IMAGES IN THE BORDERLANDS

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE AND THE WORLD

VOLUME 1

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Images in the Borderlands

The Mediterranean between Christian and Muslim Worlds in the Early Modern Period

Edited by Ivana čapeta rakić and Giuseppe capriotti

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IVANA ČAPETA RAKIĆ AND GIUSEPPE CAPRIOTTI __

Images in the Borderlands

The Mediterranean between Christian and Muslim Worlds in the Early Modern Period

In 2015, the iconic image of a three-year-old Syrian boy whose lifeless body had been washed up on a sandy beach near the Turkish city of Bodrum after a fatal attempt to cross over to the European territory with his family circled the globe.¹We witnessed an event in which an image, more than any previous news, caused a dramatic shift of public attention to the European migration crisis. Even though the age we live in is characterized by a pronouncedly visual communication (the visual media and social networks), this example has shown that despite their abundance, images still possess the power to trigger a series of social reactions and debates, prompting the politicians to act. Even if we missed seeing the above-mentioned image in the media, the mental image which we project based on a verbal description of the fatal event is strong enough to provoke a whirlwind of emotions in a person. The same day the image was published in the media, its numerous recreations started appearing on the virtual platforms, each with their own specific goals: from shaming the European leaders for closing the boundaries to migrants, to exposing and condemning Islamophobia.² Thus, for example, graphic designer Azzam Daaboul created and published an illustration of sea animals mourning

¹ Vis and Goriunova, eds, The Iconic Image on Social Media.

² Mielczarek, 'The Dead Syrian Refugee Boy Goes Viral'.

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over the child's body, accompanied with the textual comment: 'We are losing ourselves as humans, and the people will die around the borders' (Fig. 1).³

Although the comment was not written directly on the picture, the combination of image and text is what the art historian Peter Wagner would call an iconotext, which the perceiver can 'read' both literally and metaphorically.⁴ By using different animals, united in solidarity for a victim of another species, the author simultaneously emphasizes mutual solidarity and differences.⁵ In the spring of 2016, two German artists painted a huge picture of the drowned child by a riverbank in Frankfurt am Main, again to raise awareness about refugee issues and as a criticism of the EU's migrant policy. However, only a few months after the mural had been completed, right-wing activists destroyed the painting, spraying 'grenzen retten leben' (Borders protect lives) all over it (Fig. 2).⁶

Several components of these recent events are crucial for our discussion: interaction between Western Christianity and the Islamic World in the Mediterranean basin which is considered as a borderland, image eyewitnessing, and the power of the image which becomes a historical document.

Current events and the crises which we are experiencing impel the research community to revise the past ones, which is why, in line with the topics of interest, a two-day international congress was held at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split (Croatia) in September 2020 as one of the activities within a four-year European project IS-LE COST Action CA18129 *Islamic Legacy: Narratives East, West, South, North of the Mediterranean* (1350–1750), funded by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST). The purpose of the Action is to provide a transnational and interdisciplinary approach capable of overcoming the segmentation that currently characterizes the study of relations between Christianity and Islam in late medieval and early modern Europe and the Mediterranean.

The name of the conference, as well as the title of the book, stems from a desire to examine the relationship between Christendom and the Muslim World in the Early Modern Age based on diverse examples within the geographical boundaries of the Mediterranean and beyond, a very peculiar geographical area that can be considered as a 'borderland' between the two worlds. Therefore, the topic of Christian-Muslim confrontation is examined through the prism of a syntagm composed of two paradigmatic concepts (borderland and images), each of which had its own fate and methodological evolution.

³ Available at <https://twitter.com/AzzamDaaboul/status/639358232687980548> [accessed on 13 August 2021].

⁴ Wagner, *Reading Iconotexts*. The combination of text and image is also considered crucial in modern visual communication. Lester, *Visual Communication*.

⁵ Geboers, "Writing" Oneself into Tragedy'.

 ^{6 &#}x27;German Mural of Dead Syrian Boy Alan Kurdi Vandalised', BBC News, 23 June 2016,
 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36609793 [accessed on 1 July 2021].



