

Issues in the Linguistics of Onomastics

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Abstract

Names, also called proper names or proper nouns, are very important to mankind that there is no human language without names and, for some types of names, there are written or unwritten naming conventions. The social importance of names is also the reason why onomastics, the study of names, is a multidisciplinary field. After briefly discussing the multidisciplinary nature of onomastics, the article proves the following view stated and proved by many a scholar: proper names have a grammar that includes some grammatical features of common nouns. In so doing, the article shows that, like common nouns, proper names show cross linguistic differences. To prove that names do have a grammar which in some aspects differs from the grammar of common nouns, the article often compares proper names and common nouns. Furthermore, the article uses data from several languages in addition to English. After a brief discussion of orthographic differences between proper names and common nouns, the article focuses on the morphology, both inflectional and lexical, and the syntax of proper names.

Key words: Name, common noun, onomastics, multidisciplinary, naming convention, typology of names, anthroponym, inflectional morphology, lexical morphology, derivation, compounding, syntac.

1. Introduction

Onomastics or onomatology, is the study of proper names. Proper names are terms used as a means of identification of particular unique beings. Onomastics is not only a branch of linguistics: it is multidisciplinary because a comprehensive account of onomastics involves not only linguistics but also other disciplines such as:

- (a) Literature, where onomastics is known as *literary onomastics*;
- (b) Cultural anthropology and social anthropology, where onomastics can be referred to as *anthropological onomastics* or *anthropology of proper names*; and
- (c) Philosophy, where onomastics can be referred to as *philosophical onomastics* or *philosophy of proper names*.

Giving examples of particulars that can be given proper names, Wolfram (1989: 243) defines proper names as “the names of individual particulars, such as individual persons, cities, mountains, universities, or battles. The nature of the beings given proper names is a major criterion for the classification of proper nouns..

The term ‘proper name’ is generally considered a synonym of ‘proper noun’, which, in grammar is the opposite of ‘common noun. Concerning proper names and proper nouns, most lexicographers and other writers only define proper nouns, implying that the term ‘proper name’ is synonymous with the term ‘proper noun’, which is more frequently used in the literature. Below are some definitions of proper nouns.

- (a) A proper noun is “The name of an individual person, place or object, as opposed to a common noun, which refers to any one of all things denoted by the noun” (Hartmann, R.R.K. and F.C Stork (1972)) and the term ‘proper noun’ is synonymous with ‘proper name’.
- (b) A proper noun is “A noun referring to a particular unique

person, place, animal, etc. Contrasted with common noun. (Also called proper name.)” (Chalker and Weiner (1994:319)

- (c) A proper noun is a “Noun which is the name of a specific individual or of a set of individuals distinguished only by their having that name” (Matthews. P.H. (2005: 300))
- (d) Proper nouns “are names of specific people (*Shakespeare*), places (*Milwaukee*), countries (*Australia*), months (*September*), days (*Thursday*), holidays (*Christmas*), magazines (*Vogue*), and so forth.” (Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 76))
- (e) Proper nouns “name specific people, animals, institutions, places, times, etc.” (Greenbaum and Weiner (2000: 82))

We notice that, in (b), Chalker and Weiner (1994:319) state that the term ‘proper name’ is synonymous with ‘proper noun’. It is equally worth noting that, in their *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, mentioned at (a) above, Hartmann, R.R.K. and F.C Stork (1972) have an entry *proper name* not defined shown as an synonym of *proper noun*.

Proper names being terms, their study is also part of terminography, a mere collection of terms, and terminology, which goes beyond collecting terms to explore other issues such as etymology.

With regard to name giving and name taking, an individual may choose how to name any of his or her belongings, such an object, a dog or a house, but in most cases not involving personal belongings, there is a ‘naming convention’, a written or unwritten scheme to be followed in name-giving. In many cultures, personal names are given following an unwritten convention while in some organizations there is a written convention.

Concerning culture, it is important to bear in mind that religion, if it not part of a culture, supersedes culture or superimposes onto culture. Thus, in many cases, in addition to the name or names given according to their culture, Christians take a Christian name and Muslims a Muslim name. Both some cultures and some religions practise naming ceremonies.

One frequent cross-societal parameter in name giving is gender in the sense that the name or one part of the full name depends on the gender of the person named or to be named. For instance, in some cultures and religions some names are only given to males and others to only females.

2. Onomastics Worldwide

As pintoed out at the beginning of the introduction, onomastics is not only a branch of linguistics, as it is multidisciplinary because a comprehensive account of onomastics involves not only linguistics but also other disciplines”. The multidisciplinary nature of onomastics is reflected by terms such as the terms in (1), referring to some discipline-based types of onomastics:

- (1) Some discipline-based types of onomastics
 - a. *Anthropological onomastics*, in cultural anthropology;
 - b. *Geographic onomastics*, or *geonomastics*, in geography;
 - c. *Linguistic onomastics*, in linguistics;
 - d. *Literary onomastics*, in literature;
 - e. *Psychological onomastics*, or *psychonomastics*, in psychology; and
 - f. *Sociological onomastics*, or *socionomastics*., in sociology

In universities and other institutions of learning, onomastics is dealt with in one of the following four ways:

- (2) Some discipline-based types of onomastics
- a. *as a component of course, for example a course in (i) sociolinguistics, (ii) semantics, (iii) morphology and (iv) literature, where it is called literary criticism;*
 - b. *as a full course on one subfield of onomastics, for example Literary Criticism; or*
 - c. *as a fully-fledged degree postgraduate programme on onomastics.*

Onomastics is dealt with not only in universities and other institutions of learning but also by special learned societies, in the form of, organizations, associations, committees etc. and publishing information or/and journals, for example:

