

A Socio-Cultural Perspective on the Transformation of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia from the reform era of 1998 to 2021, using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The primary focus of this research is the curriculum changes from the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), 2013 Curriculum, to the Freedom to Learn curriculum, within the social and cultural context of Indonesia. The SLR process involved identifying and selecting relevant academic articles published between 2020 and 2025. The findings show that the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum reflects efforts to balance Islamic values with the demands of modernity and the socio-cultural needs of Indonesian society. Each curriculum change also demonstrates an effort to integrate technology, digital literacy, and religious character in learning, creating a curriculum that is more adaptive and relevant to the evolving times.

Keywords: *Digitalization, Curriculum, Islamic Education, Socio-cultural, Transformation*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi kurikulum pendidikan Islam di Indonesia sejak era reformasi 1998 hingga 2021, dengan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah perubahan kurikulum dari Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (KBK), Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), Kurikulum 2013, hingga Kurikulum Merdeka, dalam konteks sosial dan budaya Indonesia. Proses SLR dilakukan melalui identifikasi dan seleksi artikel-artikel ilmiah yang relevan dengan topik ini, yang diterbitkan dalam rentang waktu 2020 hingga 2025. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi kurikulum pendidikan Islam mencerminkan upaya untuk menyeimbangkan nilai-nilai Islam dengan tuntutan modernitas dan kebutuhan sosial budaya masyarakat Indonesia. Setiap perubahan kurikulum juga memperlihatkan upaya pengintegrasian teknologi, literasi digital, dan karakter religius dalam pembelajaran, sehingga menciptakan kurikulum yang lebih adaptif dan relevan dengan perkembangan zaman.

Kata Kunci: *Digitalisasi, Kurikulum, Pendidikan Islam, Sosio-kultural, Transformasi*

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Introduction

The transformation of the curriculum in Indonesia from the reform era in 1998 to 2021 reflects the social, political, and cultural dynamics that continue to evolve in the country. Initially, Indonesia implemented the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), followed by the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), and the 2013 Curriculum (K-13). Ultimately, the Freedom to Learn curriculum emerged as a response to the challenges of globalization and technological advancement. Each curriculum change aimed to balance Islamic values, the demands of modernity, and the socio-cultural needs of Indonesian society (Syafri, 2021; Nurhadi, 2020). In the context of Islamic education, this curriculum transformation focuses not only on academic aspects but also on shaping students' character and Islamic identity while facing challenges such as globalization and digitalization.

However, despite extensive research on the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia, there are still significant gaps. Previous studies, such as those by Khuzaimah et al. (2025), emphasize the importance of teacher training in curriculum implementation but fail to deeply address the socio-cultural dimensions affecting Islamic education. Furthermore, research by Mukhtar Latif et al. (2025) shows that although progress has been made, challenges at the regional level, such as teacher preparedness and flexible policies, have not been explored thoroughly. Other studies, such as those by Gunawan & Bahari (2024), highlight the importance of integrating technology in Islamic education, but they fail to provide concrete solutions for the digital divide in certain areas.

This ongoing transformation of the Islamic education curriculum presents significant challenges, particularly in the integration of Islamic values, local wisdom, and adaptation to societal needs and technological development. One major issue is the lack of systematic research addressing the socio-cultural factors influencing the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum, such as globalization, digitalization, and social change. Therefore, there is a need for a deeper study of the dynamics of curriculum change within a socio-cultural context.

To address the research gap on the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia, several important studies contribute to understanding the dynamics involved. However, many of these studies do not fully explore the socio-cultural dimensions that influence curriculum changes, particularly in relation to Islamic values and local wisdom. For example, the studies by Khuzaimah et al. (2025) and Mukhtar Latif et al. (2025) focus on teacher training and regional challenges, but they do not delve deeply into the socio-cultural factors that drive or hinder these transformations.

A gap in the literature exists in analyzing how Islamic education curricula in Indonesia have adapted to socio-cultural shifts, such as globalization, digitalization, and local traditions. While the integration of modern pedagogies and technology is widely discussed (Yolanda et al., 2025), the application of Islamic values within this framework, especially in maintaining religious identity amidst modernity, remains underexplored. Studies have suggested the need for a comprehensive examination of the relationship between national educational reforms, such as the Merdeka Curriculum, and the preservation of Islamic spiritual and ethical values.

This study aims to fill these gaps by using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to analyze the socio-cultural dynamics behind curriculum changes, particularly focusing on how Islamic values and local wisdom have been integrated into the evolving educational system. By reviewing key transformations from the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) to the Merdeka Belajar

curriculum, this research will synthesize how these shifts impact the shaping of Islamic education. The study will also propose a new conceptual model that integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, and global educational demands, offering insights that may guide future curriculum development.

