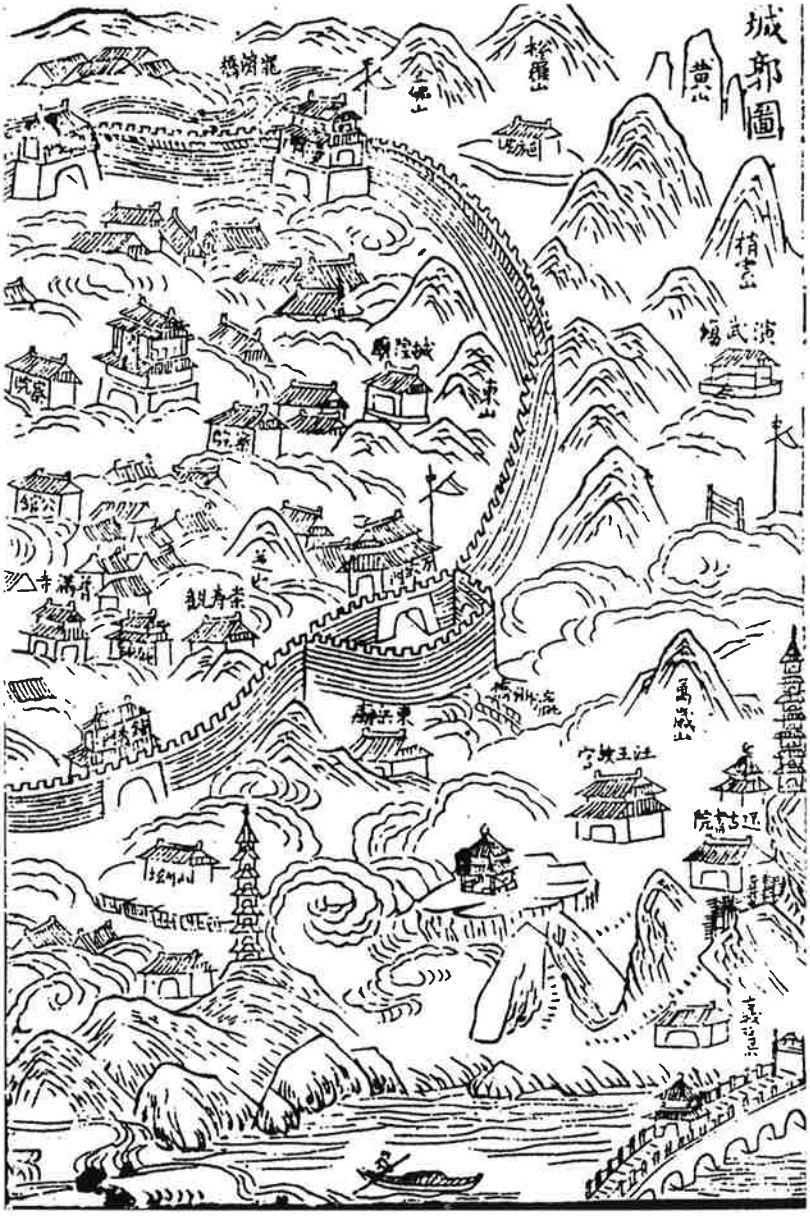
Exorcism and Money

The Symbolic World of the Five-Fury Spirits in Late Imperial China



Qitao Guo

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The Symbolic World of the Five-Fury Spirits in Late Imperial China

