Evaluating The 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria, Its Potency and Challenges in The Preservation of Indigenous Musical Arts

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Abstract

This study is set to evaluate the efficacy of the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria in preserving indigenous musical art expression and straightening emancipation from cultural imperialism. It examines the role of the policy in the projection and sustenance of the Nigerian musical culture in the public domain via cultural institutions such as Councils for Arts and Culture, local media; radio and television programmes. The degree of success and failure of the policy from 1988 to present day was also probed. Sources for data collection include, review of related literatures, field experience; in-depth interview and personal observation. The historical method applied in this work reveals that the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria which was primarily instituted as an operational principle for the promotion and projection of Nigerian ethnic cultural heritage and national identity was very effective and fruitful between 1988 and mid 1990s. However, this policy with its potential and fantastic strategies was neglected by hash military rule and their policies, and was eventually deterred by political instability and its associate lack of continuity in government policies. Consequently, the policy has remained a mere historical resource material on paper even in this present day of democratic rule in Nigeria. Hence, Council for Arts and Culture has systematically retained some level of Nigerian indigenous musical arts expression irrespective of numerous challenges facing cultural retention in this twenty first century.

Keywords: Cultural Policy, Evaluation, Imperialism, Indigenous music, Preservation

Background of the study

Prior to Western contact and later colonization, different kingdoms inhabited the area called Nigeria today. These kingdoms functioned as separate and independent entities in the interest of their cultural belief and life experiences. Each region ran their affairs to suit their socio-cultural, economic, political and religious systems and values. Soeze (1994) recorded some of these separate entities as the Benin Empire, the Lower Niger Kingdom, popularly referred to as the Oil Rivers, the Fulani Empire, the Kanem-Borno Empire, the Oduduwa Empire of the Yoruba, the Arochukwu Empire of the Igbo and the Aboh Empire

that sprang from the Benin Empire. These empires have specific languages and cultures peculiar to them in addition to some other smaller language groups within and around them.

Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diversified countries of the world with over two hundred and fifty (250) ethno-linguistic groups; a nation with abject inter-ethnic and multi-cultural conflict born out of British colonial administration in the 1960. As at today, Nigeria has thirty-six States and seven hundred and seventy-four Local Government Areas of which constitute part of various ethnic groups or regions. The ethnic regions of Nigeria were not only created based on linguistic grouping, geographical location also played a part. That is why some States have numerous linguistic groups within them, some are forcefully habouring smaller sections of groups belonging to major linguistic groups like the Igbo community in Rivers State, Kogi state, Bayelsa State, Delta state, Crossriver state. The same applies to Ijaw community which spread across Rivers State, Baylasa State and some part of Yoruba speaking States. Ernest-Samuel (2009) observes that the major cultures seem to be decimated by geographic boundaries, giving birth to distinct cultures between the northern and southern regions of the nation. However the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates as one nation Nigeria was done without considering the cultural, political, economic and religious differences that have existed over centuries.



The Northern and Southern Protectorates as different sovereign entities prior to the amalgamation. Picture taken from Ndokwa Reporters, January 15, 2014.

Although, there has been internal contact between these separate nations before external contact with the western world as Soeze (1994) rightly observes, there were isolated trade contacts among the people of the lower Niger Kingdom and the Benin Kingdom and these different names were assigned to the territories that now make up Nigeria. This implies that there has been minor borrowing of cultural traits as a result of interaction through trade, inter-marriages, migration and occupation. Yet, all ethnic groups maintained their musical traditions to enable representation of their identity within their ethnic cultural framework. The musical cultures of these various ethnic groups differ in their background, traditions and idioms, but all indigenous music in these ethnic groups gear towards achieving a common purpose in each community. They perform basically the same function in the social, cultural, economic, religious and political situations of the people. For instance, all indigenous music in different ethnic group is functional; functional in the sense that they accompany some cultural activities, events and seasons, such as rituals, marriages, worships, funerals, games and works in which they play a functional role. Therefore, music making is not purely for entertainment or artistic-enjoyment-based but are, serviceable tools for mankind and culture enhancer. This assertion has been widely established by many music scholars within Africa and Nigeria in particular. Mokwunyei (2011) stresses that in African traditional life, the performance of music does not merely occur as something incidental but rather as the primary focus of organized music making which goes beyond the physical act of producing sounds by instrumental and vocal means to the generation of attitudes and modes. She further argued that the true meaning of African music is to be found not only in its sonic and auditory properties but also in the complimentary angles that are embedded in a musical performance. Agbidi (2011) supports that, music making is not simply an exercise in the organization of sound; it is a symbolic expression of social and cultural organization. However, the indigenous musical styles and materials of every ethnic group reflect their life experiences, geographical location, culture and traditions. These factors constitute some varieties in various ethnic group's music performance practices and techniques, instrument materials and type, and then linguistic make up of their folk songs..