- (3) Some learned societies for onomastic studies
- a. *the American Name Society (ANS), publishing a journal known as A Journal of Onomastics;*
 - b. *the English Place-Name Society (EPNS), publishing a journal known as The Journal of the English PlaceName Society;*
 - c. *the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland (SNSBI), publishing a journal known as Nomina, a Latin noun meaning ‘names’, usually followed by urnal of the society for name studies in Britain and Ireland;*
 - d. *the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), publishing a bulletin known as Information Bulletin of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names*
 - e. *the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), publishing a journal known as Onoma, a Ancient Greek word meaning ‘name’ and often followed by Journal of*

the International Council of Onomastic Sciences

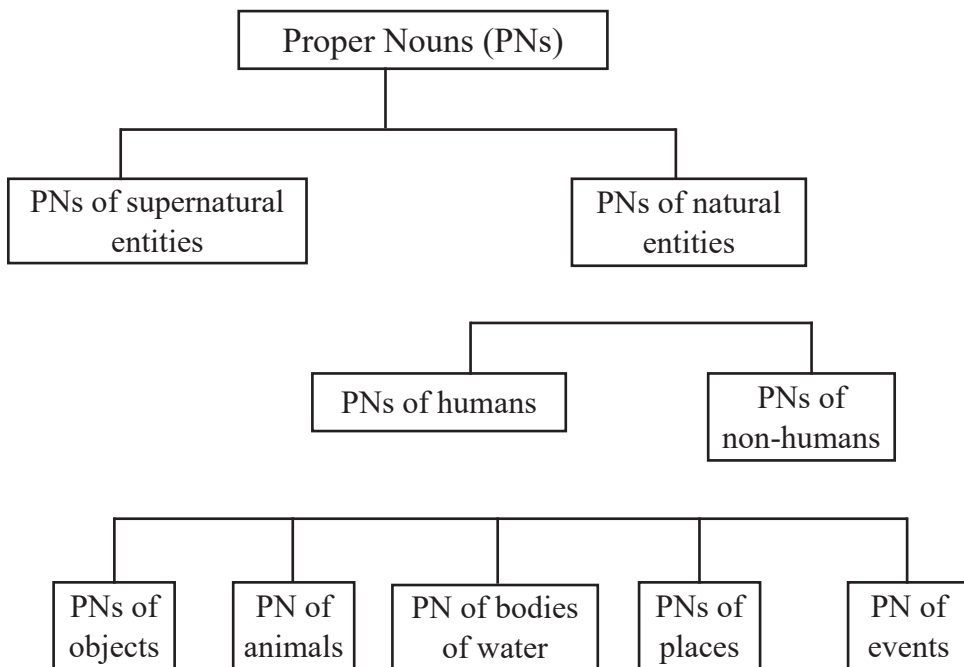
- f. the *Names Society of Southern Africa* (NSSA), publishing a journal known as *Nomina Africana: Journal of the Names Society of Southern Africa* (also found: *Nomina Africana: The Journal of African Onomastics*), ‘*Nomina Africana*’ being a Latin phrase meaning ‘African names’
- g. the *Canadian Society for the Study of Names* (CSSN) (called in French *la Société canadienne d’onomastique* (SCO), publish a journal known as *Onomastica Canadiana*, a Latinized phrase meaning ‘Canadian onomastics’

3. Semantic Typology Of Proper Names

Proper names may be classified in many ways using different criteria, such as morphological criteria and semantic criteria. For any criterion, there exists no complete list of types of proper names for the simple reason that, in principle, anything can be given a a proper name. Thus, the semantic typology of proper nouns include, among others, (a) anthroponyms, proper names of people, for example *John, Banda, Mwewa, Ivanov* etc and (b) toponyms, or place names, for example names of villages, towns, countries, provinces etc, (c) names or bodies in the sense of organizations, associations, committees etc.

A semantic typology of proper nouns may be provided using a cladogram, a type of tree diagram used to identify and classify organisms in biology. As an example, let us consider the vertical cladogram in Figure 1, which is not complete but only how cladistics can be used to classify nouns and where the term *entity* refers to anything that can be given or can bear a proper noun:

Figure 1: An illustrative cladogram of nouns



What Figure 1 says is that:

- (a) Proper nouns (PNs) are divided into (a) PNs of supernatural entities (gods, goddesses, angels etc) and (b) PNs of natural entities (people, animals, objects, events etc);
- (b) PNs of natural beings are divided into (a) PNs of humans and (b) PNs of non-humans; and
- (c) PNs of non-humans are divided into (a) PNs of objects (e.g. houses), (b) PNs of animals (e.g. dog PNs), (c) PNs of bodies of water (PNs of rivers, lakes, oceans etc), (d) PNs of places and (e) PNs of events (e.g. Christmas, PNs of wars).

However, the classification provided in Figure 1 is far from being comprehensive for two reasons. First, there are several types of PNs of humans, such as, to name but a few, (a) in some languages, between masculine names and feminine names. (b), nicknames, (c) pen names and, morphologically, (d) one-word names and multi-word names. Second, there is no, and there cannot be, a comprehensive list of types of PNs of non-human entities as, in principle, anything can be given a proper name.

Table 1, below, provides a list of some types of proper nouns based on semantic fields, which are found in the literature and most of which are used by the International Onomastics Society (ICOS) and the American Name Society (ANS).

Table 1: Some types of proper names according to semantic fields

Ref. #	Type	Proper name of	Examples
1	anthroponym	person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew, Bwalya, Carter, Chanda, Chilala, Jimaima, John, Johnson, Peter, Trump
2	brand name	a brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ford, Toyota, Rum Maple (a brand of pipe tobacco)

3	choronym	proper name of a larger geographical or administrative unit NOTE: a choronym is a subtype of toponym; since the place named is big, the term <i>macrotoponym</i> is also used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa, America, Europe, Albania, Central Province (in Zambia), Siberia,
4	code name	a name denoting an operation, activity, military unit, country, meeting etc, standing for another name which one wants to avoid or hide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Overlord (one of the Allies' operations during World War 2)
5	demonym	citizen of certain place or country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Londoner, New Yorker, Zambian, South African, Roman
	diminutive name	a shortened form of a name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob < Robert • Liz < Elizabeth • Beth < Elizabeth • Bill < William
6	hagionym	a saint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John, Mary, Peter
7	hodonym (<i>or</i> odonym)	way (way, street, road, avenue etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caro Road (in Lusaka), Great East Road (in Lusaka), Kampala Road (in Kampala)
8	hydronym	body of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Lake Tanganyika, Luapula (River), Zambezi (River)

