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LEARNING FROM THE MUD TALK: CONTINUUM UNDERSTANDING OF SEASONAL MIGRATION IN SOUTHWEST COASTAL BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

To explain the theoretical link between migration and development, this paper conceptualises that seasonal migration offers compartmental development, which is a series of 'priority accomplishing activities', ranging from the fulfilment of primary needs to the uplifting of social status. This research adopts a qualitative research design to explore seasonal migration linked with the three zones, namely i) zone of influence-questioning the 'why' aspects, ii) zone of involvement-questioning the 'how' aspects, and iii) zone of investment-questioning the 'what' aspects. The thematic analysis based on fifteen in-depth interviews with brickfield workers shows that, due to limited working opportunities in rural areas of southwest Bangladesh, seasonal migration holds opportunities to earn an 'extra' amount of money that it is impossible to earn at the place of origin. Furthermore, seasonal migrants invest the economic gain immediately at the place of origin, and social gain in the next season to find more profitable and consistent working opportunities.

Keywords: Seasonal migration, Brickfield workers, '3 Is', Thematic analysis, Southwest coastal Bangladesh.

SEASONAL MIGRATION: THE OVERALL SITUATION

Due to rapid urbanisation and improvements using modern technology in the transport and communication sectors, migration research has become exceedingly challenging. With the development of modern technology, people can move easily from rural to urban areas to organise low-cost accommodation facilities using their social capital/kinship relationships and to explore both short-term and long-term job opportunities, mostly in the informal sector. Generally speaking, migration is a movement that involves permanent or semi-permanent change in residence from one settlement to another (Chandana, 1998). Migration is associated with two major issues: economic reasons or income opportunities dominated by pull factors of migration; and environmental change driven by push factors of migration (Afsar, 2000; Martin, 2009). Many researchers (Todaro, 1969; Afsar, 2000; Thet, 2009; Kainth, 2010) have highlighted that both push and pull factors play an influential role in moving from rural to urban contexts, although the boundaries of pull and push migration are not clearly articulated in the conceptual understanding of overall migration literature. Moreover, the diversity in conceptualising migration, in particular the seasonal migration that occurs regularly on a seasonal basis, aligning with semi-permanent migration which is a temporary change in residence leaving some of the family members at the place of origin to maintain a strong connection between place of destination and origin, have challenged the overall understanding about the movement pattern of people from rural to urban (Dolgova, 2002). The trade theory entails that rural workers are attracted to higher income in urban areas and are keen to sell their labour from the traditional rural agricultural sector to the modern urban manufacturing sector (Lewis, 1954; Ranis and Fei, 1961). Surprisingly, employment levels in the informal sector characterised by unskilled labour fluctuates in every year which also creates instability and

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uncertainty in the availability of work in urban areas. Also, sometimes employment in the informal sector is considered unattractive to native labourers, and this can create a potential market for seasonal migrants (Piore, 1979).

In contrast to the pull factor in seasonal migration, the push factor also dominates seasonal migration. Now, the question arises of which aspects of seasonal migration are influenced by push factors. In addressing that question, the aspects of productivity associated with seasonality and environmental degradation due to climate change can act as major factors of push migration. During a lean period, people tend to temporarily migrate to the nearby and/or distant urban areas for employment as because of the unavailability of minimum livelihood opportunities at the place of origin (Breman, 1994). The period of adversity at the place of origin can also become periodic and can create seasonal unemployment, resulting in push migration. In that case, migration becomes a survival strategy of life (Konseiga, 2002). Besides this, the climate change demonstrated by frequent disasters has displaced many people especially from coastal areas (Brindal, 2007; Martin, 2009). This displacement has caused large numbers of people to migrate to adjacent urban areas either temporarily or permanently to find safer places (Boncour and Burson, 2010).

