UNIVERSALISM ASPECT OF DOUBLE DELEGATION IN LUKE 7:1-10

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Abstract:

Dua wakil utusan dari Kornelius, para tua Yahudi dan sahabat-sahabatnya, dalam mukjijat penyembuhan (Lukas 7: 1-10) mempunyai fungsi khusus dalam tema univeralitas injil Lukas. Penginjil menggambarkan bahwa Yesus tidak pernah bertemu dengan Kornelius, Perwira Roma, tetapi Ia berjumpa dengan utusannya. Kisah tersebut menunjukkan kalau misi pada orang non-Yahudi belum datang waktunya pada masa Yesus karena misi tersebut akan mencapai klimaks saat pembaptisan Kornelius (Kis 10). Dua utusan Kornelius juga menunjukkan kerendahan hati sang perwira dan keyakinannya akan kuasa firman Yesus untuk menyembuhkan. Meskipun seorang Romawi, Kornelius adalah seorang takut akan Allah dan tertarik pada agama Yahudi. Makalah ini menganalisa teks Kitab Suci dengan memakai pendekatan ilmu sosial yang berfokus pada aspek sosilogis dan budaya Mediterania pada abad pertama. Analisa berfokus untuk mempelajari budaya Yahudi dan non Yahudi sebagai dua kelompok penting dalam komunitas Lukas. Tulisan ini berusaha memberi wawasan tentang nilai universalisme dan kesetaraan dalam Kristus antar kelompok Yahudi dan non-Yahudi.

Key Words:

nilai Universalisme, Gentiles and Jews, double delegations, humility, centurion, and Gentile mission.

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to analyze the function of the double delegation in Luke 7:1-10as a part of the redaction in Luke gospel. Between the parallel accounts of the centurion's story in Matthew and Luke, only in Luke, Jesus never encountered the centurion personally. The centurion however, sends his delegations out to Jesus (vv. 3-7a) to ask him healing his servant. The double delegation serves the whole narrative to express the centurion's humility and his faith in the power of Jesus' word. Even Jesus praises his faith and comparing him to his own people in Luke 7:9 : "I tell you, not even in Israel I have found such faith." In addition, the gentile encountering Jesus depicts Luke's concern for the mission to the gentile by showing Jesus uses

his power to heal the servant of the gentile centurion in Capernaum. Thus, the double delegation in the story accords with the theological and social concerns of Luke-Acts.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

If the composition in Luke is compared to its parallel in Mat. 8:5-13 and John 4:46-53, there are some similarities and dissimilarities in their forms. In all three accounts the official lives in Capernaum and he has a servant who gravely sick and cannot be bought to Jesus. In John's gospel, the boy is a son, whereas in Matthew and Luke he is a servant boy. The main difference however, Johannine version does not have the official's statement about the authority and the substitution for it of a second request in the light of Jesus' remark about signs and wonders. The Mathew's version also agrees with the Johannine form that the centurion comes to Jesus personally and requests for help (John 4:47; Mat. 8:6). However, only in Luke the centurion sends his friends to Jesus rather than speaking directly to him. It is likely that Luke composes additional stories to the "Q" form by creating double delegations in vv.3b-6d.[1] After comparing same pericopes in both gospel, Matthew and Luke, scholars argue that Luke adds more words to the stories in order to serve his theological and social purpose.[2] Thus some scholars agree that Matthew'sversion is more original than Luke's because it is simpler.[3]

The story can be presented in the following manner:[4]

a. Jesus enters Capernaum (7:1)
b. The centurion has a dying slave (7:2)
c. He sends a first legation (7:3-5)
   They reach Jesus and praise the centurion
   Jesus follows them
d. The centurion sends a second legation (7:6-10)
   They present a long speech in his name
   Jesus addresses the crowd, recognizing the centurion
   Return of the legations and the healing of the slave

