

Chapter 15

Conclusions: Summary, Remaining Issues and Recommendations

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[H]istory has come to a stage when the moral man, the complete man, is more and more giving way, almost without knowing it, to make room for the. . . commercial man, the man of limited purpose. This process, aided by the wonderful progress in science, is assuming gigantic proportion and power, causing the upset of man's moral balance, obscuring his human side under the shadow of soul-less organization.

Rabindranath Tagore (1917, p. 291)

Globalization, rapidly growing information and communications technologies, and the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology introduce new dimensions to the perennial challenge of having to justify liberal education as a rational, responsible undertaking in a democratic society. Private institutions are forced to market their wares to an increasingly consumerist public unwilling to pay a very high price for something whose "value" is not tightly linked to a high-paying job upon graduation, while public institutions are increasingly controlled by legislatures primarily concerned with tax cuts and demonstrable efficiency in public spending.

Cornwell and Stoddard (2001)

In this final chapter, we first consider certain implications that emerge from the chapters in this book and discuss them in three themes: (1) the foundations of liberal arts education, (2) the current practices in liberal arts education in East Asia, and (3) issues common to liberal arts colleges and programs in East Asia. We then

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discuss the remaining issues that need to be addressed for the development of liberal arts education in the East Asian context and conclude with a set of recommendations for East Asian liberal arts institutions.

Summary

Foundations of Liberal Arts Education

As discussed in Chap. 1, liberal arts colleges and programs are essentially geared towards the needs of undergraduates and the ideal of educational excellence. They highly value faculty-faculty and faculty-student relationships, the idea of small residential collegiate communities, and collaboration and exchange in a broad array of disciplines and interests. Socializing and developing a sense of social and civic responsibility also underpin the mores and curriculum of these institutions. They also place high value on extracurricular activities and the opportunities for developing leadership and international outlooks. In these institutions, knowledge is seen, not as a product, but a process of creating, communicating and evaluating evidence, facts, ideas, opinions and arguments through dialogue between students, faculty and others, including those from other countries and cultures. The belief is that such searching for knowledge develops in the students the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to become useful contributors to society and develop an “inner life” that will make them ethically grounded and alive to the imaginative possibilities of their own and others’ lives.

From historical and philosophical perspectives (Chap. 2), the liberal arts institutions are seen to have striven to uphold the intrinsic ethical and political mission of liberal education. Despite stormy ups and downs in pedagogy and practices in Europe and the US, liberal arts education has continued to flourish and indeed experience something of a come-back in Europe and the US.

Social and political climates also influence the future of liberal arts in East Asia. As shown in Chap. 3, with the high valuing of vocational higher education in East Asia, liberal arts education is not always perceived as having any utility. The above quotation from Tagore shows that this is not simply a 21st century phenomenon and the more recent quotation from Cornwell and Stoddard (2001) shows that such a perception is also common in the Western countries. But as Yale President Levin (2010) observes, in the economically ‘rising nations in Asia’, higher education is often seen as a ticket to economic success for the individual and a win for society at large. Parents therefore urge their children to compete for admission to those institutions and entry into those majors that appear to offer the best career prospects. In this they are strongly influenced by political leaders who talk far more about the countries’ economic development and “workforce development” rather than the need to develop a better educated, more culturally-minded and moral citizenry that is capable of upholding the highest principles of democracy.

However, the more enlightened and more forward-looking business leaders increasingly recognize that they can provide the specialized professional training themselves, and that they need graduates with the range of adaptable skills that liberal arts institutions traditionally champion: creativity, flexibility, critical thinking, strong communication and problem analysis and solving skills and mindsets that allow them to work in different cultural contexts and a broad range of issues and disciplines. As Klebnikov (2015) points out, educators and administrators in East Asia are gradually realizing the limitations of the specialized vocational education they have been offering their students and beginning to see the benefits of liberal arts education in developing creativity and critical thinking in their students.

Current Practices in Liberal Arts Education in East Asia

The concept of liberal arts education varies across the three East Asian countries where most of the liberal arts institutions are to be found, China, Japan and Korea. This is partly due to their different histories and cultural and historical contexts and partly due to the varying degrees of awareness of the US liberal arts models among the founders of and educators in these institutions and whether they have actually had first-hand experience of undergraduate study in such institutions in the US. Chapters 9 and 10 provide well-informed examples of liberal arts education in the US (Pomona College) and Western Europe (Amsterdam University College).

