Pronominal licensing in Mam*

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1. Introduction

Many languages exhibit a person restriction on two arguments that occupy the same agreement domain. Bonet (1991) investigates this restriction between the two objects in ditransitive constructions, dubbing it the Person Case Constraint (PCC), exemplified in (1) where a local person dative clitic cannot co-occur with a local person accusative clitic.

(1) Je le /*te lui ai présenté.
1.SG 3.SG.A /*2.SG.A 3.SG.D have introduced
'I introduced him/*you to her.' (French, Béjar and Rezac 2003:49)

PCC effects have also been tied to subject/object person restrictions (Boeckx 2000, Béjar and Rezac 2003). Two dialects of Mam (Mayan) exhibit a restriction on 3rd person subjects with local person objects (Ixtahuacán, England 1983; Cajolá, Pérez Vail 2014).[1]

(2) Ma tz'/*chin ok t-tzeeq'an.
PROX BNON1SG/*B1SG POT ANON1SG-hit
'He hit him/*me.' (Ixtahuacán Mam, England 1983:62)

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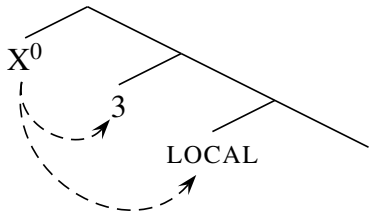
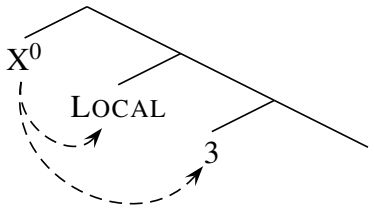
[1]Glosses from England's work on Mam are slightly edited: non1sg refers to both 2sg and 3sg. Other abbreviations include: 1=first person, 2=second person, 3=third person, A=Set A agreement, B=Set B agreement, A=accusative, AGT=agent, AP=antipassive, D=dative, DEP=dependent, DIR=directional, DS=directional suffix, LP=local person, NON1=non first person (second and third person), PAT=patient, PL=plural, POT=potential, PROX=proximate aspect, RN=relational noun, SG=singular

In this paper, I argue that the Mam person restriction in (2) should be analyzed in the same way as the PCC. Many scholars have argued that PCC effects and transitive person restrictions should be analyzed syntactically (Ormazabal and Romero 2002, Anagnostopoulou 2003, 2005, Bejar and Rezac 2003, Adger and Harbour 2007, Nevins 2007, Rezac 2008, Preminger 2019, Stegovec 2020). Under these analyses, the effects arise from a probe interacting with two goals, as illustrated in (3) where 3rd person IO and local person DO combinations are ungrammatical. Interestingly, Mam presents an additional quirk to the person restriction: objects shift above subjects in active, transitive clauses (4). The result is that the *3≫LOCAL structure which is ruled out on most accounts, is in fact grammatical in Mam; it is the opposite hierarchical order in (4), *LOCAL≫3, which must be ruled out.

(3) Typical PCC: * $IO_3 \gg DO_{LOCAL}$



(4) Mam: * $OBJ_{LOCAL} \gg SUBJ_3$



Taking this inversion into account, Mam presents a challenge for most syntactic accounts of the PCC: the probe encounters the two arguments in the opposite order of what might be expected. To account for the Mam data, I adopt Deal's (2020) analysis of the PCC which crucially assumes the structure in (4). I argue that the best way to understand the restriction in Mam is a syntax in which the probe is satisfied by the local person features on the object first, and then is unable to Agree with 3rd person subjects. Failure to agree with the pronominal subject leads to a licensing problem, resulting in ungrammaticality. In other words, pronouns must be properly licensed in Mam. Configurations like (4) can lead to the 3rd person subject being left unlicensed, accounting for the ungrammaticality. Notably, this licensing condition applies not just to local persons, as Béjar and Rezac's (2003) Person Licensing Condition (PLC) does; rather, it applies to all pronouns.

The paper is organized as follows. In §2, I present the structure of Mam clauses. Then in §3, I show the transitive person restriction. In §4, I offer an analysis of how the relevant licensing probe agrees with both transitive arguments, giving derivations for grammatical and ungrammatical configurations. I then show how the antipassive repair supports the licensing condition. In §5, I briefly contrast the present analysis with three accounts of the PCC that make the wrong predictions about the Mam pattern. §6 concludes.

