Kui narrative repetition

SOMSONGE Burusphat
Mahidol University

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Abstract

The study of Kui narrative repetition is based on four texts narrated by a native speaker of Kui spoken at Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin Province.

Repetition is frequent in Kui narrative discourse. It has different forms and functions. It is presented in the forms of verbatim, reduction, expansion, synonym, cycle, pro–verb, and negated antonym. The most notable function of repetition is to spread out the information load so that a theme line is highlighted. Repetition is usually used for linkage, preview, repeated attempt, rhetorical underlining at the peak, contra–expectation, amplification, and summary.
0. Introduction

Repetition can be found in all discourse genres. It is mostly used to control the rate or speed at which information is presented. As pointed out by Callow (1974), different languages convey information at different rates. Some languages may present the information slowly, with a great deal of redundancy or repetition whereas other languages convey close-packed information by using minimum of words and little repetition. Languages which use a great deal of repetition have a spread-out information structure whereas languages which use little repetition have a compact information structure.

Kui is an example of languages with a spread-out information structure which is obviously seen in narrative discourse. To slow down the rate at which information is presented, Kui uses repetition which takes various forms and serves different functions. This paper focusses on forms and functions of repetition as found in four texts narrated by a speaker of Kui¹ spoken at Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin province. The titles of texts are as follows:

Text 1 ?atčiiaŋ ‘An elephant’
Text 2 ƙsan ‘A snake’
Text 3 kaan sipscoŋ ne? ‘Twelve children’
Text 4 ?atča tʃiin ‘A fox’

1. Forms of repetition

The term repetition is used to mean “referring to the same event twice, whether the same words are repeated or not” (Callow 1974: 74). There are various ways of referring to the same event twice as discussed below.

1.1 Verbatim

Verbatim is a word for word repetition. An event or action may be exactly repeated. In example 1 the event in which a woman drinks an elephant’s urine is exactly repeated in a relative clause when the woman is rementioned.

(1) po? teii pthah daa? klɔm tʃiiaŋ ka? lyyj ɲooc daa?
walk go find water urine elephant then then drink water
klɔm tʃiiaŋ
urine elephant

[When the woman] found an elephant’s urine, [she] then drank it.

¹ Kui or Kuai is a language of the Mon–Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic phylum. It belongs to the Katuic Branch (Thomas and Headley 1970).
kpaj deel nqoc daa? kloom tsiian
woman who drink water urine elephant

The woman who drank the elephant’s urine...

1.2 Reduction

When the same event is referred to the second time, it is usually reduced in form as in example 2.

(2) kaat nia?sr0? muuaj klum
there is village one group

There was a group of villagers.

tii boej tph0? ?aban paa kah
go find dig bamboo shoot in forest

[They] went to find bamboo shoots in the forest.

tii boej ka? buuun kh0ne?
go find then get everybody

[When they] went to find [the bamboo shoots], everybody got [the bamboo shoots].

1.3 Expansion

When an event is restated, more information may be added. In Kui narrative, there are few examples of expansion. Example 3 illustrates a repetition via expansion.

(3) lae? koon lah tsoo faet kpaj muuaj nthryh muuaj
give birth baby out come twin female one male one

[The woman] gave birth to a twin, a girl [and] a boy.

1.4 Synonym

Another method of referring to an event twice is by using different words to state exactly the same thing as in example 4.

(4) tcon tua?ææŋ thet nth rh laeh
till himself run out of breath die

Till [he] himself ran out of [his] breath [and then] died.
ksan pho taa diŋ paaj ŋthryh kee laŋ laæw
snake when but know that man that die already

When the snakes knew that the man died.

1.5 Cycle

Cycle is defined as repetitions of similar facts with new information added each time (Thomas 1978). Cycle is a prominent feature of Kui narratives. It appears in all four texts. Each text has at least two cycles. All repeated cycles have a similar setting and the new information added is a different event. A set of cycles may have only one thematic participant attempting to do something again and again in each cycle. Another set of cycles may have a thematicity switch between two cycles but the settings and the actions will be the same. In text 4 there is a set of five cycles at the beginning of the story. A fox attempts to eat the livers of two sisters. He comes to see the sisters five times and asks how large their livers are. Each time the setting and the action are the same but the livers grow bigger and bigger. Each attempt is represented in each cycle. Example 5 illustrates the first two cycles of this set.