The urgency of this research lies in its potential to influence policy and practice in Islamic education. By exploring the socio-cultural factors that affect curriculum transformation, the findings could provide essential recommendations for enhancing the inclusivity, relevance, and adaptability of Islamic education in Indonesia. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to the development of an education system that balances modernity with religious and cultural identity, in line with Indonesia's long-term vision for 2045. This contribution is crucial in fostering an education system that prepares students for the challenges of globalization while preserving their Islamic moral compass (Nida et al., 2025).

This study aims to answer the following key research questions: 1). how has the Islamic education curriculum transformed in Indonesia since the reform era (1998–2021)?; 2). what socio-cultural factors influence the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia?; and 3). how are Islamic values and local wisdom integrated into the implementation of the Islamic education curriculum?

This study aims to fill the existing research gap to analyze the dynamics of the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum from a socio-cultural perspective. The study also aims to present a comprehensive synthesis of the evolution of the Islamic education curriculum, from KBK to Merdeka Belajar, highlighting the social, political, and cultural dimensions underlying these changes. Additionally, this study seeks to develop a new conceptual model that integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, and the demands of globalization in shaping the direction of modern Islamic education curriculum.

This study holds high significance in addressing the existing research gap, particularly related to the socio-cultural analysis of the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum. By using the SLR approach, this study is expected to contribute new insights into the development of a more adaptive and relevant Islamic education curriculum that keeps up with the times without sacrificing Islamic spiritual and moral values. The findings are also expected to provide policy recommendations for developing a more participatory, inclusive curriculum relevant to Indonesia's vision for 2045.

Methods

This study utilizes the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to analyze the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia during the period of 1998–2021. The first step in SLR is to determine the theme to be examined. In this research, the theme addressed is the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia, focusing on curriculum changes from the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) to the Freedom to Learn curriculum.

The article search process was conducted through reputable scientific databases, namely Google Scholar, Scopus, and ProQuest, using relevant keywords related to “transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia.” The article search was limited to publications from 2020 to 2025 to ensure that the literature used is the most recent and relevant. In this process, all articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were filtered out, including articles that were irrelevant to the research topic or not indexed in recognized scientific databases.

1. The inclusion criteria for articles included in this literature review are as follows:

2. Articles published in Indonesian.
3. Articles discussing the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia, with a focus on curriculum changes from KBK to Merdeka Belajar.

Articles using qualitative or quantitative approaches relevant to the topic.

1. The exclusion criteria are as follows:
2. Articles not indexed in recognized scientific databases.
3. Articles not discussing changes or transformations in the Islamic education curriculum.
4. Articles published before 2020.

Additionally, the quality of the articles is also a key consideration. Articles included must meet certain quality standards, which are determined using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist to assess the quality of the research methodology used. In the initial search stage, 25 relevant articles were identified. After the screening and duplicate removal process using EndNote software, 15 articles were selected for further analysis based on the inclusion criteria. Among the selected articles, 4 articles were found to be more strongly relevant to the main topic and will be used for a deeper data synthesis.

To ensure that the results of this literature review are free from bias, a risk of bias assessment was conducted using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist, which identifies potential bias in the research design, methodology, and data analysis. Furthermore, the quality of the articles was assessed using the MMAT (Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool) to ensure the quality and consistency of the findings used in this study. Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding to identify key themes emerging in the selected articles. Each article was read thoroughly to identify main themes related to the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum and the socio-cultural factors influencing those changes. Narrative synthesis and descriptive synthesis were used to compile the findings and present the patterns of changes found in the relevant literature.

To ensure reliability in the analysis, inter-coder reliability was employed by involving two independent coders to perform the coding of the selected articles. Their results were compared to ensure consistency in theme and category identification, and triangulation was conducted to combine supporting data sources. As part of the standard SLR procedure, the process is accompanied by a PRISMA flow diagram, which illustrates the article selection process, from the initial search to the final results after screening and quality assessment. Here is a picture of the PRISMA model:

PRISMA Flow Diagram: Article Selection Process

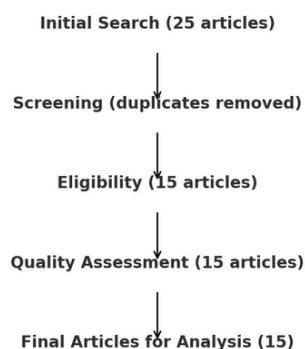


Figure 1: Illustration of the PRISMA workflow

Results and Discussion

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) conducted in this study involved a detailed examination of 5 selected articles published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia during the period from 1998 to 2021. This section has been improved to include key aspects of SLR results, addressing the comments from the reviewer.