Migration seems to be a natural process for many cities around the world, and Khulna, the 3rd largest city in Bangladesh, is no exception because it also holds economic potential and smooth connectivity with its adjacent small cities and satellite towns (Haider, 2010). One of the key features of Khulna is the dominance of brickfield sites located in the fringe areas, which lie immediately outside the main city (McManus and Ethington, 2007). Brickfield sites are one of the key locations to offer seasonal employability with a large level of occupancy. Furthermore, seasonal migrants do not require any particular technical skills to take these working opportunities except for physical fitness for performing activities like soil digging, soil cutting, carrying with a pushcart, and organising bricks for firing. Therefore, in every year, the brickfield sites attract large numbers of seasonal migrants for a particular time. This study is conducted in Rupsha Upazila under Khulna District ('Upazila' is in the second administrative tier, performing as a sub-unit the district and maintains communication between the district level and union level). Out of 86 brick kiln factories in Khulna District, around 50% are located in Rupsha Upazila; the highest number when compared with the other Upazilas of Khulna District (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Referring to the empirical evidence, this research explores the three zones associated with seasonal migration, namely i) the zone of influence-questioning the 'why' aspects of seasonal migration, ii) the zone of involvement-questioning the 'how' aspects of seasonal migration, and iii) the zone of investment-questioning the 'what' aspects of seasonal migration. Furthermore, this study establishes a connection between migration and development understanding that seasonal migration offers compartmental development, which is a series of 'priority accomplishing activities' ranging from the fulfilment of primary needs to the uplifting of social status.

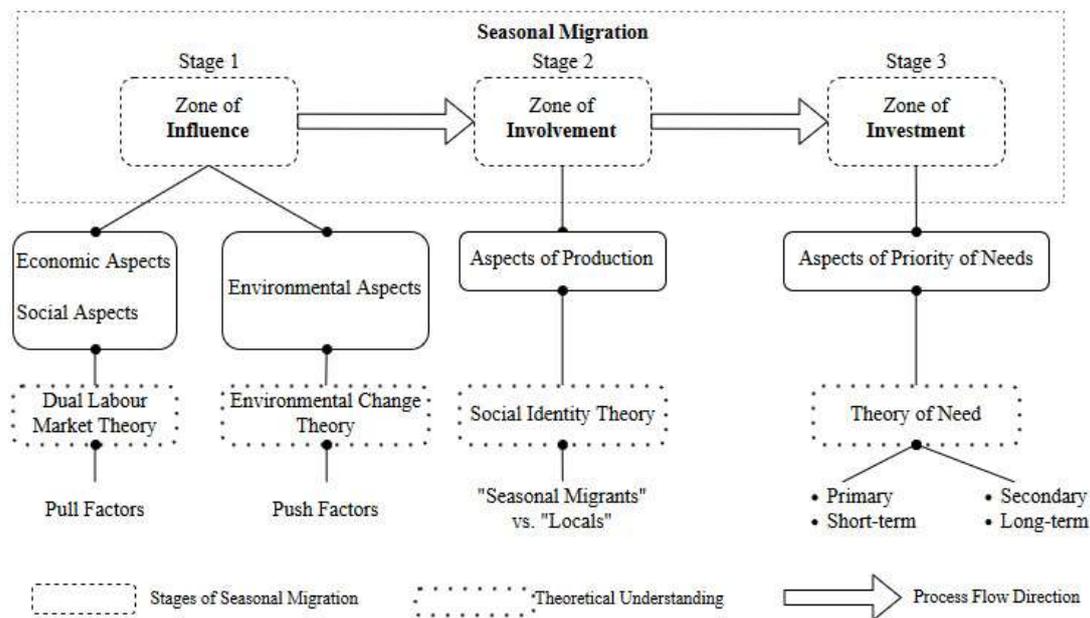
CONCEPTUAL COMPLEXITIES: UNDERSTANDING THE '3 IS' (INFLUENCE-INVOLVEMENT-INVESTMENT) IN SEASONAL MIGRATION