Nevertheless, the whole contacts with the Western world constituted a dramatic and noticeable shift in musical arts expression of every cultural group in the nation called Nigeria. The contacts with the outside world started differently in different regions of the country thus, they were influenced differently. The Northern region had initial contact with the Arab world and had been influenced by Islamic Religion, while the transatlantic trade established the initial contacts other regions of the country had with Western culture. The ugly incidence of slavery was another major contact point that pushed the Europeans to the hinterland of the regions in search of slaves. This led to massive kidnapping in the

regions. After the slavery comes full colonization with British colonies and administration established in strategic cities for full force colonization of the area. The Christian missionaries followed suit which instituted another avenue for domination of African minds with the establishment of churches and Western education. Ajayi (1965) account states that

> The British Foreign Office and Admiralty took over Lagos in 1851. Ten years later a further step was taken by the British who established the colonial regime with the acquisition of the Colony of Lagos. Meanwhile, missionary and commercial activities continued to expand with the corresponding rapid transformation of Lagos into a multi-cultural urban society. For example, in 1866 there were at least 1, 500 Saros, 1, 200 Brazilians and 42 Europeans in Lagos. The local population stood at 25,000. Emigrants (the Saros and the Brazilians) were the initial congregations of the new churches. While the Saros, with their Sierra Leonean background of English liberal education were employed as teachers in the mission schools and as civil servants in the colonial administration; the Brazilians, most of whom were uneducated, were employed as construction workers (pp . 51-52)

However, the establishment of British colony, colonial administration and amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates were not for the interest of the indigenous peoples. Rather, it was for the British selfish rule and domination of their cultural belief on the territory. Virtually all colonial policies undermined the fundamental social and cultural philosophy and issues in the ethnic regions of Nigeria. Therefore, the problem of three different values system continues to eat deep into the Nigerian's cultural stability till today. Presently, Nigeria is a nation with fusion of traditional / cultural values, religious value; Islamic and Christianity value and then, Western cultural values. All these only result to persistent conflicts and clash of cultural interests. Hence, cultural conflict necessitates the government's move to the adoption of a Cultural Policy to articulate and propagate an accepted cultural standard to form a holistic national cultural image and identity as a people. The government by this, aimed at harnessing common cultures that are generally acceptable by all ethnic groups in Nigeria to articulate a whole which will eventually become national cultural identity and image. Hence, some aspects of ethnic cultures which may disintegrate national unity or contradict the governance of the country were discouraged and dropped. Consequently, the accepted ethnic cultures were propagated as sieved by the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria.

However, by this policy, the indigenous musical arts were made to dominate the bulk of music on media and other cultural institutions as a means of decolonizing Nigerian minds. While seventy percent of broadcast content were allocated to local / cultural content, only thirty percent of broadcast materials were allocated to foreign content. This scenario helped in the propagation of indigenous musical arts both in the media and other cultural institution. Nevertheless, this development faced a huge challenge in the phase of political instability, military rule and technological revolution.

The Concept of Cultural Policy

Cultural policy is a legal document adopted by the government of a nation which prescribes guidelines, procedures, methods and practices that will enhance the promotion of culture in that country. It also includes other pronouncements or laws instituted to enhance cultural practices and development in a nation. A cultural policy is often instituted to enable the incorporation of essential parts of a people's history into the national development process, and since culture imbibes both economic and political consequences in the life of any nation. It cannot be undermined in the development of any nation.