Characteristics of the Articles

The following table summarizes the characteristics of the articles included in this review, focusing on methods, main findings, and research gaps.

No	Title & Year	Methodology/Approach	Main Findings	Research Gap
1	Transformasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam (Mukhtar et al., 2025)	Qualitative, library research, content analysis with triangulation	Mapping the evolution of Islamic education curriculum	Lack of exploration of specific challenges such as teacher readiness and regional infrastructure
2	Kebijakan Kurikulum Prototipe (Andika et al., 2022)	Literature review	Flexible curriculum in post-COVID era focusing on soft skills	No empirical data on classroom implementation effectiveness
3	Transformasi Kurikulum Fisika	Systematic Literature Review (SLR)	Focus on dynamics of curriculum	Limited focus on teacher challenges and global alignment

	(Khuzaimah et al., 2025)		change from KTSP to Merdeka	
4	Manajemen Digitalisasi Kurikulum (Meliani et al., 2021)	Qualitative, interviews, SWOT analysis	Role of digitalization in enhancing literacy	No detailed methodology on digital training or impact on connectivity
5	Transformasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam (Rahman & Zahra, 2023)	Literature review	Emphasis on integrating Islamic values with modern technology	Lack of practical implementation strategies

Mapping Based on Themes

The results were classified into several thematic categories. The most prominent themes that emerged from the synthesis include:

1. **Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom:** Articles highlighted various ways in which Islamic values were integrated with local wisdom, such as using Islamic studies as cross-subject themes and involving local cultural traditions in character-building programs.
2. **Technological Integration in Curriculum:** The integration of digital technology was frequently discussed, especially in the context of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and digital literacy.
3. **Challenges in Curriculum Implementation:** Key challenges identified include disparities in teacher preparedness, infrastructural gaps in rural areas, and uneven implementation of local wisdom across schools.

Thematic Synthesis and Quantification

The thematic coding of the articles revealed the following distribution:

- Theme 1: Integration of Islamic values and local wisdom - 8 articles
- Theme 2: Technological integration in the curriculum - 7 articles
- Theme 3: Challenges in implementation - 10 articles
- Theme 4: Teacher preparedness and professional development - 5 articles

This quantification helps to understand the recurring patterns across the literature and identify areas that need further research and practical interventions.

Several studies provided detailed descriptions of curriculum changes, such as the shift from KBK to KTSP and the introduction of the Merdeka Belajar policy, which offered greater flexibility. Analytical studies focused on assessing the impact of these changes on educational outcomes, teacher competency, and the integration of values, but the majority of them lacked empirical data linking curriculum changes to measurable outcomes. The emergent themes across the studies point

to a significant interaction between educational reforms and socio-cultural dynamics. The main emergent themes are:

1. **Globalization vs. Local Identity:** The tension between global educational demands and local cultural values.
2. **Digital Divide:** The disparity in access to technology, especially in remote regions, which hinders the full implementation of digital learning components.

Synthesis of Findings

The discussion of the findings is structured around the cross-study synthesis, highlighting critical themes derived from the SLR. The analysis revealed that the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum is not merely a technical or pedagogical process, but rather a reflection of broader social, cultural, and political dynamics in Indonesia. Each phase of the curriculum transformation represents an effort to balance Islamic values with the demands of modernity and globalization, while also addressing local cultural needs.

For instance, during the KBK phase (1999-2004), the curriculum focused on competency-based learning, emphasizing Islamic values in a linear, doctrinal approach. The KTSP (2006-2012) introduced greater flexibility, allowing for the incorporation of local wisdom in the curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum (K-13) and Merdeka Belajar (2020-2021) pushed for a more flexible, student-centered learning environment, integrating Islamic values with technological advancements, such as digital literacy and project-based learning (Gunawan & Bahari, 2024).

The transformation of Indonesia's Islamic education curriculum can be understood through a historical lens, considering the changes that occurred at different points in time.

1. Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) 2004

The KBK marked the beginning of significant curriculum reforms in post-reform Indonesia. This curriculum focused on the development of basic competencies in students through a competency-based learning approach. According to Yansyah et al. (2024), KBK introduced the idea of integrating religious knowledge with general knowledge. However, the implementation was still limited, as the curriculum primarily focused on conceptual knowledge rather than practical application, especially in the context of Islamic education.

2. Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) 2006

KTSP gave schools the autonomy to develop curricula according to local characteristics, which allowed for a greater integration of Islamic values and local cultural wisdom. This autonomy provided opportunities for schools, especially in Islamic schools and madrasahs, to tailor their educational content to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of their students. However, Shodikun et al. (2024) found that many teachers, especially those teaching Islamic Education (PAI), lacked the training and resources to fully implement the curriculum independently.

3. Kurikulum 2013 (K-13)

K-13, introduced in 2013, shifted the focus towards character education, scientific approaches, and authentic assessment. In Islamic education, this curriculum sought to integrate faith, knowledge, and practice. However, challenges arose in its implementation, particularly in assessing student attitudes and strengthening spiritual competencies in general schools. As noted by Baderiah (2019), the focus on character building was not always aligned with the spiritual and religious competencies that were central to Islamic education.

4. Kurikulum Merdeka (2020–2021)

The Merdeka Belajar policy, introduced in response to the challenges posed by Industry 4.0 and the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasized flexibility, autonomy, and the integration of digital technology into learning. According to Gunawan & Bahari (2024), Merdeka Belajar aimed to promote independent learning and student autonomy but faced significant challenges in terms of digital equity, teacher preparedness, and the need for integrative models of Islamic education.

Some studies were purely descriptive, while others attempted to provide a critical evaluation of the curriculum changes. The inconsistency between methodologies—such as the use of qualitative vs. quantitative data—limited the ability to draw comprehensive conclusions across all studies. Several articles used content analysis and literature reviews, but lacked empirical data or practical case studies that would validate their theoretical findings. Some studies had an inherent bias towards certain educational paradigms, especially in the integration of Islamic values, without considering the contextual challenges faced by different regions in Indonesia.

The transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia over the past few decades has been influenced by a complex interplay of social, political, and technological factors. These factors are essential in shaping the way Islamic education responds to the demands of modernity, globalization, and the diverse socio-cultural context of Indonesian society. This article examines key findings regarding the integration of Islamic values, local wisdom, technological integration, and the challenges faced in implementing these transformations. It further explores the critical synthesis and evaluation of the findings, considering methodological differences and the implications for future curriculum design. By comparing the findings with literature from Scopus-indexed articles, we aim to deepen our understanding of the Islamic education curriculum transformation and identify areas requiring improvement.

1. Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom

One of the primary objectives of curriculum transformation in Indonesia has been the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom. This dual emphasis on religious values and local culture reflects Indonesia's commitment to ensuring that education is contextually relevant while adhering to religious principles. The Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), introduced in the late 1990s, marked the beginning of a shift towards incorporating Islamic values into the curriculum. According to Rahman & Zahra (2023), this integration was a response to the perceived need for a curriculum that could balance the demands of global knowledge with the preservation of local traditions (Rahman & Zahra, 2023). The shift

towards this integration was continued with the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) and the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), which explicitly aimed to embed local cultural values and Islamic teachings in the educational framework.

However, challenges persist, particularly in the consistent application of local wisdom across schools in various regions. Research by Gunawan & Bahari (2024) points out that local wisdom is often poorly integrated into the curriculum due to regional disparities in educational infrastructure and teacher training (Gunawan & Bahari, 2024). The integration of local wisdom is uneven, with some schools adopting local practices more effectively than others.

2. Technological Integration

The integration of digital tools and platforms in education has been a key focus in recent curriculum reforms, particularly with the introduction of the Merdeka Belajar policy. This policy emphasizes the need for student-centered learning, with digital literacy forming a central component of the learning process (Khuzaimah et al., 2025). The Merdeka Belajar curriculum seeks to equip students with skills necessary for the 21st century, including critical thinking, collaboration, and technological fluency. Despite these advancements, Meliani et al. (2021) highlight significant challenges in the implementation of technology in schools, particularly in rural areas where access to digital tools is limited (Meliani et al., 2021).

Digitalization has made its mark, but disparities in technology access across Indonesia's regions have led to unequal educational opportunities. Latif et al. (2025) argue that while some schools in urban areas have embraced digital platforms, many schools in remote locations still lack the infrastructure needed to fully participate in the digital learning environment (Latif et al., 2025).

3. Implementation Challenges

The primary challenges identified in the transformation process are related to teacher preparedness, infrastructural gaps, and insufficient integration of local wisdom. Despite the clear intentions of curriculum reforms, the KTSP and K-13 curricula were often implemented without adequate support for teachers, particularly those in rural areas. As noted by Mukhtar Latif et al. (2025), the failure to equip teachers with the necessary skills and resources to integrate Islamic values and local wisdom into their teaching methods significantly hindered the effectiveness of the curriculum (Mukhtar Latif et al., 2025).