Chapters 4–8 show how the idea of a liberal arts education has been developed and implemented in East Asia in its unique ways. For example, as shown in Chap. 4, Korea had its own indigenous higher education institution (HEI) as early as in the 14th century. This was Sungkyunkwan, founded on Confucian principles of pedagogy with the goal of whole-person development. While it might not be strictly classified as a liberal arts college, Sungkyunkwan appeared to promote the aims of liberal arts. This particular institution has now become a regular comprehensive university but a University College was recently established within this institution to provide something very akin to a “liberal arts college” in its first-year preparatory studies prior to specialized study. In the past ten years, major HEIs in Korea including Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University (known as SKY) and Ewha Womans University, have established liberal arts divisions, mostly offering courses in English, and opening their doors to international as well as domestic students. Integrating liberal arts education in large comprehensive universities is most common in Korea and Handong Global University, the only independent liberal arts college in this country, plays an important role in disseminating Christianity-based liberal arts ideas to other HEIs throughout the land.

Japan’s International Christian University (ICU), the only liberal arts college with a single faculty of liberal arts in Japan, was established after WWII and is closely modelled on the US liberal colleges as described in Chap. 5. Unsurprisingly, the ICU curriculum and *modus operandi* closely follow the US model of liberal arts education with its emphasis on critical thinking, valuing of faculty-student and

student-student relationships, bilingualism, human rights and internationalization. ICU's Christian commitment and residential campus life also reflect the features of the US liberal arts colleges.

A more recent experiment in liberal arts education in Japan emerged in 1994 with the foundation of Miyazaki International College (MIC), as described in Chap. 6. MIC was founded by a retired Japanese scientist who assembled a team of educators with liberal arts experience. Pomona College in the US also helped with its founding. At the same time, MIC was adapted to the needs and circumstances of its location, Miyazaki prefecture, one of the most economically challenged areas in Japan. It is a fully bilingual college. Having mostly Japanese students in its intake, the primary mode of instruction is conducted by two groups of instructors, Japanese and English-speaking. And unlike other research-oriented HEIs in Japan, ICU and MIC treat liberal arts education as an integral part of their undergraduate studies.

Three Chinese liberal arts institutions, Fudan University (mainland China), Lingnan University (Hong Kong, SAR) and the National Taiwan University are examined in Chaps. 7 and 8. For many centuries, higher education in the mainland China existed solely for the purpose of training future elite bureaucrats who were schooled in the Confucian classics. The Imperial Examination system which operated for 1300 years served to select senior positions in the State's bureaucracy and provide talented people with a channel of upward social mobility and earn their position rather than gain it through heredity or *nepotism*. Then in the 20th century, following exposure to various Western challenges throughout the late 19th century, the long-lasting ancient Empire collapsed in 1911 to be followed by political fragmentation, the World War II, civil war, political radicalism during Mao era and finally economic reform period under global influences. In the face of these economic, political and cultural changes, higher education was subject to continuous transformation. In the early 1900s China carried out a large number of western-influenced reforms in order to modernize China's economy and society and the old Imperial Civil Service Exam was abolished. It was in this period that Fudan University, one of the major HEIs in mainland China, was founded as a Jesuit liberal arts institution providing a wide variety of Western liberal arts or general education courses. Like all Chinese HEIs, Fudan underwent changes and disruptions after 1949 when the Communist Party came to power and subsequently during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. In the 1950s, China began implementing a very rigid and centralized curricular system imported from the Soviet Union. This led to the adoption of specialized courses as per the Soviet model which lasted until the middle of the 1980s. From the 1980s onwards higher education institutions were granted more autonomy. So in the 2000s, Fudan University began shifting its focus back toward general education, mainly as a consequence of the influences of globalization and China's desire for economic and commercial positioning in the world.