Azzam Daaboul (()AzzamDaaboul - 3 sept. "We are isoing ourserves as humans and the people will die around the borders

Figure 1. Azzam Daaboul, meme published on Twitter, 3 September 2015.



Figure 2. Mural by a riverbank in Frankfurt am Main. Image taken from DW News.

Borderland: The Mediterranean Basin between the Two Worlds

With the methodological revolution of the *Annales* school, historians were encouraged to take geographical factors into account in their study of the past.⁷ For the study of the Mediterranean area, Fernand Braudel's seminal book *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II (The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II)* played a crucial role. Written by 1939, at the close of the dazzling early period of the *Annales*, of which it is the direct result, and published in 1949, it has influenced an immense amount of work that is directly connected with the topic of this book.⁸ Although written by a historian, the volume had repercussions on scholars from diverse disciplines including art historians who started to

⁷ Megill, 'Coherence and Incoherence in Historical Studies', p. 211.

⁸ Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World, p. 15.

consider the circulation of artists and works of art in the Mediterranean as a historical issue of the geography of art. As a branch of the traditional art history, 'geography of art' (or 'artistic geography') studies the localization of artistic phenomena within a space, analysing the dialectic between centres and peripheries⁹ and the artistic circulation on a global scale.¹⁰ It also studies homogeneous artistic cultures created along streets, rivers, and mountain chains, as well as in cultural basins like valleys, lakes, and seas, in spite of the artificial administrative borders.¹¹ In effect, in this specific field of research, the analysis of the contrast between the 'political and administrative boundaries' and the 'artistic and cultural borders' is crucial:¹² not only do artistic borders rarely coincide with the boundaries of states, but it is also common to find a specific geographic zone where two or more artistic cultures meet and overlap on boundaries between two states. In a fundamental essay written in 1987, Enrico Castelnuovo discussed the topic of 'artistic frontiers', analysing which particular factors help shift a frontier in art history.¹³ The areas of an artistic frontier are established by measuring the expansive capacity of a style. More precisely, artistic frontiers are dual peripheries; that is, they are those areas in which stylistic influences of two centres meet each other. Two different artistic centres spread their innovations towards the same peripheral area: this dual periphery is a frontier. Following this historiographical path, other researches have shown how much the seas, such as the Adriatic, the Tyrrhenian, and the entire Mediterranean, can be considered as artistic frontiers, in which many artistic cultures meet and synthesize.¹⁴ The career of Gentile Bellini, who travelled from Venice to Istanbul and produced portraits of Sultan Mehmed II and other members of the Ottoman court, is in a sense emblematic of this fruitful Mediterranean circulation.¹⁵ Generally, the scholars interested in research on artistic geography were mainly concerned with the topic of style.

In the same period some American scholars, social scientists, and historians started to use the word 'borderland' to describe and analyse a region close to the border, separated by a political boundary but culturally

⁹ In Croatia, the most significant contribution to the perception of art production through the prism of the geographical aspect was given by Ljubo Karaman in his seminal book O djelovanju domaće sredine u umjetnosti hrvatskih krajeva, published in 1963. For more information about the peculiar Italian situation, see Castelnuovo and Ginzburg, 'Centro e periferia'.

¹⁰ DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, and Joyeux-Prunel, eds, Circulations in the Global History of Art.

¹¹ Toscano, 'Geografia artistica'; DaCosta Kaufmann, Toward a Geography of Art.

¹² Toscano, 'Confini amministrativi e confini culturali'; Murawska-Muthesius, ed., *Borders in Art.*

¹³ Castelnuovo, 'La frontiera nella storia dell'arte'.

¹⁴ Dempsey, ed., Quattrocento adriatico; Natale, ed., El Renacimiento mediterráneo; Salis, Rotte mediterranee della pittura; Spissu, 'Rinascimento Mediterraneo'; Ceriana, 'Il Rinascimento adriatico'.