However, the identity of a society can only be recognized by the culture shared by its ethnic regions and citizens. This is because, the cultural heritage and shared life experiences of a group of people forms their collective identity which differentiates them as unique entity from every other cultural groups of the world. Hence, cultural identity is vital in the existence of every nation since it reflects the totality of the people's life style, experiences, and philosophy. A nation's cultural policy serves as an instrument for the promotion of national identity. This is supported by some of the United Nations (UN) activities, particularly UNESCO via her several cultural festival exhibitions. A cultural policy is expected to mobilize and motivate the people by propagating cultural awareness in order to promote national pride, integration and national consciousness. These objectives are often achieved via extensive use of cultural institutions and media outfits as apparatus to propagate cultural material.

The 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria

The Cultural Policy for Nigeria was first formulated in 1976. It got its approval by the government and was officially launched in 1988. In the same year (1988), the World Decade for Cultural Development (WDCD) 1988-1997, was formally launched by the President who was the WDCD Grand Patron. At the establishment of the Cultural Policy for Nigeria, Orientation courses for key officials in government and the diplomatic corps were organized to ensure adequate training for the task ahead. However, the responsibilities

for the sustenance and implementation of the Cultural Policy for Nigeria were largely dependent on Federal and State Governments, including some other institutions such as media organization, museums, monument, council for arts and culture.

The State Council for Arts and Culture oversees the preservation and promotion of cultural arts at State levels while the Federal Government cover several cultural sectors, such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, National Library of Nigeria, Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, National Gallery of Modern Art, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Nigerian Television Authority and the then Film Corporation of Nigeria. Each Nigerian State Government has the exclusive responsibility for the projection, promotion and dissemination of local cultural contents.

However, the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria was set to promote national consciousness, national self-reliance and national unity. The government of the day believes that these would create conducive atmosphere to infuse cultural dimension in the nation's developmental progress. Hence, for the promotion of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria states the following objectives in its section 3.1 – 3.8 as thus,

- The policy shall serve to mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness.

- The policy shall serve to evolve from our plurality, a national culture, the stamp of which will be reflected in Africa and world affairs.

- The policy shall promoted educational system that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely on our tradition and values, namely: respect for humanity and human dignity, for legitimate authority and the dignity of labour, and respect for positive Nigerian morals and religious values.

- The policy shall promote creativity in the field of arts, science and technology, ensure the continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive updating to serve modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and idea.
- The policy shall establish a code of behaviour compactable with our tradition of humanism and a disciplined moral society.

- The policy shall sustain environmental and social conditions which enhance the quality of life, produce responsible citizenship and an ordered society.

- The policy shall seek to enhance the efficient management of national resources through the transformation of indigenous technology, designs-resources and skills.

- The policy shall enhance national self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and reflect our cultural heritage and national aspiration in the process of industrialization. (p. 6)

All these points were well articulated and efforts were put in place at all levels to ensure indoctrination of unifying cultural idea in the Nigerian social system and to enhance the spirit of pride in the national cultural identity.

Preservation of indigenous musical art in the policy

Following the account of the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigerian, music which forms the bulk of broadcast material in the electronic media shall propagate the nation's cultural image and aspirations. Therefore, for effective implementation of this mandate, a music policy became necessary as a guide for the electronic media. Igwilo (2012) refers to music policy as that body of operational principles and administrative practices which determines action and non-action on broadcast music on the electronic media. Hence, the music policy allocated higher percentage of music on media to Nigerian music and lesser percentage to foreign music. This allocation was done with the consideration of station's catchment area and the rest of Nigerian regions. Thus, the music policy, in line with the 1988 cultural policy for Nigeria declares that the electronic media shall ensure seventy percent (70%) of Nigerian music and thirty percent (30%) of non-Nigerian music on daily broadcast. P2 form was used to record every music played on every media programmed on daily basis to ensure compliance.

