MARCO DE PIETRI
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EGYPT AND KARKEMISH
DURING THE 2nd MILLENNIUM BC: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

ABSTRACT
The present paper analyses the mutual influences between Egypt and the city of Karkemish (present Urk. Iv 792, n. 270. The name Karkemish is spelled using Karkemish, Egypt, contacts, relationships, influences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
We are deeply debtors to M. Zecchi (UNIBO) for his work (Zecchi 2014) and mainly for his exhaustive bibliography.

The topic of this paper are the mutual relationships between Egypt and Karkemish in the 2nd and the 1st Millennium BC; firstly, we will present the attestations of the name “Karkemish” in the Egyptian texts; then we will show some useful archaeological finds which testify the contacts between the Nile land and Karkemish; in the conclusion, we will try to understand (basing on both the textual and archaeological clues) how the ancient Egyptians considered this important city and its people.

I. KARKEMISH IN THE EGYPTIAN TEXTS

The attestations of the name of Karkemish in the Egyptian texts have been recently investigated by M. Zecchi1; the Author starts from the beginning of the known contacts, during the 18th Dynasty: Thutmose III mentions Karkemish among the other Asiatic cities he conquered in the eighth campaign of his 33rd year; the list is engraved on the seventh pylon of the Amun temple at Karnak: here the name is spelled ka-r-ka-my-ša (krkmš)2.

In the autobiography of Amenemheb (called Mahu), a pharaoh’s officer, we read that Tuthmos III “fought an expedition in the land of Karkemish (qa-r-qa-myša = qrqmš)3”; from this passage we can guess that Karkemish was indeed the northern limit of Thutmose III’s campaign: so this could also mean that this was the most probable location of the stele set up by the pharaoh, as we can read in his Annals4.

Sometime later, the name is attested in two lists of conquered cities belonging to the reign of Amenhotep III (18th Dynasty, 1390-1352 BC): the first one is engraved on a wall of the funerary temple of Amenhotep III, situated at Kom el-Hetan, near Thebes; the name is here spelled as qi-r-qa-m-ša = qrqmš5; the second list comes from the temple of Amon-Ra at Soleb, in Nubia where the toponym is spelled as qa-r-qa-mi-ša = qrqmš6. Even in this case, the name of Karkemish is quoted like a conquered, submitted city: this is a typical and well attested formula of the pharaoh propaganda, and also the iconography of the cartouche where the name is inscribed in is quite common, representing a foreign enemy kept in prison, with the hands bounded by a rope behind his back.

After Amenhotep III’s reign and during the Amarna period (ca. 1352-1338 BC), the name was not attested, also because the city was meanwhile submitted firstly by the Mittanian king Tushratta7 and

1 For information see the entries “Karkemis” in LÄ III, 339-341 and “Karkamiš” in RIA V, 426-446.
2 Zecchi 2014; for previous researches: Hogarth 1919, 17, reporting Griffith’s opinion (quoting Burchard 1909, 4. 1019; Müller 1893, 263).
3 Urk. IV 792, n. 270. The name Karkemish is spelled using a so-called “syllabic writing”, in which a single consonantal sound is expressed by a syllabic sign: e.g., ka standing for k or ša instead of simple setStatus; etc. Such a system, very common in Neo-Egyptian (mainly during the 19th Dynasty), was frequently used to transcript foreign toponyms written in cuneiform writing; further information in Cavillier 2012, 22-23.
4 Urk. IV 891; Brested 1906, 231, § 583; Sayce 1890, 8; Amenemheb’s tomb is situated in Sheik Abd el-Qurna (Western Thebes), northern area (TT 85): Porter-Moss 19942, 160 (plan), 170-175 and map V D-4, d, 10.
5 Brested 1906, 202, § 478.
6 Edel, Göö 2005, 8, 22-23, 31-32, 43; see also Kitchen 1964, 4, pls. II, VIII.
7 Giveon 1964, 239-255; see also Lepsius n.d., Bl. 88 f.
8 Kahn 2011; Klenegel 1992, 120.
later by the Hittite Great king Suppiluliuma I who installed one of his son, Piyashshili/Sarri-Kushukh\(^4\), as viceroy in the city.

