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When the Self Becomes the Other:
A journey through the history of Ottoman heritage

Wenn aus dem Eigenen das Andere wird:
Eine Reise durch die Geschichte des Osmanischen Erbes

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Solange wir zurückdenken können, war das „fremde" Erbe, das „Erbe der Anderen", Ziel verschiedenster Eingriffe – von Zerstörungen oder Nutzungsänderungen bis hin zu Schutz- und Pflegemaßnahmen. Die Handlungsmuster können dabei unterschiedlich motiviert sein, etwa in dem Bestreben, ein kollektives Gedächtnis auszulöschen oder in einem neuen Territorium Macht zu demonstrieren. Sie können aber auch darauf zielen, sich Teile einer neuer Kultur anzueignen und einzuverleiben oder das Erbe für einen Friedensprozess zu nutzen. Antike Könige versahen ihre Monumente mit Inschriften, die Feinde, die es wagen würden, diese zu zerstören, mit dem Fluch bedrohten. Spätrömische Tempel wurden von christlichen Königen abgebrochen oder zu Kirchen geweiht; alle Konfessionen – seien es Juden, Christen, Muslime, Hindus, Buddhisten oder Taoisten – unternahmen immer wieder Anstrengungen, das Erbe der Anderen auszulöschen oder zu revidieren.

Ähnlich handelten Nationen in der Folge von Kriegen, Nachbarn als Konsequenz von Konflikten, Kolonien nach der Erlangung der Unabhängigkeit. Dennoch gab es immer einzelne Stimmen, die dazu aufriefen und denen es glückte, das Erbe der Anderen zu respektieren und zu erhalten – vereinzelt wurde dies auch von weiten Bevölkerungskreisen begrüßt.

Die oben beschriebenen Prozesse sollen im folgenden Kapitel diachron dargestellt werden, und zwar am Beispiel des Osmanischen Reichs und der Türkischen Republik. Dafür werden Fallbeispiele aus den früheren Osmanischen Protektoraten im nahen Osten und im südlichen Mittelmeerraum untersucht.

"The incidents of the capture of Corinth were melancholy. The soldiers cared nothing for the works of art and the consecrated statues. I saw with my own eyes pictures thrown on the ground and soldiers playing dice on them."[1]

As reflected in the above lines, since very early times in history victories have been followed by the destruction of the heritage of the enemy, of the 'Other'. In this process it is often irrelevant whether the conquest has involved a city or other urban conglomeration or has taken place on a plain or in a mountainous area, as we saw at the beginning of the 21st century in the case of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas cannot be interpreted as a mere act of iconoclastic destruction; there is a whole political dimension attached to it, as most experts agree.[2] Far away from Kabul, carved in the side of a cliff on the Silk Road, how much was the world aware of their existence prior to their destruction? Religious differences constitute one of the most common reasons for the destruction of the heritage of the Other. In one of the most important Achamenid Royal Inscriptions, the Daiva Inscription, the Persian King Xerxes states that by the grace of the Great God Ahuramazda he has destroyed the sanctuary of demons and proclaims that the demons should not be worshipped anymore; at the same time he entrusts the future of his own house and country to Ahuramazda in order to protect it.[3] The majority of such inscriptions end with the final curse formula to protect the monument from enemy attack, which we find in Persepolis inscriptions but also in inscriptions dating back to Iron Age Anatolia, as in the case of stone monuments erected by the Late Hittite kings.[4] This custom continued to be practiced in Anatolia for many centuries, and in Ottoman holy foundation deeds dating back to the 15th–18th centuries we see similar curses in order to protect the building or the building complex from decay and destruction. These purpose-built structures, such as mosques, hospitals, schools and fountains donated to the public by their owners by surrendering their rights of possession for public benefit, were built to last. In order to ensure their sustainable preservation, both prayers and curses were added to the document in addition to clauses set for physical maintenance.[5]