Luke 7:1-2 portrays the setting of the servant's healing miracle after the sermon on the plain that Jesus goes directly to Capernaum where he meets the delegation of the centurion.[5] The narrative begins with a description of a centurion who has a slave, and his slave is gravely sick. He is a Gentile, since in that time no Roman troops were normally stationed in Galilee. He could be a Roman because he uses the title 'centurion'(ἑκατόνταρχος) designingfor an officer of a Roman military of one hundred men. The story does not provide much information of his role whether or not he is in charge of Roman troops stationed at Capernaum. He may be in the service of Herod Antipas as the

leader of mercenary troops, or in police service or custom service. However, we can not speculate on it since Luke does not have enough data.[6]

A question arises regarding the relationship between the centurion and the one whom Jesus heals. Is the sick person a son or a servant? Matthew uses the word παιςto describe him (vv. 6, 8, 13), but Luke uses the term δομλος (vv. 2, 3 and 10). In John's version the boy is called son, μιος (4:47, 50, 52). The word παις was commonly used for "slave, servant" in classical and Hellenistic Greek, and it would be understood easily by gentile readers in the first century. In addition, Luke uses the word παις and δομλος interchangeably. In the beginning of the story (Luke 7: 2), Luke describes the boy as a δομλος (slave), then he use the wordπαιςin Luke 7:7 to describe the same person who is sick. Thus, the sick person can be understood as a slave who has close relation with his master. The centurion is concerned for his young slave who is about to die, it is because of a fever (John 4:52).[7]

When the elders come to Jesus in behalf of the centurion, they describe characters of the centurion by saying, "He love our people, and he built us our synagogue" (v.5). The positive character of the Gentile indicates that he has closed relationship with the Jews and he may be a "God-fearer" who plays an important role in the history of the earliest Christian mission in Luke-Acts. Although he is attracted to Judaism, such men avoid to be circumcised. He keeps the Law of the Torah and its major commands, and also attend Jewish cults. Because the centurion probably knows the Jewish rules, then he sends delegation to ask Jesus' help. It indicates to his respect of the separation of Jews from non-Jews required by the Law (Acts 10:28).[8]

When Jesus is on his way going to the centurion's house, the second delegation of the centurion approaches Jesus and says, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof" (v. 6). Entrance into the house of a Gentile would be a source of defilement for a Jew (Acts 10:28, 11:12), and the centurion is depicted as knowing this custom, then he considers himself undeserving of Jesus' visit. He trusts that he will receive the benefit of salvation without personally having met Jesus.

The centurion expresses his second request with the comparison of military discipline. He begins with his subordination to other, and he stresses that although he is under authority, he has a power to issue command. He says, "I know, for I am under orders myself and have soldiers under me" (v.8). Literary it is translated: "for, in fact, I too am a human being subjected (present participle) to authority, having soldiers under me". Luke adds to the "Q" material the participle "τασσομενος" which clearly implies the centurion's subordination to the superior and then his delegates authority over others. The centurion's words enhance the power of Jesus' command. In other words,

the centurion confesses that in comparing to Jesus' authority, Jesus has much more power.[9]

Thought the story portrays the cure of a gravely sickness of the centurion, it does not only emphasize a miraclestory, but also a declaration of centurion's faith. As R. Bulmann said, quoted by Fitzmayer, that the modification proposed by Luke in v. 9, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith," makes this episode as a pronouncement story.[10] Jesus' statement challenges his audience by admiring the gentile centurion's faith. Jesus' words depict the pronouncement addressed to the reader, confronting his followers to reflect on their own faith. The centurion's faith becomes a symbol of a gentile believer contrasted to the common reaction of Israelites who do not believe in Jesus.

