Musical Cultures in the National Hymnbooks of the 1990s

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Abstract: Since the early 1990s, national hymnbooks (i.e. collections of church hymns) around the world have included musical material, some of which may seem unrelated to the musical traditions of the communities or, more broadly, to the national heritage of the audience. The article analyses reasons for (and forms of) going beyond the national/confessional borders in musical choices for three such books. Another related issue the article addresses is the place of "religious" in national identity and the place of "national" in religious identity. The boundaries and indexes of sonic tolerance, characteristic of a particular society, complete the range of issues under consideration.

Key words: Hymn, hymnbook, musical cultures, national identity, religious identity

Introduction

"Individuals (let alone cultures) have fundamentally different experiences of time," states Tenzer (2011: 369), discussing musical time and periodic structures historically and globally. I will argue below that music not only contains different experiences of time, but can also archive the responses of particular cultures to other periods and cultures, thus reflecting the dichotomy of the times and peoples summarized in a variety of musical styles.

Over the past decade, I conducted two case studies on the music of contemporary Anglican communities—in Israel and Greater Vancouver (BC), respectively. In progress of the fieldwork, a significant amount of ethnography was collected. Alongside audio recordings of liturgical and paraliturgical events and numerous interviews with clergy, community members, and church musicians, the ethnography included quite a few printed materials—church booklets, liturgy guidelines, and hymnbooks (aka hymnals). Three books from this collection—all published during the 1990s—in English, Chinese and Arabic (the latter two books are bilingual) are the main target for analysis in this article. As we shall see below, these documents testify to certain sociocultural processes characteristic of modern society.

Whereas in Western liturgy, hymn was always a kind of sideshow, it was given a new breath at the juncture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. "Art music" of the era became less listenable to an average parishioner, and Church authorities became quite

sensitive on this point[1]. This situation lasted for decades, and hymns in the meantime became an ideal solution for the Church Fathers to stay afloat in the turbulent waters of changing tastes and trends. Still, as noted much later,

> [t]he serious composer of church music today has to wrestle with the difficulty of finding a way to write a hymn tune in an idiom that is not only legitimate and contemporary, but also valid. In a word, his tune must be suitable for congregational use. To retrace the well-worn paths of earlier styles is much easier, no doubt, but he who does this loses his own identity (*The Hymn Book*, 1971: [v]).

Although, starting around the early 1960s, new song styles—first "happy-clappy" and later the rock style—replaced the traditional Anglican hymnody for a while[2], it slowly came back to unite the Anglican congregations worldwide as the 1990s approached.

For various reasons, the missionary work, and then the post-missionary reconfiguration of churches and local parishes—all this spiritual, educational and organizational enterprise was possible only thanks to the ecumenical position of missionaries and local clergy[3]. In the same way, the non-dogmatic character of the hymn allowed the joint committees to abstain from doctrinal or theological differences between churches and to produce hymnbooks, shared by several denominations and therefore perceived as rather national collections of church music[4]. However, since the early 1990s, national hymnbooks all over the world include the musical material, some of which may seem unrelated not only to the musical traditions of the communities, but, more broadly, to the national heritage of the audience. The question arises what was the reason to go beyond the national/confessional borders in musical choices for the hymnals, and what this issue tells us about global sociocultural processes in the contemporary world. Another question concerns the components of group identity and their balance, namely the "religious" part of national identity and the "national" part of religious identity. In the case of such regions as the Middle East, this is vital not theoretical question. In the case of Vancouver (BC), an answer to this question may shed light on the multicultural mechanism of the Canadian society. The question of the boundaries and indexes of sonic tolerance, characteristic of a particular society, completes the range of issues to be addressed.

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[1] Clarke (1987) notes that "twentieth-century 'art-music' idioms are not generally understood or liked in church congregations. It is doubtful that congregations would ever try to sing atonal hymn tunes" (p. 153). Much earlier, however, on the eve of World War I, Fortescue (1913) held that "high Mass is not the music but the deacon and subdeacon" (p. 799). This statement clearly indicates that in the early twentieth century Western church had become so critical to music that it was willing to give it up, rather than let the music set the ceremony.