(5) First cycle

tbuw kaw tɔo mæ naŋ bɔm mej phumut mahna
evening then come ask children liver your large how much

In the evening [the foxes] came to ask the children, “How large are your livers?”

ʔyuj mah mah ?anææ senso?
Introductory particle at the extent this one hair

[The children answered that the livers were] as large as the hair.

ʔa tsi lopkoŋ
yes go return

[The fox said] yes [and] returned.

Second cycle

naʔ tbuw thyn tɔo mæ naŋ bɔm phumut mahna
it is evening again come ask children liver large how much

In the next evening [the foxes] came to ask the children how large the livers were.

mah ŋthryh
at the extent nail

[The children answered that their livers were] as large as a nail.
1.6 *Pro-verb*

Repetition can be further expressed by a pro-verb, that is the verb is repeated and the demonstrative and comparative reference are added. The pro-verb is usually embedded in a cycle. In text 3 the father tries to lose his sons in the jungle three times. Each attempt is represented in each cycle. When the father repeats his action, a pro-verb is used to refer to the action described previously in the text as in example 6.

(6) ʔɔw tɕii klaŋ kאʔ ʔɔʔ naʔ ɲaiɲuaŋ
father go defecate then do the same the other day

The father went to defecate, then did the same way as the other day.

1.7 *Negated antonym*

An event may be stated twice as a negated antonym. This form of repetition is rare in Kui narratives. Example 7 illustrates negated antonym.

(7) kאʔ pth̰ah taa klaŋ
then find only feces

[The children] then found only the feces.

phis ʔɔʔ
not find father

[They] did not find the father.

2. *Functions of repetition*

The most notable function of repetition is to spread out the information load in order to highlight a theme line. An occurrence of repetition anywhere in the text enables the listener to be aware that the information being conveyed is significant.

Repetition in Kui narrative is mostly used for linkage. Old information is repeated before new information gets started. This repetitive back reference can be found throughout the text. Other dominant usages of repetition are preview, repeated attempt and rhetorical underlining at the peak. Some other usages of repetition which are infrequent include contra-expectation, amplification and summary. These functions of repetition will be discussed in detail below.

2.1 *Linkage*

Kui uses a large-scale repetition for linkage. The previous crucial event is frequently repeated by the back referential clause which indicates a completion of the previous event and serves as a point of reference for the following crucial event.
The following part of text 3 exemplifies a frequent occurrence of the repetitive back reference.

(8) juur kłaa sah ʔow kəʔ nam tścii thyyν
    wake up morning up father then take go again

In the morning the father woke up [and] then [he] took [the children] to go [into the forest] again.

tścii kəʔ nam moot
    go then take go in

[When they] went, [he] then took [the children] to go [into the forest].

tścii ɲthṛyu dziąŋ deel
    go deep more former

[They went] deeper than the last time.

ʔow kəʔ ɲtee kəän paaj ʔow tścii kłaąŋ ɲuəŋ ᵁvy
    father then tell child that father go excrete first Fp

The father then told the children that he would go to defecate first.

kəän kəʔ namnɔɔ rap paaj ʔəʔ
    child then together answer that yes

The children together said yes.

ʔow tścii kłaąŋ kəʔ wɔɔ naʔ ɲąjnuəŋ
    father go defecate then do as day before

The father went to defecate, then did the same way as the other day.

kłaąŋ ruac kəʔ ɲtee kłaąŋ paaj bɔɔ kəän kyy
    defecate finish then tell feces that if child my

kjaa ʔəän məboɔŋ ᵁvy
    call let answer Fp

[After he] had defecated, [he] then told the feces that if the children called
    him, the feces should answer the call [for him].

kəän phyyʔ ʔow tścii duun kəʔ kjaa kjaa kəʔ saŋ
    child see father go long then call call then hear

taa sneŋə məboɔŋ
    but voice answer
[When] the children saw the father go so long, [they] then called [the father].
[When they] called, [they] then heard only the answering voice.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{kəʔ} & \text{tɕiʔ} & \text{tponŋ} & \text{sneŋ} \\
\text{then} & \text{go} & \text{follow} & \text{voice}
\end{array}
\]

[The children] then went to follow the voice.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{tɕiʔ} & \text{kəʔ} & \text{pʰhaŋ} & \text{taŋ} \\
\text{go} & \text{then} & \text{find} & \text{only} \\
\text{kloŋŋ} & \text{feces}
\end{array}
\]

[When the children] went [to find the father, they] then found only the feces.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{kəʔ} & \text{kʰut} & \text{paaŋ} & \text{ʔɔw} \\
\text{then} & \text{think} & \text{that} & \text{father} \\
\text{kaʔ} & \text{duŋ} & \text{laŋw} & \text{go} \\
\text{home} & \text{already}
\end{array}
\]

[The children] then thought that the father had already gone home.