The story of the centurion does not accentuate the worthiness of the centurion, a point stressed by the elders, but rather his faith. Jesus admires his faith as a reaction to the double delegations sent to him. The redaction in Luke's story provides a background for the centurion's own statement about his authority (v. 8) and his recognition of Jesus' authority (v.7b). The willingness of both the elders and friends as delegators depicts the implied intensity of the faith of the centurion. Therefore, the story of the centurion provides reflection to understand the concern of Luke for the mission to the Gentile.[11]

THE GENTILE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE SALVATION OF GOD

The story of Jesus encountering with Gentiles and his willingness to come to the centurion house prepares the gentile mission in Luke-Acts. From the beginning of the gospel of Luke, there is a profound element reference to Jesus bringing the universal salvation. In the Song of Simeon, when baby Jesus is brought to the temple, Simeon takes the baby and says that his eyes had seen the salvation made ready in the sight of all people, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (2:32). In Acts Paul also proclaims that he has been commanded by the Lord to be a light to the Gentiles, quoting Isaiah 49:6,"I have commanded you to be a light to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:47).

Another allusion of the future salvation for the Gentiles is found in Luke 4:25-27 describing that in the synagogue of Galilee Jesus employs Old Testament examples to justify his working miracles in Capernaum. He says when there was a famine over all the land, Elijah was sent to a Sidonian widow. While in the time of the prophet Elisha, none of the lepers in Israel was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. Crockett argues that the Elijah story anticipates the table fellowship between Gentile and Jews in Acts 10-11,

whilethe Naaman story is foreshadowing the baptism of Gentiles and makes them clean and being able to participate in the Christian community. Therefore, the stories of Naaman dan the Sidonian woman in Luke 4:25-27 represent a prediction and authorization of a mission to the Gentiles.[12]

The lack of direct contact between Jesus and the centurion is a sign that it is not yet time for the gentile mission. In his journey Jesus will enter gentile territory in 8:26-29, and he will pass through a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-56), but both occasions Jesus will be rejected. In Luke-Acts, the gentile mission will find its climax when Peter baptizes another centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10). In that time the social and cultural barrier will be broken, Peter will enter Cornelius's house, eat there and baptize him.[13]

In the first century CE some Gentiles were attracted to Judaism. They were commonly called "God-fearer" (φοβουμενοςτονθεον) who devote to Jewish customs, attend Jewish synagogues, but without becoming circumcised.[14]Esler argues that Luke's community consisted primarily of God-fearers and Jews. Luke portrays approximately twenty conversion accounts in Acts that happened among Jews and God-fearers attending synagogues where the gospel is first preached. When Paul in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-25), he addresses his audience in the synagogue as "Israelites and those who fear God". Then he calls them as "Brother, sons of the race of Abraham, and those among you who fear God" (Acts 13:26). It is clear that his audiences are Gentile God-fearers, like Cornelius. Therefore, there is a crucial development in the spread of the mission throughout the diaspora that the establishment of Christian communities containing both Jews and Gentiles.[15]

Luke forms the double delegations to focus on the personality of the centurion and his faith, and to enhance the parallel with the narrative of Cornelius, the first Gentile Christian (Acts 10-11). In Acts 10: 1- 7, Cornelius is describes as "pious and God-fearing" (εμσεβηςκαιφοβουμενοςτονθεον). He is doing many charitable works and prays to God faithfully. After an angel appears to him, he sends a delegation speaking of his outstanding character among the Jews and brings Peter from Yope to his house. Cornelius shows his humility by prostrating himself before Peter's feet (10:25), and he is baptized to be a Christ-follower.

Before coming to the centurion house, Jesus first must be convinced by elders of his worthiness in relation to the Jewish nation. In Cornelius' story, Peter receives a vision that he has to go with Cornelius' companions (Acts 10:19-20) and an assurance that Cornelius is a right man who is well spoken by the Jews (10:22). Both passages of the centurion and Cornelius describe the contact of Jews and Gentiles. The redaction of the Lucan form v.v. 3b-6d depicts Luke's concern about the universal salvation and the mission to the

Gentiles. Luke brings the theme of devout Gentiles to the message of God's salvationand it finds its climax by presenting the first Gentile convert, Cornelius, in Acts 10.[16]