The most common practice with regard to places of worship, once they come into the domain of the Other, is conversion. However, especially in early periods of history, we also see the destruction of temples belonging to alien cults. According to the Chronicle of Eusebius, the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great ruined pagan temples by an edict, following the transfer of the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in the East; moreover, this action included the transportation of certain sacred objects to the new capital.[6] This campaign was also associated with 'a desire to ridicule the old cults',[7] which can be interpreted as an attempt to humiliate the enemy, another behaviour recurring in different periods linked to the destruction of the monuments of the Other. It is noted that the Byzantine Emperor Constans II, during his visit to Rome in the year 663 AD, humiliated Rome by ordering the removal of bronze parts of historic buildings and their transportation to Constantinople[8] – an insult that was later reciprocated by Crusaders in 1204. During the Fourth Crusade, nearly all of the gold and bronze decorations of the antique obelisks in Constantinople were melted down by the Crusaders, who also transported the four horses of the Triumphal Quadriga in front of Hagia Sophia to Venice to adorn San Marco Cathedral.

During the medieval period, the heritage of a number of ancient cities in Europe was the target of marauders. For example, the destruction of Rome by the Normans in 1084 is one of the unforgettable events in Europe's history. The Norman army, which had been invited by the Pope Gregory to drive out the Germans, sacked the city so violently and destroyed its heritage so extensively that the Pope had to flee with Norman aid in order to avoid the reaction of the Roman citizens.[9] But it was not only the Normans who set themselves to destroy Rome's heritage: popes such as the Barberini have also been quite hostile to the pre-Christian heritage of the city. Pope Urban VIII was so indifferent to the relics of the pagan Rome that he earned the phrase 'quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini' – 'what the Barbarians did not do, Barberini did', as a consequence of his removal of the bronze girders of the Pantheon for the purpose of making cannons.[10]

On the other hand, Urban VIII, at the same time a patron of arts and letters, is a good example of the ambivalent attitude of the popes towards pre-Christian heritage. Especially from the 14th century onward, many popes were instrumental in preserving the pre-Christian heritage of Europe. Similarly, there were Muslim judges and scholars trying to protect pre-Islamic heritage. The medieval Arab writer Ibn Zahira describes

the Egyptian pyramids as 'the greatest wonder of all' monuments[11] and Ulrich Haarman wrote a book and a number of papers about a Muslim intellectual of the 12th century, Al-Idrisi, who favoured the protection of ancient monuments.[12] Obviously pre-Islamic monuments were a subject of scholarly discussion in medieval Islam, especially in Arab countries. However, unlike the popes, most caliphs were not interested in pre-Islamic heritage at all. Some even tried to destroy 'heathen' images, although most of the time they changed their minds under the influence of scholars.

When the Ottomans conquered Anatolia, the southern Mediterranean region, the Middle East and North Africa, they became within a short time the custodians of a rich antique heritage. Until the 19th century, when the rise of interest both in antiquity and in the Ottomans attracted visitors from Europe to the Empire, pre-Islamic heritage within Ottoman boundaries was quite unharmed, although neglected. This neglect led often to misinterpretations by European travellers; for example, Henry John van Lennep, a Protestant Christian missionary who was born in İzmir in the Ottoman Empire and who later studied in the United States, travelled for his missionary work in Central and Western Turkey in the mid-19th century. During his journey in the western parts of Turkey he saw a rock embossed with an ancient relief that had been damaged by bullets. His cicerone informed him that 'since the opening of the Smyrna, Magnesia and Cassaba railway, many visitors come to this spot'; among them were English who 'stand at the outer rock, and fire with ball at the face of the statue!' According to van Lennep, 'the story appeared incredible, for it seemed more likely that the Turks would commit such an act of vandalism, but he (his cicerone) assured me (van Lennep) that it was so and he had repeatedly seen the English do it'.[13] This statement is a good example of the post-Enlightenment European prejudice that accused the Turks of causing damage to antique heritage on purpose.