However, out of the 70% music content allocated to the Nigeria, 35% of it must be music from the catchment areas; that is the area of coverage by the station, while the remaining 35% was allocated to music from various parts or regions of the country. Then, only 30% of musical content on daily broadcast is allocated to foreign music materials. Following this development, precautions were taken to ensure the acquisition of recorded music accordingly to provide for the musical demand of both the policy and the Nigerians populace. This gave rise to the airing of music by indigenous music artistes which in return, served as a means of projecting cultural views, ideology and promotion of creativity in the field of art.

Administratively, it was expected that the electronic media shall collaborate with each other, especially stations of the same catchment areas for exchange of indigenous / cultural music materials. Music presenters and producers shall be well informed and knowledgeable about the music festivals of the catchment areas and arrange for life recordings of such materials since such will propagate Nigerian cultural views. Music producers, anchors and presenters shall also be well informed of the cultural policy and how to implement them, having regards to the cultural dynamics of the environment. Okafor (2005) states that,

> The directive principles obtained in the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria clearly show the way the nation thinks it should move musically. All the parts are meant to contribute to the enhancement, preservation, promotion and dissemination of Nigerian culture. This implies that Nigerian musical idioms should be promoted and developed to compete on the international plane, and trade influences and effects with other musical cultures and styles. (pp. 357-363)

The need for establishment of national troupe with the aim for development of performing art group (of which the bulk of it was cultural music and dance) was inevitable. Thus, on March 2, 1989, it was established as stipulated in the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria. The section 6 .3.3 of the policy states that "the national troupe of Nigeria shall be part of the national arts" (p.11). Hence, the Decree No. 47 establishes that the national troupe was released in Lagos on November 19, 1991, with following objectives:

- To encourage creativity in order to achieve excellence in the performing arts
- To encourage the discovery and development of talents in the performing arts
- To achieve high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international tours
- To ensure that its productions are geared towards national aspirations
- To encourage the development of the children theatre
- To ensure the preservation of the repertoire of the troupe
- To generate funds for government.

However, this troupe has succeeded in propagating Nigerian's music cultural heritage both in national and international performance scenes. As a result, media broadcasting in Nigeria witnessed a dramatic change in its forms of music broadcasting; from saturation of foreign music genres to regular use of indigenous artiste's works and cultural music in both radio and television broadcasting since late 1980s. Consequently, most of the music in media programmes (particularly, radio and television) became more cultural-music

based which are often used as signature tune, prelude, interlude and postlude. No wonder Angus and Jhally (1989) argues that

> Music in television produces a number of different commodities: it sells not only advertisers' products but also lifestyle and a commitment to consumption; it sells not only records but videos; it sells images and packaged tastes. (p. 260).

Thus, music in radio and television as at 1980s to late 1990s were packaged to sell national cultural views, norms and ethos to the outside world, as well as boosting national pride.

Political interference and distortion in the flow of cultural music in local media

Political system in Nigeria at different point played divers roles to both instituting and detriment of the cultural policy for Nigeria. It was recorded that the Nigerian government saw the need to cue into the projection and promotion of indigenous cultural materials immediately after independence, with the aim to combat cultural imperialism and to establish national identity, enhance self-consciousness in the minds of the citizens, for national development. But the same government kept on decreeing different acts and policies that countered the possibilities of actualizing the aim and objectives of the 1988 cultural policy for Nigeria. The decree of *1972 of* Indigenization Act which was necessary for a colonized country such as Nigeria demonstrated that even before 1988, the governments that had been saw the need to decolonize Nigerian minds. It was from this decree that Nigerian Film Coperation (NFC) and the National Film Distribution Company (NFDC) came out to ensure the dissemination of cultural materials. Yet the local media such as, radio and television which served primarily as government mouth piece were drawing their programme formats and styles from British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Consequently, foreign broadcast material, especially foreign musical cultures saturated local media broadcast. 'Nigeria Radio Stations should sound like Nigeria and showcase Nigeria' (Informant A).