Both the Centurion in Luke 7 and Cornelius in Acts 10 have the same feature that they worship God. They are presented as essential prerequisites for the conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity. In Cornelius' house, Peter says to him and those gathered in the house, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). It means that Gentiles like Cornelius who fears God and acts justly is worthy to receive the Gospel. The Cornelius' story, therefore, is clear that he is an uncircumcised Gentile who becomes a Christian. For Luke it is the test-case for the admission of the Gentiles into the Church. They do not need to follow the law of circumcision before entering the Christian community since God has poured out his Spirit on them freely, as at Pentecost. There is also no need for food restriction in the common meals of Jews and Gentiles. As a result, Gentiles should become equal members of the early church community.[17]

According to Luke, Jesus heals the servant because of the centurion's faith. But it is clear that Luke sees it as a prophetic sign of the reception of the Gentiles in Acts. The narrative as a whole is closely parallel to the Cornelius. By stressing the piety of the Gentile, Luke proposes the universal idea that the Gentiles are just as good as the Jews. Gentiles can be as dedicated to and respectful of God as Jews. Luke wants to say that there is not much to choose between a Jew anda Gentile. There is no need for Jews to look down the Gentiles, for God has shown that the pious centurion is subject to God's guidance and blessing as much as any faithful Jew.[18]

THE CENTURION'S FAITH IN JESUS

The second delegation mainly describes the character of the centurion. Nollandargues, "The double delegation protects the uniqueness of the centurion's faith…., which would not be the case if the Jewish elders were responsible for the combined message."[19] In addition, the primary reason for splitting up the messages among two delegations is that Luke wants first to show that Jesus is willing to enter the house of a Gentile. The gentile mission, for Luke, is inconceivable apart from intimate relationship with uncircumcised Gentiles.[20]

Verses 6-7, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed", emphasize the characteristic of the centurion as a humble person. The contras between the testimony of the

Jewish elders (v. 4), and the self-assessment given by the centurion (v. 7a) is highlighting his humility. The dialogue between Jesus and the centurion's friends already introduces the element of humility. Verse 6a, "I am not fit to have you enter under my roof", functions not only for describing the motif of humility against the extraordinary praise of the Elder in verse 4, but also for stressing the unworthiness of the centurion to meet Jesus. His action underlines the genuine faith as an appropriate action of one who considers one's humble status in the face of an encounter with the divine.[21]

Humility is a character peculiarity which Luke holds in his gospel. The parable of the prodigal son (15:11-42): "I am no longer worthy (αξιος) to be called your son", and the humble of the tax collector and sinner, justify that the humble one will be exalted.[22] In Acts the apostles regarded themselves as worthy only to suffer dishonor for the sake of Christ's name (Acts 3:12; 4:9-10; 14:11-18). Humility opens his heart to receive God's grace and make him as an instrument of salvation for others.

To believe (πιστεύω)often means to believe in God's word and to obey.[23] In this sense the centurion's statement in verse 7a, "But say the word, and let my servant be healed", also implies components of the Jewish faith, such as God is greater that all the gods (see Exod. 18:2), God is the source of all power, we must love him and fear him (Deut. 6:2, 13), and he acts by his word alone (Gen. 1:3, 9, 11). God tells men to go and they go (Exod. 3:10; 6:19-20; Deut. 5:13); to come, and they come (Gen. 7:1; Exod. 24:1-3; and Deut. 10:1, 3).[24] Therefore, although the centurion is a Gentile, Jesus finds in him the approval of a genuine faith unparalleled even in Israel. The centurion is convinced that an authoritative word of Jesus will restore the health of his servant. He considers himself as a powerful figure, a commander of military group of a hundred soldiers. With such power, he is accustomed to doing things by simple command. He orders his servant and soldiers, and his commands are carried out. His understanding of power serves as an insight to set forth the power of Jesus' authority.[25] His faith is greater than of the people who want to see visible sign before they can believe. Even though there is no statement of the actual healingword, Jesus' power, exercised in the healing action at a distance, enhances him as the man of authority.