One of the themes that still causes conflict between national museums today is the issue of antique materials given to European excavators by the consent of the Ottoman Government in Greece and Western Anatolia during the early 19th century. A document in the Ottoman Archives dated 18th January 1812 refers to the British Ambassador Lord Elgin, who obviously applied to the Sultan both in writing and also by paying a visit to the Palace personally not to be 'prevented' from transporting 'some old marble stones with pictures and terracotta vases' from Athens to England.[14] Obviously there were also some civil servants who knew the value of

the pieces and tried to stop the transport; however, the British Ambassador, to whose country the Ottoman Government owed debt payments, could take what he wanted in the end. Later, when the American excavation team was working in Assos in 1882, we see in the archive documents stating that the finds are now shared between the Americans and the Ottoman Royal Museum. At this stage the value of pre-Islamic finds had been already established and their export started to be controlled.[15]

Where the Otherness was related to the heritage of minority groups in the Empire, the conservation and maintenance of their places of worship was in most cases supported by the Ottoman State. Following the conquest of Istanbul, Hagia Sophia and a few more major churches were converted to mosques. On the other hand, following the 1204 Crusade, most of the buildings were still in ruined condition when the Ottomans conquered the city in 1453. Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, a traveller who visited the city during the post-crusade Venetian rule in 1403, observed that the 'city of Constantinople contains many great churches and monasteries, but most of them are in ruins'.[16] With the exception of the Apostle Church, which was demolished to make way for the Sultan Mehmed Fatih Mosque, nearly all new buildings on former Byzantine places of worship in Istanbul during the Ottoman period were built either on empty sites or on ruins. Moreover, the mosaics and wall paintings with Christian images in converted mosques such as Hagia Sophia, Chora and Pammakaristos have been preserved, in spite of the aniconic approach of Islam forbidding the creation of images of sentient living beings.

Looking at the conversion dates of the major Byzantine churches in Istanbul, it can be seen that most conversions took place during the 16th century, approximately a hundred years later after the Turkish conquest. For example, the conversion date of the aforementioned Pammakaristos (Fethiye Mosque) is 1591, Theodosia Church (Gül Mosque) around 1566–74, Chora in the late 15th century, the Church of Sergios and Bacchos around 1506–1512, and last but not least the Catholic church of St. Marie de Constantinople in 1640.[17] The reasons for this development have yet to be investigated; however, there are indications that Fatih Sultan Mehmed had a more multi-cultural policy, which did not continue during the reign of the rulers of the next century.[18] However, with the exception of conversions to a Muslim place of worship, these churches had seldom been used for another function; one of the rare cases in Istanbul is the case of Hagia Eirene, an early Byzantine church within the precinct of the Ottoman Topkapı Palace, which was used as a military warehouse for a while and is now a concert hall. In other cities and towns conversions usually depended on the conquest date. For example in Iznik (Nikaia), the Iznik Hagia Sophia was converted to a mosque in 1331 during the pre-Fatih period. Following the Turkish conquest in the 14th century, the Church of St. John in Ephesus, which was already partly ruined during the late-Byzantine period, was occasionally used as a mosque, according to the Arab traveller Ibn-i Batuta (1304–1377);[19] a short time later it was completely destroyed by an earthquake. Some Christian churches, especially those in the southeastern parts of Turkey such as the Great Mosque of Diyaribakır, were converted to mosques as early as the 7th century during the Arab siege.[20]

Conversions depended either on the approach of the ruler of the period, as in the example of Fatih Sultan Mehmed, or on the number of users. Some towns such as Ephesus lost their importance as a consequence of political changes or the establishment of new trade routes and suffered from population loss. One of the results of this was a decrease in the number of users of buildings serving all faiths: for example, it was not only the Church of St. John in Ephesus that was abandoned, but also the Isa Bey Mosque in the town of Selçuk next to Ephesus. This beautiful early Anatolian mosque dating to 1374–75 was abandoned during the 16th century following an earthquake that partly ruined the building, which was re-opened as late as 1975. It is obvious in this case that the small town of Selçuk, which lost its importance during the Ottoman period, did not have the means to restore the building and the central authority had no interest. With Ephesus becoming a major tourist attraction especially from the second half of the 20th century onwards, the population of Selçuk increased again and the mosque was needed. This process confirms once more that the existence of a monument, especially in the case of places of worship, depends very much on its use value in most cases.