[2] The Preface to *The Book of Common Praise* (1938) notes that "[e]ach generation, with its problems and outlook, must ever seek ways of expressing its ideas and aspirations" (p. iii). The Preface to newer book gives a more focused definition: "Young people especially wish to sing hymns cast in the style of the twentieth century" (*The Hymn Book* 1971: [iv]).

[3] A striking example of this is the Anglican-Lutheran bishopric in Jerusalem (founded in 1841), which lasted for about forty years, before splitting into two churches (see Perry 2003, Rosenblatt 2015).

[4] Thus, the Preface to *The Hymnal Book* (1971), a joint publication of the two Protestant churches, clearly states that "nothing in this Hymn Book is of any authority on matters relating to faith or doctrine in the Anglican Church of Canada or the United Church of Canada" (p. [iv]).

Artifacts and Sociocultural Narratives

Artifacts and other solid objects such as sound archives, commercial audio-recordings, or musical instruments, as documentation of a sociocultural narrative, have recently become the subject of several studies. A brief survey below represents the topic with regard to three such case studies.

Addressing the audio recordings made by K. Wachsmann in Uganda in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, and the experience of bringing this sound archive back to the community of origin, Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub (2012) unveil the entire range of related problems and issues.

> Bringing sound recordings back to their communities of origin raises many ethical and practical questions. What is the community of origin, especially in cases where a tradition has died out? What are the criteria for selecting (and excluding) particular individuals to receive recordings? What are the criteria for selecting (and excluding) musical items to be taken back to the communities? What about those musical items that were restricted from being made accessible to the general public?" (p. 216).

The polemics around the article (Cooke 2015, Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2015) shows, inter alia, how fragile, vulnerable to criticism, and sometimes thankless, is our fieldwork. Furthermore, it raises a series of wider issues. For example, *whose* property is (1) an indigenous song and (2) a recording of this song made by the "other"? This is quite a sensitive issue. If, for example, during the 1980s, Russian ethnographers recorded some 400 wedding songs in 20 villages of, say, Astrakhan region, no question would arise as to who the songs and the recordings belong to, or whether they would have to be "repatriated" back to the villages. However, in the case of Wachsmann's sound archive, the question does arise, if the collection of recorded indigenous songs should be returned to the Ugandans who meanwhile became Christians… Thus, *who* made a particular recording appears to be one of the key issues when considering the return of a recording to the community of origin.

Seroussi (2012) brings a vivid example of the various commercial recordings of the Sephardic (Judeo-Spanish) folksong *Las horas de la vida* (The hours of live), performed and recorded over decades by not only the descendants of this community in the various locations of the Sephardic diaspora, but also by other singers. The song originated as a Spanish children's song, also known in Latin America, and it was re-discovered by the Judeo-Spanish musicians, eventually becoming one of the flagship songs of the Sephardic repertoire. It has actually remained as such both in Spanish, and in Sephardic cultural registers. "The modern Odyssey" of the song, as the researcher figuratively calls this journey, has helped to preserve the song, which had nevertheless been somewhat modified during its various recordings, sung in different dialects and in various musical styles before finally being ascribed to the community to which it most likely belongs.

Yet, the most emotionally intense example of the three I bring here is, perhaps, Rancier (2014). The researcher, who describes herself as an "occasional violinist," addresses the *qyl-qubyz*, a traditional Kazakh string bow instrument. (Kazakhstan, which was one of the "Central Asian republics" of the former USSR, became independent in the

post-Soviet period—A.R.) The image of the instrument's sound, which, according to the writer, "possesses the ability to imitate sounds from nature, such as the sound of wind, the call of swans, or the howling of wolves" (p. 389) is just as accurate as it is poetic. The breathtaking narrative behind the instrument tells the story of how the Soviet authorities, in an attempt to ban the "shamanic" (in its essence and purpose) instrument, perverted its shape, having added a couple of extra strings and turning it in this way into a kind of violin... The instrument is represented in an essay as an archive of the national identity of people who closely connect themselves "with nature, sorrowful emotion, supernatural power, and ancientness" (p. 389).

One may wonder who the "other" in each of these stories actually is—a local culture or its own other? If the answer is the latter, it could raise a quite rhetorical question: what is the role of such "others" in preserving, changing, or even discarding the cultural heritage and ancient traditions of the inhabitants of a particular place or displaced communities?