The next attestation is engraved on an Egyptian libation stone vessel, found in an antiquities shop in Cairo by Donald Redford at the end of April 1973\(^{10}\), unfortunately the provenience of the object is still unknown (though the discoverer proposed the zone of Memphis). The dedicator's inscription quotes also Karkemish (\(q\-r\-m\-\(s\-)\(a\) = qrqm\(s\))

\[\text{rnp.t sp 16 hir n(y) nb Ts.\(w\)y n(?)}{\text{?}}\text{Hr-m-hb p3 hq3 hft wfr.yt=f th.t n(y).t nft(w) s3 \text{Kny nfr.yt r p3 t3 n p3 wr hyy n Qr}\text{m}\(s\)}{\text{...}} \text{rd=i=sn n\(b\)=w wfr(=w) snb(=w) n k3 hry-pr n(y) nb Ts.\(w\)y Sm-nfr d(w) n\(y\) n\(b\)}.\]

"Regnal year 16 under the Majesty of the Lord of the Two Lands, Horemheb, the Ruler; at the time of his first victorious campaign, from Byblus as far as the land of the chief of Cardunchum, [...] that they [i.e., the gods] may give life, prosperity and health to the k3 of the stablemaster of the Lord of the Two Lands Sen-nefer, repeating life" \(^{12}\).

But we are not sure about actual Horemheb’s campaigns in Syria\(^{12}\); Redford\(^{14}\) refers to a possible expedition during Murshili II’s seventh year, when Kantuzzili and Sarri-Kushuh defeated the Egyptian army in the area of Karkemish, as told by the king’s Annals\(^15\); Darnell and Manassa\(^16\) proposed instead to think about military expeditions during Tutankhamun’s reign, when Horemheb was still a general. In any case we can see that Karkemish was regarded as one of the most important cities of the Syrian area. A further interesting consideration is that the name Karkemish here refers not only to the city itself, but also to the entire area around the city (\(p\)\(3\ t\)\(3\) “the land”), instead of \(p\)\(3\ n\w y\ w r\) “the city”); it is a clue that the name was used also to speak about the entire northern Syria, and so that the city was not actually reached by the pharaoh\(^{17}\).

During the 19\(^{a}\) Dynasty, the name is well attested in the Ramesside inscriptions; in the so-called “Poem of the Battle of Kadesh” we find it three times, always spelled \(k\-r\-\(k\-a\)-\(y\-m\)-\(s\)-\(a\) = krkm\(s\))\(^{19}\):

"Here beginneth the victory of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt [...] which he achieved in the land of Arzawa, in Pidasa, in that of Dardany, in the land of Masa, in the land of Karkisha and Luka, in Carchemish, Kedy, (the) land of Kadesh, in the land of Ugarit, Mushanat" \(^{19}\).

The entire land of Khatti was come, that of Naharin likewise, that of Arzawa, Dardany, that of Keshkesh, those of Masa, those of Pidasa, that of Arwen(?), that of Karkisha, Luka, Kizzuwadna, Carchemish, Ugarit, Kedy, the entire land of Nukhashshe, Mushanat, Kadesh" \(^{20}\).

"Then he caused many chiefs to come, each one of them with his chariots, and they were equipped with their weapons of warfare, the Chief of Arzawa, him of the (land of) Masa, the Chief or Arwen(?), him of Luka, him of Dardany, the

Chief of Carchemish, the Chief of Karkisha, him of Khaleb, the brothers of him of Khatti, collected in one place; their total was 1000 chariots come straight on into the fire" \(^{21}\).

In the “Bulletin of the Battle of Kadesh” the term is attested only once with the same spelling\(^{22}\):

“See, the wretched Chief of Khatti is come together with the many foreign countries who are with him, whom he has brought with him as allies, the land of Dardany, the land of Naharin, that of Keshkesh, those of Masa, those of Pidasa, the land of Karkisha and Luka, the land of Carchemish, the land of Arzawa, the land of Ugarit, that of Arwen(?), the land of Inesa, Mushanat, Kadesh, Khaleb, and the entire land of Kedy" \(^{23}\).

