasskoye; Pyshchug). And so on, and so forth. These legends are more often sad, based on a story of an unhappy love which ends tragically.

Legends of dark forces of evil. Mean ravine. A ravine. *Frightening scenes are rumoured to come in sight in this ravine at night.* (The settlement of Shayma; Pavino). Lousy gully. *Imps are always being in this gully.* (The hamlet of Kalinki; Sudislavl). Chertishnoye. ("Chyort" means "imp" in Russian.) A lake. *Imps frequently let people see them in it. It's rare that someone would drop in Chertishnoye lake.* (The town of Neya; Neya). Beshenkovo. (Derived from the Russian word "beshenny", which means "mad".) *The place which was considered to be home for the forces of evil shaped like will-o'-the-wisps hanging about.* (The hamlet of Putyatino; Nerekhta). Solnochikha. A forest. *A witch nicknamed Solnochikha lived in this forest long ago. You won't go to Solnochikha forest, will you, you'll go astray if you*

do. (The town of Soligalich; Soligalich). Such stories are more often connected with the devil image. They are based on the fact of being usually out-of-the-way, gloomy, some either tragic or weird events happen, and this tends frightening people. And so on, and so forth.

Legends containing some people's traits the names are based on. Razmakhnino. (The name sounds like some pun which is likely to mean "the settlement where everyone gesticulates"). A hamlet. *You can't miss a native of Razmakhnino: see them waving hands as mills by strong breeze.* (The urban locality of Ponazyrevo; Ponazyrevo). Pustosilovo. (Also a pun meaning "the hollow strength settlement"). A hamlet. *Fed'ka the Hollow Strength lived in this hamlet. He was always boasting of being the strongest. The men decided to compete and see. As for him, he lost tug-of-war, then everyone but him was able to lift a log. He even made a fool of himself at chopping wood. The hamlet is Pustosilovo for that matter.* (The settlement of Borovskoy; Pyschug). And so on, and so forth.

Many legends are based on the connection with the people who had something to do with the objects (living close by, having a meadow to stake out claim to at haymaking time, perished and so on). Ofonino. *The well-to-do peasant Ofonya grazed his horses at this place. One of the horses drowned, that's why the place was named like this.* (The hamlet of Timoshino; Makaryev). The Avdot'ya. A river. The bridge of Dun'ka. A bridge. *The female peasant Avdot'ya drowned in the creek, and the bridge she fell from is named the bridge of Dun'ka.* (The point is that Avdot'ya, Dun'ka and so on are different Russian derivatives on the basis of the same Greek name Eudokia.) (The hamlet of Medveditsa; Pavino). The priest's chasm. A gully. *There was a slough at this place as a priest passed it either riding or carting, and he fell through, and drowned.* The village of Konteyevo; Buy). Dun'ka's river. They say that a certain Dun'ka drowned her grief into it. (The village of Zavrazhye; Kadyy). The Nikifora. A river. *They say that Mikifor the peasant used to live on the Mikifora.* (The hamlet of Yekaterinkino; Kadyy). Yekimtsevo. A hamlet. *A boatman lived in this hamlet, he was called Yekim. He wasn't able to say "ch" distinctly. They would call him from the other bank: "Yekim". "Tsevo?" - he would respond. That's why Yekimtsevo.* ("Tsevo" means the interjection "eh?", but it is in fact a distorted word "chego" as Yekim was said to be unable pronouncing "ch" distinctly.) (The town of Kologriv). And so on, and so forth.

Some name testify to striving for connecting names with people's activity, artifacts, herbal and bestial worlds, relief peculiarities etc. Maslovo. A hamlet. *Linseed oil used to be produced, think what a swell press there was around here on the river Voymez. Linseed is to be picked and pounded in mortars with huge pestles adding some water, it was done somewhere behind the watermill.* ("Maslo" is oil in Russian.) (The town of Manturovo). Konishevo. A hamlet. *They say, horses for tsars were bred in the hamlet in*

*the Tsarist days. ("Kon" means "horse" in Russian.) (The village of Zdemirovo; District of the Red Village). Kuzovtsovo. A hamlet. Due to the berry fields surrounding it and the small copse where plenty of mushrooms has been there for ages, and it's well-known that berries and mushrooms are picked into wicker baskets. ("Kuzovok" means a large flat-lid wicker basket in Russian.) (The village of Podol'skoye; Kostroma). Onuchino. A hamlet. Male peasants used to wind puttee round their legs, that's a strip of cloth from ankle to knee, high boots were put on only afterwards. And now all those sneakers are used as common footwear... So, "Onuchino" means "the hamlet of puttee". (The settlement of Borovskoy; Pyschug). Malinovtsy. A hamlet. There was plenty of raspberry at the place where the hamlet is situated, besides, it grew far and wide. ("Malina" is "raspberry" in Russian.) (The village of Medveditsa; Pavino); Myl'nikovo. A hamlet. There were plenty of wild flowers - "myl'nitsas". (A dialect word for a range of plant species of Caryophyllaceae family: genera *Saponaria*, *Silene*, *Lychnis*, *Steris*, etc.) (The urban locality of Krasnoye on the Volga; District of the Red Village.) And so on, and so forth.*

