



The feast of San Antonio in the colonia Guajitos, Guatemala city

Xochitl Anaité Castro Ramos

We present to our readers the new name of the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos (CEFOL), now known as the Centro de Estudios de las Culturas en Guatemala.

The Centro de Estudios de las Culturas en Guatemala was established on July 8, 1967, by resolution of the Honorable University Council of the University of San Carlos of Guatemala (USAC) under the original name "Centro de Estudios Folklóricos." Over time, and in response to the social context and various historical events, changes became necessary. For this reason, after a joint effort between researchers, center directors, and other USAC units—with the support of Rector Ing. Murphy Olympos Paiz Recinos—the University Council reviewed and approved, on July 24, 2019, the change of name from CEFOL to Centro de Estudios de las Culturas en Guatemala (CECEG).

You will still find the name Centro de Estudios Folklóricos in the bulletin you now hold in your hands. This is because the article presented here is the result of research conducted by its authors in 2018. However, the entire team is pleased to share that our research unit is now officially named the CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE LAS CULTURAS EN GUATEMALA.



The Feast of San Antonio in the Guajitos Neighborhood, Guatemala City

Xochitl Castro Ramos

Introduction

Popular religiosity is expressed through various devotional practices, such as celebrations dedicated to domestic saints—that is, those who are part of a family group's heritage and traditions. The members of the Cux-López family are descendants of one of the founders of Guajitos, the militiaman Ambrosio González, who passed on to his successors the devotion to Saint Anthony of Padua.

For over 100 years, the aforementioned family has possessed a small sculpture of the Franciscan saint, delicately carved and ornamented, around which a religious celebration has developed that impacts the lives of many neighbors in the community. This celebration not only strengthens the bonds of identity and sociocultural cohesion, but also reinforces the patronages traditionally attributed to Saint Anthony, such as interceding for lost objects, helping people find a partner, and promoting charity through the small loaves of bread that bear his name. This text explores these and other aspects of the veneration of Saint Anthony.

1. Who was Saint Anthony of Padua?

Fernando de Bulhões e Taveira de Azevedo was born in Lisbon, Portugal, on August 15, 1195, and died in Padua, Italy, on June 13, 1231—the date on which the Church celebrates his feast. From a young age, he felt drawn to religious life and first joined the prestigious Order of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine. However, he later realized that his true vocation aligned better with the humble and compassionate lifestyle of the Franciscan Friars Minor. In 1219, he set sail for Morocco with fellow friars and chose to change his name to Anthony, in honor of the early founder of the hermits, Saint Anthony the Abbot (251–356).

An illness, likely malaria, affected Anthony's health, and he was advised to return to Europe. He passed through several places, including Sicily, southern France, and Assisi, where he lived in conditions of great material poverty: "Anthony, the Portuguese, is a stranger whom no one wants to receive in their convent. He must take refuge in the humblest of all Franciscan houses, where the useless and the fools end up." (Sedín-Blázquez, 2000, p. 132).

In Assisi, he came to know Saint Francis, founder of the order that bears his name. There, he developed as a brilliant professor of theology and an eloquent preacher. One of his most important sermons took place in Padua, the city with which his name would forever be associated. In 1230, his health began to decline, and he moved to the hermitage of Arcella, near Padua, where he wrote sermons dedicated to various saints, and especially to the Virgin Mary. Despite the weakness of his body, he continued preaching and stirring the hearts of the people: "Such was the people's fervor for him that they threw themselves upon him to cut pieces of his habit." (Sedín-Blázquez, 2000, p. 133) Once again, his deteriorating health led him to settle in the hermitage of Camposampiero, which bordered a dense forest where a giant walnut tree stood out. Next to it, Anthony asked for a cell to be built so he could remain isolated and in meditation. That natural environment—surrounded especially by birds and flowers—likely contributed to his syncretism with Saint Anthony the Abbot, who in Latin America is known as San Antonio del Monte.

Due to the severity of his physical condition, Anthony received the sacrament of extreme unction. Gradually, accompanied by the penitential psalms sung by his fellow friars, he surrendered his soul to the Creator with deep serenity and a sweet smile that reflected his state of peace. Oral tradition tells that at the moment of his death, the children of Padua cried out: "The Saint has died!"