On the south-eastern wall of the hypostyle of Amarah West (in Nubia), the “Syrian Topographical List” is engraved: it reports the cartouches with the names of some conquered towns; among them we read also Karkemish, spelled \(q\-r\-q\-m\-\(s\)\(-\(a\) = q\(r\)qm\(s\))\(^{23}\); moreover, in the list of prisoners on the walls of the Ramesseum in Luxor, the prince Sety presents to the victorious pharaoh the soldiers (literally: \(h\)\(3\)\(w\) \(br\) rd\(w\), “them who fight on foot”) of Karkemish (spelled \(k\-r\-\(k\-a\)-\(y\-m\)-\(s\)-\(a\) = krkm\(s\))\(^{23}\).

In the “Treaty” of peace after the battle of Kadesh\(^{26}\), written on two stelae, one in Karnak and one in the Ramesseum, we find the name of a messenger of Karkemish (\(k\(r\)k\(q\)\(r\)\(q\)?)\(-\(m\)-\(y\)-\(s\)-\(a\) = \(k\(r\)k\(q\)\(r\)\(q\)?)\(m\)\(s\)), Ya-

\(^{16}\) Our transcription.
\(^{15}\) Redford’s translation (Redford 1973, 37).
\(^{20}\) CTI 61 = KUB XIV 17 Vs II, 18-30. For general bibliography see the Hethitologie Portal Maine (HPM) at the related link; for the translation see Beal 2000; see also De Martino 2014, 88-89; Götz 1933, 87.
\(^{21}\) Darnell 2007, 182.
\(^{22}\) Redford 1973, 41.
\(^{23}\) KRI II 4 § 5 (=Bondelli, Elli 2012, 189, l. 5 = Gardiner 1960, 7, P5); KRI II 18 § 46 (Bondelli, Elli 2012, 193, l. 3 = Gardiner 1960, 8, P45); KRI II 51 § 151 (Bondelli, Elli 2012, 202, l. 8 = Gardiner 1960, 10, P150).
\(^{24}\) Gardiner 1960, 7.
\(^{26}\) Freu 8.
\(^{27}\) Freu 10.
\(^{28}\) Freu 2004, 230, l. 11 = Gardiner 1960, 29, B45.
\(^{30}\) Gardiner 1960, 29.
\(^{31}\) KRI II 111 § 45 (Bondelli, Elli 2012, 230, l. 11 = Gardiner 1960, 29, B45).
\(^{32}\) Gardiner 1960, 29.
\(^{33}\) KRI II 216 n. 20.
\(^{34}\) KRI II 145 § 86 (Bondelli, Elli 2012, 258, s 86 = Gar diner 1960, 45, R76).
\(^{35}\) Langdon, Gardiner 1920.
pushili (y-pw-sy-r)\textsuperscript{27}, who was appointed to bring the silver tablet of the deal to the pharaoh\textsuperscript{28}:

“... [the messenger of the] land of [Hatti... Tili]-Teshub, and [the second messenger] of [Hatti] Ra[mose and the messenger of Karke][mish] Tapushili, they came carrying the tablet of [silver which] the great chief of Hatti Hattushili III had sent to the pharaoh ...”\textsuperscript{29}

Almost from the same period we have another, less monumental, document: a limestone ostracon\textsuperscript{30} from Thebes, King Valley, with a hieratic inscription, more precisely the formal beginning of a letter written by the king of Karkemish Ini-Teshub to the pharaoh. The text reads: \textit{wr n(y) Qy-r-qa-n(w)-m(i)-sa f = Qrqm(\textit{sic})mš} \textit{In-n(w)-tbs(\textit{sic}) f = Intbs} \textit{hr swḏ3 ib...}, i.e.: “The great of Karkemish Ini-Teshub\textsuperscript{31} addresses to... (literally ‘rejoices the heart of...’); in the spelling of Karkemish the signs N 35 and Z 2 (here used as “syllabic writing”\textsuperscript{34} for the simpler n) seem to be redundant: perhaps the scribe was confused with the name of the king Ini-tešub, creating a duplicate of signs for ditography.