However, the military regime of 1983 led by Muhammadu Buhari declared War Against Indiscipline (WAI) which led not only to the Jailing of a number of political opposition but, was also extended to journalists. The government of the day thought that cultural image was less important pressing need of a newly independent country. This regime was known for its authoritarian policies. Thus, harshness of this regime led to the 1985 military cue. Following the military coup d'etat of 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida assumed power in August 1985. Babangida's led government presented to the public and media the image of an affectionate and considerable leader. This he did by first, releasing the detainees and

promised Nigerians to ensure that their opinion counts in his decisions. (Britannica.com). However, it was in this regime that the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria was launched. General Babangida ruled Nigeria uninterruptedly for eight years; from 1985 to 1993.

Although the cultural policy for Nigeria was instituted by General Ibrahim Babangida's military regime yet, some counter policies emanated from the same administration. There was a clear demonstration that their interest where not much on the cultural policy but on industrial policies. Hence, in 1990 trade policy was lunched. Legacies were laid with the intention of laying foundation for Nigerian industrial take off. Hence these policies encouraged commercialization and privatization and in turn undermined the goals of the cultural policy. Probably, the negligence on cultural values was as a result of political class in cueing industrialization and focusing their interest in robust economy. Prior this time, radio stations were only owned and manned by the governmental Agency as the National Broadcasting Commission was established to oversee the affairs of broadcasting in Nigeria. However, the government of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida granted the request for establishment of private broadcasting industries in Nigeria. Many private radio and television stations were created including Ray Power 100.5 FM which was the first private radio station on air in 1993. Since then, over fifty television and radio stations had been established across Nigeria. As private establishments that were set out for business, private radio and television stations came on with less attention on cultural policy or national cultural image. Their interests were rather on commercialization and profit making. Thus their programme styles and consideration centered on getting popularity and patronizers rather that than the fundamental media role to the society. (Nwakwesili 2008).

In 1993 General San Abacha , The defence minster under Babangida overthrew the interim government of Ernest Shonekan. Abacha's government reversed all the progress that the country had made since independence. Abacha' regime had no regards to due process, rule of law, press freedom, individual liberty and human rights. Violence was his response to critics and political opponent. Lindsay as cited by Ukadike (1994) affirms that the policy makers in successive Nigerian government have failed to recognize the nation's creative artistic endeavour and expression of artistic independence by Nigerian artistes as positive contribution in line with cultural development. Hence such mentality went so far in battering goals of the cultural policies and cultural institutions needed for the expansion and strengthening the cultural values. He argues that 'Nigerian broadcasters have not refrained from making television the tom-tom that drums the praises of top federal government functionaries and luminaries in state capitals'(Ukadike 1994: 144). This is so because, radio and television stations want to remain in business . In like manner Anna

Borzello, a BBC correspondent in Lagos comments that, 'there were cinemas in Lagos Nigeria in the 60s, but they began going out of business in the 70s-partly because of difficulties of operating under military dictatorship' (2004 : 1). Hence, the failure to achieve the goal of the cultural policy especially in the area of cultural music on daily broadcast has a lot of negative influence from the previous governments attitudes toward the existing policy and institution of counter policies. However, it was clear that military regime have no real motivation to encourage the national cultural image, identity and self-reliance. Decolonization of Nigerian minds is not part of their agenda following their decrees.

Some respondents in the field, mostly media personnel air their mind during different session of interviews. Respondent A states that,

> Since government has approved commercial Radio Stations, why then should government go round to suffocate media industry with such policy as the Nigerian cultural policy? Government should allow competition among media stations. However, in Garden City Radio, we hardly play Nigerian songs since the Copyright Act Decree insist on payment to Nigerian artistes when media stations broadcast their songs.

Respondent B , in support of the above argument states that

> Since private media businesses are not getting any form of funding from government and are expected to pay taxes, Government should not force cultural content on them. Rather, the best they can do is to project the country the way the Station chooses provided they are not violating human right

In addition, respondent C. who has put in thirty five years of service in Radio Nigeria and still serving revealed that, even in Radio Nigeria which is government owned station, commercialization had set in because, government expects each station to take care of their expenditures and also raise capital for the federal government. However, instead of the government assisting to reduce the financial burdens on the media industries, more tasks, and challenges are added to the already existing ones. All these burdens end up constituting distractions from the actualization of the cultural policy's objectives. Thus, the struggle to survive and stay on air force media firms to be commercially-driven instead of being people-oriented. Consequently, the Nigerian cultural policy became secondary to most media industries and the Government could not penalize them knowing their own short falls.