The waves of nationalism that swept over the whole world starting during the 19th century caused a change in the attitude to the heritage of the Other all over Europe, Asia and Africa. The Ottoman Empire, which started losing its territories in the Balkans and Middle East, saw the destruction of Turkish monuments in the former protectorates and started at the same time to change its attitude towards the monuments of the Other. The researcher Neval Konuk,[21] who has investigated several examples in Greece, presents interesting case studies in this regard. The most interesting one is the

case of the Atik Mosque in Serras: in 1912, during the Bulgarian occupation of Greece, the mosque was converted into a Bulgarian church. When the Greeks took Serras back in 1913, the mosque was restored and was returned to the Turks in an official ceremony. After the population exchange following the First World War and the Greco-Turkish War, it came into the possession of the National Bank of Greece and was used successively as a cafe, a music hall and a cinema. It was finally pulled down in 1937 in order to develop an office complex.[22] In some cases a Christian place of worship which was converted to a Muslim place of worship was subsequently re-consecrated as a Christian monument, as in the case of the Ali Bey Mosque in Budorom. Especially in the Greek islands, in addition to conversions for religious purposes there are also Ottoman mosques converted to shops and warehouses.[23]

When looking at this period it is also necessary to take into account that war-torn Greece could not concentrate on conservation issues with more important problems waiting to be solved; both its own monuments and those of the Other which were ruined and neglected during the war were mainly used for practical purposes, without being able to undertake the necessary measures for their preservation. Money and expertise were limited and precedence was instead given to the rehabilitation of war-damaged housing stock and the development of the health-care system. The exception to this rule was the monuments representing the glorious national past of the ancient Greek and Hellenistic periods. In their case, modern conservation methods were even applied, including anastylosis.[24] The same applies to post-war Turkey during the same period; especially in areas close to the borders of the new Turkey, several places of worship and other monumental buildings were abandoned as a consequence of war and population exchange. In Western Turkey, a number of Greek churches were built in small towns during the 19th century as a consequence of the new prosperity. With the Ottoman fiscal system now controlled by Europeans, Greek merchants who could speak European languages and were experienced in maritime trade accumulated a wealth which had not existed during the previous periods. Greek villages and small Greek and Turkish towns were adorned with new places of worship and civic buildings such as clubs, schools and hospitals dedicated to the Greek community. Following the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in the first half of the 20th century, most of these buildings started to decay or were used as warehouses. Again similar to Greece, precedence in preservation was given to pre-Ottoman Seljuk buildings representing the origins of the Turkish

presence in Anatolia dating back to the 11th century. For example, the founder of the new Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, during his visit to the medieval city of Konya in 1931 ordered urgent precautions to be taken to restore the decaying Seljuk monuments in the city.[25]

Until the mid 1970s, historic buildings inherited from the Other in both Turkey and Greece were more or less protected. Although most of them had started to decay, they were not demolished, repurposed or expropriated. However, following the Cyprus conflict in 1960s, policies hardened on both sides. In Greece, historic heritage dating back to the Ottoman period, including mosques, school buildings, karawanserails and baths, was not covered by preservation policies and was excluded from listing in most cases. This led either to further decay or often to uncontrolled demolition, reconstruction or new use which did not match the original purpose, such as places of worship being used as night clubs or music halls, as we saw above in the example of the Atik Mosque in Serras. It has to be added that a number of Greek intellectuals, academics and preservation experts tried to stop this policy;[26] however, at least until late 1980s they were not successful in the general sense.

In Turkey starting in 1936, a legislative framework was introduced which enabled the state to expropriate the buildings of endowments. These endowments, which often owned a number of historic buildings, had to give over some of these buildings, including places of worship, to the newly-established General Directorate of Holy Foundations. This change in the legislation actually targeted the pre-Republican, Ottoman Muslim foundations in general and not the minority holy foundations in particular. The leadership of the Turkish Republic founded in 1923 wanted to get control over the properties of the previous period. As Baskın Oran confirms, the new legislation was aimed at Muslim foundations; however, starting in 1972, the General Directorate of Holy Foundations began to ask the Christian Holy Foundations to submit their foundation deeds. These institutions did not have foundation deeds, as they were established with a special permit issued by the Ottoman Sultan of the time. In this way, the General Directorate of the Holy Foundations started to claim the transfer of property rights to their institution, i.e. to the State.[27]

Holy Foundations or Pious Endowments were an early version of non-governmental institutions. The system, based on an owner's surrender of his or her rights of possession to a purpose-built property such