The Centurion's faith also deeply connects to his love for his servant. Luke states his love by saying, "a centurion had a slave who was dear to him" (v. 2). Another affable relationship also occurs in the description of the second delegation. When Jesus is near his house, the centurion sends his friends to him (v. 6). The word friend "φιλος" shows the closed relationship between the master and slaves, describing a harmonious atmosphere in the hospitable house of the centurion.

Loving others, especially the poor, is one of major concerns of Lucan Gospel. Esler claims that the Lucan community is made up of Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. In the proclamation of the good news in Nazareth, Jesus says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor (πτωχος)" (Luke 4:18). In the setting of Greco-Roman world in the first century CE, πτωχος referred to the group of people at the very bottom of the society. According to Hands, quoted by Esler, πτωχοςwas applied to the majority people in the cities who had no claim to the income of a landed estate, lacked the leisure and independence enjoyed by the elite.[26] In addition, the position of the poor and the illness were regarded unsympathically in Palestinian society. Day-laborers survived on a day's wages and the main victims of the circumstance were widows, orphans, beggars, and the poor.[27]Luke seems interest to use the word "beggar" in the socio-economic sense, appears on some passages in his gospel (14:13, 21; 16:20, 22) because they are as the main recipients to the gospel.

The stories of the widow of Zarephath and Naaaman the Syirianas examples of Gentiles who experience the mercy of God (Luke 4:25-27) provide a social setting of the Lucan community. Both represent the extremes of the social strata: the poor widow, a member of the lowest social classwill die because of famine (1 Kgs. 17:12), and Naaman belongs to the high social class is a powerful commander of the King of Aram (1 Kgs. 5:1-5). Luke's option to these characters is not only to show idea of the universal salvation, but also provide a social setting of his community describingthe social strata of his members, both the poor and the rich.[28]

Luke depicts the centurion as a rich person belonging to high social strata by saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." The centurion expresses his readiness to accept the Gospel by asking Jesus to heal his servant. In addition, he puts in practice his faith by loving his servant and helping Jews to build the synagogue. The centurion strikingly reveals three indispensable requirements for receiving Jesus' salvation: he is deeply humble, his love to others, and he has a whole-hearted faith in Christ. He loves not only the alien people of Israel but also his neighbor (10:25-37). His high estimation of his sick servant shows that he considers himself on only in his function but also as a person. Jesus' salvation responds to the three characters. Faith, humility, and love achieve an exemplarity unity in the centurion's figure.[29] His humility does not only define him that gentiles do not need to be circumcised but they have to conduct themselves appropriately in their relations to others, especially to those who are poor.

CONCLUSION

The pronouncement of the centurion's faith (v. 9) is the climax of the healing story in Luke 7: 1-10. Jesus amazes the gentile faith as a respond to the double delegation sent to him. The elders as the first delegation provides a background for the centurion's statement about his authority in verse 8. The contras between the elders' words that the centurion is worthy (v. 4), and the centurion's statement that he is not worthy (v. 6), emphasizes the faith of the gentile centurion. The second delegation of the centurion's friends shows his humility that his power is not comparable to Jesus'. He is not worthy to receive him in the house. Therefore, the double delegation profoundly builds up the suspense for the pronouncement of Jesus.

The willingness of both the elders and the centurion's friends underscores the point of the concern for the gentile mission in Luke-Acts. The double delegation corresponds to the rhythm of salvation history. The story Jesus does not encounter the centurion shows that the time of the mission to the gentiles not yet come. The Gentiles mush wait for the proclamation that the salvation of God will be proclaimed to all the nation beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24: 47), continued to the coming of the Pentecost in Acts 2, and finally the climax of the gentile conversion to Christianity in Acts 10.

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ENDNOTES

1 Fitzmayer, *The Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, translation, and notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 649.

2 Gagnon, Robert. "Luke's Motives for Redaction in the Account of the Double Delegation in Luke 7:1-10,"*NT*36 (1994): 122-145.