The state of Cultural Policy for Nigeria

The cultural policy is now a historic policy in a booklet which happened in Nigeria. None of the media industries, Councils for Arts and Culture visited were in possession of a copy of the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria. Even Federal Government media stations like, the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and Radio Nigeria which claimed to have led the implementation of this policy on local media could not even present a copy of this policy in their Stations. A good number of media personnel in this present dispensation are not even aware that such policy ever existed in Nigeria. In any case, those who spoke on this policy appeared to have merely drawn from its shadow since their station could not present a copy of the policy. However, while older personnel claimed to be fully aware of the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria, the younger ones have no idea if such policy ever existed in Nigeria. One of the eldest respondents who was in service when the policy was enacted and applied on daily broadcast states that,

> Yes, I know that there is such a Policy as the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria, but it is no longer functional. You are lucky to meet me here today because if I retire here, those coming behind me may not know. I have been with Radio Nigeria for 35 years now. So, I know there was such a Policy. When I was in Enugu, we were made to compile indigenous music and highlife for daily broadcasts. It was a must do on daily basis. Not just that, there was also a percentage of the indigenous or cultural music that must be on air. It was a must assignment and there is no two ways about it. (Respondent C).

This submission demonstrated that they had applied such policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but presently, it is out of sight, out of reach and rarely thought of in the planning and scheduling of media broadcast programmes in Nigeria today. This is common occurrence in virtually all the radio and television stations in Port Harcourt, especially private stations which have no interest in projecting the cultural motive of the 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria. Respond D in the same line of thought submits that,

> The Cultural Policy should naturally be weak because, you cannot do a cultural policy for Commercial Stations. You cannot, for example, fix a trip fare for commercial taxi drivers and bus drivers when you don't maintain their cars, don't pay their drivers, and don't give them loans to buy these cars. It will be too had to do so, if you fix a price for them, they won't keep it. So, all you can do is to allow competition. So when the Government has allowed commercial and private television / radio

> stations, we are no longer restrained to the cultural policy. The reason is that the radio stations want to survive. So, Government should not close the door for competition with such policies.

Following the situation painted in the above submissions, the 1988 cultural policy for Nigeria is as good as dead. The popular code found amongst the media industries in this era which poses little or no drive to inclusion of ethnic musical contents in media programmes is the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission Code. It is commonly referred to as the NBC Code. Some media Stations claimed to be follow the NBC Code in the selection of musical content in their broadcast materials. Others argued that the selection of their broadcast materials depends purely on the station's format, not on any said policy or code. Hence, whereas some of the media industries possess copies of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, some others do not even perceive the NBC Code as a substantial material to guide their programme formats. Hence, the 1988 cultural policy for Nigeria is considered obsolete and it is not functional in Nigeria local media industries today.

Conclusion

Nigerian Cultural Policy and its implementation strategies possess the potentials to protect Nigerian ethnic musical culture and national cultural heritage. But, it has not been effectively applied to drive home the aim of this policy into the social system and nation building by presiding political bodies. The Nigerian political structure which ought to maintain consistency and national interest in their political agenda are more interested in ethnic and personal interest. In Nigerian political system, a change in power or political party translates to automatic trashing of efforts and policies of the previous government. This trend is detrimental to national development and image. Consequently, the 1988 Cultural policy for Nigeria has remained a mere historical resource material on paper even in this present day of democratic rule in Nigeria.

In any case, if Nigeria as a nation wishes to retain her cultural image and identity in this globalised world, there is need to revisit 1988 Cultural Policy for Nigeria with a view to drawing from the intellectual wealth of scholars in exploring practical ways of re-inventing the concept of culture via proper awareness, implementation and monitoring of such policy.

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