"Saint Anthony has died!" The fervor quickly spread throughout the town, and oral tradition recounts that on the day of his burial, the sick who approached to touch his tomb were miraculously healed. The commission in charge of the canonization process reported 53 miracles performed through Anthony's intercession. These testimonies served as the foundation for Pope Gregory IX to canonize the Franciscan friar on May 30, 1232—almost exactly one year after his death.

1.1 The First Miracles

During the life of Anthony of Padua, several miracles revealed to his contemporaries the profound holiness of his spirit. Some of the most well-known that have survived to our time include the following:

The Miracle of the Fish:

In the coastal city of Rimini, Italy, Saint Anthony preached to citizens who remained indifferent to his message. In response, he turned to the sea and began preaching to the fish, which promptly surfaced and raised their heads to listen to him.

The Mule and the Host:

To demonstrate the omnipresence of God through the Eucharist, Saint Anthony asked a man to keep his mule without food for three days. On the fourth day, the animal was presented with a choice: on one side, a manger full of barley, and on the other, the consecrated host. The story tells that, despite its physical hunger, the mule knelt before the body of Christ held by Saint Anthony.

The Visit from the Child Jesus: It is said that during his stay at the hermitage of Camposampiero, the Child Jesus visited Saint Anthony in his cell and playfully rested in his arms. This miracle was witnessed by Count Tiso, the saint's protector and benefactor.

1.2 Patronages Attributed to Saint Anthony

Finding a Spouse: Undoubtedly, this is Saint Anthony's most well-known miraculous function. In almost every place and time, there are anecdotes about how the saint interceded to help someone "find a boyfriend or partner," especially unmarried women. In popular tradition, the saint is often urged to act through a kind of symbolic coercion—that is, through practices which, from the Church's perspective, are considered "pure superstition." For example, people place the saint's image upside down or remove the Child Jesus from his arms (when possible) until the miracle takes place. Others offer 13 cents at the saint's feet or pin the same number of needles into the nearest tree near the house, usually onto a heart-shaped image.

Lost Items: According to custom, Saint Anthony's name is invoked when a specific item cannot be found, and the item typically reappears shortly afterward. This practice originates from oral tradition, which recounts that on one occasion the saint lost a book and prayed intensely to recover it. Soon after, a fellow friar returned the missing document. Another explanation is due to the syncretism between Saint Anthony of Padua and Saint...

Anthony the Abbot or Saint Anthony of the Mountain, the forerunner of hermits, who is especially invoked for lost animals.

Saint Anthony's Bread: In Guatemala, on June 13, bakeries prepare small loaves that are miniature replicas of the daily "manteca" (lard) bread commonly consumed in households. Tradition says that once these loaves are blessed, one is given to each person to keep for the entire year in order to ensure abundance and well-being. The loaves, or panitos, also symbolize charity. In Franciscan parishes, they are distributed after Mass on the 13th, and the most vulnerable are invited to enjoy a tamale with coffee.

1.3 What Defines the Iconography of Saint Anthony?

Iconography allows us to identify and define the characteristics or distinctive symbols of a figure or theme—that is, the visual elements that grant it individuality and follow a specific tradition. Below is the definition offered by José Martínez-Puche:

"Anthony appears in the earliest representations wearing the Franciscan habit (a tunic and a cord belt), along with the Book of the Gospels. By the 14th century, he is depicted with a symbol inherited from Saint Anthony the Abbot: the 'flame,' representing divine love, and occasionally the variation of a 'flaming heart.' In the 15th century, he is shown with a 'lily,' symbolizing purity; and by the end of that same century, his iconography includes..."

..the figure of the “Child Jesus.”

Today, Saint Anthony is depicted wearing the Franciscan habit of the First Order, with the symbols—generally combined—of the book, the Child Jesus, and the lily. (Martínez-Puche, 2004, p. 327)

1.4 The Devotion to Saint Anthony

Devotion to Saint Anthony of Padua was spread by the Franciscans themselves and became firmly established throughout the Church with the support of Pope Sixtus V (1585–1590), who belonged to the same order. Later, on January 16, 1946, Pope Pius XII declared the saint a Doctor of the Church, a title that further strengthened his veneration from the second half of the 20th century onward. The main popular celebration in honor of the holy man of Padua takes place on June 13, the date of his death. However, Tuesdays of Saint Anthony are also commemorated, recalling his funeral and the miracles said to have occurred on that day. Another celebration is the Bread of the Poor, which, in addition to religious devotion, involves acts of charity and compassion for society's most vulnerable.