The next attestation comes from an inscription at Medinet Habu, telling the victories of Ramesses II.\textsuperscript{35}

“No land could stand before their arms, from Hatti, Qode, Carchemish (qy-r-qa-my-ṣa = qrqmš), Arzawa, Alasiya (Cyprus), (but they were) land waste, one by one”\textsuperscript{36}.

Despite of this official document of the pharaoh’s propaganda, we know that Karkemish was not actually destroyed by the Sea People; here, perhaps, the name of Karkemish is used to mean the northern Syria in general\textsuperscript{37}.

The last known evidence of the name is the Ptolemaic temple of Kom Ombo, within a list of foreign cities conquered by Egypt; here the spelling is very different: \textit{grgims}\textsuperscript{38}.

II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRACES OF CONTACTS WITH EGYPT

Besides the written sources, we have also some archaeological evidences of these relationships\textsuperscript{39}; all the pictures of the materials could be easily found in the bibliography mentioned in the notes and also on the official site of the British Museum. In order to be more perspicuous, we will present all the materials in a list layout:

a) artifacts of Egyptian origin:

- a stone head-mace with the cartouche of a Ramess-es\textsuperscript{40} (unknown findspot);
- a fragment of an alabaster bowl (with the inscription: \textit{n nb=š, “... a good year of/for her lord”})\textsuperscript{41} and another fragment of a “New Year” glazed flask (probably inscribed with a name like \textit{Jmn-j/wp(v)-...})\textsuperscript{42}, both found in the so-called House D\textsuperscript{43} (situated in the Outer Town of the city);

b) artifacts with Egyptian influence:

- four bronze statuettes representing Harpocrates, Isis with Horus, and Osiris (two of them) all dated to the 7th Century BC\textsuperscript{44} (from House D);

\textsuperscript{27} The name is currently spelled as \textit{y-pw-sy-r}; but, following Edel’s interpretation (\textit{Edel} 1969, 183 ff.), the correct reading (taking into account a metathesis) of the name should be \textit{Pijaššili (*P-j-s-i-fr/* instead of J-p-s-i-fr/\textit{I}); in this case the messenger would bring the same name of the famous king of Karkemish, son of Shuppiluliuma I; see also \textit{De Martino} 2014, 90.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{KRI} II 226, 1.7-8 (= \textit{Bondellu, ELLI} 2012, 280, 1. 1); though in \textit{lacuna}, here Kitchen accepts Edel’s restoration (\textit{Edel} 1969, 183), saying “certainly Carchemish” (see the critical apparatus of \textit{KRI} II 226, 1. 7 g).

\textsuperscript{29} Translation by \textit{Zecchi} 2014, 103-104.


\textsuperscript{31} For the reading of this name see \textit{Gardiner} 1947, 132*; see also \textit{Ranke} 1935, 38 n. 11. The strange metathesis \textit{tbs} instead of \textit{tsb} is explained in \textit{Gardiner, loc. cit.}; the lacuna was filled by Gardiner with the sign D 55 (the receding legs = determinative for “to retreat, to come back, to repulse”), usually used as determinative for the name of the Asiatic god Teshub; more information in \textit{Barnett, Černý} 1947 (with the quotation of \textit{Buchard} 1909, 10, n. 171).

\textsuperscript{32} For Ini-Teshub in this document see \textit{Kupper} 1992, 22-23; see also \textit{Barnett, Černý} 1974 (also for the restoration in the lacuna, by Gardiner, of the sign D 55).

\textsuperscript{33} This is a typical incipit of letters in the 18th-19th Dynasties: \textit{Cavilleri} 2012, 177-178.

\textsuperscript{34} For the “syllabic writing” see \textit{Cavilleri} 2012, 22-23.

\textsuperscript{35} OIP 8, pls. XLVB-XLVI; historical account in \textit{GRM 2011}, 358-359; see also \textit{Klenge 1992}, 125.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{KRI V} 39, 16; see also \textit{Peden} 1994, 28-29; our text is from \textit{Zecchi} 2014, 104.