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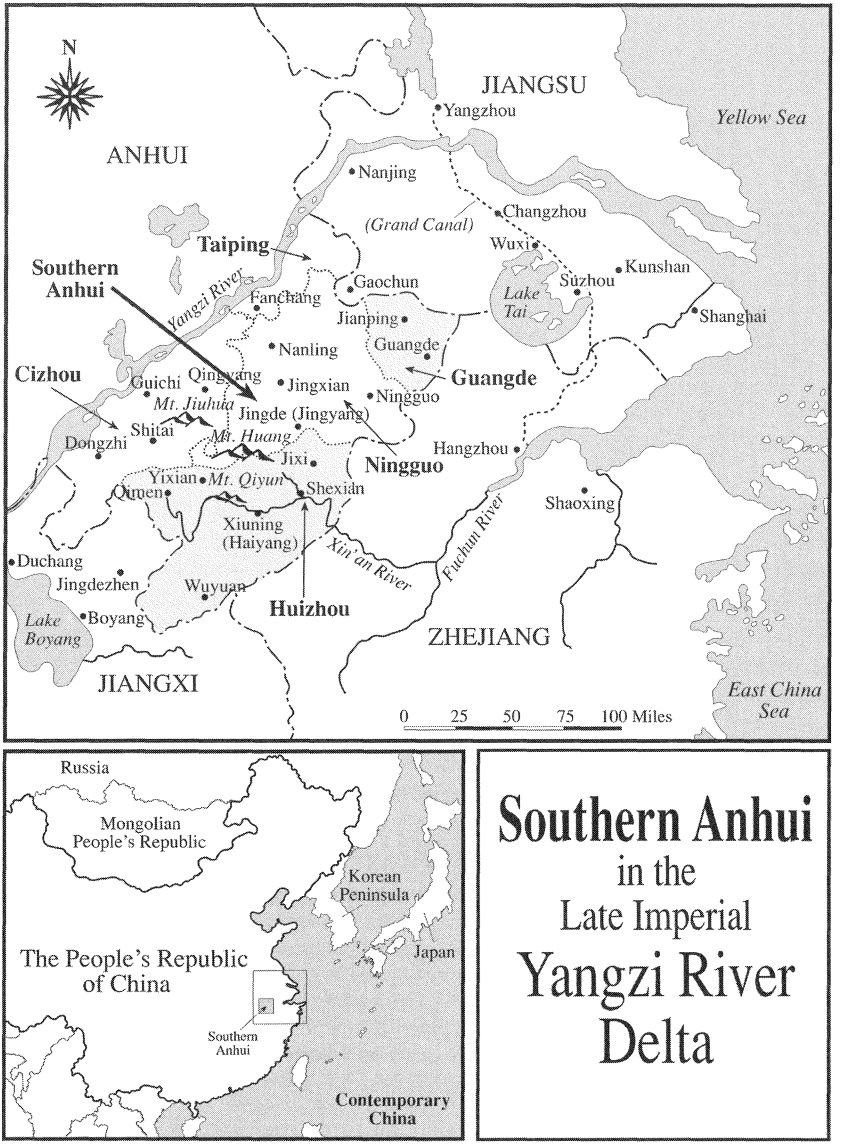

Southern Anhui in the Late Imperial Yangzi River Delta

Chinese Dynasties

Xia (legendary)	1953–1576 B.C.E.
Shang	1576–1045
Early Zhou	1045–771
Spring and Autumn Era	771–479
Warring States Era	479–221
Qin	221–207
Former Han	202 B.C.E.–9 C.E.
Xin	9–23 C.E.
Later Han	25–220
Three Kingdoms	220–265
Western Jin	265–316
Eastern Jin and Sixteen Kingdoms	317–420
Northern and Southern Dynasties	420–589
Sui	581–618
Tang	618–906
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms	907–960
Northern Song	960–1127
Southern Song	1127–1279
Yuan (Mongols)	1279–1368
Ming	1368–1644
Qing (Manchus)	1644–1911
Republic	1912–1949
People's Republic	1949–

Reign Periods of the Ming and Qing Dynasties

Ming (1368–1644)

Hongwu	1368–1398
Jianwen	1399–1402
Yongle	1403–1424
Hongxi	1424–1425
Xuande	1426–1435
Zhengtong	1436–1449
Jingtai	1450–1456
Tianshun	1457–1464
Chenghua	1465–1487
Hongzhi	1488–1505
Zhengde	1506–1521
Jiajing	1522–1566
Longqing	1567–1572
Wanli	1573–1620
Taichang	1620
Tianqi	1621–1627
Chongzhen	1628–1644

Qing (1644–1911)

Shunzhi	1644–1661
Kangxi	1662–1722
Yongzheng	1723–1735
Qianlong	1736–1795
Jiaqing	1796–1820
Daoguang	1821–1850
Xianfeng	1851–1861
Tongzhi	1862–1874
Guangxu	1875–1907
Xuantong	1908–1911

Abbreviations

HZF	*Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志 (1502)
HZZ	*Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志 (1566)
JXZ	*Jixi xianzhi* 績溪縣志
MQHS	*Ming–Qing Huishang ziliao xuanbian* 明清徽商資料選編
QXZ	*Qimen xianzhi* 祁門縣志 (1873)
SXH	*Shexian zhi* 歙縣志 (1771)
SXZ	*Shexian zhi* 歙縣志 (1937)
XXZ	*Xiuning xianzhi* 休寧縣志 (1693)
YXZ	*Yixian sanzhi* 黟縣三志 (1870)