In Guatemala, the veneration of Saint Anthony was brought by Franciscan friars, who during the colonial period were the main religious order responsible for spreading Christianity throughout the new lands—especially in the most remote regions. As a result, many communities (towns, villages, hamlets, neighborhoods, settlements...) are under the patronage of the aforementioned saint. Some examples include: San Antonio Aguas Calientes (Sacatepéquez), San Antonio La...

Paz (El Progreso), San Antonio Palopó (Sololá), San Antonio Ilotenango (Quiché), San Antonio Suchitepéquez (Suchitepéquez), San Antonio Huista (Huehuetenango), and San Antonio Sacatepéquez (San Marcos), to name a few locations. Each place has its own particular way of celebrating Saint Anthony, but there are common elements such as the performance of novenas, masses, processions, the administration of sacraments (baptisms and communions), blessing of objects (bread, candles, holy cards, and rosaries), as well as other less solemn activities such as fairs, dances, rodeos, greased pole climbing, marimba concerts, and more.

2. *Pale When Scared and Rosy When Happy!* *The Little Saint of the Cux-López Family*

Among the many expressions of popular religiosity is the cult or devotion to domestic saints, that is, images that belong to a family and are passed down through generations. Hugo Suárez analyzes this reality as part of an autonomous model of religious experience, consisting of personal initiatives that depend on the will, knowledge, and faith of those who promote them. Specifically:

There are images that belong to private individuals who neither request nor allow any interference from priests; if they participate, it is only by specific invitation to perform a Eucharist, nothing more. These are personal undertakings of...

...salvation that are characterized by the acquisition of an image through various means and reasons linked to the personal experience of its owner, who decides its promotion (p. 127).

To a large extent, this model approximates the cult of Saint Anthony of Padua that develops in Guajitos; however, like any sociocultural phenomenon, it does not follow a fixed pattern and has its own particularities, since it is not a “private enterprise of salvation” and the relationship of the Cux-López family with the local church has been more than cordial over time.

2.1 Origin of the Image

Due to the lack of historical documents about the origin of the image of Saint Anthony, oral tradition constitutes the only tool to establish its presence in Guajitos. It is known that the first owner was Mr. Ambrosio González, the patriarch of one of the founding families of the current neighborhood, which, as is known, began to develop in the late decades of the 19th century. Consequently, it is estimated that the wood-carved image is more than a century old. Regarding this, Zoila Cux-López (2018) states the following:

"From what I know, Saint Anthony has been celebrated for many years, almost since Guajitos was founded. This saint belonged to my great-grandparents [Ambrosio González and Silveria Pur], then passed to my grandmother [Silveria González], and then into the hands of my father [Pascual Cux-González]."

Other indications that help date the age of the image are its distinctive sculptural features. Regarding this, the following iconographic analysis is offered:

The sculpture represents Saint Anthony in his Franciscan habit, with golden decorations of vegetal inspiration. The right hand has the index finger and thumb forming a circle to hold lilies, an attribute of the saint's purity. With the left hand, the hand of the heart, he holds a book, alluding to his theological wisdom, and above it, the Child Jesus, also dressed in a Franciscan habit but without a hood. The Child's right foot protrudes from the garment, wearing a dark shoe. It also has golden decoration of a vegetal type. The Child's face is innocent and directed toward the sky. The painting of the eyebrows and eyes may be a later intervention. The saint's face is portrayed with a serene expression, and the forehead is very broad. The hair is carved with curls in the central part. His mouth is very small, and the eyelashes have been emphasized. The feet have also been carved, although the central part of the wooden piece was left intact, which provides stability to the sculpture. According to tradition, it is over 100 years old, which seems easy to confirm based on the carving that could be dated to the 19th century (Chajón, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

2.2 The Antonian Festival: Before and After

For the current members of the Cux-López family, Saint Anthony is the father, friend, confidant, and intercessor who has always accompanied them, even before they were born. For this reason, he has his own space in the home, a large recently constructed room where he is placed in...