Enigma of the "Other" in the Post-Missionary Epoch

The point where, for the first time, the "other" is perceived more as a subject than as an object is probably the phenomenology of the early twentieth century, especially Levinas, according to whom "the other is not a phenomenon but an enigma, something ultimately refractory to intentionality and opaque to the understanding" (Critchley 2004:8). This enigma will receive various academic interpretations during the century, until globalization transforms the "other" into a part of everyday life and daily news and into an investigator of his own "other," including the former "self." Thus, De Certeau's definition of the mid-1980s, "[t]oday, the text is society itself" (1984: 167), receives a new dimension: society seems to be nothing but our idea of it, while this rather epistemological notion relies on sociocultural studies, the media, and (still) the self-expression of society. In this context, music is given a vital role in delineating individual, group and national identity (Slobin 1993), and it becomes an important text for studying such identities.

While the conflict between what we call today "selfness" and "otherness" was long a part of European history and musical practices, the concept of "otherness" as a studied cultural phenomenon appears only in the mid-twentieth century. Fanon ([1952] 1986) metaphorically and very precisely formulated the colonial perception of indigenous cultures: "what is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact" (p. 16). An important phase of colonial studies is undoubtedly Said's *Orientalism* (1978). For Edward Wadie Said, himself a native of Jerusalem, Orientalism was academic study of the East or, more exactly, of "what is today referred to as the Middle East" (Loomba 1998:43). The concept of Orientalism as an epistemological trend, rather than an artistic experience, was welcomed in the academic world, until it was disputed (see Locke, 1991, Taruskin, 1992) and finally criticized (Varisco 2007). The next stage in cultural studies, reflecting the realities of the post-colonial world, is a variety of writings on intercultural communications in the global era. This area of research is rapidly gaining momentum since the mid-1990s (see Slobin 1993, Appadurai 1996, and Stokes 2004, 2008). Again, music, as a particularly

sensitive device, appears to display how globalization affects local cultures in the postcolonial epoch:

> If globalization is understood as the emergence and slow consolidation of European and American hegemony across the planet over half a millennium, then the most current episode, the world music moment, either reiterates the same old (colonial) story or suggests its subtle and persistent powers of self-transformation in a changed media environment (Stokes 2008: 5-6).

The Church, which has always been one of the most traditional institutions of society, has also undergone significant changes over the last century. The first and most comprehensive change is the dynamic liberalization of the Western Church. It has different manifestations: the clothing of clergy, the musical style of worship, the acceptance of elements of other religions (mainly the early beliefs of indigenous Christians) and, finally, the blessing of same-sex marriages (only in some churches and parishes). Another important change is the reduction in missionary activity, especially in post-colonial societies. Indigenization of clergy in formerly missionary churches is drawing the outline of a significant degree of cultural diversity within the church customs and traditional practices. The release of BAS (*Book of Alternative Service*) and similar books, accepted by the independent national churches of the World Anglican Communion, complements the database for revealing anew the "enigma of the other" in the post-missionary epoch—very few people can predict what the local church will look like in some twenty years of self-ruling. As it presently looks, there are two leading trends, opposite in the time vector: (1) backward to the national/ethnic roots of former missionary parishes, and (2) forward to the ecumenical perspective in musical choices for the hymns' singing. Thus, the transnational nature of Christianity is becoming visible. From the above, it can be concluded that ecumenism, between the re-defined boundaries of morality and social tolerance, on the one hand, and a revised framework of theological hybridity, on the other, are probably the most characteristic features of Western Christianity in the post-missionary epoch.