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Introduction

In 1826, on the first day of the eighth month, a grand procession paraded from Xidi 西遞 village to the county seat of Yixian 黟縣 and then back to Xidi, a distance of about eight kilometers. The procession was held to invoke the Wuchang 五猖 Five-Fury Spirits and thereby protect the Hu lineage that resided in Xidi. The village of Xidi was a showcase of all Huizhou 徽州, a Jiangnan 江南 prefecture noted empirewide since the sixteenth century for both its intense gentrified lineage culture and its strong mercantile tradition. The man behind the procession rituals was Hu Yuanxi 胡元熙, a son of one of the "six wealthiest Jiangnan merchants," who was living at home in Xidi at the time, perhaps on leave from his post as prefect of Hangzhou 杭州. More than three hundred Wuchang supplicants participated in the Xidi parade; they were "all boys under the age of fifteen," Hu proudly noted. "The procession went through the county seat, and the county magistrate let all into the Hall of Double Osmanthus, giving two buns to each of the participants, all the while highly commending everyone."[1]

The Wuchang procession was part of the preliminary ceremonies for a grand showing of ritual operatic performances scheduled for the following month. The ceremonies were organized by the prominent and wealthy Hu lineage to commemorate the compilation of the genealogy of the Xidi Hus, who numbered "nearly three thousand adult kinsmen," as Hu Yuanxi's father-in-law, Cao Zhenyong 曹振鏞, a scholar-official at

1. Hu's "Memorandum" to *Xidi Mingjing Hushi renpai zupu* (Genealogy of the Ren 壬 [ninth] branch Mingjing Hus in Xidi), in *Daoguang wunian* (last section, 1a–3b).

the imperial court, noted in his preface to the lineage genealogy. Early in the ninth month, for eleven consecutive days and nights, more than sixty plays were performed on three stages erected in the village. The most magnificent of these was two-tiered, built in front of the huge Apical Ancestral Hall, the largest of twenty-six Hu lineage ancestral halls that filled the village. On the sixth night, when the "grand ritual" was held in honor of the Hus' apical ancestor—a prince of the Tang-dynasty royal family—three troupes staged ten plays for an audience of more than forty thousand.[2]

In his Memorandum to the *Genealogy of the Ren-Branch Mingjing Hus in Xidi,* Hu Yuanxi did not bother to identify Wuchang. Perhaps he thought he did not need to, as the ritual of the Five-Fury Spirits had a deeply rooted tradition in Xidi. In fact, he did not even refer to Wuchang. Instead he used the term *huchang* 呼猖, "to invoke the *chang* (fury)" spirits, which were nevertheless believed to consist of five entities, that is, Wuchang the Five Furies.[3] What is more, he felt no need to explain the term *huchang,* either. Here, couched in Hu's unexplained use of terminology, is a clue about a well-established ritual, a lineagewide rite known to all his kinspeople.

But the absence of an explicit mention of Wuchang could also imply that the deity's symbolic character was elusive, defying easy identification. A survey of local sources from Huizhou and the larger southern Anhui region does not supply much information on the identity of the Five-Fury Spirits.[4] Even when sources, especially official gazetteers, do

2. Ibid. See also Cao's preface to this genealogy. *Mingjing* (明經; Clarifying the classics) refers to the examination the Xidi Hus' apical ancestor passed, for which he was thereafter called the Lord Mingjing. The Xidi Hus' genealogy is itself "monumental," being one of the most beautifully caligraphed and printed among hundreds of Huizhou genealogies stored in the Anhui Museum and Anhui Provincial Library. In 1826, Hu Yuanxi (*juren* 1821) was the prefect of either Hangzhou or another prefecture in neighboring Zhejiang 浙江 province. For biographical information on Hu Yuanxi, see also *YXZ,* pp. 71–72, 121. For the deeds of Hu's father, ancestral halls in Xidi, and the village's size (about 210,000 square meters), see *YXZ,* p. 422; Zhao Huafu, "Ming-Qing Huizhou Xidi," p. 20; Yu Zhihuai, *Yixian,* p. 34; and chapter 4 herein.

3. Wuchang was understood in the Huizhou region sometimes as five supernatural beings making up the Five Furies, and sometimes as a generic deity, or more accurately, a pentad spirit (a cluster of deities grouped in five). Below, I mirror the ambiguity of the original usage by referring to Wuchang sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural.

