

## The Pattern of Selected Antioxidants in the Quran

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**Abstract:** This article presents an analysis on selected antioxidants that are stated in the Quran. Special attention is given to the pattern of selected antioxidants in *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* context to facilitate a better understanding on the concept of antioxidants in the Quran. This study is a qualitative study and the approach is content analysis. Data were collected through content and document analysis and data were analyzed thematically using descriptive and analytical methods. Early findings demonstrate that general antioxidants for instance cereals and certain specific antioxidants such as dates and grapes are mostly stated in *Makkiyah* context. The implication of the study establishes that the pattern of the antioxidants in the Quran proves the Quranic coherence which is one of the miraculous aspects of the Quran.

### Introduction

According to Molan (2012), antioxidants play an important role in protecting the body from damages caused by free radicals. Antioxidant substances possess the ability to scavenge the harmful free radicals (Al-Mustafa & Al-Thunibat, 2008; Atrooz, 2009; Bharti & Ahuja, 2012). Various free radical scavenging antioxidants were identified in dietary sources for example fruits, vegetables and grains (Lahwal, 2009). Thus, in recent years, antioxidants have been studied especially in fruits and vegetables by many researchers as a vast majority of antioxidants derives from them (Nahak, Suar & Sahu, 2014).

The Quran since the day of its revelation had introduced this wide range of antioxidants in different verses (Ranjbar, Tavilani & Mohsenzadeh 2013). A variety of antioxidants for example dates were recorded in different chapters of *ḥadīth* book; *kitāb al-Aṭ'imah*, *kitāb al-Maghāzī*, *kitāb al-Riqāq* and *kitāb al-Iṣṣām bi-al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah* (Al-Bukhari, 2001). As a result, a considerable amount of Islamic literature has been written on fruits, vegetables, grains and other dietary sources since the very beginning of the time.

Over the past century, there has been a vast number of literature from Muslim scholars on prophetic medicine and *aḥādīth* on plants. Khadar (2006) listed numerous Muslim scholars and their writings; Abdul Malik bin Habib Al-Andalusi (238H/853M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Abu Bakr Muḥd b. Zakaria al-Razi (313H/926M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Mulūkī* and *al-Ḥāwī fi al-Ṭibb*, Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Muḥd al-Dainuri Ibn Sunni (363H/973M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Ibn Sina (428H/1037M) *Al-Qānun fi al-Ṭibb*, Abu Nuaim al-Asbahani (430H/1038M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Abu al-Abbas Jaa'far al-Mustaghfiri (432H/1041M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Abdul Latif al-Baghdadi (629H/1232M) *Al-Ṭibb min al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah*, Diya' al-Din Muḥd b. Abdul Wahid al-Maqḍisi (646H/1248M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Ibn Baitar (646H/1248M) *Tuḥfah Ibn al-Baitār fi al-Ṭibb bi al-Aṣḥāb wa al-Nabā'āt*, Ibn Nafis (687H/1288M) *Al-Mūjāz fi al-Ṭibb*, Al-Turkimani (694H/1295) *Al-Mu'tamad fi al-Adwiyah al-Mufradah*, Muhammad Syamsuddin al-Zahabi (748H/1348M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah (751H/1351M) *Al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi*, Jalaluddin b. Abu Bakar al-Suyuti (911H/1505M) *Al-Manhaj al-Sāwī wa al-Minhal al-Rāwī fi al-Ṭibb al-Nabawi* and many more. Scholars at this period have only focused on collecting the Quranic verses and *aḥādīth* on plants or prophetic medicine *aḥādīth* despite the fact that all these dietary sources contain antioxidants.

Recently, Muslim researchers have shown interest in the medicinal aspects of plants in the Quran and *aḥādīth*. Among the researchers are; Abdul Basit Al-Sayid one of the prominent scholars on the research of plants and has many books written on plants for example *Al-Mausū'ah al-Um li 'Ilāj bi al-Nabā'āt wa al-Aṣḥāb al-Ṭibbiyah* (2004) and *Al-Ṭibb al-Akhḍar* (2006), Khafagi and Zakaria (2006), Marwat, Khan and Fazal-Ur-Rehman (2008), Adil (2009), Khan Marwa (2009), Ahmad (2009), Kahrizi, Molsaghi and Faramarzi (2012), Rameshrad (2015), Sheikh and Dixit (2015), and Tariq and Ahmed (2015). However, researchers have not treated antioxidants in much detail.