Hymnbooks in Comparison: the Qualities of Musical Selections

Since the musical collections found in the hymnals represent the position of the Church at a particular time, a comparison of the hymnbooks issued over the course of one decade for different local denominations of the same church may contribute to a better understanding of the direction in which modern Christianity is moving. The comparison of hymnbooks will be carried out with an emphasis on the historical scope and geographical coverage of musical selections, presented in each particular book. Yet, there will be additional points of reference, which directly or indirectly contribute to the same subject, such as the modal framework of musical selections throughout a book, the use of historical forms of notation, or the accompaniment style for plainsongs. The comparison will be conducted between the three selected hymnals, used by the English-speaking and Chinese Anglican congregations of Greater Vancouver (BC), and the Arabic-speaking Anglican congregations of the Middle East, all released during the 1990s. We will also refer to earlier editions of these

books (if applicable) and to the English Hymnal of the mid-1990s as representing the Mother Church. The following hymnbooks will be discussed:

Common Praise. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998
    (hereafter: The Canadian book)

Hymns of Universal Praise. Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1996
    (hereafter: The Chinese book)

Book of Spiritual Hymns (in Arabic). Nicosia: Zavallis Litho, 1990
    (hereafter: The Arabic book)

The New English Hymnal. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1994
    (hereafter: The English book)[5]

Attribution of the melodies appears in each specific collection of hymns, although it follows slightly different terminology and methods of distinction. While the earliest melodies, whose origins are rather vague, appear everywhere under the name "plainsong" or "Gregorian chant," tunes taken from an early psalter or hymnal can appear under the name of this collection if there is no other information about the source. National melodies, in addition to the heading denoting nationality, usually receive an extension providing further information, for example: traditional, folk, hymn, carol, or church melody. While the information about authors and sources normally are presented in different lists for texts and music, the Canadian book offers a unified index of authors and sources for both texts and music. Whatever the nuances in terminology and methods of indexing, the very tendency for accuracy in attribution attests to the intention of the compilers to highlight the historical scale of a particular collection and its cultural diversity (or, conversely, cultural unity when one culture is represented in many varieties). In general, and considering all the terminological discrepancies and overlays, the historical scope and geographical coverage of the three compared post-missionary hymnals, with reference to the English book, are shown in Figure 1 (p. 30).

The number of musical selections varies from book to book, and we cannot calculate them accurately. The main body of hymnody is followed by the sections of various settings, including morning and evening prayers. For statistical purposes, I refer to the estimated number of hymns in the main body of each book. Thus, we find the smallest number in the Arabic book (438), and the largest in the Canadian book (665). This is, in particular, why the Arabic book is more impressive in terms of percentage than of the total number in each of the two categories. In terms of the number of represented national cultures, the Chinese book holds a leading position—32 geographic locations, considering both traditional and sacred national tunes. The English book, which counts 64 plainsongs, contains only three traditional melodies from the three cultures outside the UK. The Canadian book gives special attention to the languages of the indigenous people of the country—12 of the 18 languages other than English represented throughout the book.

Normally, the balance between the major and minor keys throughout a hymnbook is about 75 percent to 25 percent. This historically proven proportion can be found in most Anglican hymnbooks, including the English book and the Canadian book of the above list, as well as in two editions of *The Hymnal of the Episcopal Church* [USA] (1940, 1982).

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[5] Full bibliographic data for these four books may be found in the section "Hymnbooks," after "References."
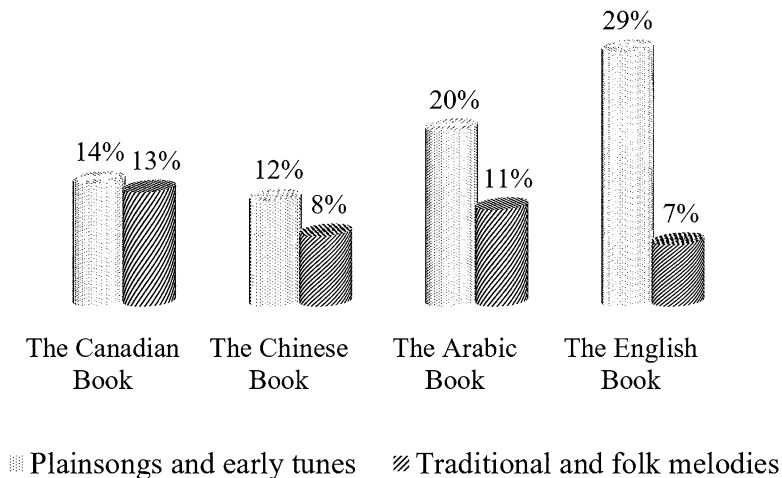
The Arabic book and the Chinese book, however, show another balance: 90 percent of tunes in major keys and 10 percent of tunes in minor keys. The presence of melodies in minor keys in the Arabic book has even grown in comparison with the previous edition of this book (1965), in which they were only 4.5 percent (we will discuss the possible reasons for this later).