The main place of the altar, surrounded by other religious images, photographs of deceased relatives, and various floral arrangements. the bond with the image is so strong that they have even noticed supernatural-like occurrences, as the saint changes color and facial expression according to events happening in the household:

San Antonio has something special for us, because when we are sad... he is sad, when we have a sorrow he turns pale, pale!, as if it were his own sorrow too... his expression changes. When we are happy — for example, now that the Rosary is happening — he is rosy-cheeked, chubby-cheeked! (Cux-López, B., 2018).

Due to the fact that Pascual Cux-González was orphaned of both father and mother in 1946, at the age of five, the sculpture of Saint Anthony was “guarded” for 30 years by a paternal uncle, whose name was Silverio Cux. Don Silverio, together with other relatives and neighbors, organized the celebration of the little saint, since at that time Guajitos was a village within the canton of Guarda Viejo. The image was carried in procession or transported on foot to the current parish of La Divina Providencia, zone 8 of the capital city, where a commemorative mass was held. The return trip was done in the same way, Saint Anthony in his wooden shrine advanced accompanied by the songs and prayers of the devotees.

Once they were back in Guajitos, a magnificent celebration took place that usually lasted up to three days. The prayer of the Saint

The Rosary prayer took place between seven and eight at night, followed by a dinner and dancing with marimba music until dawn of the next day. A devotee who has participated in San Antonio’s novena for 22 years expresses: “So joyful! We used to stay until the marimba marathon ended” (Soto-Monterroso, 2018). The previous comment is complemented by Zoila Cux-López as follows: “It was a big party, since it was a very small community, all the neighbors came, there was no need for any invitation. Even today, people come without any notice... they just know, they invite themselves [laughs]” (2018).

Currently, the novena and the feast of San Antonio are hosted by the siblings Beatriz, Gilda, Zoila, and Antonio Cux-López, with the support of their parents Pascual Cux-González and Tonita López. They affirm that they have been celebrating for 50 years, considering their parents’ time, and although it involves considerable effort and expense, they believe the sacrifice is worth it because: “For us, it’s a thanksgiving; San Antonio’s intercession allows us to be alive. It has always been a great blessing to celebrate him, to honor him... honestly, what we receive is one hundred percent” (Cux-López, G., 2018).

Changes over time have caused the Antonian celebration to adapt to new circumstances, for example, the novena prayers are now held around five o’clock...

In the afternoon, because people have to leave early for work and cannot stay up late. Also, Guajitos, like many popular neighborhoods in the capital city, suffers from the effects of crime such as robberies, extortions, homicides... mainly perpetrated by gang members or mareros, so it is necessary to avoid devotees moving around late at night on empty streets. Regarding the current festivities, Beatriz Cux-López comments:

When June 13 falls on a weekday, we do the prayer and serve fruit punch and tamales, and we also give away the little bread of San Antonio. But the main day [end of the novena] is always on Sunday, so people can participate. We provide lunch and hold a dance with marimba music. Now we have to do it that way... times have changed, people can't stay up late and party until dawn... they have to work the next day (2018).

2.3 Lost Objects and Found Loves:

The Favors of San Antonio

There are many cases that people consider miracles or prodigies that happened through the intercession of San Antonio de Padua, events that help strengthen the faith of his devotees. Below are some accounts told in the words of those involved.

2.3.1 Cases of Lost Objects

Walter Ramírez along with Danilo Hernández are two young men who participate in the Pastoral...

From the Culture Ministry of the Santa María del Tepeyac parish. In 2018, they prepared the altar of the Cux-López family for the feast of San Antonio. Within their miraculous experiences, they shared the following events:

Lost Checks:

At the company, some checks were casually lost on June 13. They were calling me because they couldn't be found. Right in the middle of the prayer, we were here [at the Cux-López house] and I invoked San Antonio. And within 10 or 15 minutes, they called me to tell me that the blessed checks had appeared (Ramírez, 2018).

Payment of Benefits:

I had been fired from work and they didn't want to give me any payment, nothing at all. On the advice of my grandmother, I went to the church of La Merced, over in zone 1, to ask San Antonio for justice. Three days after pleading, they called me from work to say my check was ready. They gave me 100 percent... after they didn't want to give me anything (Ramírez, 2018).