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{tɕiʔ} & \text{taʔ} & \text{duŋ} & \text{kaʔ} \\
\text{go} & \text{arrive} & \text{home} & \text{then} \\
\text{duŋ} & \text{see} & \text{father} & \text{stay} \\
\text{kaʔ} & \text{kuua} & \text{ʔɯ} & \text{duŋ} \\
\text{at} & \text{home}
\end{array}
\]

[When they] arrived home, then [they] saw [that] the father was at home.

Most examples of repetitive back reference are represented by the forms of reduction and synonym. Verbatim is also found but rare. In example 8 the repetitive back reference via reduction is illustrated as diagrammed below.

**The previous event**

**The repetitive back reference**

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>ʔɔw</td>
<td>kəʔ</td>
<td>nam</td>
<td>tɕiʔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>take</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>----------&gt;</td>
<td>tɕiʔ</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>ʔɔw</td>
<td>tɕiʔ</td>
<td>kloŋŋ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>defecate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>----------&gt;</td>
<td>kloŋŋ ( ruac)</td>
<td>defecate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>kəʔ</td>
<td>kjaa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then</td>
<td>call</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>----------&gt;</td>
<td>kjaa</td>
<td>call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>kəʔ</td>
<td>tɕiʔ</td>
<td>tponŋ</td>
<td>sneŋ</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>follow</td>
<td>voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>----------&gt;</td>
<td>tɕiʔ</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are several points to be noted.

1. The repetitive back reference in (b) is tagged by the completive marker ruac 'to finish' to highlight the completion of the previous crucial event.

2. The previous event in (c) is already reduced in form as seen below so when it is repeated there is not much left for further reduction.

   \[\text{kaan} \quad \text{ka'?} \quad \text{kjaar} \quad ?ow \quad \text{---} \quad \text{ka'?} \quad \text{kjaar} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{kjaar} \quad \text{call} \]

3. The events following the repetitive back reference are all crucial and constitute a theme line of the story. These events are highlighted by the repetition of the auxiliary ka?. This lexical repetition functions to link successive events within chronological order (see Burusphat 1992 for detailed discussion of ka?).

4. The repetitive back reference may also link new information to old information mentioned somewhere in the text. This can be done via a relative clause as seen in example (1).

2.2 Preview

When the narrator aims to underline an event as a crucial information, she may alert the listener by letting a participant talk about that event before it actually happens. Therefore previews of events which constitute a theme line can be made through the speeches or cognitive experiences of participants. The repetition of previews usually take the forms of reduction and synonym in the theme–line events, as in example 8.

* Speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previews of theme–line events</th>
<th>Theme–line events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. [?ow \quad \text{ka'?} \quad \text{ntee} \quad \text{kaan} \quad \text{paaj}]</td>
<td>[?ow \quad \text{teii} \quad \text{kaan}]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father then tell child that</td>
<td>father go defecate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[?ow \quad \text{teii} \quad \text{kaan} \quad \text{nua} \quad \text{dyv} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{?ow} \quad \text{teii} \quad \text{kaan}]</td>
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<tr>
<td>[?ow \quad \text{teii} \quad \text{kaan} \quad \text{nua} \quad \text{dyv} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{?ow} \quad \text{teii} \quad \text{kaan}]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. [ka'? \quad \text{ntee} \quad \text{kaan} \quad \text{paaj}]</td>
<td>[ka'? \quad \text{kjaar}]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then tell feces that</td>
<td>then call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[booc \quad \text{kaan} \quad \text{kyv} \quad \text{kjaar} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{ka'?} \quad \text{kjaar}]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if child my call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[?aan \quad \text{mbocen} \quad \text{dyv} \quad \text{---} \quad \text{(kjaar) ka'? son taa}]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let answer Fp</td>
<td>call then hear but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sneen mbocen voice answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cognitive experience (Thought)