\textsuperscript{37} About the use of the name of Karkamish for the entire northern Syria, see \textit{Zecchi} 2014, 105; see also \textit{Klenge 1992}, 125.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Zecchi} 2014, 106; see also \textit{Gardiner} 1947 I, 123*, 132, n. 250; \textit{De Morgan} 1895, 130: 170.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Zecchi} (in press); see also \textit{Zecchi} 2014; \textit{Mumford} 2007, passim.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Woolley - Barnett} 1952, 159; pl. LXXI, fig. c.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Woolley} 1921, 127, fig. 44.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibidem}, fig. 46.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibidem}, 125 ff.; we do not make mention of the alabaster vessel in \textit{Woolley} 1921, 127, fig. 45 because we are not sure it has Egyptian origins (the only clue could be the material, the alabaster, so common in the Nile Valley). Some further Egyptian influences could be found also in the figurines in \textit{Woolley, Barnett} 1952, 252-257, pl. LXIV c: also in this case the material, the lapis lazuli, is typically Egyptian.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Zecchi} 2014, 106, fig. 7; see also \textit{Woolley} 1921, pl. XXI, figs. b-c; BM 116184 (Harpocrates), BM 116185 and BM 116186 (Osiris) all acquired by Woolley in 1922, copper alloy. Woolley thought that one of the Osiris (BM 116185) was in a more Egyptian shape, whereas the other one (BM 116186) could be a local imitation (\textit{Woolley} 1921, 127).
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− a copper ring carrying the name of Psametik I Wahibra\(^45\) (from House D);
− four clay seal-impressions with the name of Nekau II\(^46\) and two smaller clay seal-impressions (used for a papyrus) with the name of Sekhat-Hor\(^47\) (from House D);
− a human mask of white steatite, with strong Egyptian details\(^48\) (from House D);
− four green glazed fragments of amulets (found in the Water Postern): the head of a Bes statuette\(^49\), an udjat-eye\(^50\), the head of a statuette of the goddess Sekhmet\(^51\) and another amulet not well preserved\(^52\);
− an entire, green glazed Bes figure\(^53\) (surface find);
− another figure of Bes (surely a local imitation) in blue-glazed frit (found near to the Great Staircase of the Temple of the Storm-god\(^54\));
− four scarabs kept in the British Museum (unknown findspot): one surely from Karkemish, while for the others the provenience is not so clear; the first carries the praenomen of Shabaqo (Neferkara)\(^55\), the third displays an imitation of a royal name (\(\text{cɜ-nb-rᶜ}\)) and the last one is engraved with Egyptian motifs\(^56\);
− another white steatite scarab (found in the area of the Royal Buttress, close to the King’s Gate\(^57\));
− two bronze situlae, of Egyptian type but of Phoenician manufacture (discovered near to the House B, along a wall\(^58\));
− five false-door fragments in an Egyptian shape (coming from houses-sites D, E, G and H\(^59\)).

III. CONCLUSION: AN ATTEMPT OF INTERPRETATION

Keeping in mind all the presented data, we would now try to answer to a precise question: how did the Egyptians consider the city of Karkemish and its people?

Firstly, analyzing the spelling of the name Karkemish, we can see that at the end of the signs with a phonetic value, two determinatives are written: the first is the hieroglyph representing a “club as a foreign weapon or warfare\(^60\), frequently used also as determinative for the Asiatic people: it is a clear qualification of a less evolved weapon technology and so also of a less developed culture; this could be a good proof that the Egyptian people considered themselves like a better and more evolved society, also in the field of military tools; the second determinative is the “sandy hill-country over edge of green cultivation”\(^61\) that is the typical sign used to determine a foreign country.

Furthermore, on the stone bowl of the stableman Sennefer, we saw the expression \(\text{p₂ t₂ n p₂ wr ḫs² n ṣmqš} \) “the land of the vile chief of Karkemish”\(^62\), here the king of the Syrian city is defined ḫs² “vile, coward”\(^63\); in some other texts we have also seen that Karkemish was considered like a conquered country, a land that sends prisoners (see for instance the lists of Amenhotep III and the one preserved in the Kom Ombo temple, or also the quotations by the Rameside sources); this is a clear evidence that Karkemish was regarded as a submitted, weaker city, in line with the usual imperialistic propaganda of the victorious pharaoh.