1 The Mostar Old Bridge during the conflict:
The bridge was half destroyed and temporarily repaired
by the Bosniaks before it was blown up completely

2 The destroyed tower at the foot of the Mostar Old Bridge

as a mosque, fountain, school or hospital, which can be found in many countries in Asia and Africa, was an essential part of the Ottoman legal system. When the Ottoman Empire was succeeded by the Turkish Republic, all of the separate Muslim foundations were collected under the roof of the General Directorate of the Holy Foundations. However, holy foundations belonging to non-Muslim minority groups were excluded from this action, based mainly on the Lausanne Treaty following the Turkish War of Independence. The change in policy starting in 1972 did not breech the Lausanne Treaty; it started to ask the minority foundations to show evidence that they had this status, which was a deliberate action aimed at expropriating the historic properties owned by these foundations.

Ottoman Holy Foundations in other countries dating back to the period of Ottoman dominance shared a similar fate. Since Egyptian independence, 25 000 people from Turkey have applied to Egyptian courts to get back their property rights with regard to Holy Foundation properties. Only 23 of these have won their court cases and six of them have been paid a combined total of US $ 6 000. There are Turkish citizens whose court cases in Egyptian courts date back to the 1960s.[28] Similar cases can be followed in nearly all former protectorates of the Ottoman Empire. For example, following the Turkish-Russian War in 1878–79 and establishment of an independent Bulgarian State, the new Bulgarian government transferred the property rights of Ottoman foundations to the new state. By 1909 most of the Ottoman properties had been expropriated. In addition, since the Ottoman heritage had become the heritage of the Other, several monuments were torn down and their stones were used to build pavements or new buildings.[29] The second wave of expropriation of Turkish buildings in Bulgaria came in the 1980s during the Jiv-

3 The Heritage of the Other:
A destroyed Ottoman Mosque in Bosnia

kov regime, when nearly all Turkish property rights, including those over historic buildings, were transferred to the Bulgarian state.[30]

Another problem with these areas where the Ottoman heritage became the heritage of the Other is lack of ownership and acknowledgment. During the construction of the Cairo Metro in 1982–87, several Ottoman buildings were destroyed, including the historically very important complex of İskender Pasha.[31] Another country where the destruction of Ottoman heritage has been the subject of protest is Saudi Arabia. In addition to a number of other Ottoman buildings, the destruction of the 18th-century Ecyad Castle in Mecca, which was demolished on 1st January 2002 to make way for a

hotel building, led to reactions in Turkey.[32] Previous to this incident, there had been several attempts to demolish the castle; however, with the help of international support, Turkey had managed to stop it. Similarly, unused monuments in Turkey such as the Sumela Monastery in Trabzon in the Black Sea region and the churches on Ahtamar Island in the Lake of Van in Eastern Anatolia became derelict and were vandalized. Still they were not demolished, which made it possible to restore them in the first decade of the 21st century; now visiting communities can use them again for religious purposes at designated times.

Civil war is one of the main causes of the destruction of the heritage of the Other. During the Bosnian War (1992–95), several Ottoman buildings were destroyed on purpose in order to erase the Bosnian collective memory linked to the Ottoman era. According to Amir Pasic, the architectural heritage of pre-war Bosnia gave us 'clear images of tolerance in Bosnia',[33] architecture being the best witness to the common life of Muslims, Christians and Jews; mosques, synagogues and churches standing side by side symbolized the tolerant culture of the Islamic-Bosnian community. The war and the genocide perpetrated on Bosnian Muslims targeted precisely the symbols of that peaceful existence, with the aim of erasing Bosnian identity and the Ottoman past. In the war that saw some of the worst ethnic cleansing since the Second World War and the deaths of some 200 000 people, more than two thousand historic monuments were reduced to rubble.[34] Especially in the Ottoman city of Mostar, the destruction by Serbian and Croatian artillery of the Stari Most (Old Bridge) in 1992, a structure which dated back to 1566, became the symbol of that ethnic cleansing. The bridge, which had no strategic importance in the military sense, had connected the different communities in the city not only physically, but also metaphorically. Thus its destruction was of great importance to those who aimed to make that culture of tolerance extinct in every sense. By the same token, the later reconstruction of the Stari Most became, according to UNESCO, 'a symbol of reconciliation, of international co-operation and of co-existence of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious communities'.[35]