Preview of theme–line event

c.  kαʔ kʰwet paaj
then think that

father go home already

Theme–line event

synonym

ʨii duŋ laːw
---
tɕii ɗaʔ duŋ

father go arrive home

kαʔ ɲhχʔ ʨw
then see father

kuua ʔuu duŋ
stay at home

2.3 Repeated attempt

Repetition is further used for a repeated attempt of participant. The devices which are mostly used to fulfill this function are cycle and pro–verb as illustrated in examples 5 and 8. Example 5 is from text 4. A repeated attempt of foxes to eat the livers of two sisters is represented by a set of five cycles. Example 8 is from text 3. There are three cycles with pro–verbs embedded in the second and third cycles. This set of cycles represents the repeated attempt of the father who tries to lose his children in the forest. Each time they return but in the third cycle the children are rescued by an elephant’s keeper and stay with him in the forest until they grow up.

Both sets of cycles in text 4 and 3 focus on the theme which is represented in repeated pattern in cycles. The purpose of the cycles in text 4 is to focus on the repeated attempt of a fox to eat the livers of two sisters. In text 3 the focus is on the repeated attempt of the father to lose his children in the forest. The repeated pattern has to do also with a style of narration that makes the story enjoyable.

2.4 Rhetorical underlining at the peak

According to Longacre (1983) a climactic narrative discourse has climax as a notional structure feature. A story reaches a climax when there is a highest point of tension and frustration (cf. Burusphet 1991). Climax corresponds to the surface structure peak which has features peculiar to itself. There are various devices to identify peak and rhetorical underlining is one of them. Kui underlines the peak by slowing down the information rate via repeated words. Repetition is used to draw attention to the repeated word (cf. Rugaleva 1983). The following examples are the identification of peak via repeated words in all texts.
(9) Text 1

ka? tɛii tpoon booj
then go follow see

[The elephant] then went to follow [the tiger].

poon tɛii poon tɛii poon
follow go follow go follow

[He] went to follow, went to follow, followed.

ka? poon mahnaa ka? phi? phyx?
then follow how then not see

No matter how [he] followed [the tiger], [he] could not see [it].

In text 1 a woman goes to find fruit in the forest and drinks an elephant’s urine. Later she gives birth to a twin, a boy and a girl, and tells them that their father is an elephant. She asks her children to go find their father. When they first meet their father, the elephant does not know that they are his children so he kills his son. After he finds out the truth he takes his daughter home. Later a tiger tricks the daughter and eats her while the elephant is away. The story reaches its climax when the elephant is highly frustrated and tries to find the tiger to kill. The climax is marked on the surface by the repeated word tɛii (t)poon ‘to go to follow’.

Text 2

phɔo taa phun khlaaj læew ka? ksan lah
when but belly break-open already then snake out

tɛoo ruu * phun ndææl
come at belly wife

When the belly was already broke open, the snake came out of the wife’s belly.

ka? sææŋ tɛo tam tam mahnaa ka? phi? dzim
then down come hit hit how then not all

[The husband] then came down to hit [them], but no matter how [he] hit, [he] could not [hit] all [of them]

dʌŋ tam tam tɛon teææŋ thet thvh laæ
still hit hit till himself run out of breath die
[He] still hit [and] hit [the snakes] until he himself died.

In text 2 a woman goes to dig bamboo shoots. Her shovel is stuck in the ground. She says if a man helps her pull out the shovel she will be his wife (even though she is married). A snake helps her pull the shovel so she tells him to go to
her home during the night. Several months later she is pregnant. Her husband finds out the truth so he kills the snake. He takes his wife to cut wood in the forest. He climbs up a tree, cuts a stick, sharpens it and throws it down to his wife’s belly. Then the belly is broken and the snakes come out from the belly. Here is the climax of the story. The husband is in trouble. He tries to hit all the snakes but he cannot. The surface feature peak is identified by the repeated word *tam* ‘to hit’.

Text 3

namnoc **bocj** knaa tcii dunj
go together seek way go home

[The children] went together to seek the way to go home.

**bocj** mahnaa ka? phi? phyy?
seek how then not see

No matter how [they] sought [they] could not see [the father].

rawanj pa? **bocj** knaa tcii dunj tcii phah
while walk seek way go home go come across

kuuaj siian ?atciian
person take care elephant

While [they] were walking to seek the way home, [they] came across an elephant’s keeper.