Within the overall discourse of migration, seasonal migration can be depicted as a multi-stage process. In exploring the multi-stages of seasonal migration, this study postulates that seasonal migration is associated with the '3 Is' (influence, involvement, and investment). Considering the '3 Is', the first stage of seasonal migration dictates the zone of influence that is pertained with the three aspects, namely economic, social, and environmental. This research conceptualises that the zone of influence deals with the 'why' aspects of seasonal migration, mainly questioning the reasons of seasonal migration, and the migratory status of the families, and their factors of migration. This research recognises the zone of influence as a primary proponent of seasonal migration. In explaining this stage, the factors of migration such as pull

factor and push factors can be further examined with the two major theoretical perspectives, namely dual labour market theory and environmental change theory respectively. Dual labour market theory explains migration with focus on supply and demand. According to Piore (1979), wages for migrants are not only a reflection of the condition of supply and demand, but are also a matter of status and prestige. In contrast, environmental change theory highlights that there is a connection between income inequality and the increased consumption of status-oriented goods and fossil fuel which can be further reflected through global environmental degradation and that can influence decisions on migration (Chao and Schor, 1998; Ostrom, 2008; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Understanding the theoretical perspectives, we agree that seasonal migration takes place due to both push and pull factors. In pull seasonal migration, issues like the presence of strong kinship at the destination, differential wage pattern, consistent working opportunities along with the seasonal variability, and, sometimes, the overall quality of living close to urban areas exemplify the relationship between theoretical perspectives and empirical perspectives. In establishing a connection between the pull-factors and the economic and social aspects of seasonal migration, this research has adopted the dual labour market theory. Again, while examining the push-factors of seasonal migration linked with the extreme climatic events such as cyclone, flood, and river erosion, this research has applied the environmental change theory. Based on the theoretical understanding, we recognise that the zone of influence is associated with issues of the place of origin and the deciding reasons of seasonal migration (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual understanding of the ‘3 Is’ in seasonal migration



Source: Authors, 2018.

The second stage of seasonal migration, the zone of involvement deals with the ‘how’ aspects of seasonal migration, incorporating the issues like period and duration of migration, process of finding work/chances of employability, types of work, and payment structure. This stage incorporates the activities performed by the seasonal migrants at their place of destination. Primarily, the zone of involvement indicates the internal mobility pattern of seasonal migration. This stage also establishes the interconnection between the classification of labour followed by the different wage structure and the period of engagement to understand the dynamics of

seasonal migration. The interconnection clearly indicates the production perspective of seasonal migrants characterising the possibility of selling labour in parallel with the amount of financial gain. In contrast to financial gain, tension dynamics between seasonal migrants and the local workers are also common, especially when it comes to finding jobs at the place of destination. By using the social identity theory perspective, we can recognise the socio-psychological behaviour between these two groups because social identity theory apprehends how the identities are negotiated in a context of migration (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Weber, 2014). It also exerts inter-group identity forms and links to group membership (Burke and Tully, 1977; McAreavey, 2017).

The third and final stage of seasonal migration, the zone of investment incorporates the ‘what’ aspects of seasonal migration, featuring the after-effects of seasonal migration. The final stage of seasonal migration exemplifies the types of benefits (classified as economic and social) received by the migrants. The zone of investment explains how seasonal migrants use their income and social gain at the place of origin. We have anticipated that economic benefits coupled with social benefits affect migrants in multifaceted ways. This research accepts that the benefits received by seasonal migrants are used according to their priorities, ranging from the fulfilment of primary needs to the upliftment of social status. The benefits offer a step-by-step and/or a section-by-section (and, generally speaking, a gradual) development that can be likened to a compartmental development establishing a strong reference between migration and development.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: EXPLORING THE VOICES (‘MUD TALK’) OF THE BRICKFIELD WORKERS

The understanding of seasonal migration is continually changing because it is associated with multiple aspects such as economic, social, and environmental aspects. Also, the indistinguishable boundaries between pull and push factors of seasonal migration have made this understanding even more complex. Recognising that, this research is primarily grounded on the experiences of the seasonal migrants, particularly those working in the brickfields of Rupsha Upazila. We have adopted a qualitative research approach because it provides detailed understanding of the seasonal migration by talking directly with people, going to their places of work, and allowing them to tell their stories (Creswell, 2007). At the outset, we had limited understanding about the experiences of seasonal migrants who work at the brickfields of Rupsha Upazila, and the use of qualitative methods enabled us to capture the broader perspectives of seasonal migration and development because qualitative methods are soft, flexible, subjective, and grounded in data (Halfpenny, 1979). Although qualitative research requires a broader and less restrictive design, it also demands the combination of empirical evidence and theoretical claims to produce an argument (Schwandt, 2007). Recognising that, whenever we have collected data, we have attempted to continually relate the data with the theoretical understanding of seasonal migration. Furthermore, we have used a case study approach because it offers an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives (why people migrate from rural to urban areas; how seasonal migrants get employment at their place of destination; what seasonal migrants receive from migration) within the real-life context (Simons, 2009).