However, in other places in Europe, the 1990s saw a new attitude with regard to the heritage of the Other. For example, from the late 1980s and early 1990s onwards, the Greek Ministry of Culture initiated the restoration of a number of Ottoman relics on the islands close to Anatolia.[36] Since all are places of worship which lack a congregation, most are being used as stores and warehouses following their restoration.[37] In Turkey, with the selection of Istanbul as the European City of Culture in 2010, several buildings which had been transferred into the ownership of the state during the previous period were given back to the relevant communities. However, as Korhan Gümüş points out,[38] most of these communities face the problem of finding a new function for these buildings, as the numbers of the community members have diminished as a consequence of population exchange following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. According to Gümüş, a new threat awaiting these communities is the lack of funding for maintenance, especially for civic buildings such as schools and community clubs which have no religious function. Thus communities are forced to sell some of their buildings in order to fund the conservation of other buildings. In order to bridge this last hurdle, the Istanbul 2010 Agency introduced some pilot projects including the transformation of the Armenian church of Vortsvod Vorodman (The Children of Thunder) into a cultural centre. This is an interesting project, as the transformation did not include de-consecration of the church; the building remains a place of worship. Another point of importance is the fact that the project was partially funded by the Turkish State. A further ongoing pilot project is the housing of the Istanbul Design Biennale and some other cultural events in the Greek School in Galata, which has enabled its reintegration into the city. There are three more pilot projects along the same lines, one of them being an urban project under the name of Küçükyalı Archaeological Park; it involves a partnership among the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Koç University and Istanbul 2010 Agency, which aims to re-animate the collective memory of the city. The other two projects are the restoration of the Camando Monumental Grave and the transformation of the unused Mayor Synagogue.[39]

Despite all of these positive efforts, especially in Turkey and in the eastern Mediterranean countries starting in the 1990s, the earlier destruction of places of worship, especially in Asia, continues to fuel new conflicts. This is the case, for example, with the Baber Mosque, a Mughal period edifice destroyed by Hindu nationalists in 1992 with the claim that it was originally built on the temple of the Hindu deity Lord Ram. A similar conflict continues with regard to the Temple Mount or Haram al Sherif in Jerusalem, identified in both Jewish and Islamic traditions as the site where Abraham offered his son for sacrifice. The rock is a holy spot for both traditions – the summit of Mount Moriah for the Jews and the holy spot from which Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven for the Muslims – and is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine. The Temple

4 The historic Greek School in Galata (Istanbul)

5 The historic Greek School in Galata (Istanbul), the property rights over which were restored to the Greek community

Mount is also the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the 'Farthest Mosque' in Islam, which according to some Jewish archaeologists stands on the approximate site of the Second Temple. In this situation, where each side anticipates that the other will destroy its heritage, Jewish initiatives aiming to restore the Second Temple or to reconstruct the First Temple increase tension on the site and cause panic among Palestinians.[40] During the recent conflict in Syria, Turkey had to secure the Tomb of Süleyman Shah, a sovereign exclave of the Republic of Turkey near Aleppo that houses the grave of the grandfather of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire.[41]

The heritage of the Other is one of the most important aspects of heritage conservation. It certainly deserves more attention by international institutions. There is a need to develop a special legislative framework, especially for transnational heritage. Still, more and more countries are making efforts to develop new concepts for this quite unusual aspect of the preservation discourse, as demonstrated by the examples presented in this paper.

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38 Gümüş, Korhan: XXI Mimarlık, Tasarım ve Mekan Dergisi, June 2014, my thanks to the author for the reference to this article, 16th June 2014.

39 Gümüş, Korhan 2014 (note 38).

40 More detail about this topic in Aygen Zeynep 2013 (note 25), pp. 61–75.

41 Article: Suriye'deki Süleyman Şah Türbesi Çevresinde Çatışma, in: Hürriyet, 24th March 2014, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/26073664.asp (30th June 2014).

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