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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EFFECTS OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION ON CULTURAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN TRANS NZOIA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish effects of Western Christianity and African Traditional Religion on moral and cultural development of the people of Trans Nzoia County. Morals and core values play a very important role in the upbringing of the youth in any given community in any given Geographical part on this planet. The study will be guided by the following objectives: Establish effects of Christianity on moral development, Determine effects of African Traditional Religion on moral development, Compare and contrast effects of moral development of Western Christianity and African Traditional Religion and to determine the role played by morals and core values in both Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Mixed Research method combined both qualitative and quantitative was employed in the study to unearth the hidden truth underlying in the study. The target population was 500 people which gave a sample size of 50 Bishops and Pastors of 50 Churches. The researcher employed purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The researcher used two guiding theories in the study: the theory of Atonement on the Christian part and the theory of dual allegiance on the part of African Traditional Religion. Data was collected by use of Questionnaires and Interview schedules. The raw data was analyzed and descriptively availed for facilitation of research objectives and research questions. Computer program SPSS was employed to give the final accurate and precise results of Research findings. The findings indicate that the intrusion of foreign cultures in Trans Nzoia County has helped water down the quality of African morals on one part and the other part there is improvement on cultural and core values of the people of Trans Nzoia County. The conclusion on the same is that since communication and mobility has been so much developed in these recent times, it is easy for people from different parts of the world to meet and interact at any time at any given Geographical zone on the planet. The study recommends that the citizens of Trans Nzoia should be careful enough in considering the kind of morals to be applied in this county since the county is an Agricultural hub where people from different parts of the Earth converge either for commercial purposes or for learning Agribusiness techniques.

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Introduction:-

The study endeavors to address the background of the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, Significance of the study, Justification of the study, Scope of the study, limitation of the study, and assumption of the study.

Background

The fusion of morals and core values of the western lifestyle and the African lifestyle in contemporary Africa is causing a spontaneous disintegration of the African social structure. Akama (2006) opines that cultural dynamism takes place alongside acculturation, which is the emulation of the objects of one culture by another culture. On the contrary, those who brought the western lifestyle in Africa have had domineering influence in disregard of the African culture and lifestyle of their African counterparts. The African child was morally molded by the community from which the child was brought up. Biological parents played very minimal part in molding their youngsters. This created social awareness in the minds of African children to respect not only their biological parents but to respect everyone else in the community. Agemates were to be regarded as sisters and brothers. Those people who fall in the age group of one's father or mother were to be referred to as mothers and fathers. The same case applied to grandparents. This promoted the discipline, morals and values of the African child in Trans Nzoia County in pre-colonial times. In post colonial time, there is double belonging as John Wiley (2000) puts it. This double belonging has deeply created interwoven social system which makes it hard to discern which African is and which is the western morals and values. This is evidenced by the way the African youngsters relate with their seniors in society. The Bible provides that the child should be taught accordingly and when the child is old, he will not depart from the teachings (Prov.22:6). What has scaled down the morals of the African child is giving rights to the child to choose the kind of life the child desires to live, the kind of Education the child desires to pursue and the type of friends the child desires to hang out with. All this freedom has helped shoot down the discipline of the African child in Trans Nzoia County. This has equally corrupted the child's morals and values. The biblical truth and its interpretations by those who brought the word of truth to Africa seem not to understand the word properly. (Eph.6:1-3) gives very clear instructions on how children should obey their parents. It is not expected that children obey their parents unless these children are properly instructed by the community. The community is responsible of teaching and instructing the youth on good morals and values which is a sure way of bringing up the youngsters into responsible adulthood. The study is interested in shooting down the rate of divorce in Trans Nzoia County. This will equally help to scale down cruelty among spouses of Trans Nzoia County. Wife beating and husband beating among young spouses are likely to be minimized. This will stem from good instructions given on good morals and values by the community of today. On the positive part, the Western morals and values of speaking the truth in love is highly applauded. Keeping time and working hard within the given timeframe is what the African child has yet to emulate from the Western lifestyle in order to promote Trans Nzoia County to a higher level. All in all, the study endeavors to find means and ways of providing corrective measures and constructive instructions on good morals and values for the people of Trans Nzoia directing the County into avenues of great success.