2. Structure of Mam

2.1 Agreement

Mam, like many other Mayan languages, displays ergative (Set A) and absolutive (Set B) agreement in the clause. This can be seen in (5): *chin* cross-references intransitive subjects and transitive objects (absolutive, set B) while *n-* cross-references transitive subjects (ergative, Set A).

(5) Ergative/Absolutive alignment (England 1983:58,62)

a. Ma chin b'eet=a.
PROX B1SG walk=LP
'I walked.'

b. Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX B1SG POT ANON1SG-hit=LP
'You hit me.'

c. Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX BNON1SG=POT A1SG-hit=LP
'I hit you.'

In addition to these two agreement paradigms, Mam also has a unique locus of agreement: an enclitic which tracks local person features (LP enclic).[2] In Ixtahuacán Mam, this is *=a*, though the form differs in other dialects (*=i, =e, =e'*).

(6) Intransitive subjects (England 1983:58)

a. Ma ∅-b'eet=a.
PROX BNON1SG-walk=LP
'You walked.'

b. Ma ∅-b'eet.
PROX BNON1SG-walk
'He/she walked.'

[2]The exact features that this enclitic references is more complex. This enclitic appears for all local persons except first person plural inclusive. Noyer 1992 analyzes the *=a* enclitic as the 'elsewhere' case, and the null counterpart as exponing [αI αYou] (first and second person values match, i.e., 3rd person and first person inclusive). In Scott (2020), I analyze the *=a* enclitic as spelling out the presence of a [HEARER] feature regardless of value, building on Little (2018). I gloss this as LP 'local person' for simplicity; note that in England's work it is glossed with the full person/number features of the argument it is referring to.

This LP enclitic can agree with either the transitive subject or object (England 1983:58), an example of "omnivorous" (Nevins 2011) or "promiscuous" agreement (Béjar 2003). In (7a), the local person subject triggers =*a* on the verb but in (7b), the subject is 3rd person, and the local person object triggers =*a* on the verb.

(7) a. Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX BNON1SG-POT A1SG-hit=LP
'I hit him.' (England 1983:58)

b. Ma chin tzaj t-tzyu-'n=a Kyel.
PROX B1SG DIR ANON1SG-grab-DS=LP Miguel
'Miguel grabbed me.' (England 1983:113)

Set A morphology is also used to reference oblique objects. Like other Mayan languages, oblique phrases are constructed with a "relational noun" (RN) which functions like a preposition, though they are formally possessed by the oblique object, indicated by the use of Set A morphology on the relational noun.

(8) a. ...w-u'n=a.
A1SG-RN.AGT=LP
'... by me.' (England et al. 1974: ex 242)

b. ...ky-u'n xjaal ...
A3PL-RN.AGT people ...
'...for the people...' (England et al. 1974: ex 240)

2.2 Hierarchical relationships

Coon et al. (2014) distinguish two types of Mayan languages, high-ABS and low-ABS, depending on where in the verb absolutive is marked. They further analyze the high placement of absolutive in high-ABS languages as reflective of object movement driven by the need for the object to receive absolutive case from Infl^0.

Table 1: Absolutive Parameter

HIGH ABS	ASPECT	**ABS**	ERG	ROOT	(VOICE)	SUFFIX	
LOW ABS	ASPECT		ERG	ROOT	(VOICE)	SUFFIX	**ABS**

In its base position, the object cannot be probed by Infl^0; the object is only accessible to receive case and trigger Set B morphology if it moves to the edge of *v*P.

(9) [Infl^0 [$_{vP}$ OBJECT [SUBJECT [$_{VP}$ V ~~OBJECT~~]]]]

A second piece of evidence for object shift is that Mam exhibits a ban on Ā-extraction of ergative subjects, known as the Ergative Extraction Constraint (ECC). Following Coon et al. (2014), I assume that the obligatory movement of the object above the subject is the source of the ECC (see also Campana 1992, Assmann et al. 2015, and Coon et al. 2020 on Mayan, and Aldridge 2004, 2008 on Austronesian). Coon et al. (2020) argue that due to the nature of the probe on C, the object counts as an intervener and subjects cannot be extracted (10).