The Kidnapped Friend:

San Antonio also intercedes for people who get lost... or rather, who are purposely taken. Well, I was told that a friend had been kidnapped, and we got super worried! We started invoking San Antonio's prayer, asking and asking... about 15 or 20 minutes after we finished, they called us to say he had appeared safe and sound.

The Apartment Rent:

We had lost the rent money for the apartment, 2,500 quetzales. We searched and searched, and nothing — we couldn't find the money. So we started: "San Antonio, San Antonio, San Antonio, please let the money appear"... then we checked the couch again and right there! It had slipped into the very corner (Ramirez, 2018).

2.3.2 Love Stories

Undoubtedly, the most popular patronage of the saint of Padua is related to love. Hundreds of anecdotes are told about couples who owe their union to San Antonio's intercession. In Guajitos, the following accounts were collected:

The Grandparents

Once, my grandfather [Antonio Cux], who was from San Juan Sacatepéquez, came for the San Antonio festival. It just so happened that he was a marimba player, and right then, he was the one hired... despite there being so many marimba bands. While he was playing, he saw a young woman and fell in love with my grandmother [Silveria González], who was the daughter of the family that organized the celebration here in Guajitos (Cux-López, Z., 2018).

Renouncing Witchcraft

Well, my niece didn't have much luck with men; she was just stumbling around, as we say. She ended up having two children, and none of the fathers took responsibility... they would just leave the baby and disappear. The worst part is that she — following bad advice from some friends — even went to Guazacapán [Santa Rosa] so they could do a "job" [a spell or

...a spell]... What! Things got even worse — she even lost her job! She got to the point of going hungry with her little kids, they kicked her out of the apartment where she was living... total disaster! I felt so sorry for her because she's the daughter of my late sister. I told her to come live with me, that somehow we'd make it work. But I warned her: no more of that witchcraft nonsense! I told her to entrust herself to God and the Virgin, and if she really needed a man, to ask San Antonio. —Really, aunt?— she asked me. —Yes— I told her, —Come with me to the novena at the Cux house and you'll see, but you have to do it with faith!— I think my words got through to her, because she came to the prayers with all her heart, with all her affection... she cried and cried... like she was releasing all the sadness she had bottled up. June had barely ended when a good man started courting her... by the end of the year, she was married — completely and officially. San Antonio was the one who straightened out her life, but she had to turn away from evil.

Final Comment

San Antonio is one of several household or family saints present in Guajitos. Most of them are under the care of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the neighborhood's founding families. Among the saints venerated in the sub-neighborhoods are: Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Saint Gertrude, and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. All of them are honored through a novena that ends with a celebration including music, dancing, and food. The popular religiosity of Guajitos lives on through these more intimate celebrations — more local, more rooted in the trust between friendly families — yet this traditional spirituality transcends a...

...broader context through the patronal feast in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe, or through the solemn acts of Holy Week such as the Good Friday processions.

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Interviewees or Contributors

1. Cux-López, Beatriz. Age: -- years. Occupation: sells juices and fruits at the Cervantes municipal market, Zone 3. Date of interview: June 13, 2018.
2. Cux-López, Zoila. Age: -- years. Occupation: sells juices and fruits at the Cervantes municipal market, Zone 3. Date of interview: June 13, 2018.
3. Cux-López, Zoila. Age: -- years. Occupation: sells juices and fruits at the Cervantes district market, zone 3. Interview date: June 13, 2018.
4. Hernández, Danilo. Age: 33 years. Occupation: Certified Accountant. Date of interview: June 17, 2018.
5. Ramírez, Walter. Age: 29 years. Occupation: Certified Accountant. Date of interview: June 17, 2018.
6. Soto-Monterroso, Paulina. Age: 66 years. Occupation: worked in a bakery and as a seamstress. Date of interview: June 17, 2018.



Figure 1. Saint Anthony of Padua, beautiful wooden sculpture over 100 years old, venerated and safeguarded by the Cux-López family.



Figure 2. Saint Anthony on the family altar of the Cux-González family, during the celebration on Sunday, June 17, 2018.