The statement of the problem

Character development by the Christian way is reflected in the Biblical teaching as recorded in Eph. 6:1-3. In general, the Western world instructs the youth individually on moral and character development. This is the opposite of the African social system whereby the whole community is concerned with the cultivation of morals of the youth. When the youth from the Christian social set up are compared with African social set up, it will be found that the African youth who were instructed collectively by the community, are better off morally and character wise are better groomed than their counterparts. The element of extended family in the African social setting has helped to create awareness in the youth on how to fit in the society. Due to the strong Western influence on social development and acculturation taking place through interaction and social media prevailing in today's contemporary world, the researcher has a gap between these two sets of institutions on moral development of the youth of Trans Nzoia County which the researcher addressed.

The objectives of the study:-

1. To establish effects of Christianity on moral development
2. To determine effects of African Traditional Religion on moral development
3. To compare and contrast effects of both Christianity and African Traditional Religion on moral development.
4. To compare and contrast the co-values of Western lifestyle and African lifestyle

Significance:-

The study intends to examine the three lifestyles: The Western lifestyle and the African Traditional lifestyle and the third lifestyle which is the fusion of the Western and the African social lifestyle. By so doing, the study intends to establish reasons that bring about rampant family feuds which cause innumerable domestic violence resulting into a high rate of divorce among couples of Trans Nzoia County. The study wanted to find cause and effects of Western lifestyle in the lives residents of Trans Nzoia County in so far as morals and values are concerned.

Justification of the study

Many scholars have undertaken the study of Western lifestyle and its effect on cultural and moral development of African residents of Trans Nzoia County. It seems that there are yet some social elements which cause the African young couples to exercise domestic violence which result in mass divorce and hence many families breaking and leaving children at bay. In the recent past, an increasing domestic violence has been experienced and still continues to be witnessed. There is both wife beating and husband beating which is causing many families to break. The study intends to address this gap so as to save young couples that are affected by this scenario.

Scope of the study

The study focused on the target population of Trans Nzoia County of a manageable size. In this case, the accessible population was 50 respondents drawn from across the five Sub Counties of Trans Nzoia County namely: Kiminini, Cherangany, Endebess, Saboti and Kwanza. Trans Nzoia County in the Republic of Kenya borders with West Pokot County to the North, Uasin Gishu County to the North-Eastern, it borders Bungoma to the South West and to the West it borders the Republic of Uganda.

The Literature Review:-

Moral development in African social and cultural set up takes the central part in individual and community upbringing. It believed that a well groomed individual contributes to a well groomed community. It is believed that whoever was not properly prepared to fit in the community is regarded a social misfit and is not fit to take any position of leadership where he hails from. The question of community is very important such that when an individual fails to meet certain standards then it is considered the failure of the whole community, this is so because the African social setup is not based on individualism but it is based on inclusivity. The guiding policy is: You are because we are and I am because we are. According to the African worldview, a person does not exist on his own. The community is the umbrella of all humanity in any given social setting. Morals go hand in hand with core values. According to (Otile and Ogimo 2016) Culture is a complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals beliefs, arts customs and technology. Which are shared and transmitted from one generation to the next generation?

The Western influence on culture may not totally transform a black man to become white but can only create white spots of any black individual who goes through Western acculturation. The Western missionaries, who brought Christianity in Africa, tried their best to turn the skin of a black man to turn white but this never happened. The missionaries gave new names to African converts of Christianity convincing the African Christians to believe that by acquiring an American name or a European name will make the convert more superior and hence would cause him earn respect and honor. This is actually not right. Whoever endeavors to change the name of convert will only be successive if he manages to change the convert's character.