(10) [$_{CP}$ __ ... [$_{vP}$ OBJECT [SUBJECT [$_{VP}$ V ~~OBJECT~~]]]]

Ixtahuacán Mam shows both of these indicators of high objects. First, the high placement of absolutive morphology makes it a high-ABS language, (5). Additionally, ergative subjects cannot undergo Ā extraction in Mam. In the non-extraction context in (11a), the plural transitive subject *xiinaq* is cross-referenced by Set A morphology on the verb, and appears in-situ following the verb. While Ā extraction for object focus is perfectly grammatical, extracting the ergative subject is ungrammatical (11b). In order to focus the ergative subject, the antipassive construction is used, in which the agent *xiinaq* 'man' becomes the intransitive subject and the object *cheej* 'horse' must appear in an oblique (relational noun) phrase, (11c). Section 4.2 shows that this repair strategy for extracting transitive subjects is the same as the repair for the person restriction.

(11) England 2017:517

a. Ma chi kub' ky-tzyu-'n xiinaq cheej.
PROX B3P DIR A3PL-grab-DS man horse
'The men grabbed the horses.'

b. *[Aa xiinaq] ma chi kub' ky-tzyu-'n cheej.
[DEM man] PROX B3P DIR A3PL-grab-DS horse
Intended: 'It was the men who grabbed the horses.'

c. [Aa xiinaq] ma chi tzyuu-n ky-i'j cheej.
[DEM man] PROX B3P grab-AP A3PL-RN:PAT horse
'It was the men who grabbed the horses.'

2.3 Probe placement

As we've just seen, the source of Set B (absolutive) morphology in Mam is Infl^0. I follow Coon (2017) and assume that Set A ergative agreement arises directly via a Spec-Head relationship between transitive *v* and the external argument. I assume the same probe on v^0 is present in all Set A contexts (possessive and relational noun constructions).

(12) [Infl^0 [$_{vP}$ OBJECT [SUBJECT [v^0 ...]]]]
ABS ERG

We now turn to the third locus of agreement in Mam which is not present in other Mayan languages: the LP enclitic which can track subjects or objects. I assume that the LP morpheme is a clitic built on an Agree relationship. Since the LP enclitic can co-occur with Set A or Set B marking, I start with the base assumption that the LP probe is not on v^0 or Infl^0. As a starting place for understanding LP agreement, consider the position of this morpheme in relation to the rest of the verb: in final position. Many Mayan languages have a special "status" suffix that always appears last in the verb and tracks transitivity. Clemens and Coon (2018) analyze the position of the status suffix as the head (ss^0) above v^0 which marks the edge of the verbal projection and the landing site of the verb in all Mayan languages.

Mam does not have status suffixes that track transitivity (England 1983). Instead, the LP enclitic takes the final position on the verb. I take this to suggest the LP probe is on the ss^0 head. Given that objects shift above subjects, the LP probe on ss^0 encounters the object first. In order to capture the fact that it can also agree with the subject, I propose that the LP probe continues probing after agreeing with the object. The details of this agreement are discussed in section 4.1.

(13) [Infl^0 [ss^0 LP [$_{vP}$ OBJECT [SUBJECT [v^0 ...]]]]

In addition to appearing on verbs, recall that LP enclitics appears on possessed (relational) nouns as well. I thus propose that the heads that can host the LP probe are ss^0 in the verbal domain and the head responsible for possessor agreement in the nominal domain. The LP probe does more than trigger the enclitic *=a*: as I argue in section 4, it also licenses pronouns. I argue that in *LOCAL≫3 configurations, the LP probe cannot license the 3rd person subject, leading to ungrammaticality.

3. Transitive person restriction

In Mam, local person subjects and 3rd person objects are grammatical, shown in (14). The reverse construction, however, is not grammatical in (15).[3] Crucially, in (15), the local person object should condition the appearance of *=a* on the verb. However, since set A and set B markers collapse the second/third person distinction, (15a) can only mean "You hit me"; the interpretation with a 3rd person subject is not possible. In other words, *=a* cannot be associated with only the object and not the subject.