Legends narrating of places where hoards have been hidden are also numerous. The Kladovitsa. ("Klad" means "hoard" in Russian.) A river. *A hoard is said to be somewhere on its bank under a big pine. Will-o'-the-wisps were seen at this place at night. Though all the Kladovitsa has been dug over, nobody has found the treasure, none was born to do it.* (The hamlet of Dobroumovo; Pavino). The pool of hoard. A pool on the confluence of the rivers Igumenka and Nikifora. *A hoard has been buried here where the Igumenka flows into the Mikifora. That was long ago. It's out of our depth though.* (The hamlet of Yekaterinkino; Kadyy). Faithful to the legends, people have never been unhelpful to find treasures round here.

Trying to find the explanation of the geographic object name can be based on phonetic and associative signs. Kukuy. A hamlet. *The name has been left by the Tartars as well. "Kokovat" at that time was the severe word which didn't do justice to the humorous modern idiom "staying out in the cold"; it meant "being captive, being hold prisoner".* (The hamlet of Timoshino; Makaryev). Khalaburdikha... A hamlet. *"Khalaburdy" is a Tartaric word. (The hamlet of Timoshino; Makaryev). Kokoshkino. According to traditional legend, one childless woman was fond of cats as if demented, and besides, she stammered in addition. And she was always saying "kokoshki" instead of "koshki" ("cats").* (The town of Nerekhta). Shulyovo. A hamlet. *"Shulo" means "Fence pole". Men with poles being their trade used to live in the hamlet.* (The hamlet of Leont'yevo; Manturovo). And so on, and so forth. The short stories of such kind allow getting acquainted with first-hand characteristics of certain words, including dialect ones, occurring in the patois lexical and semantic systems.

The same geographic point name is often of associated with several legends at once. Rogovo. A hamlet. *After the landowner's surname - Rogov. However, the surname itself is derived from the word "rog" ("horn") and the local plan is horn-shaped.* (The hamlet of Rogovo; Manturovo). Malinovka. A hamlet. ("Malina" is "raspberry" in Russian.) *Some say, due to the berrying. The others - after the Saint Martyr Eudokia (victim to the Persian king Sapor in the 4th century) whose memorial day, August 17, was believed to be the Raspberry Day. But hey, a heady raspberry drink used to be produced.* (The village of Georgiyevskoye; Mezha). Petersburg. A hamlet. *Some people arrived and said the houses were as nice as in Petersburg. Robbers used to stop picnicking where the hamlet is now. But with time, a rich hamlet rose: there were shops, and log houses of such kind that the additional log wall formed a partition inside; itinerant traders used to come, and it was said: "It's a nice place, just as Saint-Petersburg".* (The hamlet of Petersburg; Vokhma). Paradise. A hamlet. *Once a highborn noble was on his way through our place and put up for the night with a local resident and the next day morning, pleased with hospitality, he said: "Your place is just a paradise!" But one day the fire break, the windward side of the village burnt to the ground but the lee remained on hand; homeless victims of the fire visited their neighbors and said: "Your place is certainly the paradise on earth".* (The village of Tikhon; Vokhma). Trenino. A hamlet. *The hamlet is named after the tender-hearted landowner Trenin. But no, there were the two Treniny brothers, they owned a factory.* (The urban locality of Kadyy; Kadyy). Odnoushevo. (Derived from the Russian word "odnouhiy" - "one-eared".) A hamlet. *Named after its dweller - a monk nicknamed One-Ear, then a church was built there. One of the hamlet's dwellers had his ear cut, that's where the name is. The village of Odnoushevo belonged to Fyodor Odnoushev - the father of Metropolitan of Moscow.* (The village of Gorbachyovo; Soligalich). And so on, and so forth.

Legends embrace all toponyms' types (both toponyms themselves and microtoponyms). A considerable amount of the orally-transmitted legendary traditions are based on real events as well, as we suppose. Legends explaining toponyms' origin by the first settlers as well as by the people the named objects somehow refer to are particularly numerous.

Toponymical legends and traditions are a striking example of folk etymology representing a human's attitude to the reality surrounding him or her [3]. Usually, this etymology is false. However, being an important part of the linguistic world picture, it cannot be considered to be something useless. "Folk etymology, being a linguistic and psycholinguistic phenomenon, is cultural and historical one at the same time" [4: 27].

It represents mentality of the folk which has created them. Listening to these short stories, free of formalism and content constraint as well as improvised, we are not only involved into the acts created by folk fantasy, but

also - and this is the most valuable - get to know something about the local geographic space, about the peculiarities of spiritual and material culture, and the language of the people inhabiting it. The legends appear to be a source of knowledge on dialect lexis, on local toponymy, including the those of its elements that are literally dying out together with the last rural natives in the modern urbanistic era.

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