The social Cultural Revolution in Africa has to be looked at from two angles. The first angle is angle is the positive angle whereby development in terms of modern technologies of communication, mobility from one point to another, formal Education whereby records of past events can be kept for future reference and for future generations without much distortion and many other elements that have impacted life in a positive way need to be appreciated and applauded. The second angle is the social cultural evolution brought by the Western missionaries through Christianity. This second angle has to be looked at from the negative perspective because it has some elements which have impacted the County of Trans Nzoia negatively. African Christians have imbibed the western culture and morals so much so that it has become part and parcel of their lives (Rodee 1983) states that African social problems that were never before the Western influence included pervasive corruption, spiraling inflation, massive unemployment, overcrowded cities and destitute villages. Like any other culture for any other group of people from any Geographical region on the globe, African culture Is dynamic, hence it is still undergoing contacts and conflicts which the researcher terms social-cultural metamorphosis. The socio-cultural influence from the Western block has given rise to socio-political economic evils including greed, bribery, mismanagement, embezzlement, tribalism and

ethnicity (Rodee 1983) these and many other factors seem to cause spontaneous disintegration of the African social structure. This is a clear indication why modern methods of birth control which include abortion have been greeted with bitter response in many African cultures despite enormous efforts to give it positive and best alternative birth control (Onwubiko 1991). For the common good of the African social system, culture may be allowed to act as a watchdog so as to protect, control and guide the same. (Skinner 2014) defines culture as “Totality of how people live and behave” In this case, the researcher is looking for means and ways of scaling down elements that cause a setback in cultural development eroding good morals and values of the people of Trans Nzoia County so that the County may bring up responsible citizens. The converging point of Western and African Traditional social systems is on the point of core values for human development. These values include: Peace, Hospitality, Honesty and Faithfulness. The diverging point the respect of women for their husbands as instituted in the African cultural and social setting. This respect is unfortunately absent in the Western culture although it is clearly recorded in the Holy scriptures in the Bible (Eph.5:22-23) Divorce is yet another diverging point. This divorce was absent in the African social structure but it has now been fused into the African culture. In the African social system, even a barren wife was not divorced. Instead, another wife was married to give birth for the barren wife. The researcher intends to open eyes of the people of Trans Nzoia County by bringing to the surface those good cultural values accompanied with sound morals for sound upbringing of the people of Trans Nzoia so that cruelty, divorce and rampant cases of suicide may be scaled down.

Effect of Christianity on moral Development

When Christianity was introduced in Kenya, and more so in Trans Nzoia County, it found African Indigenous social and Spiritual institutions already in place and properly functioning. Western morals and values came along with the word of God. The Western missionaries taught the word of God and preached for conversion to Christianity. The converts learned that children are instructed to obey their parents in the Lord (Eph6:1-3) The Researcher is concerned about those parents who are not in the Lord. A gap is realized between parents who are in the Lord and those parents who are not in the Lord. Christianity teaches Individualism. There is individual salvation, individual deliverance, and Eternal life per individual personality. This individualism has affected the youth of Trans Nzoia County in such a way that the youth have no collective respect for everyone in the community The youth are very selective on who to respect and who not to respect. This kind of behavior has scaled down the magnitude of respect between the youth and the elders in the community of Trans Nzoia County. The Western influence on African Christians is not absolutely negative. (Hermen, Kroesbergen 2019) observes that the fusion of morals and core values serves the African Christian comfortably directing his destiny to paradise.

The element of extended family is missing in the Christian culture whereby a step brother and a step sister is referred to as half brother and half sister respectively. According to African social setting, it sounds very rude to refer to one as half brother or half sister. The absence of the element of extended family in the Western lifestyle has scaled down the social respect amongst the people of Trans Nzoia County. In the same vein, the respect for elders has gone down the drain. For instance, the kissing of the bride and the bridegroom in public on the wedding day is a western influence which is considered rude, unethical and unbecoming according to African ethics. This difference in behavior creates a gap which the researcher endeavors to close. Another area of concern as witnessed by the people of Trans Nzoia County is the dress of an African girl of today. In pre-colonial period, Africans did not have good clothing to cover their nakedness. The coming of Western missionaries and the colonial masters into our continent of Africa introduced good and descent clothes for men and women, boys and girls in Trans Nzoia County. In the recent years, The County has realized a paradigm shift from the West which has changed the dressing style such that any correction just falls on deaf ears. The response is, “My fashion my choice”. The miniskirts being used by our young girls today are really degrading the moral standards of the youth of Trans Nzoia County

Increased divorce rate in Trans Nzoia County is directly an influence of Western Christianity. (Agrawal 1998) argues that there is no moral reasoning for the purpose of moral justification. Bad morals pollute the community. There is no way the community can justify the happenings due to bad morals. The study endeavors to put in place the solutions needed to combat mass divorce in Trans Nzoia County. The analogue group though less educated and less advanced in the Western way of life, that group is successive in their marriages and have educated their children who seem not to like the analogue lifestyle. The digital lifestyle is the Western influence which looks down upon the analogue. It is wise to choose the correct lifestyle that may not cause one to have a lot of trauma. Happy and satisfactory life is better than modern and advanced lifestyle with a lot of grieves and sorrow.