(14) Ma tz'-ok n-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX BNON1SG-POT A1SG-hit=LP
'I hit him.' (England 1983:62)

(15) a. Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX B1SG POT ANON1SG-hit=LP
*'He hit me.'
'You hit me.' (England 1983:62)

b. Ma tz'=ok t-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX BNON1SG=POT ANON1SG-hit
*'He hit you.'
'You hit him.' (England 1983:62)

This restriction only holds of pronouns. An R-expression subject like *Kyel* in (16) can co-occur with local person objects. Additionally, local on local constructions are perfectly grammatical, (17a).

(16) Ma chin tzaj t-tzyu-'n=a Kyel.
PROX B1SG DIR ANON1SG-grab-DS=LP Miguel
'Miguel grabbed me.' (England 1983:113)

(17) a. Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX B1SG POT ANON1SG-hit=LP
'You hit me.' (England 1983:62)

[3]England (1983) notes that some speakers allow 3rd person subjects with local person objects by dropping the enclitic. I set aside the analysis of those speakers' grammars for now.

b. Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX BNON1SG=POT A1SG-hit=LP
'I hit you.' (England 1983:62)

4. Deriving the Mam pattern

4.1 Interaction/satisfaction

In this section I offer and implement a formal analysis of how the LP probe in Mam fails to Agree with 3rd person subjects only in the presence of local person objects. I set aside an analysis of the grammatical LOCAL≫LOCAL configurations for reasons of space.[4] Instead, I will focus on accounting for the *PROBE≫LOCAL≫3 configuration. I adopt Deal's (2020) account of the Weak PCC, which relies on the probe interacting with local person argument first in PCC-violating structures. Her analysis builds on Deal 2015, which offers a theory of Agree in which probes come with two specifications, listed below.

(18) a. Interaction condition: the features that a probe copies back
b. Satisfaction condition: the features that cause a probe to stop probing

To illustrate, the probes responsible for Set A and Set B agreement are simple probes satisfied by [ϕ]. These probes copy back full sets of ϕ features and stop probing after interacting with the first ϕ-bearing element.

(19) Simple ϕ probe (Set A and Set B agreement)
[INT:ϕ,SAT:ϕ]

Probes like (19) will always stop probing after agreeing with one pronoun (assuming all pronouns bear ϕ). These are simple probes that do not display omnivorous agreement or cause a person restriction. This contrasts with an insatiable probe like (20), which will interact with all ϕ-bearing elements in its domain.

(20) Probe which Agrees with multiple DPs
[INT:ϕ,SAT:-]

[4] Anagnostopolou 2005, Nevins 2007, Coon and Keine 2020 all present analyses of the Weak PCC. While these theories account for LOCAL≫LOCAL configurations, they all make the opposite predictions for ungrammatical combinations in Mam involving 3rd persons. For this reason, I adopt Deal's (2020) account of the Weak PCC; her account predicts the full Mam pattern.

Deal (2020) uses the interaction/satisfaction theory to account for the full typology of PCC patterns, including the Weak PCC. Her account is crucially different from previous accounts of the PCC when it comes to the *3(IO)–LOCAL(DO) combination, which is ruled out for both Strong and Weak PCC patterns. In her account of the PCC in ditransitives, Deal assumes that in basic configurations, DOs raise to c-command IOs. As illustrated in (4), this structure is parallel to object movement above subject in Mam. In these PROBE≫LOCAL≫3 structures, the probe cannot Agree past the local person object, suggesting that the probe is satisfied by [PART(ICIPANT)] (21).[5]

(21) The LP probe:
[INT:ϕ,SAT:PART]

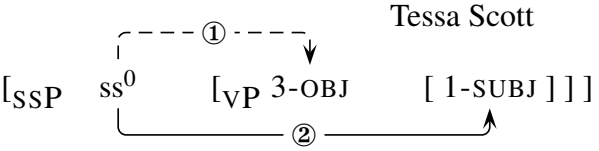
The structure in (4) and the probe specified in (21) together result in the lack of an Agree relationship between the LP probe and the 3rd person subject. I propose that the PROBE≫LOCAL≫3 structures are ungrammatical in Mam because the 3rd person pronoun (c-commanded by the object) is not properly licensed, given the requirement in (22).