There has been an increasing interest in the study of antioxidants in the Quran. Several studies such as Lahwal (2009), Ranjbar and others (2013) and Ghavamizadeh and Mirzaie (2014) have reported fruits that are pointed out in the Quran for example olive, grape, pomegranate, fig and date contain antioxidant phenolic compound. In the same vein, Qusti S. Y. and others (2010) demonstrated that other antioxidants for example wheat, cucumber, garlic, lentil and onion also have phenolic contents. Other scientific study for instance De Nigris and others (2007) revealed that pomegranate contains

polyphenolic flavonoid and its juice has antioxidants and rich in punicalagin polyphenols. Rho KA and Kim MK (2006) have reported that grapes contain a high amount of flavonoid, β carotene, tocopherols and dietary fibers. Besides, other form of grape for example juice also contains flavonoids, anthocyanidins and nucleic acids while its skin and seed have quercetin which inhibits LDL oxidation and platelet aggregation that assists in cardiovascular protection. Other than that, the lean red meat has a range of endogenous antioxidants and other bioactive substances (P.G. Williams, 2007). However, all these studies have not dealt with the discussion on the antioxidants in *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* chapters (*surahs*).

The issue of *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* is very crucial to provide a clear understanding on the condition of the revelation because a chapter was not revealed in a whole but in portions during 23 years of the Prophet Muhammad mission in Makkah and Madinah. Due to this reason, the scholars have different opinions on the meaning of *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah*. In brief, the opinions are based on these three aspects; the time of revelation either before or after hijrah, place of revelation either Makkah or Madinah or people who had been addressed either Makkah or Madinah people. The selected opinion among most scholars on the meaning of *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* is based on the time of revelation of the chapters (*surahs*) and verses (*ayahs*) (Sofiah, 2006). It is to be borne in mind that, the arrangement of the chapters in the Quran is not in a chronological order of the revelation. The *ṣahābah* during the Prophet's time recognized the name of the chapters and their related chapters as there are many *aḥādīth* on this matter. One of the *ḥadīth* narrated by Sahl bin Saad, the Prophet said to a man "How much of the Quran do you know (by heart)?" The man replied I know such *Surah* and such *Surah* (by heart), naming the *surah*. The Prophet said, "I have married her to you for what you know of the Quran."<sup>1</sup>

### Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative study and the approach is content analysis. Data were collected through content and document analysis. The content of the Quran was studied to collect the Quranic verses of the antioxidants. To ensure the smooth process of gathering the Quranic verses, the content of the Quran was studied in two formats; electronic and hard copy to compare and improve the exactness of each finding. Certain keywords were used in a software which known as *Al-Maktabah al-Syamilah* to collect the verses in the selected chapters. Some examples of significant keywords are; *ḥabbah*, *ḥabban*, *al-nakhil*, *al-nakhīl*, *nakhīl*, *a'nab*, *al-a'nab*, *al-zaitūn* and *al-ruḥmān*. For this study, a special attention is given to only a few selected *Makkiyah* chapters which are; Al-Anaam, Al-Nahl, Abasa and Al-Tin. Meanwhile, for *Madaniyah* chapters, only Al-Baqarah and Al-Nur were discussed.

For validity and reliability, data were collected from several Quranic exegesis such as *Tafsir Al-Sa'di*, *Tafsir al-Wasit* by Tantawi, *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Tafsir Maududi*, *Tafsir Ibn Ashur* and other relevant *tafsirs* were analyzed to understand the meaning of each Quranic verses in *Makkiyah* or *Madaniyah* chapters. The exegesis were analyzed in two formats; electronic and hard copy. Electronic form of certain Quranic exegesis is from ksu website (<http://quran.ksu.edu.sa>) or *Al-Maktabah al-Syamilah*. Data were analyzed thematically using descriptive and analytical methods. These two methods were applied depending on necessity. The arabic words in this article were italicized and transliterated.