It goes without mentioning that illicit sex among the youth of Trans Nzoia County is an influence of the Western lifestyle. Due to availability of contraceptives and pornography on social media, the youth of Trans Nzoia County feel they are licensed to play sex at will and at any time. The manufacturers of contraceptive devices argue that contraceptives offer safe sex. However, it has been found that contraceptives cause problems especially when it comes to the right time for a girl to conceive especially after marriage. Contraceptives have also been found to influence young girls to indulge in prostitution which did not in the African community. (Chinua Achebe 1969) opines that the downfall of the Ibo society is a product of both the white man's external influence and internal increasing disunity. The downfall of Trans Nzoia County is being caused by both external and internal forces. There are those African youths who have completely immersed in the Western lifestyle so much so that looking back where their roots of originality is a taboo. Many of our youth in Trans Nzoia County have applied and continue to apply for green cards that are likely to empower them to become citizens of Western Countries. This will continue to cause the loss of human manpower and skilled labor force from Trans Nzoia County.

Effects of African Traditional Religion on moral Development

It has always been the duty of the African community to design and put in practice the desired morals and values for the upbringing of an upright community. In the African social system, it was believed that no man is an Island. The famous African saying is, "He is because we are and they are because he is." The task of instructing the youth to grow into responsible adulthood used to be a collective responsibility. The youth grew up with a lot of respect for the community. Today, this respect is absent due to the Western influence. The African social system offered informal Education. There were no bells to control the periods of learning but respect for one another on the part of teachers was maximum. Grandfathers took out boys and taught them how to herd cattle and how to defend the animals they were herding in case of a fierce wild animal like a Leopard or a Lion happens to attack the animals they were herding. The grandfathers also instructed the youth on how to fend for their families by providing food and other necessities. The young boys were also taught how to handle girls not with cruelty but with love and care. The grandmothers on the other hand used to be instructors for girls in the community. The young girls were instructed on how to cook food, take care of children, and how to take care of their husbands. Young women were required to respect their husbands at all costs. Respect and love was social cement that sustained the African marriage. On the negative part, men were sometimes extra harsh to assert their masculine position in their homes. Unfortunately, this assertion often resulted into house beating that robbed happiness and harmony in some homes. In a nutshell there was fear that once a woman is given a small opening for family leadership, she would lead a man with an iron fist. The Christian influence and the African Traditional lifestyle are two forces tearing the contemporary man apart. (Desmond Tutu 1997) state that the Africans suffer from a state of Schizophrenia, that is, "The struggle between their Christianity and their African-ness. This struggle is between the youth and the elders of Trans Nzoia County. This is a state where things are pulling apart and causing things to fall apart and life is no longer at ease.

The African social system is not so much theoretical in nature. As elders taught the youngsters on how to herd animals, they always took them out to do it practically. The same applied to grandmothers. They always took the girls into the kitchen when it was time to give instructions on fixing a particular dish either for the family or for the guests. Whoever cooked raw food was given the same to eat. This kept the learner alert and obedient. (Hermen, Kroesbergen 2019) states that the African social system is not about pictures of the world but about how to get things done and about discovering what ultimately caused something to happen. This confirms why most African lessons were practical but not theoretical.

The element of extended family has contributed positively towards morals and values of the youth in Trans Nzoia County. According to African social system, everybody in the community has to be respected at all costs. Failure of a youth to respect an adult may cause the youth to be punished by anybody available at the scene of crime. This helped to uplift the standard of discipline among the youth of Trans Nzoia County. (Onwubiko, 1991) states that African values are articulative and include the sense of community, a sense of good human relations, a sense of sacredness of life, a sense of hospitality and a sense of sacredness of Religion. These short phrases here above as stated by Onwubiko speak volumes about the African spiritual and social structure. In order to land on a safe ground, the respondents of Trans Nzoia County should choose to practice dual allegiance. (Parrat, 1996) opines that in this context, syncretism and dual allegiance become the natural phenomena.