Figure 1. The historical scope and geographical coverage of musical selections

a) according to the number of tunes

Plainsongs and early tunes   Traditional and folk melodies
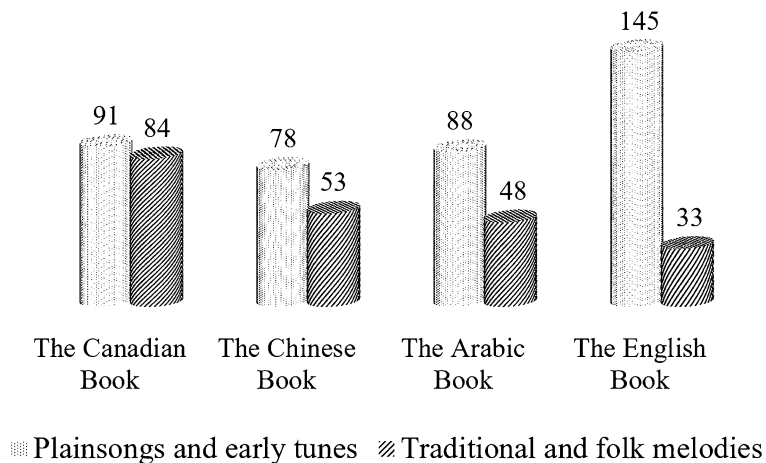
b) according to the percent of tunes

Plainsongs and early tunes   Traditional and folk melodies

Different hymnals offer different notation for the plainsongs. Thus, the English book represents two forms of musical notation for each plainsong: historic (neume) and modern notation, accompanied by modal harmony. The Canadian book, presents most of the plainsongs in modern notation with modal harmony arranged by Healey Willan (1880–1968), an Anglo-Canadian composer, whose great contribution to the revival of the plainsong tradition has not yet received a proper assessment. Unaccompanied plainsong melodies in this book receive a two-line notation, which can be found also in part of

American hymnals. Church modes of the plainsongs are indicated in all the books listed above. Pentatonic scales are part of the regional traditional melodies in the Chinese book, which offers numeric notation (in addition to modern notation) for all melodies with Chinese text in this bilingual book. The Arabic book offers a right-to-left notation for all musical material, although most of the texts are outside the printed music (in the previous edition of this book, all Arabic texts are placed between the staffs, which looks much more justified). The forms of notation typical for each of the books under discussion are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Special/historical forms of notation throughout the hymnbooks

a) neume notation (the English book)

b) two-line notation (the Canadian book)

c) numeric notation (the Chinese book)

d) right-to-left notation (the Arabic book)

Although the main source of hymnody everywhere is German chorale (c. 1525 – c. 1750) and English hymns (c. 1750 – c. 1900), the twentieth century church music is also represented in the books under comparison. Each of the three post-missionary hymnals contains a significant number of modern hymns, praise songs, or just tunes associated with regional repertories (for example, up to 25 percent of all melodies in the Arabic book). The composers whose works are mainly represented in these hymnals are Else E. Farr (the Arabic book), Wing-hee H. Wong (the Chinese book), and Patrick Wedd (the Canadian book). Yet, the English book offers a much smaller number of tunes reflecting the past century.

Musical Choices and Sonic Tolerance

What determines the musical choice for the hymnbook? What are the reasons for this or that expansion of historical scale, geographic coverage, or both? In addition to the original value as the only source for congregational singing, the hymnals of the 1990s perform additional functions, such as the unification of an ethnic group or even a nation, especially when the self-identification of a group or person is based on the native language and cultural traditions rather than on the place of birth. Thus, sixteen melodies of Lebanese origin, identified in the Arabic book as Oriental melodies, as well as thirteen Chinese melodies in the Chinese book serve their target audience regardless of the location of a particular Arabic-speaking or Chinese-speaking parish.