(22) Pronoun Licensing Condition (ProLC): All pronouns must be agreed with (licensed) by an LP probe.

What follows are two sample derivations to show how the interaction/satisfaction account can directly account for the Mam restriction. Solid lines indicate Agree with [PART], which satisfies the probe. We begin with a grammatical configuration: a local person subject and a 3rd person subject (3≫LOCAL). The LP probe interacts with the object, continues to probe its domain, and interacts with the subject, copying back features of both. Both arguments interact with the probe. (Section 5 summarizes several PCC analyses which fail to account for the grammaticality of these structures.)

(23) Ma tz'=ok n-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX BNON1SG-POT A1SG-hit=LP
'I hit him.' (England 1983:62)

[5]Note that this is a simplification of Deal's (2020) analysis. Mam displays the Weak PCC, and Deal shows that in Weak PCC patterns, [PART] does not satisfy the probe. Instead, Weak PCC probes are insatiable (they lack a satisfaction condition). However, Deal introduces the notion of *Dynamic Interaction*: in ✓LOCAL≫LOCAL structures, interaction with [PART] limits further interaction to [PART]. For ease of explanation and lack of space, I focus only on the *LOCAL≫3 configuration in Mam, applying Deal's analysis of the Strong PCC. The full analysis of the Weak PCC pattern is given in Deal 2020 and straightforwardly extends to Mam.

(24) 

The crucial ungrammatical configuration in Mam is illustrated below: a local person object cannot occur with a 3rd person subject. The probe interacts with and is satisfied by object bearing [PART]. The result is that the probe does not interact with the 3rd person subject, leaving the subject un-agreed-with, deriving the restriction *LOCAL≫3.

(25) Ma chin ok t-tzeeq'an=a.
PROX B1SG POT BNON1SG-hit
*'He hit me.'
'You hit me.' (England 1983:62)

(26) 

I assume that ungrammaticality results in (26) due to the licensing requirement in (22). Failed agreement by itself does not crash a derivation (Bejar 2003, Preminger 2014); it is the unmet licensing need of the subject that does so.

4.2 The repair: evidence for licensing

To express the ungrammatical active clause in which a 3rd person agent acts on a local person patient, one argument must be in an oblique phrase. This is done through the antipassive in (27), which demotes the object to oblique.

(27) ... *sajtz iilan wi'ja*.
... x-tz'-aj-tz iila-n [RN*P* w-i'j=a].
... DEP.PROX-BNON1SG-DIR-DIR see-AP [RN*P* A1SG-RN:PAT=LP]
'... he scolded me.' (England 1983:307)

Notice that the verb only agrees with one argument, while the other argument is expressed in a relational noun phrase. It's clear that the LP probe agrees with the local person pronoun, and I assume that the LP probe on the antipassive verb abstractly agrees and licenses the 3rd person subject.

The effect is that each pronoun is in its own LP domain. This is in fact a familiar repair for PCC violations. In French, the repair for the Strong PCC is that IO appears in PP (oblique phrase), shown in (28).

(28) Je t' ai presenté [$_{PP}$ à lui].
1.SG 2.SG.A have introduced [$_{PP}$ to him]
'I introduced you to him.' (Béjar and Rezac 2003:50)

The repairs in Mam and French support a licensing explanation, similar to the PLC proposed in Béjar and Rezac 2003: "Strategies to rescue PCC violations all involve satisfying the PLC by making sure each 1st/2nd person NP has a corresponding [π] probe to Agree with it" (Béjar and Rezac 2003:55). The Mam repair is structurally similar: one pronoun appears in RNP (oblique phrase).

The antipassive in Mam satisfies ProLC by making sure each pronoun has a corresponding LP probe to Agree with it, supporting the requirement that all pronouns be licensed by an LP probe and not other ϕ-probes. It cannot be the case that any probe can license pronouns: note that there is still Agree between Infl^0 and the subject, evidenced by the Set B morpheme in (27). Given the fact that both objects and subjects are independently agreed with by Infl^0 and *v*, the licensing requirement cannot be synonymous to being agreed with by any probe on a functional head. A similar analysis is made by Béjar and Rezac: the PLC requires the [PART] feature be agreed with by a person probe (Béjar and Rezac 2003).