In text 3 a poor couple cannot afford bringing up their twelve children. The father attempts to lose the children in the forest. The story reaches the climax on the last attempt as the children are highly frustrated. They cannot find the way home. The peak as the corresponding surface feature of climax\(^2\) is marked by the repeated word *bocj* ‘to seek’.

Text 4

tcii ta? ka? ta? toonj muuaj laa lah tcii
come arrive then pick up coconut one throw die go

[When the foxes] arrived, [each of the two sisters] then picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

\(^2\) See a discussion of correlation of notional and surface features in Longacre (1987, 1983).
Kui narrative repetition

too na?nae ta? plaj tooŋ muuaj laa kaʔ laeh
come like this pick up fruit coconut one throw then die

[When other foxes] came like this [again, each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

ta? plaj tooŋ laa laeh
pick up fruit coconut throw die

[Each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

[Each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

laeh dzim laeh dzim
die all die all

[The foxes] died all.

In text 4 a group of foxes attempt to eat the livers of two sisters. When the livers are big enough to eat, the two sisters grow a coconut tree and stay up the tree. The story reaches its climax when the foxes come and the sisters try to protect themselves by hitting the foxes with coconuts. The surface feature peak is clearly marked by a great deal of verbatim repetition.

2.5 Contra–expectation

Repetition is also used when there is a contra–expectation which is represented in the form of negated antonym as illustrated in example 7. This example is from text 3. The father tries to lose his children in the forest. He tells the children to wait while he goes to defecate. After defecating, he tells the feces to answer the children' call for him. When the children come after the voice, they are disappointed because they see only the feces, not their father.

2.6 Amplification

Kui uses repetition for amplification in the same way as mentioned by Callow (1974:74) below:

Some languages use repetition frequently for amplification. Here the second mention of the event is used as a vehicle for carrying some added information, some new material that was not mentioned the first time.
The form of repetition for amplification is usually expansion as illustrated below:

(10) kaʔ phryʔ khloŋŋ ?adzvvl khloŋŋ jumŋŋ ?adzvvl
then see print tiger print feet tiger

[The elephant] then saw the print of the tiger, the footprint of the tiger.

Example 10 is from text 1. khloŋŋ ?adzvvl ‘the tiger’s print’ is repeated with some added information.

2.7 Summary

Summary is “a type of brief, generalized repetition” (Callow 1974:78). There is only one instance of summary which is made through a speech of participant. In text 3 when the children come across the elephant’s keeper, they tell him about their father’s attempt to lose them in the forest. This summary is old information which is repeated again to highlight it as a theme line and is provided for those listeners who may miss it in a previous telling. Summary takes the forms of reduction and synonym.

(11) kaʔ ɲtee kuuaj siian ṭatciąŋŋ paaj ṭow nam tcoo then tell person take care elephant that father take come
booj plajłoŋŋ ṭow kaʔ tciŋŋ duŋ nuŋŋ mohaj booj find fruit father then go home before we find
knaa tciŋŋ duŋ phiʔ phryʔ kaʔ lyŋŋ klaʔkruŋŋ way go home not find then then get lost

[The children] then told the elephant’s keeper, “The father took [us] to find fruit, then he went home. We could not find the way home, then [we] got lost [in the forest].”

3. Summary

Kui uses a large-scale repetition to spread out the information load in order that a theme line is highlighted. There are various ways to repeat the same event. The devices which are frequently used include cycle, reduction, synonym and pro-verb. Other forms of repetition which are infrequent are verbatim, expansion, and negated antonym. The notable functions of these forms are linkage, preview, repeated attempt and rhetorical underlining at the peak. Some other functions can also be found but rare. They are contra-expectation, amplification and summary. The relationship between forms and functions is diagrammed as follows:
## Forms

<table>
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<th>Verbatim</th>
<th>Reduction</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Rhetorical underlining at the peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduction</td>
<td>Linkage</td>
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<td>Synonym</td>
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<td>Cycle</td>
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<td>Pro-verb</td>
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<td>Expansion</td>
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<td>Contra-expectation</td>
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<td>Negated antonym</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Even though repetition is basically used for underlining a theme line, it has to do also with a style of narration as seen in the form of cycles.3

### REFERENCES


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