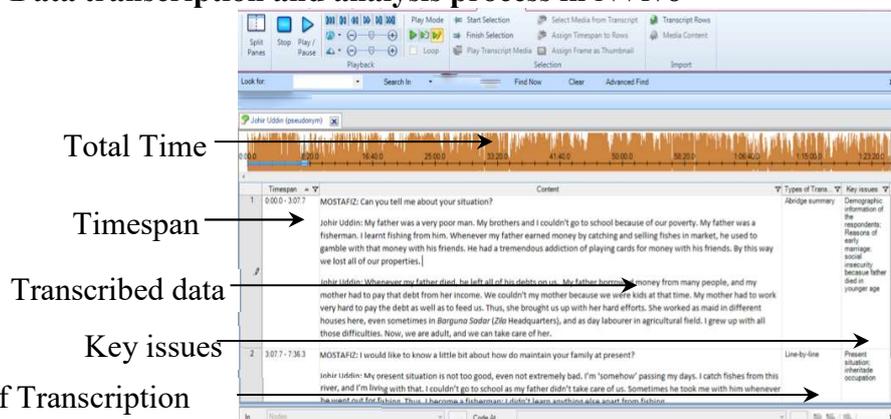
This research focuses on the making sense of the complex issues related to seasonal migration, and in doing so, we have purposely selected fifteen seasonal migrants working in the brickfields of Rupsha Upazila for face-to-face in-depth interviews. We have adopted purposeful sampling because it has allowed us to choose research participants that we were particularly interested in (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008). Aligning with the purposeful sampling, we have also used the ‘problem sampling’ that offers a much looser and more general

theoretical role, and which contains an opening to the possibility of conceptual and analytic discovery (Layder, 2012, p.121).

We developed an interview guide with quite specific topics related to seasonal migration prior to interview. However, we kept the interview process flexible so as to ask further questions in response to important replies from the research participants. The in-depth interviews were conducted between February and May. Due to the seasonal variation followed by the availability of migrants, we collected data at the initial stage of the working season, just after winter. We adopted a qualitative perspective of data analysis that is not concerned with statistical representativeness, but rather with a selection of units of investigation that can generate a theory (Kardorff, 2004). We used both note taking and audio recording as data collection tools during the interviews because using those tools can establish greater trustworthiness, and conformability in interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

From the beginning of this research, we have used NVivo, a qualitative data storing and analysis software, to store and organise the collected information from the brickfield workers. Typically, software like NVivo has provided the opportunity to store textual documents in reference to a coding system by tagging or indexing parts of those documents (Gregorio and Davidson, 2008). Along with many researchers such as Miles and Huberman (1994), Maxwell (2009) and Saldana (2011), we also recognise that it is impossible to separate the data gathering and data analysis steps in qualitative inquiry; therefore, we have collected the data and have analysed the data simultaneously. During the data analysis, we have undertaken the translation and transcription by ourselves because the real value of doing our own transcription is building intimate knowledge of the data (Bazeley, 2013). The use of NVivo software has provided us with the opportunity to link the audio data with the transcripts. In this way, the contextual information has been kept embedded in each transcribed document. One of the main advantages of using NVivo software is to link the specific information along with the time frame (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Data transcription and analysis process in NVivo



Source: Authors, generated in NVivo, 2018.

While analysing the data, we have given our priorities in exploring the meaning from the text because the proper analysis involves developing the meanings of the interviews, bringing the research participants' perspectives to light and providing new perspectives from the researchers (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Due to the high flexibility features of interviews, we have used thematic analysis to identify and to interpret the patterns (themes) within the data (Bazeley, 2013). During the thematic analysis, we have explored 'codes' like the economic aspects of migration, push and pull factors of migration, payment types (fixed and/or flexible), and the social benefits of migration from the interview data (see Table 1). Coding is one way of analysing the qualitative data, where codes are generated from language-based data, which are

the most often words or short phrases that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, and essence-capturing attribute (Saldana, 2013).