¹⁵ Campbell and Chong, eds, Bellini and the East.

homogeneous.¹⁶ Expanding on these inquiries, Linda T. Darling used the 'borderline paradigm' in contrast to the 'frontier paradigm' to describe the culture of the early modern Mediterranean.¹⁷ According to this researcher, 'the frontier divides one society from another, while the borderland is where they overlap and blend'; 'the frontier is a line [...] whose purpose is to delineate one population and set of conditions from another', 'an inimical place, defended by forts and armies', while 'the borderland is the area where the two societies meet and overlap¹⁸. In spite of this monolithic construction, Darling states that in the case of Middle Eastern studies, 'Some authors use the term "borderland" for the concept designated here as the frontier' or use 'the terms frontier and borderland interchangeably.'19 In this regard we can add that in the European art-history tradition the term 'frontier' is used to describe not a line delineating a distant land, but a dual periphery, that is, an osmotic barrier characterized by a strong and peculiar cultural and artistic communication, very similar to the concept of 'borderland'.²⁰ Lastly, some geographers used the concept of 'borderscape' to describe places of global encounter and plurality in which borders are continuously renegotiated, such as the contemporary Mediterranean.²¹ Despite terminological issues, these researchers consider the seas (in particular the Adriatic and the entire Mediterranean) as dynamic areas of confrontation, and not as borders or limits.

Using a global approach and not attempting to transform the words 'frontier' and 'borderland' into a monolithic paradigm, the essays in this book show that the Mediterranean was a crossable border between two religious and political powers, that the borders were represented and modified in the territories as well as in images, and that this 'borderland' was an area of interesting iconographic experimentations.²²

Considering the geopolitical aspect of early modern times (in relation to contemporary geographical determinations), in the first chapter of this book

¹⁶ The concept is established when considering areas between the United States and Mexico. See Hansen, *The Border Economy*.

¹⁷ Darling, 'Mediterranean Borderlands'. According to the scholar, 'The concept of the borderland stands in direct contrast to that of the frontier, traditionally understood as the outer edge of a society. In the case of the United States, the frontier was also the edge of civilization, the place where civilized society confronted the wilderness, the savage, the unknown. What lay on the other side of the frontier was conceptualized in negative terms, as the absence of the things that made civilized life good or even possible: government, agriculture, cities, literacy, the rule of law'. Darling, 'The Mediterranean as a Borderland', pp. 54–55.

¹⁸ Darling, 'The Mediterranean as a Borderland', pp. 54–55.

¹⁹ Darling, 'The Mediterranean as a Borderland', pp. 57-58.

²⁰ The concept of 'frontier' is fruitfully used in this way by a Franco-Italian group of researchers: Raviola, 'Frontières régionales, nationales et historiographiques'.

²¹ Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, eds, *Borderscapes*; Brambilla, 'Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept'.

²² Regarding the theme of the encounter between Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean basin, see Pedani, *Dalla frontiera al confine*; Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire*; Pedani, 'Beyond the Frontier'.

the eminent scholar Peter Burke offers a comparative approach to two Islamic heritages, the Arab heritage in Spain and Portugal and the Ottoman heritage in Central and Eastern Europe, especially but not exclusively in territories that once formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Selected examples of the artistic legacy of the two regions illustrate what the Turkish scholar Halil İnalcık, describes as a 'frontier culture', defined against the culture of the capital cities, Istanbul and Vienna.

Two scholars, Ivan Alduk and Ferenc Tóth, analyse the buildings, the maintenance, and the perception of military fortresses on both Christian and Ottoman borders.²³ The fortresses of Zadvarje in Croatia and the bastions of the Dardanelles and Bosporus are two examples of the construction of military borders prompted by the continuous expansion of the Ottomans,²⁴ inserted in a more general process of the establishment of borders characteristic for early modern Europe and recently studied by Maria Baramova.²⁵ Furthermore, Alduk emphasizes that many of the present-day customs in Zadvarje are the echoes and legacy of the cultural overlap and encounters that took place in the border area in the past. Ana Echevarria brings an interesting perspective of the borderlands between the Christian and the Muslim world with an emphasis on the guardians of the borders. She analyses the role of certain elite corps, namely bodyguards who, having converted, challenged boundaries in the borderland: Mamluks, Janissaries, the Moorish bodyguard of the Iberian kings, and the Elches of the kings of Granada all served as a measure of their lords' importance. They all created an image of converted soldiers that are often encountered in literary sources, but were simultaneously depicted in many paintings, allowing Echevarria to analyse their appearance and role in the imagery which has become a visual source for the research of historical events.