As explained in Chap. 7, Lingnan University in Hong Kong was founded as Canton Christian College in Guangzhou, China as a non-denominational Christian university in 1888. The school changed its location several times over the years, moving to Macau because of the Boxer Rebellion, then back to Guangzhou, then to

Hong Kong, then to Shaoguan and finally, after the ending of WWII, back to its permanent campus at Haizhu, Hong Kong. Lignan exemplifies the spirit of US liberal arts education with its mission of imbuing youth with “Christian spirit and Western knowledge and culture in order to help China cope with the challenges of Western military presence and civilization.”

Liberal arts education in Taiwan dates back only to 1956 when the Taiwanese Ministry of Education approved Tunghai University’s proposal for general education, hence focusing on both the humanities and sciences. Founded by Methodist missionaries, the university’s logo contains a cross in reference to the statement in the founding documents that it was “founded in the love of Jesus,” and three linked circles which both refer to the Holy Trinity and the motto, “Truth, Faith, Deeds.” General education, or non-specialized elective courses, also featured at the National Tsing Hua University, some of whose graduates later pursued graduate courses in US HEIs and then returned to promote the concepts of general education. During the 1990s, many other Taiwanese HEIs adopted the idea of general education mainly due to the government’s national promotion of general education after studying developments in major universities in Japan and the US. The National Taiwan University which inaugurated its general education program in 2004 provides an example of integrating general education in a large research university.

Issues Common to Liberal Arts Colleges and Programs in East Asia

As noted in several chapters, the small-scale liberal arts colleges in East Asia are having to operate under difficult economic circumstances. Competing with larger and better resourced institutions, they need to constantly upgrade their services, curricular, technology infrastructure, accommodation and other facilities to national and international standards. They need to market themselves overseas and offer exchange programs and overseas learning-work experience, all of which are costly operations. And they have to strike a balance between maintaining a revenue stream to meet all of the costs central to the institutions’ missions, including helping needy students and accommodating increased enrollments, and requiring enrollment fees that will frighten students away. As shown in cases in this book, sometimes the answer lies in establishing the right priorities, sometimes in using technology, for example, for inter-cultural exchange and language teaching, and sometimes in colleges finding ways of re-branding themselves, creating new “products”, moving into new “markets” and generally achieving more efficient and effective curricula.

Adopting the framework presented in Fig. 1.1, Chaps. 3–10 discussed the various issues confronting the liberal arts institutions in East Asia, including (1) re-defining the meaning of liberal arts education in the educational and socio-cultural context of East Asia, (2) balancing both excellence and access in liberal arts education, (3) exploring changing roles of liberal arts institutions to meet both local and global demands, (4) clarifying functions and effects of religion,

residential life, and small-scale in offering liberal arts education, and (5) integrating liberal arts education in large research universities.

Based on the discussions of earlier chapters, Chaps. 11–14 further elaborated the common issues facing the small liberal arts colleges and programs in East Asia such as the differences in conceptual understanding of key values and roles of liberal arts education, changing focuses of internationalization, lack of intercultural communication competences, the challenges in integrating digital technologies, and the all-too-often neglected issue of faculty well-being, and suggested policies and strategies to address those issues and promote liberal arts education in East Asia.

Remaining Issues

There are still some other issues warranting our attention. These include the governance of liberal arts institutions, the role of Christianity in liberal arts education, curriculum issues, and the university evaluation system.

Governance of Liberal Arts Institutions

The governance of institutions is inevitably bound up with financial, management and political matters. In Japan and Korea, private spending on tertiary education is