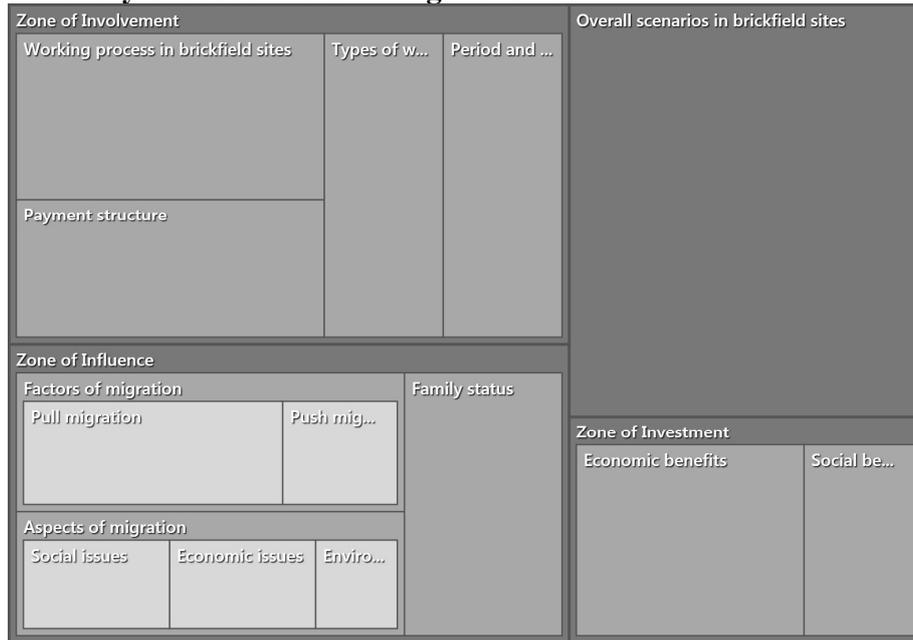
Table 1: Exploration of codes from interview data during thematic analysis

Name of the Codes	Sources	References
1.0 Overall scenarios in brickfield sites	15	60
2.0 Zone of Influence	15	69
2.1 Aspects of migration	9	23
2.1.1 Economic issues	6	9
2.1.2 Environmental issues	5	5
2.1.3 Social issues	4	9
2.2 Factors of migration	14	26
2.2.1 Pull migration	12	18
2.2.2 Push migration	7	8
2.3 Family status	15	20
3.0 Zone of Involvement	15	78
3.1 Payment structure	15	20
3.2 Period and duration of seasonal migration	14	17
3.3 Types of works	14	17
3.4 Working process in brickfield sites	11	24
4.0 Zone of Investment	12	33
4.1 Economic benefits	12	22
4.2 Social benefits	7	11

Source: Authors, generated in NVivo, 2018.

The preliminary analysis from the aggregated data shows that the fifteen in-depth interviews are categorised into three codes, namely the zone of influence, the zone of involvement, and the zone of investment. The zone of influence contains three sub-categories: aspects of migration, factors of migration, and family status of the migrants. The analysis also indicates that both pull and push factors are present in seasonal migration. The zone of involvement has four sub-categories: payment structure, duration of seasonal migration, types of work, and working process. The value in the 'references' column in relation to the zone of influence indicates that the seasonal migrants have mentioned, for example, 78 times the sub-categories in the zone of influence either directly or indirectly in their interviews. Lastly, the zone of investment holds two sub-categories: economic benefits and social benefits. These are coded from twelve interviews instead of fifteen interviews (see Table 1). This is because three of the respondents did not mention anything regarding the benefits or outcomes of migration either positively or negatively. The rest of the respondents stated that the economic benefits play a crucial role at their place of destination. The study also suggests that the notion of economic benefits commensurate with upliftment in the personal and family sphere of seasonal migrants act as a tool to break the persistent debt cycle and achieve some increase in social status.