But on the other hand, in two different documents, the king of Karkemish is treated as an important person, able to address directly to the pharaoh (in the case of the ostracon with the name of Ini-Teshub) or to envoy a messenger as witness of a treaty (remembering the example of Yaphushilu).

\(^45\) Zecchi 2014, 103, fig. 4 a-e (BM 116187); see also Woolley 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. c, n. 8-8*: Psametik I Wahibra (664-610 BC) was the first pharaoh of the 26th Dynasty (664-625 BC): GRIMAL 2011, 451-459.

\(^46\) Zecchi 2014, 104-105, figs. 5-6 (BM 116222-116225); see also Woolley 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. c, n. 1-4. Nekau II Wehemi bra (610-595 BC) was the second pharaoh of the 26th Dynasty (664-625 BC): GRIMAL 2011, 459-461.

\(^47\) Givone 1985, 162, n. 8; see also Woolley 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. c, n. 5-6; BM 116226-116227 (acquisition 1922 by Woolley): Late Period (610-605 BC).

\(^48\) Woolley 1921, 127, pl. XXII, fig. a.

\(^49\) Ibidem, pl. XXVI, fig. b, n. 2.

\(^50\) Ibidem 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. b, n. 4.

\(^51\) Ibidem 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. b, n. 7.

\(^52\) Ibidem 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. c, n. 11.

\(^53\) Ibidem 1921, pl. XXVI, fig. b, n. 6.

\(^54\) Woolley, Barnett 1952, 175 (k), pl. LXXI e.


\(^56\) BM 105068 (acquisition 1913 by Woolley): 28th (?) Dynasty (ca. 404-399 BC) / 29th (?) Dynasty (ca. 399-380 BC), steatite, beige glazed; see also Givone 1985, 160, n. 2; Hornung, Stassinopoulos 1976, 391, D 14.

\(^57\) BM 105076 (acquisition 1913 by Woolley): Late Period (ca. 722-332 BC), black stone. The inscription is interpreted as “\(\text{ḥp₂-nb-rᶜ}\)”, i.e. (following Gardiner’s Sign-List) O 29, V 30, N 5/Y 24; Givone 1985, 160, n. 4.

\(^58\) BM 102688 (acquisition 1908 by Hogarth): Rameside (?) / Late Period (?) / 22nd Dynasty (?) / 21st Dynasty (?), (1250-1050 BC), beige steatite or glazed composition.

\(^59\) Woolley, Barnett 1952, 197, fig. 81.

\(^60\) Woolley 1921, 120-121, pl. XXI a.1, 1*, 2, 2*; following Woolley they are “cast with ornament in relief showing figures of Anubi, &c., conventionalized almost beyond recognition”; BM 116125-116126 (acquisition 1922 by Woolley), copper alloy situlae of Egyptian type, 7th Century BC.

\(^61\) Ibid., 126, 151-152 (fig. 59). In addition to all the objects here cited, we can find also “a blue paste scarab, Egyptian, the design obliterated, fairly early type, perhaps 19th Dynasty” (Woolley, Barnett 1952, 175 (f): from the staircase of the Storm-god Temple) and “a scaraboid seal in lapis blue past” (Woolley 1921, 121: from House B); unfortunately we were not able to find out more information about them.


\(^63\) Ibid., Sign-list, 488, n. N 25.

\(^64\) Redford 1973, 41.

\(^65\) WB III, 399: “Elend, erbärmlich. a) Zumeist als Beiwort feindlicher Fürsten (Länder, Soldaten)”; see also Faulkner 2002, 204.
So we are dealing with the usual Egyptian way of write the history: in the official documents the Nile land is the center of the entire world, and all the other countries are considered like nothing (or at best a mere name in a list of military conquests); on the contrary, leaving out the propagandistic view, and looking to the reality (documented by texts and archaeological finds), Karkemish was indeed an important city, with strong relationships both with Hatti and Egypt. According to the abovementioned data, we can finally conclude that Karkemish shows a history, perhaps a less known “shadow history” that deserves to be told and better known, in order to shed more light also on the so-called “great” History.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

BM n. of objects in the British Museum, London.

CGC Catalogue Général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire.


KUB Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköy, Berlin 1921ff.


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