3 Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 314. Fitzmayer argues that the Matthean account (8:5-13) probably contains the form of the story that was originaly in "Q". The Q material is clearly found in Mat 8:5-6. 8-10, and 13 b, and it is parallel to Luke 7:1b-2, 3a, 6e, 7b, 8-9, and 10b. The Matthean form agrees with the Johannine tradition in depicting the centurion coming to Jesus personally. The term used in Matthean tradition for the boy is '*pais*', and it is found in the strictly "Q" part of the Lucan episode (7:7c). It therefore, probably represents the more primitive tradition. See Fitzmayer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 648-649.

4 Bovon, *Luke 1: a Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 258.

5 Capernaum has been mentioned earlier in Luke 4:23, 31, and will appear again in 10:15. It is quite clear that Capernaum is important place for Jesus' ministry,

though in 7:1 Jesus' presence in Capernaum is to be understood as part of a pattern of itineration. See Nolland, 315.

6 Fitzmayer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 651.

7 Shaffer, Jack Russell, "A harmonization of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 10:1-10", *TMSJ 17 (2006): 40-41.*

8 Bovon, *Luke 1: a Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, 260.

9 Fitzmayer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 653.

10 Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 314. Fitzmayer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 649.

11 Fitzmayer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 650.

12 Crockett,"Luke 4:25-27 and Jewish-Gentile Relationship in Luke-Acts", *JBL* 88 (1969): 177-81.

13 Tanehill, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 126.

14 Josephus uses the phrase "φοβουμενοςτονθεον" of Judaism on at least one occasion with respect to Gentile sympathizer.This phrase occurs seven times in the Septuagint: five time on the attitude of Jews to Yahweh (Jos 4:24;22:25; Is. 29:13; 66:14; and Jon. 1:9), once for describing the reverence of Jews for other gods (Jos 24:33b), and one to describe the attitude of that eminent non-Jew, Job, to God (Job 1:09). See Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 36-37.

15 Luke employs the term "God-fearer" in Acts 10:2. 22, 24 (Cornelius), Acts 13: 16, 26, 43, 50 (Paul in Pisidian Antioch); Acts 16:14 (Lydia of Thyatira at Philippi); Acts 17:4 (Paul at Thessalonica), 17 (Paul at Athens); Acts 18:7 (Paul at Corinth). See Finn, Thomas, "The God-fearers Reconsidered", *CBQ* 47 (1985): 76.

16 Gagnon, Robert, "Luke's Motives for Redaction..., 129-130.

17 Wilson, Stephen G, *The Gentiles and the Gentiles Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 176.

18 Wilson, Stephen G., 177.

19 Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 314.

20 Gagnon, Robert., "Luke's Motives for Redaction..., 139-140.

21 Gagnon, Robert., "Luke's Motives for Redaction..., 140.

22 Some stories in Luke which extol humility are the crucified criminal (23:40-43: "For we are getting what we deserve for our deeds"), the parable of the tax collector (18:9-14), the example of the obligated slave (17: 7-10 "We are worthless slaves, we have done only what we ought to have done"), the parable about the place of honor (14:7-11), and the *Magnificat* (1:46-56 "He has scattered the proud and lifted up the lowly").

23 Friedrich, Gerhard (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. VI (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1968), 204-206.

24 Derrett, Duncan M., "Law in the New Testament: the Syro-Phoenician Woman and the Centurion of Capernaum" *NT* 15 (1973): 176-177.

25 The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 156.

26 Jesus quotes it from Isaiah 61:1. In the Septuagint the word πτωχος is a translation of "anawim" in Hebrew text. In the Greco-Roman world in the first century CE, the word πτωχος means a beggar. See Esler, 180.

27 Lane, *Luke and the Gentile Mission* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994), 54.

28 Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 180.

29 The pericope of the centurion explains to the Gentiles that salvation only can be received by personal attitude, loving others and faith in the Lord. See Bovon, 261.

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