Images as a Historical Source

Once again the *Annales* school played a crucial role in the development of the new methodological approach by acknowledging the importance of images as a source on which to rebuild history.²⁶ From the second half of the twentieth century (especially since the 1980s) — the decades of the

²³ The permeability of the Balkan frontier has been recently studied, regarding different aspects by Antov, The Ottoman 'Wild West'; Molnár, Confessionalisation on the Frontier.

²⁴ Among others, this topic has been analysed by Karpat and Zens, eds, Ottoman Borderlands; Stein, Guarding the Frontier; Ebel, 'Representations of the Frontier'; Peacock, ed., The Frontiers of the Ottoman World.

²⁵ Baramova, Boykov, and Parvev, eds, *Bordering Early Modern Europe*; Baramova, 'Border Theories in Early Modern Europe'.

²⁶ Naturally, some historians relied on images for their interpretation of history much earlier than this. For more on the use of images in history up to the 1990s, see the landmark research study by Haskell, *History and its Images* as well as the chapter 'Introduction: The Testimony of Images' in Burke, *Eyewitnessing*.

birth and the development of visual studies, cultural history, and visual anthropology — many scholars, coming from a wide variety of disciplines, started to use images in their research, without necessarily being art historians. In this way, iconography became the common ground for research, shared by art historians, cultural historians, archaeologists, theologians, cultural anthropologists, etc.²⁷ In other words, it has become a frontier which allows an encounter between many disciplines, as evidenced by the collection of essays in this book, written by scholars who come from different disciplines, but whose starting point is image research. The term 'image' first referred to the graphic images which belong to the sphere of traditional art history (paintings, statues, engravings, photographs, architectural images, etc.),²⁸ after which the term was incorporated in a much broader cultural context, that is, in the context of life, whereby its comprehensive sphere of research encompassed terms from other disciplines, such as the optical, perceptual, mental, or verbal image.²⁹

Images inspire different emotions in people, evoking empathy or fear; they are the objects of veneration and cult objects; people worship them, kiss them, weep before them, and offer gratitude to them. They are didactic tools and propaganda tools, and can be used for the purpose of indoctrination. Images represent either personal or collective vows; they commemorate both events and people. Pictures can be defaced and damaged, whereas images cannot. They are the ones that endure.³⁰ Images become 'monuments', thus entailing the notion of duration, warning, aspiration, speech that refuses to fall silent, and subsuming the notion of survival, whether personal, group, or human in general. An image defies both entropy and time.³¹ It is because of this that images exist as (eye)witnesses of a specific event, age, or era. As emphasized by Peter Burke, one of the founders of the new cultural history in the UK,³² images as historical evidence can also present challenges. In the case of inherited Islamic architecture in present-day Europe, he noticed that buildings are often palimpsests, and thereby one challenge is to reconstruct their appearance at different moments in their career. In the case of painting - Christian paintings of Muslims in the Battle of Lepanto, for instance - the

²⁷ Anthropological approach to images is a relatively new method. More on the overview of its development in Schomburg-Scherff, 'The Power of Images'; Belting, An Anthropology of Images; Morphy and Perkins, 'The Anthropology of Art'. Georges Didi-Hubermann, one of the leading modern theoreticians of art history and philosophy, also deals with the anthropological dimension of images; see Didi-Hubermann, L'Image ouverte.

²⁸ Burke, Eyewitnessing, p. 13.

²⁹ Mitchell, Ikonologija, pp. 19–20; Vicelja-Matijašić, Ikonologija. p. 178.

³⁰ About the difference between picture and image, see Mitchell, 'Four Fundamental Concepts of Image Science', p. 28; About relations between images and people in history, see Freedberg, *The Power of Images*.

³¹ Babić, 'Za jedno antropološko'.