The effect of both Christianity and African Traditional Religion on moral Development

The moral and cultural impact of both the Western Christianity and African social system is directly reflected in the lives of those who welcomed both moral and cultural systems. The Western Christianity had its contribution in the lives of African adherents. (Dr. Clifford, Meesua Sibani, 2014) states that Western culture has tremendously impacted African Traditional society positively and negatively. This implies that there is cultural good and cultural bad. On the positive part, the Western cultural influence has helped to abolish some harmful cultural practices. Formal Education for instance has helped to replace the idle mind which caused the inhabitants of Trans Nzoia County to learn and achieve modern skills of Agri-business so as to work effectively on farms that were left behind by the colonial masters. Western though Christianity has also helped the natives to learn and achieve medical skills in order to manage medical facilities in the County. The spiritual development prevailing in Trans Nzoia today has contributed positively in scaling down thuggery, Criminology and the abolition of bad customs of clitoridectomy of girls in the African communities within the County of Trans Nzoia.

It has taken quite long for African natives to accept to change some of the cultures. It is naturally hard for people to abandon something they have known for a long time to go in for something new and strange. (Akama, 2012) opines that for culture is dynamic because culture normally changes over time. Factors that affect culture change are intrusion of migrants and cultural diffusion in response to events, phenomena, and adjustments of morals and values within the given social structure. This implies that even after the departure of colonial masters of Trans Nzoia County there is still cultural change going on. European missionaries, American missionaries, Chinese merchants and Arabs are here in the County of Trans Nzoia interacting with the natives of the County of study. Although Africans of Trans Nzoia County were adamant of abandoning their culture, morals and values, the Western influence prevailed and eventually the Western influence took over and the natives gave in. Right now, the same natives are deeply immersed in the Western lifestyle so much so that what they do and the language they speak is purely Western. The present generation in Trans Nzoia County speaks English and Kiswahili fluently than they can speak their mother tongue. The same residents can pray better in foreign languages than in their native language. (Onwubiko 1991) states that African values are articulate and include a sense of community, a sense of good human relations and a sense of sacredness of life and a sense of hospitality. In the same vein, Africans are very good at the sense of good human relations and at the sense of hospitality. When the colonial masters came to Trans Nzoia County, they were warmly welcome. The Western missionaries engaged the natives of Trans Nzoia County in a very long prayer and when the Africans opened their eyes, they found no land. The colonial masters had already taken the big chunk of land and shared amongst themselves. Fortunately, the natives of Trans Nzoia County did not wage war against their guests to demand for their land; instead they continued to pray until God expelled the colonial masters from the County. The prayer of Trans Nzoia County today is that natives may polish their morals and values and not to be corrupted by the cruelty of Algaieda, and Alshabab who are always finding inroads in the County through pretence in the name of traders selling shawls, watches, clothes, and shoes. Hopefully God will hear this prayer.

Comparing and Contrasting core values

The world view of a given people designs and discerns the morals and values of that particular people. According to African worldview-meaning according to how Africans look at the world in which they live, they were able to come up with particular morals and values to suit their environment. The Western missionaries came to Africa with the picture of their worldview only to meet different people with different views about the world. According to the African worldview, a woman has to submit to man at all costs. This view is supported by the Holy Scriptures (Eph.5:22-23) unfortunately, the messengers who were responsible of bringing the scripture in the continent of Africa, did not live up to the word. Best and Khan, 1989) state that validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. In this case, the Bible is the measuring yard stick for people's faith. For the Bible to be valid, let the respondents agree with what it says. Unfortunately, the values of love and harmony are absent in some African men. In few isolated cases, some men dominate their wives and in some cases apply the language of the whip and the fist upon their dear wives. This occasionally robs happiness and harmony from their homes. The Bible does not say that men have to be harsh and cruel in order to manage their homes nor are they supposed to rule their families with an iron fist. The book of Ephesians 5:25 instructs husbands to love their wives to the point of even dying for them the same way the Lord Jesus Christ died for the Church. On the other hand, the Western cultural values do not permit wife beating unless in very extreme cases should this happen. On the positive part, the Western cultural system regards the use of time very much. The element of time is terribly misused in Africa in the African social system. A directive that a certain event is scheduled to take off and end at this given time is not binding in African social set up. Unfortunately Africans do things in African time. To Africans, time is not important. On the contrary, the event is the most important item in the African way of doing things. The question