### Results and Discussion

Findings from the content of the Quran demonstrated that general antioxidants for example cereals and certain specific antioxidants such as date, grape, olive and pomegranate are mostly stated in *Makkiyah* chapters; Al-Anaam, Al-Nahl, Al-Mukminun, Abasa and Al-Tin. Only Al-Baqarah and Al-Nur which are *Madaniyah* chapters point out certain antioxidants. Number of verses both in *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* chapters is depicted in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

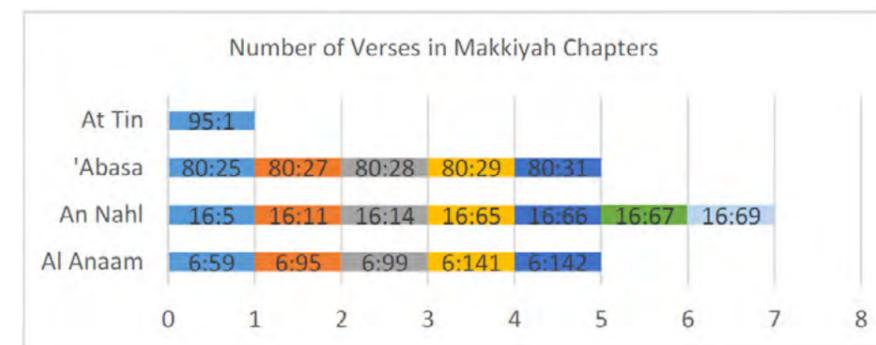


Figure 1: Number of Verses in Makkiyah Chapters

<sup>1</sup> Al-Bukhari, Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī, The Book of Virtues of the Quran, Chapter Reading the Quran in Heart, vol 6, ḥadīth no 5030, pg 192. Al-Bukhari also narrated this ḥadīth in different chapter and Muslim narrated in Ṣahīḥ Muslim, the Book of Marriage, vol 2, ḥadīth no 1245, pg 1040.

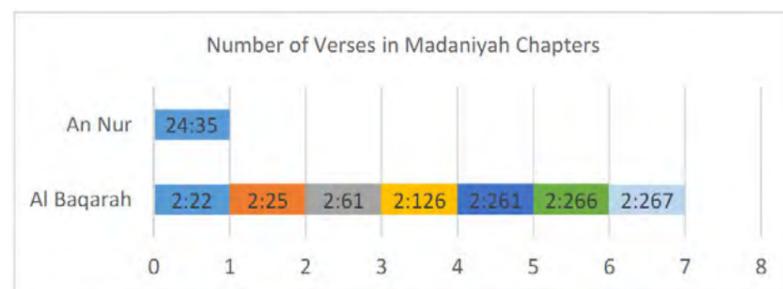


Figure 2: Number of Verses in Madaniyah Chapters

**Surah Al-Anaam.** Al-Anaam is the sixth chapter and it was revealed in one piece at night in Makkah according to most scholars (Al-Baghawi, 1997; Ibn Kathir, 1999; Tantawi, 1997). Only a few verses are *Madaniyah* according to certain scholars (Tantawi, 1997). Al-Anaam 6:59 illustrates that all Allah's creation in this universe belongs to Him. He knows every single movement in the universe even a seed that falls in the darkness of the earth (Jalal al-Din, 2000). The word *habbah* is a general term which refers to any seed from the plant (Ibn Ashur, 1984) and this include cereal which is a type of seed.