4. Southern Anhui 安徽, the geographical focus of this study, is in western Jiangnan (literally, south of the Yangzi River), the great cultural and economic heartland of late imperial China. In late imperial times, southern Anhui consisted of Guangde 廣德 subprefecture and the four prefectures of Taiping 太平, Ningguo 寧國, Chizhou 池州, and Huizhou. Huizhou prefecture was composed of the six counties of Shexian 歙縣, Xiuning

Part I

Integrating Local Exorcism

The Evolution of the Symbolic World of the Five Furies

1

The Origins of Wuchang Exorcism

Elements of Wuchang exorcism in late imperial southern Anhui can probably be traced back to shamanism, which had played an important role in religious and social life since the dawn of Chinese history. Wuchang rituals originated from ancient Nuo exorcism, "popular" both as a "great tradition" in royal palaces and as "little traditions" among the country folk; and the original form of the deity was ambiguously linked with both exorcising agents and exorcised objects.[1] Later, the ambiguous character of Wuchang continued to grow with the textualized liturgies of institutionalized Daoism, as well as with local popular observances. This chapter delineates the basic developments in pre-Ming exorcism in light of their relevance to late imperial Wuchang rituals and their contribution to the making of Wuchang's symbolic world.

The Nuo or masked performances of ghost exorcism started in prehistorical times in the Yellow River plain, the birthplace of Chinese civilization. The term *nuo* initially seems to have been an onomatopoeic word that mimicked the shouting sound the exorcists made when expelling demons or plague.[2] The word is a cognate of *nan* 難, "difficult," and is related to the Tibeto-Burman root word *na*, meaning "sickness." Some scholars suggest that Nuo exorcism originated in the ritual exposure of

1. The terms "great tradition" and "little traditions," coined by Robert Redfield, are used here merely for convenience. This does not suggest that I accept the formulation of dichotomies such as elite/folk, universal/local, and urban/rural. See Sangren, "Great Tradition and Little Traditions Reconsidered."

2. Zhu Junsheng, *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng*, p. 712; cf. Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China*, p. 77.

2

Ming Taizu, Religious Hierarchy, and Ghost Exorcism

Two of the most important turning points in the history of popular Wuchang worship came in the Ming dynasty. The first push came from the political sphere, from no less powerful a figure than the founding emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋. This "Grand Martial" (Hongwu 洪武) Emperor incorporated Wuchang into the imperial rituals to the (deity of) military banners (*qidu* 旗纛). In the beginning, sacrifices to the military banners were made together with those to other deities. In the ninth year of the Hongwu reign (1376), an independent temple was built for worshipping the military banners. The official *Ming History* notes,

> Every year in mid-autumn, on the day when the Son of Heaven personally offered sacrifices to the [deities of] mountains and rivers, [the emperor] sent the banner bearers and imperial guardians over to pay tribute to the military banners. The sacrifices were offered to the Great General of the Banner-Head; the Great Generals of the Six Banners (Liudu dajiang 六纛大將); the Banner Deity of the Five Directions (Wufang qishen 五方旗神); the Honest Deity Commanding Military Ships; the Deity of Golden Drums, Bugles, Blunderbusses, and Cannons; the Deity of Crossbows, Flying Spears, and Flying Stones; and numerous other deities such as the Celestial and Terrestrial Wuchang in the Battlefield and Barracks (Zhenqian Zhenhou Shenqi Wuchang 陣前陣後神祇五昌). Totaling seven, [these deities] shared one altar facing south. Wearing a leather cap, the emperor went to the Fengtian Palace and offered incense there.[1]

1. *Mingshi*, p. 1302. This is just one of four occasions when sacrifices were offered to the military banners in the Ming. For the other three occasions, see ibid., pp. 1301–1302.