9	nesonym	island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madagascar, Mauritius, Zanzibar
10	oikonym	settlement, e.g, house, village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kungu (Village) (a village in the Zambia's Northern Province)
11	oronym	mountain, hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kilimanjaro
12	pen name	a pseudonym, viz. an assumed name, an name used, for some reason or reasons, by a writer instead of his real name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abram Tertz (real name: Andrei Donatovich Sinyavsky, a Russian writer)
13	pseudonym	fictitious name used by a person, for example an artist or a politician, instead of his/her real name Note:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abram Tertz, given above as an example of a pen name, a type of pseudonym • Frank Caatello (real name: Francesco Castiglia, an Italian-American mafia gangster)
14	theonym	god, goddess, divinity	Jesus, Zeus
15	toponym	place Note: many other types are subtypes of toponyms, e.g. (h)odonym, hydronym and oronym)	Zambia, Lusaka, Matero (a suburb of Lusaka). Paris, New York, Great Britain, Cape Town

It is worth noting that, etymologically, the suffix *-onym* means ‘name of’ but the majority of nouns ending in *-onym* do not denote proper nouns. Thus a zoonym is the name of a species of animals, such as dogs, cats, antelopes etc, but not proper names, but if you name your dog Max, *Max* is a proper name of that dog and not a zoonym. Likewise, the term *glossonym* means ‘name of a language or

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dialect’ but while glossonym is not a proper name, *ChiTonga* is both a glossonym and a proper name. It is equally important to note that not all types of proper names have a one-word name ending in –onym. Thus, there is not, to the best of my knowledge, such a term to refer to the name of a war, such as World War Two, or a battle, such as the Battle of Stalingrad: ‘World War Two’ is a proper name of a war and ‘Battle of Stalingrad’ a proper name of a battle.

4. Naming

Name giving cases may be divided into two groups, namely:

- (a) Naming by an individual of a belonging of him or her; and
- (b) Naming in cases other than the naming by an individual of a belonging of him or her.

In principle, an individual is free to name any of his or her belongings, This is only in principle because a name may create a problem, for example giving a dog the same name as one of the neighbour or a VIP. In cases other than the naming by an individual of a belonging of him or her, there may be naming conventions depending on some factor or factors such as culture, religion or an existing naming convention in an organization or institution. A naming convention may be written or, as is generally the case in cultures and religions, unwritten. A good example of a written naming convention is the naming convention followed to name tropical cyclones by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). WMO uses a set of rotating lists of names but retires and replaces names of particularly deadly tropical cyclones.

There are also cases where a name must be approved by an organization, institution or country or someone in that someone in that organization, institution or country.

5. Typology of Anthroponyms

Proper names may be classified in various ways depending on the parameters chosen, including, among others:

- (a) Morphology, distinguishing, for instance, between mononyms, viz. one-word names, and polynyms, viz. multi-word names;
- (b) Syntax, establishing types of multi-word names and identifying syntactic relations within multi-word names; ;
- (c) Religion, to distinguish names used only in some religion or religions;
- (d) Gender, to identify names used only for one gender or both genders;
- (e) Ethnicity, to identify names used in one or more ethnic groups; and
- (f) Language, to identify names used in one or more languages.

A person with a mononym is referred to a mononymous person and a person with a polynym is a polynymous person. Mononyms are extremely rare and the literature generally only gives examples from remote history, which suggests that an individual who is mononymous was polynymous but only one name is known.

An anthroponym, viz. a personal name is a name used to identify an individual. In most cases, individuals have more than one officially recognized names. The set of all officially recognized names of an individual is known as the ‘full name’ of that individual. Consider the case of an individual A with two names in his passport, namely David and Phiri, and an individual B with three names in his passport, namely Peter, Bwalya and Chanda. The ‘full name’ If the individual’s passport contains all the names, one of the name is referred to as surname, family name or last name: for A, the surname is Phiri and for B the surname is

Chanda. Where an individual has two names, as is the case for A, the name other than the surname is the ‘first name’. For B, who has three names, Chanda is the surname, Peter the ‘first name’, or forename, and Bwalya the ‘middle name. Diagrammatically, the situation is represented, below, by Figure 2 for A and Figure 3 for B.

Figure 2: Structure of the full name of A

Full name (<i>or Name</i>)	
First name	Surname
<i>David</i>	<i>Phiri</i>

Figure 3: Structure of the full name of B

Full name (<i>or Name</i>)		
First name	Middle name	Surname
<i>Peter</i>	<i>Bwalya</i>	<i>Chanda</i>

In connection with the above information about personal names, It is worth noting that:

- (a) in some cultures, for example in Chinese culture. the surname is first given;
- (b) an individual may have more than three names; and
- (c) in many countries in the western culture or countries influenced by western culture, a married human may add after her surname the surname of the husband and the two surnames are hyphenated, as in Jane Chansa-Phiri; and
- (d) an individual’s full name may contain, in addition to one or more names, one or more words not belonging to the category of nouns, for example **von** óf/from’ in Bernd Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist, the name of a German writer (1777-1811).

It is also worth noting that ‘full name’, ‘first name’ and ‘surname/

family name/ last name’ are not the only types of personal names. For instance, a piece of fictional literature may have one or more charactonyms, a charctonym being the name of a fictional character which is descriptive of some behavioural or physical trait of the character. Charactonyms are one of the main subject matters of ‘literary onomastics’.

Most proper names are anthroponyms, viz. names of people, because of the number of human beings, both alive and dead. Not only are anthroponyms numerically the most important type of proper names, but they are subdivided into socially and legally important subtypes, as exemplified in the following section. Table 2, below, is a list of some types of anthroponyms.