Al-Ana'am 6:95 and 6:99 present proofs and evidences of the power of Allah which refute the false arguments invented by the Arabs against the faith hence prove the truth of the revelation (Al-Sa'di, 2000; Tantawi, 1997). Al-Ana'am 6:95 asserts that Allah causes the grain and fruit kernel to sprout (Maududi, n.d). *Al-habb* in Ana'am 6:95 is a general term which refers to all types of seed (Al-Sa'di, 2000) or any seed that fructify the plant (Ibn Ashur, 1984). *Al-habb* also refers to wheat and barley grain and all types of grains (Al-Razi, 1999; Tantawi, 1997). Al-Anaam 6:99 lists few examples of plants with the manifestation of water in the beginning of the verse as it is the origin and cause of every living creature (Ibn Kathir, 1999). Certain antioxidants or their plants are identified in the verse such as grains (*habban*), palm trees (*al-nakhil*), grapes (*a'nab*), olives (*al-zaitun*) and pomegranates (*al-rumman*). All the antioxidants are stated in specific except grains. *Habban* is a general term but the word is linked with a characteristic; (*mutarākibā*) which means arranged in layers at their spikes (Ibn Ashur, 1984). This refers to wheat, barley, corn, rice or any other plant that fulfills this characteristic. The characteristic is to symbolize the multiple and large quantity of grains. Due to their large quantity, they are meant for eating and saving purposes (Al-Sa'di, 2000).

Al-Anaam 6:141 and 6:142 respond to the superstitious beliefs and the customary practices of the Arabs concerning what is permissible or prohibited. Regarding this matter, only Allah has the right to pronounce the permissibility and prohibition. Al-Anaam 6:141 answers this matter by affirming that Allah is the One who brings forth gardens trellised and untrellised, date palms, crops of different shape and taste, olives and pomegranates as a blessing (Al-Sa'di, 2000). Certain items in the verse are stated in general for example the word *ma'rūshat* and *ghair ma'rūshat* which refers to any trellised and untrellised plant. It is stated in general because there are many plants from this kind and it is not limited to a specific plant.

The Quran continues its response to the false belief of the Arabs by stating that the livestock (*al-ana'am*) is the source of food. Al-Anaam 6:142 gives permission to eat the meat of livestock. The phrase 'Eat' is not an order but a permissible action (Ibn Ashur, 1984) and it is followed by a great reminder 'do not follow the footsteps of syaitan'. Al-Sa'di (2000) explains that the phrase 'Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy' means the devils do not order humans except for something that can harm them. The reason behind this is although red meat has beneficial compounds, high intake of red meat can be harmful as it consists of fats and cholesterol (Ankita L. 2017). An interesting point is that this chapter was revealed at night hence this permissible action was revealed at that time and the permission is followed by a reminder. From this, it can be understood that over eating this type of meat at night is more harmful.

**Surah Al-Nahl.** Al-Nahl is the sixteenth chapter. According to almost the authorities, this chapter was revealed in Makkah a few months before the Prophet's hijrah to Madinah (Al-Qurtubi, 1964; Ibn Kathir, 1999; Tantawi 1997). Some commentators maintain that the last three verses belong to Madinah period as there is a narration from Ibn Abbas and Ibn Zubair about this matter (Al-Alusi, 1994). However, this is a weak narration as stated by Ibn Kathir (1999). Al-Nahl 16:5, 16:11, 16:14 present the sign of monotheism (*al-tauhīd*) that can be seen in Allah's creation. One of the creations is the livestock that serves as the source of food as mentioned in Al-Nahl 16:5. This verse displays the ability of Allah (Al-Syanqiti, 1995) His knowledge, wisdom, mercy, His Oneness and His power (Tantawi, 1997). Other than that, Allah has created fruits from different kinds with the presence of rain. Certain antioxidants are listed in Al-Nahl 16:11; olives (*al-zaitūn*), dates (*al-nakhīl*) and grapes (*al-a'nāb*). Allah has created the ocean so that human can eat the fresh and tender flesh. The word *lahm thariyy* in Al-Nahl 16:14 refers to fish (Al-Baghawi, 1997; Jalal Al-Din, 2000). The word *lahm* is characterized with *thariyy* which means freshness (Ibn Ashur, 1984) to draw attention by eating the fish as soon as possible to avoid the change of the taste and smell (Tantawi, 1997).