of European time, African time and American time keep coming up in everyday conversations. This is where Africans from Trans Nzoia County need to pull up our socks and jumpstart our way of doing things in relation with God given time so as to accomplish many tasks in a given timeframe. (Schilbrack, 2010) states that the difference between the traditional concept of religion and an African concept can be illustrated by the difference between their critical responses. In this case, Africans end up accomplishing very little in a whole year. No wonder, this may be the reason why the residents of Trans Nzoia County may be lacking behind economically. These residents need to pull up socks set up goals to be met in a given timeframe and so the County is most likely to realize economic upshot as was the case during colonial times.

Conclusion:-

Comparing the effects of Western lifestyle and African Traditional lifestyle in relation to moral development in Trans Nzoia County, the following points realized. The Western lifestyle and African lifestyle depend on each other. Moral development were of the two lifestyles is responsible of what is reflected in the lives of the residents of Trans Nzoia County. A careful sampling of good morals and values were fused and availed for positive upbringing of the youth in Trans Nzoia County. The study created a neutral platform whereby ideological, philosophical and sociological factors were merged from Western and African influences on moral development. When these factors are shared carefully by appreciating each other from both sides, an improved social and spiritual life will be realized. The study is likely to generate alternative ways of improving the social and spiritual well being of the residents of Trans Nzoia County. This improved lifestyles would eventually permeate the social fabric of the whole country since Trans Nzoia is a cosmopolitan County which represents the whole nation of Kenya In addition the study sets a stage for more scholars to explore and come up with better ideological and philosophical and sociological ideas which may uplift the living standards of the residents of Trans Nzoia County and beyond. The study has been an eye opener to reveal other underlying gaps that may prompt other scholars to dig deeper into this subject of study to unearth the desired truth which may be employed to uplift the living standards of the residents of Trans Nzoia County morally and socially. The study has managed to find the difference between Western world view and the African world view each of which generate its own beliefs and practices. The study has shed more light on inclusivity and individualism whereby research has revealed an existing gap which affect moral upbringing of the youth of Trans Nzoia County into responsible adulthood. The organization of individual lives will now determine the life of tomorrow and therefore it is important to be stable not to follow every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:13-14)the study has established that there is no perfectness in the lifestyles of Western bloc and Eastern bloc. In order to succeed one has to learn from others as others learn from him/her and then compare and contrast. (Hermen, Kroesbergen, 2019) observed that the fusion of morals and core values from Western Christianity and African Traditional Religion forms a hybrid religion which served African Christians comfortably by directing them to paradise. In the same vein, morals and values from the Western social system and African social system may be fused to form a hybrid social system that may be used to serve the present generation of Trans Nzoia County comfortably now and after. The study has come up with solid evidence that worldviews differ from one place to another and from one group of people to another group of people. Hence, it is crystal clear that that different beliefs and practices are bound to emerge. It is therefore upon each and everyone in Trans Nzoia County to choose the kind of life best suitable for him/her. However, the study has found out that those who end up regretting because of the pattern of life in which they are immersed, are those who missed the mark during the time a choice of life pattern was being made. The choice of one's life today determines one's life tomorrow

Recommendations:-

The study has come up with the following recommendations:

1. The Christians should come up with the policy that guides moral development of church members and church leadership.
2. The traditional moral development need not be confused with church moral development. There should be a distinction between the two for proper church growth.
3. The residents of Trans Nzoia County should compare and contrast the morals of Western Christianity and morals of African Traditional system and sample out the most suitable morals and put them in use for their daily life.
4. A comparison should be done between the Western Christian values and African Traditional values and then come up with the most suitable values to be used in contemporary life.

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