Table 2: Some types of personal proper names

Ref. #	Term	Definition
1	first name	First or sole name preceding the last name (see 3 below) name other, as in ‘ Peter Smith’ and ‘ Peter John Smith
2	middle name	name between the first name (see 1) and the last name (see 3), as in ‘Peter John Smith’ and ‘Mark Kambani Banda’
3	last name	name given at birth. It is hereditary or given according to culture, as in ‘Peter Bwalya Mwansa ’
4	family name	same as <i>last name</i>
5	surname name	same as <i>last name</i>
6	given name	same as <i>first name</i>
7	forename	same as <i>first name</i>

8	nickname	name used instead of the real name for affection humour or ricule
9	orthonym	real name as opposed to <i>nickname</i> (see 8) and <i>pen name</i> (see 11)
9	diminutive name	a shortened form of a namem, e.g. Bob < Robert, Liz < Elizabeth
10	hagionym	a saint, e.g. John, Mary, Peter
11	pen name	a pseudonym, viz. an assumed name, an name used, for some reason or reasons, by a writer instead of his real name
12	pseudonym	ficitious name used by a person, for example an artist or a politician, instead of his/her real name ``
`13	Christian name	name taken from Christianity, usually, but not always used as a first name among Christians
14	charactonym	the name of a fictional character that fits or sug- gest some trait of the character.

The following is worth noting:

- (a) In some cultures, for example in the Far East, namely in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese cultures, what is called surname, or family name, comes first; and
- (b) The terms *nickname*, *pseudonym* and *orthonym* are not always anthronyms: they also apply to other types of proper names such as toponyms.

6. Aspects of the Grammar of Proper Names

Like common nouns, proper nouns are subject to morphological, morphosyntactic and syntactic processes or phenomena as well as spelling conventions. However, the literature shows that in many languages, proper nouns have some grammatical idiosyncrasies. This section will deal in turn with spelling conventions, the

morphology, the syntax and the morphosyntax of proper nouns

6.1 Spelling conventions

Consider the English data in (4), in which (4a) is a common noun and (4b) a proper noun:

- (4) a. bush
b. Bush

Unless both words in (4) are fully capitalized so as to have BUSH in both cases, the spelling convention in English, applying here is that the first letter of a proper noun is in the upper case in any position while for common nouns the first letter is in the upper case only sentence-initially. Most languages using alphabetical spelling systems behave like English. One notable exception is German: in German, where there is no spelling difference between common nouns and proper nouns: unless words are fully capitalized, as is the case in many titles, the first letter of all nouns, both common and proper, are always in the upper case, noun, be it common or proper is in the upper case in any position while for common nouns the first letter is in the upper case only sentence-initially.

Another example of difference in the spelling of proper names is found in the Zambian Government-approved orthography of Zambian languages in Ministry of Education (1977), which deals with the orthography of seven Zambian languages, all belonging to the Bantu language family namely Chitonga (Malcolm Guthrie's Tonga), Cinyanja (Malcolm Guthrie's Nyanja), Icibemba (Malcolm Guthrie's Bemba), Kikaonde (Malcolm Guthrie's Kaonde), Lunda, Luvale and Silozi (Malcolm Guthrie's Lozi). In Bantu languages nouns are assigned to numbered morphological classes, usually signalled by noun prefixes, determining morphosyntactic agreements between nouns and most of their dependants and with verbs of which they are subjects. Three classes, in most

cases, are locative prefixes translating some English locative prepositions: (a) class 16 ‘on/at’, class 17 ‘at/to’ and class 18 ‘in/into’. In Ministry of Education (1977), the spelling rule of the locative prefixes in Kaonde, Lunda, Luvale, Nyanja and Tonga, but not in Bemba and Lozi, is twofold, paraphrased as follows:

(5) Spelling rule of locative prefixes in some Zambian languages

- a. Monosyllabic locative prefixes are joined to common nouns and never to proper nouns.
- b. Bisyllabic locatives are never joined to anything: they are written separately as they are words.

Some of the examples given by Ministry of Education (1977) are reproduced in (6) through (12), where the locative prefixes are in bold:

(6) KAONDE

- a. **pamuzhi** ‘on the village’
- b. **kumuzhi** ‘at/to the village’
- c. **pa** Solwezi ‘at Solwezi’ 9a city)’
- d. **ku** Kasempa ‘at/to Kasempa (a town)
- e. **kuli** Mambwe ‘to Mambwe (a person)
- f. **kuli** Leza ‘to God’

(7) NYANJA

- a. **pamadzi** ‘on the water’
- b. **munyumba** ‘in/into the the village’
- c. **mu** Lusaka ‘in/into Lusaka’ (a city)
- d. **pa** Katete ‘at Katete’(a town)
- e. **pa** Cisanu ‘on Friday’

(8) LUNDA

- a. **kumukala** ‘at/to the village’
- b. **hakadidi** ‘on bed’
- c. **ku** Dipalata ‘at/to Dipalata
- d. **hadi** mukwawu ‘to another’
- e. **hadi** kawumbu ‘(up)on a anthill’
- f. **mudi** Nzambi ‘(in God’

(9) LUVALE

- a. **hamutwe** ‘on the head’
- b. **kuzuvo** ‘at/to the house’
- c. **mujimo** ‘in(to) the stomach’
- d. **ku** Kabompo ‘at/to Kabompo’(a town)
- e. **ha** Salumanyi ‘at Salumanyi’
- f. **mu** Zambia ‘in Zambia’

(10) TONGA

- a. **mucikolo** ‘inside the school’
- b. **kumunzi** ‘at/to the village’
- c. **amulyango** ‘on/at the door’
- d. **ku** Monze ‘at/to Monze’ (a town)
- e. **kuli** Chimuka ‘to Chimuka’ (a person)
- f. **kuli** Leza ‘to God’

6.2 The morphology of proper names

In linguistics, morphology, the study of the structure of words in functional terms is divided into two, namely (a) inflectional morphology, the study of processes expressing grammatical processes such as grammatical number, gender, tense, aspect etc, and (b) lexical morphology, the study of how lexical items are formed using other lexical items. This being the case, the

following two questions that spring to the mind:

- (a) Are proper names, or proper nouns, subject to inflectional morphology and/or lexical morphology?
- (b) If proper names, or proper nouns, are subject to inflectional morphology and/or lexical morphology, is there any morphological difference between proper nouns and common nouns?