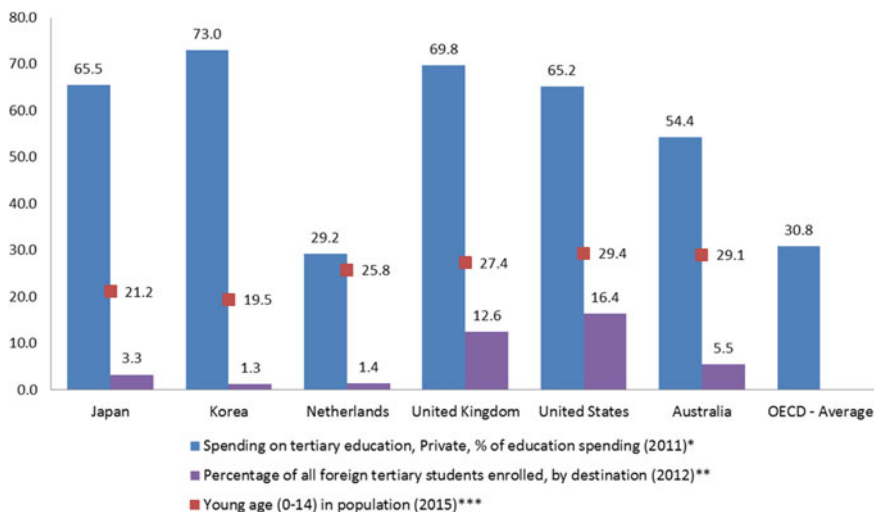


Fig. 15.1 Percentage of private financing on tertiary education. *Sources* Created by Authors by using the following sources: *OECD (2015). Spending on tertiary education (indicator). Doi: [10.1787/a3523185-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/a3523185-en) (Accessed on 09 July 2015). **OECD (2014). Education at a glance 2014, Chart C4.3. ***UNDP (2014). Human Development Report 2014, Table 15

relatively high. As shown in Fig. 15.1, the percentage of private financing on tertiary education of these countries is 65–73 %, compared to the OECD average of 30.8 %. Another notable trend in East Asia, particularly in Japan and Korea, is the declining number of young people. The percentage of the population aged between 0–14 is 21.2 % in Japan and 19.5 % in Korea, as compared to 29.4 % in US, 29.1 % in Australia and 27.4 % in UK. Furthermore, the market share of foreign students is still minimal in Japan and Korea at 3.3 and 1.3 % respectively. With the relatively low percentage of 0–14 year-olds in the population and the very low market share of foreign students, it is obvious that HEIs in Japan and Korea will face severe shortages of students in the very near future and will need to market their programs even more aggressively overseas.

The prevailing financial climate presents many more funding problems for the smaller liberal arts colleges than the larger comprehensive research universities. Their styles of instruction are more small-scale, intimate and interactive in nature and private tuition fees alone cannot cover this more costly style of teaching and learning. While the US liberal arts colleges enjoy abundant endowments raised by the private sector and alumni, their East Asian counterparts tend to be solely dependent upon private tuition fees and government subsidies. This is one of the reasons for the emerging liberal arts institutions in East Asia to be embedded within the large research universities rather than established as stand-alone independent institutions.

Other governance issues affecting the educational, research and social activities in the liberal arts colleges arise as a consequence of the various countries' political and socio-economic circumstances. With the substantial portion of the institutions' budgets coming from government sources, the political influence over the liberal arts institutions can be considerable. Some scholars point to a recent upsurge in national governments' control over higher education in general throughout Asia (Mok 2003; Yonezawa 2007). Further studies are needed to investigate the nature of the influence of national politics on the governance of liberal arts institutions in East Asia and how this impacts on such agendas as free speech, critical thinking and liberal learning.

Role of Christianity in Liberal Arts Education

As shown in the previous chapters, there are strong links between Christianity and the liberal arts institutions in East Asia. Many founders of these institutions were Christian scholars and missionaries who were advocates for Christian ideals and believed that these provided the very foundations of character building and peaceful and democratic societies. Today, only a few of these institutions still adhere to Christianity as their core principle (e.g. ICU, Lingnan University, and Handong Global University). In Japan, *Introduction to Christianity* is a required course in many universities that once had strong Christian foundations but this is taught as a separate subject without any links to other subjects on the curriculum or as a set of

guiding principles for students and faculty members. It would seem that the materialism of modern society and the vocation-oriented and research-oriented nature of today's HEIs have led to the loss of a quest for ethical and ideal human behavior and reflection upon self and spirituality. Excessive neo-liberal policies on education and strong emphasis on evaluation in East Asian HEIs have also led to belief in visible and measurable outputs of HEIs such as enrollments, attrition rates, grants earned, refereed articles published, prizes, patents and so on, rather than purely academic ideals. The problem of unethical conduct in research and science has grown as a consequence of a quest for money, high profile and "brand" among the institutions and faculty members in East Asia (Arimoto 2007). It would therefore be argued that more studies are needed into how Christian ideals can contribute to developing ethical values and behaviors in academic and civic engagement and be incorporated into academic programs and pastoral care on campuses.