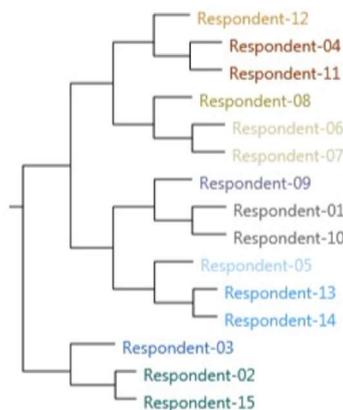
Figure 3: Hierarchy of codes in examining the ‘3 Is’



Source: Authors, generated in NVivo, 2018.

Hierarchy of codes have assisted us to assimilate the common factors regarding seasonal migration into four themes: zone of influence, zone of involvement, zone of investment, and the overall scenarios in brickfield sites. Learning from the voices of the brickfield workers, we could establish that both zone of influence and zone of involvement have an equal share in explaining seasonal migration in the brickfield sites (see Figure 3). However, the zone of influence occupies more versatile factors than the zone of involvement. The zone of investment has an emphasis on both social and economic benefits where economic benefits hold the leading characteristics. The crosscutting issues have been discussed under the overall scenarios in brickfield sites, indicating that seasonal migrants mostly focus on repaying their debt and fulfil their personal and family needs rather engaging in long-term activities in brickfield sites.

Figure 4: Interviews of brickfield workers clustered by word similarity



Source: Authors, generated in NVivo, 2018.

The cluster analysis of the source data (interview data) shows that some similarities and dissimilarities exist in responses to the questions related to seasonal migration given by the migrants. Figure 4 shows that respondent 4 and respondent 11 have addressed similar topics and have identified similar issues related to seasonal migration; therefore, these two

respondents are located in the same cluster on the basis of their interviews (see Figure 4). Also, respondent 2 and respondent 15 are identified in the same cluster, but they are different from the rest of the cluster. This exactly matches with the initial findings of the data, indicating that the respondent 2, respondent 3, and respondent 15 are contractors of the seasonal migrants who also work as seasonal migrants in the brickfield sites (see Figure 4).

The preliminary analysis of the source data shows that seasonal migrants are coming to the transition zones to tap the benefits of their newly developed social connections, which also act as a tool for social capital for recurring seasonal migration. This issue has made seasonal migrants more susceptible to frequent migration from the rural to the urban context. These underlying dynamics are explored and discussed in detail in accordance with the ‘3 Is’ (influence-involvement-investment).

UNDERSTANDING THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE: THE ‘WHY’ ASPECTS

To explore the zone of influence, we started our analysis by producing a ‘word cloud’ to analyse critically the voices of the brickfield workers. The ‘word cloud’ is a common tool used to explore and visualise textual data (McNaught and Lam, 2010; Filatova, 2016). The more frequently a word appears within the written transcripts, the larger and bolder it appears in the word cloud. In this research, we have used this tool in NVivo to get a quick visual response from the source data, the interviews with the brickfield workers.

The word cloud of zone of influence depicts that this stage of seasonal migration is linked with the place of origin because its strong presence: 87 times within the aggregated codes of zone of influence (see Table 2). The data from Table 2 also shows that family holds an important role for migration that can be further influenced by the role of contractors who offer either working opportunities or income opportunities that can be further associated with monthly engagement in order to support their family and relatives and to pay the loans of destination.

Table 2: Fifteen most frequent words of the aggregated codes of ‘zone of influence’

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
working	7	203	6.83	work, worked, working, works
brick	5	124	4.17	brick
village	7	121	4.07	village, villagers, villages
family	6	87	2.93	family
origin	6	87	2.93	origin, original
contractor	10	63	2.12	contractor
place	5	62	2.09	place, places
household	9	60	2.02	household
income	6	48	1.62	income
workers	7	41	1.38	worker, workers
months	6	39	1.31	month, monthly, months
opportunity	11	38	1.28	opportunity
relative	8	34	1.14	related, relative
debt	4	30	1.01	debt
money	5	30	1.01	money

Source: Authors, generated in NVivo, 2018.

A complete illustration of words of the aggregated codes of ‘zone of influence’ is shown in Figure 5 where words like ‘family,’ ‘village,’ ‘origin,’ ‘household,’ ‘relative,’ and ‘problem’

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