The combined answer to these related questions is that, like common nouns, proper nouns are subject to inflectional morphology and lexical morphology but there are grammatical differences between common nouns and proper nouns.

6.2.1 Inflectional morphology

There are three main inflectional processes in the literature of nouns:

- (a) Pluralisation, to mean ‘more than one’;
- (b) Gender distinction, in some languages, viz. to distinguish between the masculine form and the feminine form of the same noun; and
- (c) Declension, in those languages, such as Latin and Ancient Greek with a system of cases mainly used to express some grammatical functions such as subject of an independent or main clause, direct object, indirect object etc.

Both common nouns and proper nouns are subject to these inflectional processes but the literature shows that the two types of nouns, namely common nouns and proper names, or proper nouns are not, in all languages subject to morphological processes to the same extent.

Consider, first, the data in (11)-(13) on pluralisation:

- (11) BEMBA (Bantu language)
- a. *fulwe* ‘tortoise’
 - b. *baafulwe* ‘tortoises’
 - c. *Mwamba* (an anthroponym)
 - d. *baa Mwamba* ‘(the) *Mwambas*’ (plural of (11c) which can also be used as a honoric plural or to mean ‘Mwamba and company’)

- (12) LOZI (Bantu language)
- a. *tau* ‘lion’
 - b. *litau* ‘lions’
 - c. *Lubinda* (an anthroponym)
 - d. *bo Lubinda* ‘(the) *Lubindas*’ (plural of (12c) which can also be used as a honoric plural or to mean ‘Lubinda and company’)

- (13) ENGLISH
- a. *smith*
 - b. *smiths* (plural of (3a))
 - c. *Smith* (an anthroponym)
 - d. *Smiths* ‘*Smiths*’ (plural of (13c))

The data in (11) and (12) above show that, like common nouns, proper names, at least in some languages display grammatical number in terms of ‘singular’ and ‘plural’, However, the data in (11) and (12) also show that, unlike the plural of a common noun, the plural of an anthroponym *x* has three meanings:

- (a) ‘more than one *x*’;
- (b) honorific plural;
- (c) ‘*x* and company’.

It follows that all the three languages in (11)-(13) morphologically

distinguish between singular and plural in proper nouns, like in common nouns, the plural form of an anthroponym in some languages do not only mean ‘more than one’.

We turn now to gender.

Most languages with this grammatical category distinguish between masculine nouns and feminine nouns, which means that the category of grammatical gender has two subcategories, namely masculine and feminine, but some languages have more than these two. Thus, Latin, Ancient Greek, German and Dutch, to name but a few, ‘have, in addition to masculine and feminine, a gender called ‘neuter’. The operation of grammatical genders of nouns, including proper names, depends on the language, as is shown by comparing, for example, Nyika, a Bantu language, and French, Namwanga, a Bantu language.

In French, like in the other Romance languages, that is languages derived from Latin, a noun, whether common or proper, is either masculine or feminine and in most cases there is no morphological criterion used to identify its gender. Thus, *cible* ‘target’ is masculine but *table* is feminine. The importance of gender in French and French-like languages is syntactic and morphosyntactic. Consider the French data in (14):

(14)FRENCH

- a. cible ‘target’
- b. table ‘table’
- c. un cible ‘a/one target’
- d. une cible ‘a/one table’
- e. le cible ‘the target’

- f. la table ‘the table’
- g. un beau cible ‘a/one target’
- h. une belle table ‘a/one beautiful table’

- i. le beau cible ‘the beautiful target’
- j. la belle table ‘the beautiful table’
- k. Jean ‘John’

The French nouns *cible* et *table* are masculine and feminine, respectively. We notice that with *cible* ‘target’, a singular masculine noun, we have *un* ‘a/one’, *le* ‘the’ (singular) and *beau* ‘beautiful (singular). while with *table*, a feminine singular noun, we have *une* ‘a/one’, *le* ‘the’ (singular) and *beau* ‘beautiful (singular). It is worth noting that *le* and *la* become *l’* (a) before a vowel or (b) a *h* for some nouns as in *l’arbre* (< le arbre ‘the tree’, *l’arme* (< *la arme*) ‘the weapon’, *l’homme* (< *le homme* ‘the man’, *l’harmonie* (< *la harmonie*) ‘the harmony’, but *le heurt*/**l’heurt* ‘the shock’ and *la hache*/**l’hache* ‘the axe’.

Just like common nouns, proper nouns in French and other Romance languages are either masculine or feminine, as shown in the French data in (15):

(15) FRENCH

- a. Charles ‘Charles’
- b. Caroline ‘Caroline’
- c. Charles est bon ‘Charles is good’
- d. Caroline est bonne ‘Caroline is good

We see that the French adjective meaning ‘good’ agrees in gender with the proper noun qualified.

While in French and other Romance languages there are two grammatical genders, namely the masculine and the feminine, Latin, of which they are descendants, has three grammatical gender: masculine, feminine and neuter. That these real grammatical gender is shown in (16):

(16) LATIN

- a. vir (masculine) ‘man’
- b. mulier (feminine) ‘woman’
- c. templum (neuter) ‘temple’
- d. bonus vir/vir bonus ‘good man’
- e. bona mulier/mulier bona ‘good woman’
- f. bonum templum/ templum bonum ‘good temple’

We see in (6) that in Latin the form of an adjective depends on the gender of the noun. However, it worth noting that gender is one of two determinants of the morphology of nouns, adjectives and determiners, the other determinant being declension, a system of morphological inflection to express, mainly, grammatical functions such as subject, direct object, indirect object etc..

6.2.2 Lexical morphology

Lexical morphology is not concerned with who names whom or what but, rather, how proper names are structured in terms of morphology. Lexical morphology, or word formation, is usually subdivided into (a) derivation, dealing with single words derived from single words, and (b) compounding, dealing with cases where a word is made of two or more words. The two types of lexical morphology, namely derivation and compounding apply to onomastics as some proper names are one-word expressions while others are multi-word. However, as will be seen, under derivation, there are exceptions to the rule that a proper noun is not derived from a single word.