Figure 3. Altar detail: Allegory of Divine Justice



Figure 4. Altar detail: Image of the Virgin Mary dressed in traditional Guatemalan fabric.



Figure 5. Pascual Cux-González, current heir of the image of San Antonio de Padua.



Figure 6. Sisters Gilda, Zoila, and Beatriz Cux-López, main hosts of the Antonian celebration at their home in the Guajitos neighborhood, Zone 21. The family altar is visible in the background.



Figure 7. Antonio Cux-López, devotee and family member who cares for and celebrates San Antonio.



Figure 8. Doña Tonita López serving the fruit punch offered to devotees after the Holy Rosary.



Figure 9. Attendees at the Holy Rosary prayer in honor of San Antonio.



Figure 10. Doña Elvira, main prayer leader of the novena to San Antonio.



Figure 11. Danilo Hernández and Walter Ramírez, altar servers and devoted believers of San Antonio.



Figure 12. Marimba that enlivened the celebration of San Antonio.



Figura 13. Couples dancing during the celebration at the Cux-López family home.



Figure 14. Diners enjoying the lunch offered by the host family.

AGREEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY HIGH COUNCIL THAT APPROVES THE CHANGE OF NAME



Bachelor's Degree
Deysi Coryna Tz'Queto
Director
Center for Folklore Studies - CEFOL -
Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

Director:

For your knowledge and effects, I transcribe the SECOND Point, Paragraph 2.1, Subsection 2.1.1 of Act No. 18-2019 of regular session held by the Council University Superior, on Wednesday, July 24, 2019, the same as copied It literally says:

"SECOND PRIORITIZED POINTS:

2.1.1 Change of name of the Center for Folklore Studies of The Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala.

The Higher University Council **Considering:** That since its inception in 1967, the Center for Folkloricos in congruence with the multicultural reality of the country, has strengthened its different areas of Research, with the fundamental purpose of promoting cultural values and national identity, as basis for the construction of an inclusive, just and supportive developed nation; **Considering:** Which in order to strengthen its mission, its leadership, its advocacy and its positioning in the field of Institutional, national and international that contributes to the rescue, conservation, protection, promotion Dissemination of the fundamental manifestations and values of the country's multicultural identity **Considering:** That the change of denomination of the



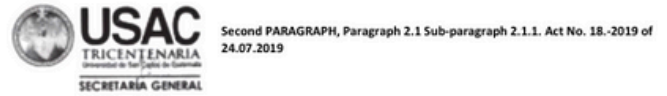
I take this opportunity to subscribe to the present

"GO AND TEACH EVERYONE"

Arq. Carlos Enrique Valladares Cerezo
SECRETARIO GENERAL

C.C. File

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Centro de Estudios Folkloricos -CEFOL- or Centro de Estudios de las Culturas en Guatemala -CECEG-, is due to the fact that folk studies have limitations in terms of their meaning, scope and scope, In addition to the fact that it is strictly associated with the study of the artistic and technical manifestations of certain groups, without considering their complex relationships with their social, economic, political and cultural environment. **Considering:** That it is appropriate to change the name of the Center for Folkloric Studies - CEFOL- to the Center for the Study of Cultures in GUATEMALA -CECEG-, in order to study culture from a holistic perspective, dynamic in constant construction and as a basis for the Development of Guatemalan society, in a contemporary context, characterized by the global Interrelation of different cultural manifestations. **Considering:** That the change of Name of the Center for Folkloric Studies -CEFOL- to the Center for Cultural Studies in Guatemala will have the purpose of studying the different cultural manifestations that are interrelated in Guatemalan society. **Considering:** That the change of name and expansion of the scope of action of the Center for the Study of Cultures in Guatemala of the University of San Carlos of Guatemala, will not imply additional expenditure of resources. **Therefore, The University Superior Council: AGREES: First: Approve the change of denomination of the Center of Studies of Cultures in Guatemala from the University of San Carlos de Guatemala -CECEG-. Second: Instruct the General Directorate of Research and the Center for Cultural Studies in Guatemala -CECEG-, communicate and disseminate the change of its denomination and scope of Action, to the Guatemalan society university community and to the bodies with which it maintains Close ties of cooperation." -----**

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