³² This approach has also been analysed and codified as a method in France by Dominique Rigaux and by Chiara Frugoni in Italy.

challenge is the stereotyping of the represented figures. For traditional positivist historians, this distortion was a liability. For cultural historians, though, it can be turned into an asset, a source for the history of prejudice itself.³³

The Battle of Lepanto, though not strategically relevant from a strictly military point of view, generated an unprecedented campaign of celebrations in a variety of media, comprising all kinds of visual arts as well as literary texts and performative events. Many essays have been written on this topic,³⁴ but the works in this book show that the ever-intriguing theme of the Lepanto battle is not even close to being exhausted. Therefore, the article written by Laura Stagno deals with the images in the Ligurian territory and the bordering southern area of Piedmont, which are perceived as peripheral to the main Lepanto discourse, with the aim of investigating the plurality of iconographic typologies related to the 1571 triumph prevailing in these contexts. She deals in particular with the iconography of the rosary, which encompasses the celebration of the 1571 victory as one of its possible components and often includes portraits of the victor whose identity could depend on a specific political context, as pointed out by the scholar.³⁵ The post-Tridentine climate in which the battle was fought also favoured the comparison of these contemporary figures with sacred exempla as confirmed by the analysis of several portraits of the Lepanto victor by Chiara Giulia Morandi. Indeed, formulae in disguise were used for the celebration of Christian princes who supported or fought in the Battle of Lepanto in order to create celebrative comparisons not only to martyred saints, but also to figures of the Old Testament. Thus, for example, John of Austria, an admiral of the Holy League fleet at Lepanto, is compared to Joshua and David in Pedro de Oviedo's text, whereby the scene of the triumph of John of Austria is deduced from the iconography of David victorious over Goliath who is holding the severed head of the enemy. Invented images and ephemeral constructions in the context of celebratory imagery are also the topic of interest of Juan Chiva and Víctor Mínguez, who examine a publication entitled Arcvs aliqvot trivmphal et monumenta victor. classicae, in honor. Invictissimi ac Illustrib. Iani Avstriae, victoris non qvietvri (Antwerp, 1572). The volume is an apology for John of Austria, composed of sixteen triumphal images (accompanied by a Latin text) that show frontispieces, triumphal

³³ Burke, 'Rival Legacies' in this book.

³⁴ On Lepanto's celebrations, see, among other studies, Mulcahy, 'Celebrar o no celebrar'; Le Thiec, 'Les enjeux iconographiques et artistiques'; Gibellini, L'immagine di Lepanto; Capotorti, Lepanto tra storia e mito; García Hernán, 'Consecuencias politico-culturales de la batalla de Lepanto'; Mínguez, 'Iconografía de Lepanto'; Wright, Spence, and Lemons, eds, The Battle of Lepanto; Mínguez, 'El Greco y la sacralización de Lepanto'; Mínguez, Infierno y gloria en el mar; Mínguez, 'Doria y Austria en Lepanto'; Stagno and Franco Llopis, eds, Lepanto and Beyond.

³⁵ For a survey of the theme, focused on southern Italy, see Capotorti, *Lepanto tra storia e mito*, especially pp. 137–212. For the fortune of the 'Lepantine' iconography of the rosary in the Adriatic basin, see Stagno and Čapeta Rakić, 'Confronti mediterranei', Čapeta Rakić and Capriotti, 'Two Marian Iconographic Themes'.

arches, cenotaphs, columns, and other monuments in which we see captive Turks, mythological gods, trophies, galleys, and other nautical and allegorical depictions. In their opinion, the publication and the accompanying images — a series of invented, ephemeral constructions that were never built — served as powerful propaganda and ideological weapons to praise the achievement at Lepanto, extol the House of Austria, and promote, perhaps even as a possible successor, the figure of John of Austria.

Nevertheless, the essays in this book seek to adopt a reciprocal approach to the topic in focus, which is viewed through the prism of 'both sides'. Thus, Naz Defne Kut deals with the Ottoman perspective of the Battle of Lepanto, which is based on Ottoman sources. As the scholar emphasizes, the Sublime Porte tried to minimize the dimensions of the defeat in their official reactions, but its devastating effects are notable in the narratives of contemporary Ottoman chroniclers. While the historiographical documentation and visual representations of the Ottoman victories, such as the conquest of Preveza (1538) and the conquest of Cyprus (1571), are traditionally abundant in the sixteenth-century Ottoman literary and visual accounts, the literature on the Battle of Lepanto is scarce. Furthermore, the visual representations of Lepanto as a locality, such as miniature paintings or the portolan charts, are mostly limited to the works of the pre-1571 era.