6.2.2.1 Derivation

The literature shows that most one-word names in a language are derived from other words in that language but the source word may be no longer known. The source words are common nouns, adjectives, verbs etc, but common nouns are the most frequent sources.

Before discussing the morphology of proper nouns in terms of derivation and compounding, a brief examination of the morphology of onomastic terminology naming some types of proper nouns will be carried out.

The names of a number of types of proper names, for example anthroponym, a personal name, and toponym, a proper name of a place, end with the *-onym*. This suffix is from an Ancient Greek noun meaning ‘name’. Thus, *anthroponym* means ‘name of a person’, as *athropo-* comes from Ancient Greek *anthropos* ‘person’. When the name of a type of proper name ending with *-onym* takes a another suffix *-y*, after *-onym*, the *-y* means ‘study of’. Thus, *anthroponymy* means ‘study of anthroponyms’, *hydronymy* means ‘study of hydronyms’, *toponymy* means ‘study of toponyms’ etc. However, *-onymy* may be replaced with *-onomastics*, to yield, for example, *anthroponomastics*, instead of *anthrorponymy*, *toponomastics*, instead of *toponymy*. More examples are provided in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Examples of derivation meaning ‘the study of’

Ref. #	Type	Study of
1	anthroponym ‘name of a person’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• anthroponymy• anthroponomastics

2	choronym 'proper name of a larger geographical or administrative unit'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choronymy, • choronomastics
3	demonym 'citizen of a certain place or country'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonymy • demonomastics
4	hagionym 'name of a saint'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hagionymy, • hagionomastics
5	hodonym (<i>or</i> odonym)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (h)odonymy, • h)odonomastics
6	hydronym 'name of a waterway, lake, ocean etc'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hydronymy • hydronomastics
7	nesonym 'name of an island'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nesonymy • nesonomastics
8	oronym 'name of an elevation (hill, mountain)'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oronymy, • oronomastics
9	oikonym 'name of a settlement, e.g, house, village'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oikonymy • oikonomastics
10	theonym 'name of a god, goddess or deity'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theonymy • theonomastics
11	toponym 'name of a place'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • toponymy • toponomastics

As was pointed out at the beginning of 6.1.2., there are cases where a proper name is not derived from a single word. In connection with this, two cases will be discussed. First, let us consider the case of Mambwe, Namwanga and Nyika, three

similar neighbouring Bantu languages located in Zambia and, to a lesser extent, Tanzania. In these languages, there is a twofold gender-based rule, with a few exceptions, concerning naming, as follows;

- (17) Naming convention among the Mambwe, Namwanga and Nyika (Bantu languages)
- a. Names of males begin with si- and most names of females begin with na-.
 - b. Children are named after the father in accordance with (17a).

Thus, in Mambwe and Namwanga, if the surname of the father is Sinkamba, all his sons will be Sinkamba and all daughters Nankamba. Likewise, if a Nyika father is Simwinga, all his sons will be Simwinga and all daughters Namwinga. This is captured in (18) and (19):

- (18) MAMBWE and NAMWANGA (Bantu languages)
- a. Sinkamba (masculine proper noun)
 - b. Nankamba (female proper noun)

- (19) NYIKA (Bantu language)
- a. Simwinga (masculine proper noun)
 - b. Namwinga ‘femiine proper noun’

Exceptions to the rule in (17), above, include the case of **Siame**: in Mambwe and Lungu, which is very similar to Mambwe, if males are **Siame**, females are **Nayame**, but in Namwanga, females will be **Nakamba**, not to be confused with Nankamba, the ‘feminine’ of Sinkamba, as shown in (18).

The differentiations exhibited in the languages mentioned in (18) and (19) are gender-based, but, in the languages concerned, gender is not ‘grammatical gender’ but what can be called

'lexical gender'. This is so because gender-based differentiations exemplified in (18) and (19) has no morphosyntactic bearing at all in terms of agreement, choice of pronouns etc.

The data in (17) and (18) may be considered cases of both inflection and derivation. They are instances of inflection because gender is a grammatical concept and is expressed morphologically, and they are instances of derivation in the sense that both *Simwinga* and *Namwinga* are derived by prefixing *si-* or *na-* to *-mwinga*, whatever *-mwinga* means.

Having put to rest the gender-based differentiation between male surnames and female surnames, using prefixes in some Bantu languages, the next move is to answer the following two general questions:

- (a) What are the possible sources of one-word anthroponyms?
- (b) How are one-word anthroponyms derived?

Part of the answer to the first question is that one-word anthroponyms are derived either from single words, as shown in (20)-(22), or from a multi-word phrase, as shown in (23):

(20) BEMBA (Bantu)

- a. Katebe < akatebe 'small stool'
- b. Mfula < imfula 'rain'

(21) NSENGA (Bantu)

- a. Balani < balani 'engender/give birth' (2plural imperative)
- b. Kambani < kambani 'say' (2plural imperative)

(22) ENGLISH

- a. Bush < bush
- b. Smith < smith

(23) FRENCH

- a. Lebrun < le brun ‘the brown one’ (masculine)
- b. Dupont < du pont < de le pont ‘of the bridge’

As for the parts of speech, or word categories, of common single words from which proper names can be derived, the literature shows that the most frequent ones are nouns, adjectives and verbs. It is worth noting that when a proper name is derived from a noun, the source noun is either a common noun or a proper noun: some proper nouns are derived from common nouns and others from proper nouns. In onomastics, the terms **properization** and **commonization** are employed to refer, respectively, to the derivation of a proper name from a common noun and the derivation of a common noun from a proper name.

This completes the answer to the question ‘What are the possible sources of one-word anthroponyms?’.