Curricular Issues

While this book has been able to introduce some innovative courses and programs in liberal arts institutions, it is still not clear how these programs are actually developed and implemented, how they are related to studies in other disciplines, the extent to which and ways in which faculty members in different disciplines collaborate in overcoming disciplinary boundaries and narrow specializations and advance students' awareness of the importance of such matters as critical thinking and academic and civic commitment. These questions need answers by conducting far more research into the course design and development procedures and narrative experiences of teaching and learning by faculty and students.

Moreover, special attention needs to be paid to the integration of the various disciplines and especially how to integrate natural sciences and physical education into liberal arts education. As shown in Chap. 2, scientific knowledge and skills have advanced specialization at HEIs and often challenged the utility of liberal arts education. In the US, the substantial proportion of PhD students majoring in science in the research universities came from liberal arts colleges (Newton 2015). At ICU, science major students take more than half of their total credits from different majors in arts and sciences and many of them go on to pursue graduate studies (International Christian University 2015).

Physical education should be an important component of liberal arts education, helping to balance body and soul in personal development, and yet its position is hardly explored in the liberal arts institutions and is totally ignored in the other HEIs. Further investigations are also needed in this regard.

Most East Asian educators and administrators are graduates of the research universities. Another much needed area of inquiry is how and why some of these personnel then decide to teach in the liberal arts institutions, whether they then experience any confusion or de-skilling in being required to adapt to the different desired modes of teaching and learning and need to be more innovative in terms of

curriculum development and interdisciplinary approaches. If this is the case, investigation is needed into the forms of induction and continuing professional development that will help such faculty in these regards.

University Evaluation Systems

The evaluation criteria employed by the major world HEI ranking systems place a strong emphasis on research as represented by the numbers of articles in journals with a high impact factor, citation, and awards granted to faculty members and graduates. The key values emphasized in liberal arts institutions such as organizational and individual well-being and quality of teaching and learning barely feature in these ranking systems. Such standardized criteria for comprehensive research universities are now well embedded in East Asian HEI systems and the universities' senior managers and faculty members are under considerable pressure to improve their research outputs in order to gain high ranking for their institutions and tenure and promotion for their faculty members.

Such measurements and heated competition for funds and status inevitably sacrifice efforts for better teaching and learning and social services which are so important for educating future generations. La Trobe University in Australia has recently developed a new QED ranking (From the Latin *quod erat demonstrandum*, "which had to be proven") which, Long and Harvey (2015) argue, provides a truer measure of a well-rounded institution. QED aims to redefine quality, not according to the narrow research metrics, but in terms of equity, teaching and learning, research and diversity and treating these as integral and interactive dimensions of university life and not as separate domains. This concept may well warrant further consideration of what is meant by quality in liberal arts education in East Asia.

Recommendations

Throughout our book, we've claimed that the challenge to the liberal arts institutions in the 21st century as they put down their roots in different cultures and political regimes lies not in maintaining or reclaiming their Western origins, missions and purposes but in adapting these to the present and future needs and opportunities of East Asian societies. In this regard, we conclude by making the following recommendations for existing and new liberal arts institutions in East Asia in order to help them adjust to their unique socio-cultural contexts and at the same time become internationally competitive and sustainable:

- (1) Liberal arts education should be available to all students in all comprehensive research universities, vocational colleges and other types of higher education institutions, and not simply in the form of a one-year general education

program but as an expanded program throughout the entire curriculum. This would mean that the core values of liberal arts education—creativity, critical thinking, problem solving skills, communication skills, services and more—should receive far greater and deeper attention in all majors in order to graduate well-rounded and well-grounded students.