Since the relationship between images and texts is a core issue of the history of images, another implicit risk in this kind of research might also include the interpretation of images on the basis of texts by simply projecting the content of written sources onto the images.³⁶ The essays collected in this book seek to overcome this methodological problem by looking for the specific testimony of images, that is, for the voice and the intention of images which can be found in the gap between texts and images or sometimes even opposing the text.³⁷ In some cases the testimonies of the images and the texts actually coincide, as shown in the essay by Angelo Maria Monaco on the portraits of Mehmed II. Before the siege of Otranto, the circulation of the sultan's images on both sides of the Mediterranean shows how partial religious tolerance can produce luxury goods. After Otranto, however, images and texts are unanimous in the depiction of the sultan as a monstruous leader. The relationship between texts and images is also central in the essay by Cristelle Baskins and Borja Franco Llopis on the personification of Africa and on the conquest of the Peñón de Vélez in the ephemeral funeral structures built on the occasion of the exequies for King Philip II held in Seville, in comparison with the ones settled in other cities, such as Saragossa, Alcalá de Henares, Florence, Naples, and Chieti. In the case of Africa Devicta, the gap between text and image may

³⁶ This implicit risk of the Warburgian tradition was underlined already by Ginzburg, 'Da A. Warburg a E. H. Gombrich'.

³⁷ On the importance of focusing the attention on the gap between texts and images, see Frugoni, 'Le immagini come fonte storica'.

derive from a need to simplify the production of the image or from the use of another iconographic model as a source instead of the text. The strength of an iconographical model in the Mediterranean basin is also studied by Iván Rega Castro in his essay devoted to the circulation of the 'icon' of the Turkish or Moor slave put at the feet of triumphal princes or kings (sometimes, like the already mentioned *Africa Devicta*, as personification of the continents). In Portugal, Spain, France, and Italy, this 'icon' seems to be used as a peculiar strategy to glorify the military victories of many sovereigns.

The military achievements of Christians against Muslims in specific battles are the focus of the essay by Maria Luisa Ricci, devoted to the patronage of the Knights of Malta. Promoting the role of the order as guardians of the borders of Christianity in the Mediterranean Sea, some Knights commissioned the depictions of medieval battles in which the enemies are anachronistically represented as modern Ottomans to underline the need for the existence of the order due to the permanent war against infidels. The same role of guardians of the boundaries between Christendom and the Ottoman Empire was played in the Mediterranean basin by the Knights of St Stephen in Tuscany, quite far from the centre of the Christian-Ottoman conflict. In his essay, Francesco Sorce shows the lost connection between the order and the image of Muhammad, painted as a creator of the border between classical civilization and Islamic barbarism in a Medicean cycle of paintings in Palazzo Pitti in Florence.

Many essays of this book show how the rhetoric of the perpetual conflict is still prevalent in images,³⁸ even if in some cases it is possible to perceive the fascination with and the acknowledgement of the prestige of the 'enemy' from both sides.³⁹ In effect, over the last few decades, historiography dealing with the Christian–Muslim relationship used a double paradigm: the first is the paradigm of confrontation, studying in particular the economic and political reasons for an apparently religious conflict; the second is the paradigm of the encounter, showing the many possibilities of exchange during the permanent war, slavery, and conversions in late medieval and early modern times.⁴⁰

To conclude, the strength of the book lies in considering the issue of the images in the 'borderland' from a new perspective. Whereas the 'frontier' has always been delineated and analysed by art historians from the point of view of style, the essays collected in this volume are an attempt to question the images in the Mediterranean borderland for their iconographic meaning and for their value as testimony.

³⁸ Cf. Sorce, 'Il drago come immagine del nemico'.

³⁹ See also Eslami, ed., Incontri di civiltà nel Mediterraneo; Poumarède, Pour en finir avec la Croisade; Ricci, Appeal to the Turk.

⁴⁰ This double paradigm has been analysed by Harper, ed., *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye* and has been used by Formica, *Lo specchio turco*.

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