We now move to the second, and last, question, namely: ‘How are one-word anthroponyms derived?’. Consider the above data in (22), reproduced as (24), (20), reproduced as (25) and (21), reproduced as (26):

(24) ENGLISH

- a. Bush < bush
- b. Smith < smith

(25) BEMBA (Bantu)

- a. Katebe < akatebe ‘small stool’
- b. Mfula < imfula ‘rain’

(26) NSENGA (Bantu)

- a. Balani < balani ‘engender/give birth’ (2plural imperative)
- b. Kambani < kambani ‘say’ (2plural imperative)

Unlike in the English data in (24), where there is no difference at all between proper nouns and source words, in the Bemba data in (25) and the Nsenga data in (26), there are morphological differences between proper nouns and source words. In (26), the common noun **akatebe** is morphologically **a-ka-tebe**, in which **a-** is an augment, or initial vowel, **-ka-** a class 12 noun prefix and **-tebe** a noun stem; likewise, the common noun **imfula** is morphologically **i-n-fula**, in which **i-** is an augment, or initial vowel, **-n-** a class 9 or 10 noun prefix in the Bantu class system and **-fula** a noun stem. In addition to morphological differences, there are tonal differences in (25a): the proper name and the common noun are pronounced [kàtèβè] and [àkátéβé], respectively, as citation forms. Likewise, there are tonal differences in the Nsenga data in (26): **Balani** and **balani** are pronounced [bàlà:nì] and [bàlânì], respectively, and **Kambani** and **kambani** are pronounced [kàmbà:nì] and [kámبâ:nì], respectively.

In Bantu, nouns belong to nouns classes, signalled by agreements and, in most cases, prefixes. The noun for ‘person’ is in class 1 in the singular and class 2 in the plural while the noun for ‘village’ is, in most Bantu languages, in class 3 in the singular and class 4 in the plural. However, any Bantu anthroponym, not derived from another anthroponym, for example as a diminutive or augmentative form, is always in class 1 in the singular and class 2 in the plural, regardless of the class of the source common noun, as shown by the following data from Bemba:

- (27) BEMBA (Bantu language)
- a. akatebe kali/*ali panse ‘the small stool is outside’
 - a. Kabwe ali/*kali panse ‘Kabwe is outside’
 - b. imfula ikeesa/*akeesa ‘(the) rain will come’ (after today)
 - d. Mfula akeesa/*ikeesa ‘Mfula will come’

6.2.2.2 *Compounding*

Consider the case where an individual is only known by one name, for example Socrates, and the case of an individual whose full name is Peter Limbikani Banda. Socrates is a **mononym**, that is a name made of one name, Peter Limbikani Banda is a **polynym**, that is a name made of more than one name and the individuals called Socrates and Peter Linbikani Banda are a **mononymous person** and a **polynymous person**, respectively.

Morphologically, mononyms are of two types, namely (a) mononyms derived from a single word, for example **Smith** in English, from the common noun **smith**, and (b) mononyms which come from a sequence of words, still present in the name, as exemplified in (28), below.

(28) FRENCH

- a. Lebrun < le brun ‘the brown’
- b. Lemaire < le maire ‘the mayor’
- c. Lacroix < la croix ‘the cross’
- d. Dupont < du pont < de le pont ‘of the bridge’

What has been seen so far concerning one-word proper names is that some one-word proper names formed from one word, which is a case of derivation, while others are from a sequence of words, which is a case of compounding.

Most compound proper names are not one-word proper names, as in (28), above, but multi-word proper names formed as follows: a phrase, generally a noun phrase (NP) or part of an NP, becomes a proper name, as exemplified in (29) and (30);

- (29) a. United Nations < united nations
b. African Union < African union
c. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

- d. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
- e. International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS)

(30) GERMAN

- a. von Moltke ‘of Moltke’, as in Helmuth von Moltke, literally meaning ‘Helmuth of Moltke’, the name of a German chief of staff during World War 1.
- b. von Kleist, as in Bernd Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist, the name of a German writer (1777-1811)

The four names in (29) are all names of organizations. The names in (29a-b) are short, but The names of most organizations and institutions are longer than the names in (29a-b) and many are longer than (29d-f).). The German word **von** in (30) is a preposition meaning ‘of’ or ‘from’. In surnames, **von** is either a nobiliary particle, that is a particle this particle indicating nobility or noble patrilineality, or a preposition meaning ‘of’ or ‘from’. A similar construction is found in many other European languages. For instance, as shown in (31), the German **von** used in (30) corresponds to **van** in Dutch:

(31) DUTCH

- a. van Dijk’, as in Virgil van Dijk, the name of Dutch footballer, the literal meaning of van Dijk being ‘from dike’
- b. van de Berg, as in Tim van de Berg, the name of a Dutch footballer, the literal meaning of van de Berg being ‘from the mountain’.

Two-word compound nouns are usually semantically classified into four types, as follows:

(32) A semantic classification of compound nouns

- a. endocentric compound noun, for example the English compound noun *steamboat*, which denotes a special kind of the entity denoted by one component
- b. exocentric compound noun, also called, using a Sanskrit word, *bahuvrihi* compound, for example the English compound noun *redskin*, which does not denote a special kind of the entity denoted by one component
- c. copulative compound noun, also called, using a Sanskrit word, *dvandva* compound, for example the compound nouns *Alsace-Lorraine* and the English compound noun *fighter-bomber*, whose meaning is the sum total of the meanings of the components
- d. appositional compound noun, for example the English compound *coach-player*, in which the components give different descriptions of the entity

It is worth noting that *Alsace-Lorraine*, given in (32c) as example of copulative noun, is a two-word compound name made of two proper names or regions. Likewise, *Bosnia-Herzegovina* is a two-word compound name made of two proper names or regions and *Austria-Hungary* has an empire, also called Austro-Hungarian Empire, made of two countries, Austria and Hungary

Compound names are of several types but some types are not found in all languages. Morphologically, both common nouns and proper names are classified on the basis of the component words in terms of the nature of the word classes, or ‘parts of speech’ to which they belong and in terms of the order in which the component words occur, as exemplified in Table 4, below, where CN stands for ‘common noun’, PN for ‘proper noun’, PA, viz. adjective derived from a proper noun, GENP for ‘genitive pronoun, a pronoun in Bantu meaning ‘of, and PSTPART for ‘past particle’:

Table 4: Some types of compound proper nouns

Ref. #	Types	Examples	Language
1	PN+PN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alsace-Lorraine • Bosnia-Herzegovina • Austria-Hungary 	English
2	Adj+PN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Africa 	English
	PN+Adj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afrique australe ‘Southern Africa’ 	French
3	CN+PN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zuid-Afrika ‘South Africa’ 	Afrikaans
4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universiteit van Zuid-Afrika ‘University of South Africa’ 	Afrikaans
5	PA+CN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Union 	English
6	CN+PA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union africaine 	French
7	CN+GENP+PN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umoja wa Afrika ‘African Union’ (literally ‘union/one-ness/ of Africa’) 	Swahili
8	PSTPART+ CN +CN+CN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 	

Many proper names are much longer and, therefore, more complex than those in Table 33, as shown in (34), the name of an organization usually referred to using the acronym COMESA:

(34) FRENCH

Marché commun de l’Afrique central et australe ‘Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa’ (Literally ‘market common of the Africa central and southern’)

Using symbols like those in Table 33, above, the structure of the name in (34) is: CN + Adj + Prep + Article + PN+Adj+ Conjunction+Adj. This formula can be modified as follows to show syntactic relations: CN+Adj + Prep [[Article+PN] [Adj+ Conjunction + Adj]]

One of the longest proper names is the name of the organization usually referred to by using an acronym: UNESCO. Table 5, below, gives the full name of UNESCO in five languages:

Table 5: Full name of UNESCO in five languages

Ref. #	Types	Examples	Language
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(35) The full name of UNESCO in five languages

Ref. #	Language	Name	Acronym
1	English	United nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
2	French	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture Literally 'Organization of- the nations united for the- education, the science and the culture'	UNESCO
3	German	Organisation der Vereinten Nationen für Erziehung, Wissenschaft und Kultur Literally 'Organization of-the united nations for education, science and culture'	UNESCO
4	Portuguese	Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura Literally 'Organization of- the nations united for the education, the science and the culture'	UNESCO
5	Spanish	Organización educativa, científica y cultural de las Naciones Unidas Literally 'Organization educational, scientific and cultural of the nations united'	UNESCO

Table 5 clearly shows crosslinguistic grammatical differences as well as in the choice of ‘parts of speech’. Hence, formulas representing the syntactic structure of compound names denoting the same entity in different languages are language-specific, in principle, although two different languages may have the same structure.

6.3 Syntax

The syntax of proper names may be divided into two, as follows:

- (35) A semantic classification of compound nouns
- (a) The syntax of the proper names as nouns considered as wholes; and
 - (b) The syntax of compound proper names and proper nouns from sequences of words, such as Lacroix < la croix ‘the cross’, in terms of the internal syntactic structure.

Considered as wholes, proper nouns do not differ from common nouns in syntactic terms in the sense that proper nouns can perform the same syntactic functions, such as ‘subject of’, ‘complement of’ etc. Most syntactic differences between proper nouns and common nouns are structural.

Taken as wholes, proper nouns do not always syntactically behave, in some languages, like common nouns. The literature shows that, on the whole, there are no or differences between proper names and common nouns in terms of syntactic behaviour. Differences may include the use of articles, as shown in (36) and (37):

- (36) a. Smith is outside.
b. *the Smith is outside.

- (37) a. *smith is outside.

- b. the smith is outside.

We notice a clear contrast between **Smith**, a proper noun, and **smith**, a common noun, with regard to the use of the definite article in English. However, it is wrong to infer from the data in (36) and (37) that there is no English proper noun with the definite article: some proper nouns in English and, other languages with articles, do always have the definite article, as in (a) **the African Union**, translated in French as **l'Union africaine**, where **l'** is a definite article, and in Portuguese as **a União Africana**, where **a** is a definite article and (b) **the Dead Sea**, translated in French as **la Mer morte**, literally 'the sea dead'. where **la** is a definite article.

In terms of syntactic functions, such as subject, direct object, indirect object and adverbial, no difference has been recorded between proper nouns and common nouns

One-word proper nouns from sequences of words are extremely rare not only cross-linguistically but also in those languages, such as French, where they are found. In those languages where they are found, they may behave differently, in some way, from the phrases they come from. Consider, for example the French data in (38) and (39), which include anthroponyms **Lemaire** and **Dupont** used in (28):

(38) FRENCH

- a. Lemaire < le maire 'the mayor'
- b. le maire 'the mayor'
- c. la richesse de Lemaire 'the wealth of Lemaire'
- d. la richesse du maire Lemaire 'the wealth of mayor'

Lemaire' (literally 'the wealth of the mayor Lemaire')

(39)FRENCH

- a. Dupont < du pont < de le pont 'of the bridge'
- b. le pont 'the bridge' 'the bridge of Dupont'
- c. la couleur de Dupont "'the bridge of Dupont'
- d. la couleur du pont < la couler de le pont 'the colour of the bridge'

As shown, the anthroponym **Lemaire** comes from the phrase **le maire** 'the mayor' and the anthroponym Dupont comes from the phrase **de le pont** 'of the bridge' > **du pont**. However, **Lemaire** and **Dupont** are treated as genuine one-word noun, This is why the French morphological rule stating that **de le** 'of the-masculine singular becomes **du** applies to **maire** 'mayor' and **pont** 'bridge' but not to the two proper nouns: the two anthroponyms do not have an article, namely **le** 'the-masculine singular: the **le** of **Lemaire** and the **du** < **de le** are part and parcel of the proper names. To sum up, **Dupont** and **Lemaire**, as well as similar one-word names, are synchronically one-word names.

A comprehensive syntactic study of compound proper names must, of necessity, include what can be called an internal syntax, the study of syntactic and morphosyntactic relations among the various component words of a compound name. The syntax of compound names in a given language must be based on the morphological types of proper names identified in that language.

7. Conclusion

Naming is so important in any human society that there is no human language without name, and there exist several bodies, in the form of organizations, associations or committees dealing

with names. Furthermore, names are so important to human kind that onomastics, that is the study of names, is a multidisciplinary field. This article pointed out the multidisciplinary nature of onomastics but focussed on one discipline, linguistics, discussing the grammar of proper names, mainly morphology, both inflectional and lexical, and syntax. Not only is there no human language without names but for some types of names there are naming conventions

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