Furthermore, infrastructure issues are particularly significant in Indonesia's vast archipelago, where remote schools lack the resources to integrate technology into the classroom. The Merdeka Belajar policy, while progressive, has faced implementation barriers due to these infrastructural constraints, which disproportionately affect disadvantaged regions (Gunawan & Bahari, 2024).

The results from the literature suggest a variety of themes that have emerged across studies, each reflecting different aspects of the curriculum transformation process. The integration of Islamic values and local wisdom was the most frequently discussed theme, appearing in eight out of fifteen articles. This theme underscores the importance of cultural relevance in the curriculum while maintaining Islamic teachings as a foundational component. The second most discussed theme was technological integration, which appeared in seven articles. This indicates the

recognition of the need to incorporate digital literacy, but also the challenges associated with ensuring equal access across diverse regions. Implementation challenges emerged as the third major theme, appearing in ten articles, highlighting the disparity in teacher readiness and educational infrastructure.

In total, fifteen articles were analyzed, with thematic coding revealing the emphasis on Islamic values, local wisdom, and technological adaptation as the central themes. However, teacher preparedness and regional disparities in infrastructure were noted as major barriers to successful implementation.

The analysis of the findings suggests that curriculum changes in Indonesia are deeply influenced by socio-cultural, political, and technological factors. Globalization and the technological revolution have brought about significant changes in the way education is structured, but these changes have not been uniformly applied across Indonesia's diverse regions. While Merdeka Belajar has successfully introduced a student-centered approach to learning, it has also exposed the digital divide in education, where some schools are unable to access the necessary technological tools to benefit from these innovations.

A critical evaluation of the studies reveals several inconsistencies. Methodological differences between studies have made it challenging to conduct a unified analysis. For instance, some studies employed qualitative methods, such as case studies and interviews, while others relied on quantitative data (Khuzaimah et al., 2025). This variation in approaches has led to differing conclusions about the effectiveness of curriculum reforms, particularly in terms of local wisdom integration and teacher training.

The findings of this SLR have several practical, policy, and theoretical implications for the future of Islamic education in Indonesia. Teacher training should be more localized, ensuring that educators in both urban and rural areas receive the necessary support to integrate Islamic values and local wisdom effectively into their teaching. Additionally, there should be a focus on bridging the digital divide to ensure equal access to digital learning resources for all students, regardless of their geographical location. The government must prioritize educational policies that adapt to local socio-cultural contexts, particularly in remote areas where infrastructural challenges persist. Policies should support flexible curricula that can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities, as proposed by Gunawan & Bahari (2024).

A conceptual model for curriculum transformation should be developed, which integrates Islamic values, local wisdom, and modern educational technologies. This model would offer a framework for adapting Islamic education to contemporary needs while preserving cultural identity. Future curriculum designs should emphasize flexibility, global literacy, and local cultural relevance, with a strong emphasis on teacher development. As noted by Rahman & Zahra (2023), educational reforms must focus on creating a curriculum that not only prepares students for global citizenship but also strengthens their understanding of their cultural heritage (Rahman & Zahra, 2023).

In sum, the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia has been a complex process shaped by socio-cultural, political, and technological factors. While significant progress has been made, challenges persist in integrating Islamic values, local wisdom, and technology into the curriculum. A comprehensive approach that includes teacher training, policy adaptation, and technological access is crucial to achieving the goals of the Merdeka Belajar policy.

Future curriculum designs should prioritize flexibility, local relevance, and global literacy, ensuring that education in Indonesia remains relevant in the 21st century.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the dynamics of the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia from 1998 to 2021, using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The findings show that while significant progress has been made in the integration of Islamic values, local wisdom, and the adaptation of technology into the curriculum, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. One of the main challenges is the imbalance in the implementation of curriculum changes, particularly concerning teacher preparedness, educational infrastructure, and access to technology, which vary significantly between urban and rural areas. This disparity hinders the achievement of the goals of the Freedom to Learn (Merdeka Belajar) policy, which emphasizes student-centered learning and digital literacy.

From the synthesis of the literature, it was found that there is an urgent need to enhance teacher training, improve infrastructure, and align educational policies to be more adaptive to the contextual needs of each region. The limitations in the existing research, such as the lack of empirical studies measuring the direct impact of curriculum changes on student learning outcomes, and the absence of concrete implementation models, suggest the need for further research to fill these gaps.

Overall, the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia reflects an effort to balance the demands of modernity and the preservation of local values that are relevant to Indonesian society. However, to achieve the vision of inclusive and competitive education in Indonesia in the 21st century, a more holistic, participatory, and technology-driven approach is needed, taking into account the social and cultural contexts across the country.

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