Musical choice can also seem a kind of political gesture. Such are, for example, two Taiwanese melodies in the Chinese Book—the *Ping-pu* folk song and the *Tayal* folk song. The inclusion of two folk melodies from Taiwan in the Chinese collection of hymns may seem like a musical reminder of the tragic pages in the relationship between the Republic of China and Taiwan. Although more than half a century has passed since the civil war in China, the descendants of Taiwan (where Chiang Kai-shek with the remaining Chinese nationalist forces fled in 1949) still tell you stories about the army sent to die and other stories I heard during my term in Vancouver. Another example of sociopolitical gestures of this kind is the hymns representing the twelve languages of the First Nations (that is, the native inhabitants of Canada) in the Canadian book, although the book does not include melodies associated with these demographic groups. The openness of the editors of these books to the Hebrew and Orthodox melodies attests to the ecumenical tendency typical for post-missionary churches in the global era.

Yet, openness to other cultures depends sometimes on sonic tolerance and its actual limits in a particular society. Sonic acceptance should not be taken for granted in the societies whose various audiences were educated in different musical systems, which differ, for example, in interpreting the semitone scales as equally tempered vs. microtone modified, as in the case of Middle-Eastern *maqamat*. While the Western-trained ear easily accepts pentatonic scales, defining them as "ancient" or "naïve," the maqam-based tunes may be perceived as "inconvenient" for those who are not familiar with them from childhood. The issue of sonic acceptance (or rather, a desirable change in the sonic pattern) was obviously on the agenda of Western missionaries establishing the Western Church with its ritual, practices, and music in the Middle East. It should be explained, that any

attempt by the converted believers to sing a church tune in regular Western minor scale, natural or harmonic, may have caused some discomfort for the Western missionary's ear, for being sung in one of the traditional Arabic scales (*navah* or *hijaz* respectively) on which the audience grew up. There is likely no other reason for the choice of almost exclusively major-scaled hymns in the early editions of the Arabic book: since the major scale is quite close to the *ajam* maqam, there is no sonic conflict. On the other hand, after decades of congregational singing of Western church music, including a slowly growing amount of minor-scaled melodies, the 1990 edition of the Arabic book includes a significant number of the minor-scaled hymns, but still less than the Anglo-American "standard." Being a kind of historical bridge and a means of intercultural communication, national hymnals of the 1990s serve as indicators of cultural lability and sonic tolerance of the societies in which they were issued.

Conclusion

The article aims to place the post-missionary hymnbooks of the 1990s in a row with other artifacts and solid objects that may contribute to the study of sociocultural narratives. As the review shows, the musical selections of these books reflect many musical cultures, be they the old culture of the place or other cultures in close or remote circles of the target audience. Different musical cultures are presented throughout each hymnal in a single form when both early tunes and tunes of another modal system are presented in the contemporary Western notation with appropriate harmony (when applicable). A few readable examples of historical forms of notation are part of each hymnbook, bringing the flavor of the era.

The place of "religious" in national identity and the place of "national" in religious identity were among the lenses through which the hymnbooks were examined. It should be recalled that ecumenical tendency typical of the post-missionary churches in the global era caused the preparing and release of the hymnbooks in a way that was often a joint work of two or more missionary churches. As a result, we may consider such hymnals as being of national rather than confessional value. Much attention was paid, in particular, to missionary practices and post-missionary reconfiguration of communities, taking into account how national hymnbooks represent plainsongs, tunes originating from microtone scales, and pentatonic melodies, as well as to the balance (in each particular hymnal) between regular major and minor scales suitable for congregational singing in a correct way.

In the comparison with other sources of church music, hymnbooks often contain deeper historical and wider geographical coverage; they also widely represent local motif and external musical "blotches," as a tribute to other cultures. Since they belong to the church, not to civil society, national hymnals have become a documentary, indirect but reliable enough to outline the limits of national cultural tolerance. On the other hand, regardless of how we define the above-addressed artifacts—as cultural capital, national soundscapes, or archives of national identity[6]—these material objects of the human history are true documents of the sociocultural narrative of certain peoples at a certain period.

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[6] This follows the definitions of Bourdieu (1984), Seroussi (2014), and Rancier (2014), respectively.

Acknowledgements

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