Al-Nahl 16:65-69 provide some lessons from the universe. Al-Nahl 16:65 emphasizes the revitalization of the earth after its death with the cause of rainwater (Nazri, Majid & Abdullah 2017). Al-Nahl 16:66 delivers a type of antioxidant which is milk. The pure and palatable milk that derives from livestock's bellies between excretion and blood is the greatest evidence of the Oneness of Allah, His powerful ability and His amazing creation (Al-Sa'di, 2000). The significant lessons that can be learned from the creation of the livestock and milk are sincerity in worshipping Allah and continuation of gratitude on His blessing (Tantawi, 1997). An amazing fact that pure milk is totally differ from the first two elements (blood and filth) in its nature, colour and benefits. The Quran characterizes the milk with two significant features which are; pure and palatable. Pure means the milk does not have blood colour and smell of filth from the gut while palatable means a smooth easy flow in the throat (Al-Baghawi, 1997).

The two antioxidants in Al-Nahl 16:67 are dates (*al-nakhīl*) and grapes (*al-a'nāb*). From them derives the intoxicants and pure food for human such as dates, dried grapes, vinegar and syrup. This verse was revealed before the prohibition of alcohol (Jalal Al-Din, 2000). Subsequently, Al-Nahl 16:69 describes the production of honey which derives from the bellies of the bee. The Quran uses the term '*sharāb*' which literally means drink (Ibn Manzur, 1994). Adil (2009) clarified the reason behind the use of a general term '*sharab*' instead of a specific term '*asal*'. This is because Allah leaves the matter to human to study what is in the bellies of the bees. The verse also expresses that honey has varying hues and colours such as white, yellow, red and other good and charming colours (Ibn Kathir, 1999; Al-Tabari, 2000). The different colour of the honey is due to the habitat of the bee, its food and age (Tantawi, 1997). The verse states that honey has healing element "there is healing for people". Due to this, scholars have discussed about this issue. The point that is agreed to all scholars is honey has medicinal aspects in healing. However, scholars have different opinion on the healing either it is general to all diseases or only special for certain diseases. According to Maududi (n.d), honey is a medicine to cure several diseases because it contains the juice and glucose of flowers and fruits in the best form (Maududi, n.d). Adil (2009) also agrees that honey is used for certain diseases. He supports his argument by citing the verse "there is healing for people" and not healing for every people.

**Surah Abasa.** According to most scholars this eightieth chapter was revealed in Makkah at a very early stage of the Prophet's mission (Al-Qurtubi, 1964). Abasa 80:25-31 highlights a number of antioxidants after the instruction of pondering and reflecting upon various types of food. These verses points out different species of fruits and plants which grow as the cause of rainwater. Thus, the rainwater is portrayed at first in Abasa 80:25 before pointing out the fruits and plants. Afterwards, other antioxidants are mentioned such as cereals or grains in Abasa 80:27, grape and herbage in Abasa 80:28, olives and dates in Abasa 80:29 and fruit in Abasa 80:31.

**Surah Al-Tin.** Al-Tin is the ninety fifth chapter that belongs to a very early part of the Makkah period (Tantawi, 1997). The scholars have different views on the meaning of *al-tīn* and *al-zaitūn* in Al-Tin 95:1. Maududi (n.d) during his interpretation of this verses discussed the two main opinions on the meaning of *al-tīn* and *al-zaitūn*. The first opinion is *al-tīn* and *al-zaitūn* refers to the fruit itself while the second opinion is the two fruits mean places. *Al-tīn* refers to Syam (Syria) while *al-zaitūn* refers to Baitulmaqdis. The most famous opinion is that the two fruits are well known type of fruit among the people of Syam and Baitulmaqdis. Certain scholars for example Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Qayyim, Al-Zamakhshari and Al-Alusi hold this view. This is due to the practice of the Arabs people that named a land according to the name of the fruit if the fruit grows abundantly in that place. Thus, the land where these two fruits grow in abundance are Syria and Baitulmaqdis (Palestine). These two places were well known to the Arabs during the Prophets time for the growth of fig and olive.