- (2) Independent, small-scale liberal arts colleges should be strategically supported (and established) by national/local governments or non-profit foundations in much the same ways as the top research universities in East Asia (for example, Peking University and Tsinghua University in China, The University of Tokyo in Japan, Seoul National University in Korea and National Taiwan University in Taiwan) have been established and supported. The various nations need to recognize that dedicated liberal arts colleges are needed in order to produce more graduates who are capable of creative and critical thinking, problem-solving and contributing to the welfare and prosperity and security of their local communities and wider societies.
- (3) The liberal arts institutions of East Asia need to provide more language programs, especially English programs in such ways as to promote the ideals of liberal arts education. Today's world requires graduates with highly developed empathetic and communication skills and the capacity to understand and live and work with peoples of other countries and cultures. As in the case of English language teaching and use at ICU (Chap. 5), language needs to be seen, not as a mere communication tool, but as a tool to promote creativity, critical thinking, research, ethical thinking and debates and problem-solving about societal and global issues. Those who experience such programs can more readily engage with people from different backgrounds and help to heal the divisions that exist in all of our societies.
- (4) Because of their small staffs and limited funding, liberal arts institutions should focus on a few high impact strategies or programs rather than trying to emulate the broad and diverse range of disciplines and courses in the research and other large HEIs (Kuh 2008). We've shown in Chap. 9 that *first-year seminars*, *undergraduate research with faculty*, and *study-abroad programs* are high impact programs for Pomona students, as are the *internship programs with international organizations* at Handong Global University and the International Christian University's *close academic advising and English for Liberal Arts* and *study-abroad programs*. What transpire to be high impact strategies in East Asian institutions may be quite different from those that contribute to the success of the Western liberal arts institutions.
- (5) There needs to be far more collaborative research in the liberal arts colleges and programs in East Asia into the nature and strengths of liberal arts education. Not only do the institutions need more empirical research and robust evidence to inform their thinking about improving their visions, policies, curriculums and courses, teaching and learning, governance, management, sources of funding and ways in which they serve society but to act as advocates for more socio-culturally appropriate, sustainable and internationally renowned higher education in East Asia.

- (6) Faculty and staff in liberal arts institutions also need continuous support and encouragement in developing their knowledge and skills and improving and innovating in their teaching and learning. Blaich and Wise (2014, p. 5) emphasize the importance of ‘serious and pervasive institutional commitment to the ongoing improvement of student learning’ and this can be only achieved by means of continuous professional development, peer support and senior managements’ trust in, and support for, new programs and experiments. This is especially important in the East Asia where the concept of liberal arts education is still not deeply understood and shared among all members of faculty. For the small-scale liberal arts institutions in East Asia with their limited human and other resources, short-term research leave (along with long-term research leave which is more popular in larger universities), curriculum development grants which promote collaborative and interdisciplinary course development within and between institutions, face-to-face or online forums, and creation of communities of practice can all help to develop the scholarship of liberal arts education.

Boyer’s model of scholarship (1990) would seem to provide the best basis for the advancement of academic life and work in the liberal arts institutions and reflections on the new social and environmental challenges beyond the campus and realities of contemporary life. To progress beyond the endless and futile research versus teaching debate, he used the term scholarship and proposed that this included four different categories (Boyer 1990, pp. 16–23):

The scholarship of discovery that includes original research that advances knowledge (which is broadly similar to “pure research”).

The scholarship of integration that involves synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within disciplines, or across time.

The scholarship of application that goes beyond the service duties of a faculty member to those within or outside the University and involves the rigor and application of disciplinary expertise with results that can be shared with and/or evaluated by peers.

The scholarship of teaching and learning that includes the systematic study of teaching and learning processes. This differs from scholarly teaching in that it requires a format that will allow public sharing and the opportunity for application and evaluation by others.

Boyer’s model has been widely embraced across the academy and adapted for different disciplines and it would appear to provide an excellent framework and research in the context of liberal arts and those areas and fields that are fundamental to its advancement. The liberal arts badly needs scholars who can skillfully explore the frontiers of knowledge, integrate ideas, connect thought to actions, and inspire their students to strike the right balance between careerism and the liberal arts and between self-benefit and service.

- (7) Governments and university evaluation agencies in East Asia should review their criteria for university quality assessment. While some key indicators for high quality university education are the same for all types of HEIs, other

indicators are needed to assess the unique features of particular kinds of institutions. For example, as suggested above, the liberal arts institutions need to be judged according to the quality and equitability of their undergraduate teaching, community building, international provisions and programs and service learning, all of which qualities serve nations well but are quite different from the qualities sought in the comprehensive research universities.

It is our belief that adopting these approaches will help liberal arts institutions move to new height in educating the whole person and cultivating the multiple ways of knowing, critical and creative thinking and lifelong learning that will prepare students to participate responsibly in East Asian and global civil society and not only secure a sustainable foundation for economies and markets but all human relationships.

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