5. Three PCC accounts that make the opposite prediction

The challenge raised by the data from Mam is how to account for grammatical PROBE≫3≫LOCAL configurations. We have seen that the combination of the ProLC and a interaction/satisfaction model of agreement can account for this pattern. However, many accounts of the PCC specifically rule out this structure. In this section, I will briefly summarize three such accounts of the PCC which fail to predict the Mam pattern.

In Béjar and Rezac 2003, the relevant head hosts separate person and number probes. The person probe encounters the 3rd person (dative) IO first; the IO matches the person probe (by virtue of being dative) and undergoes clitic movement, leaving behind an invisible A-trace. The number probe then probes and matches the lower local person DO. These configurations are ruled out because the person features on the DO never entered into an Agree relationship with (and thus was not licensed by) the person probe.

In Nevins 2007, Multiple Agree rules out PROBE≫3≫LOCAL configurations. In these cases, the probe agrees with both arguments but crucially does not Contiguously Agree

with [+PART]: the 3rd person (with unmarked [-PART]) intervenes between the probe and the [+PART] feature, causing an ungrammatical derivation.

Most recently, Coon and Keine (to appear) develop a theory of "Feature Gluttony" to account for the PCC, again ruling out PROBE≫3≫LOCAL. Under their analysis, probes consist of multiple segments of a feature geometry (following Béjar and Rezac 2003) in which each segment searches for a goal simultaneously and different segments can agree with different goals. In PROBE≫3≫LOCAL configurations, the probe is specified as [uϕ–uPART]. The [uϕ] segment agrees with the 3rd person (IO) and the [uPART] segment Agrees with the local person (DO). The problem arises in choosing which element to move: moving either one violates a requirement that a probe cliticize everything it Agreed with, while moving both violates the binary (internal) Merge operation.

In ruling out combinations of 3rd person indirect objects and local person direct objects (or 3rd person quirky dative subjects and local person nominative objects in Icelandic), the accounts in Bejar and Rezac 2003, Nevins 2007, and Coon and Keine 2020 all rely on a configuration in which the the 3rd person argument intervenes between the probe and the local person pronoun.[6] In contrast, Deal's (2020) analysis assumes a that probes first interact directly with the local person argument which satisfies it, resulting in no agreement with the 3rd peron argument.

6. Conclusion

The person restriction in Mam presents a pattern which seems familiar on the surface: in active, transitive clauses, local person objects are ungrammatical with 3rd person subjects. This configuration is familiar in the sense that it has been well known to require 'inverse' marking in many languages in the Algoquian family, and is even found in Huastec, a Mayan language (Zavala 1994). However, Mam presents a puzzle for many theories that analyze transitive person restrictions as PCC violations because the two arguments are in the opposite hierarchical order relative to the probe.

While many theories predict the opposite pattern (i.e., *3≫LOCAL; Bejar and Rezac 2003, Nevins 2007, Coon and Keine to appear), Deal's (2020) theory is able to account for the Mam pattern. Her account builds on the observation that a direct object preference is central to the derivation of PCC effects and takes this to indicate that the probe interacts with the direct object first. Deal (2020) argues that this difference in structural assumptions, analyzed in the interaction/satisfaction theory of Agree (Deal 2015a), is the main component for understanding the variation in PCC patterns cross-lingustically.

[6]Even in 'reverse' PCC patterns (e.g., Slovenien; Stegovec 2020) which can arise due to scrambling between the IO and DO, the configurations to rule out are all structurally the same—the 3rd person argument is assumed to intervene between the probe and the local person pronoun.

The final piece to understanding the restriction in Mam is a pronominal licensing requirement. In the ungrammatical configurations, 3rd person (null) subject pronouns are left unlicensed; although they are agreed with by *v*, the LP probe did not reach them. I have proposed the ProLC: all pronouns must be agreed with by an LP probe. Evidence for this comes from the repair for person-violating structures: the antipassive. In the antipassive repair, each pronoun is in the domain of its own LP probe. This analysis leaves open the question of how the licensing condition is checked, as well as why the LP probe can license pronouns but other agreement probes cannot.

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