**Surah Al-Baqarah.** This second chapter is *Madaniyah* chapter with the consensus of all opinion. It was revealed after the hijrah to Madinah and most of the verses was revealed during the first two years of hijrah (Tantawi, 1997). Some verses of this chapter lists the fruits either in general or in specific. Al-Baqarah 2:22 indicates the word fruits (*al-thamarāt*) in general. This verse pinpoints various types of crops and fruits as sustenance which benefit the human beings (Ibn Kathir, 1999). The fruits are the gift from the Creator which were granted to human beings for the purpose of preservation and protection of the faith (Tantawi, 1997). The fruits with various colours and types are not only as sustenance and source of food to human but also to feed the horses and cattle (Al-Baghawi, 1997). As the verse denotes the fruits in general, *al-thamarāt* in the verse may refer to plant for example cereals and fruits for example dates (Al-Sa'di, 2000). The verse reminds humans about the power and supremacy of the Creator and He is the one who creates them and gives the sustenance thus, they should worship Allah alone (Al-Tabari, 2000). As Al-Baqarah 2:22 represents fruits in the worldly context as sustenance, Al-Baqarah 2:25 manifests the rewards in paradise for those who believe and do good deeds. They will be provided with fruits and they will say, 'such fruits were provided to us before on the earth' (Maududi, n.d). Al-Baqarah 2:22 and 2:25 have connection and are interrelated because fruits are a gift from the Creator in worldly life and the hereafter.

Al-Baqarah 2:61 discloses certain antioxidants for example vegetables, cucumber, garlic, adas and onion. This verse discloses the ungratefulness and disobedience of Bani Israil towards Allah's blessing. They asked Prophet Musa to pray for them these type of food from the earth because they cannot withstand everyday eating *al-mann* (a kind of sweet food

for example honey) and *al-salwa* (a kind of bird). Prophet Musa got mad as they requested to exchange the best food from the sky with lower type of food from the earth whereas Allah had honoured them with the food (Jalal Al- Din, 2000). Because of their disobedience againsts Alllah, the Jews incurred divine wrath and they suffered humiliation and poverty in history. So much so that such bitter experience had its impact on them even though they may be materially very much well-off (JAKIM, 2011). This verse serve as an evidence that these food (cucumber, garlic, adas and onion) are the well-known food among the previous nation.

The general antioxidant for example fruits (*al-thamarāt*) is stated once again in Al-Baqarah 2:126. Prophet Ibrahim prayed to Allah to make Makkah a land of peace and security and bestow with every kind of fruit those of its people, who believe in Allah and the Last Day (Maududi, n.d). Allah had answered his prayer, Makkah is unquestionably a noble and holy land and the people of Makkah have the opportunity to taste a variety of fruits although it was a barren land without water and plants. This becomes a reality because the fruits were brought from Syam by the people who wanted to perform tawaf in Makkah (Jalal Al-Din, 2000).

Al-Baqarah 2:261 illustrates an analogy of spending the wealth in the way of Allah. The parable for this action is for example a grain (*ḥabbah*) which brings forth seven ears and each ear bears a hundred grains. Allah will manifold the increase from their spending more than that to whom He wills (Jalal Al-Din, 2000). After that, the Quran describes another analogy of people who spend their wealth with a sense of pride. It is a meaningless action and they will absolutely regret it when they need them desperately in the hereafter (Jalal al-Din, 2000). Allah gives the best analogy in Al-Baqarah 2:266. Al-Baqarah 2:267 also describes the spending by the cause of Allah. It is an order to the believer to spend their wealth in the form of zakat and to donate the best form of grains and fruits which derived from the earth and do not give anything that is worthless which they themselves never accept it (Jalal Al-Din, 2000).

**Surah Al-Nur.** This twenty fourth chapter is a *Madaniyah* chapter (Tantawi, 1997). Allah pronounces in Al-Nur 24:35 that olive is a blessed tree and its oil can light up a lamp. Its oil shines though the fire has not touched it due to its purity and luminosity (Al-Tabari, 2000).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the antioxidants are mostly stated in *Makkiyah* chapters. The pattern of the antioxidants in *Makkiyah* chapters demonstrates that the antioxidants are pointed out not for the purpose of eating only but for other purposes as well. The antioxidants is mostly stated in *Makkiyah* chapters due to certain reasons during the time of revelation. The chapters in this study are not arranged in a chronological order of the revelation hence the significance and wisdom behind the revelation of each verse or chapter cannot be revealed. This study in some way proves the Quranic coherence in which the theme of the verses in *Makkiyah* and *Madaniyah* chapters are interconnected and interrelated.

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