3

The Rise of Local Pantheons in the Mid Ming

Zhu Yuanzhang tried to create a lasting subsistence economy, but he could not anticipate the effect of a century of political restabilization and economic reconstruction that began with his reign. During this century, commodity production slowly developed, and this development promoted the unequal distribution of land. As a consequence, the village-subsistence ideal of the early Ming was gradually eclipsed by a commercial-landlordist model of rural life, which at the same time also fed the growth of an urban economy.[1] All of this paved the way for dramatic socioeconomic changes that accelerated after the mid Ming, especially over the course of the sixteenth century. The economy became monetized and society increasingly urbanized, particularly in the Jiangnan region.[2]

The new socioeconomic environment of the mid Ming ushered in new beliefs and new ritual customs and formats, which generated new religious symbols and old ones restructured into new devine systems. In particular, Zhu Yuanzhang's arrangement of the city and earth gods inevitably underwent local transformation in the new climate. The first half of this chapter analyzes the metamorphosis of Chenghuang and Tudi exorcism in local society. In the second half I will begin to shift my focus to southern Anhui, exploring how this mid-Ming change led to the construction of the local pantheon or Wuchang's new symbolic world in Guangde 廣德 subprefecture.

1. Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure;* idem, *Praying for Power,* p. 314.

2. See, e.g., Han Dacheng, *Mingdai chengshi yanjiu,* esp. appendix 1—a long list of hundreds of cities and towns that emerged during the second half of the Ming dynasty (pp. 666–689).

Part II

Co-opting Ghosts and Money

Popular Wuchang Symbolism in Late Imperial Huizhou

4

Synopsis of Huizhou Social History

The manipulation of Wuchang worship turned out to be even more crucial for local elites in Huizhou than for their counterparts in Guangde, in the effort to maintain traditional social order in the face of the rapid socioeconomic changes after the mid Ming. From the mid Ming onward, especially over the course of the sixteenth century, Huizhou emerged as a gentrified lineage stronghold and a major cradle of mercantile activities. At stake for Huizhou elites was not only control over their kinsfolk and bondservants, but also the relationships among different social groups within the lineage elite, mainly between the established gentry and rising merchants. This power negotiation was subtly mirrored in Wuchang imagery, which in turn further enriched the Huizhou version of the ambiguous deity. For its colorful social-cultural history, and especially given the rich sources of both elite writings and "popular" texts, Huizhou appears to be an ideal place to figure out the new identities of Wuchang and to analyze how they combined with the deity's original character to form a pattern of popular symbolism. To reach a better understanding of this pattern and its social dimensions in Huizhou, this chapter first takes a brief look at the social fabric of the prefecture in late imperial times.

Gentrified Lineages, Merchants, and Bondservants

In the People's Republic of China, so-called Huizhou scholarship (*Huixue* 徽學) has been most productive and influential in the post-Mao historical literature. This is in part due to the existence of an enormously large amount of primary sources, including genealogies, other lineage

5

The New Identities of Wuchang

Popular Wuchang symbolism in Huizhou, as in Guangde, was fundamentally about the exorcism of evil ghosts. And here, too, Wuchang was placed at the bottom of local pantheons and functioned to enhance the tutelary deity of the local community or lineage. But where Zhang Bo was a deified figure in Guangde, in Huizhou he was naturally overshadowed by other heroes who had made great contributions to the Huizhou region in previous times—deified figures such as Wang Hua 汪華 and Zhang Xun 張巡.[1] The similar mechanism of *ji er mingzhi* made these famous Huizhou heroes anthropomorphic proxies for the city and earth gods who headed Huizhou local pantheons and presided over Huizhou exorcism rites. More significantly, Huizhou merchants adopted the deities

1. Zhang Bo continued to be worshipped in Huizhou through the Qing and after. The King Zhang temple in Shexian, for instance, is mentioned in *SXZ* (pp. 231–232) immediately after temples for worshipping Wang Hua, Liu Meng 劉猛, and Zhang Xun. Evidence indicates that Wang Hua became the primary deity in a Huizhou Guanghui (Cishan) temple, (Cheng Ting, *Chunfan jicheng*, 2a). More interestingly, *HZZ* (1566 ed., 10.10b) mentions five "King Zhang temples" (Zhangwang miao 張王廟), devoted to worshipping the god Guangde Cishan, in Qimen county alone. *QXZ* (1873 ed., p. 314) also mentions five King Zhang temples and a new one, most of which were in the same locations as indicated in *HZZ*. But the *QXZ* editors clearly indicate that the primary god for these temples was Zhang Xun, not Zhang Bo. Could this have been a result of this locality's *ji er mingzhi* strategy, or could it be that the *QXZ* editors have mistaken the primary god worshipped in those King Zhang temples in the late Qing? If the latter is the case, this mistake reflects the popularity of Zhang Xun in Qimen; it indicates that Zhang Xun had overshadowed Zhang Bo. Nevertheless, in Huizhou, Zhang Xun was indeed also called "King Zhang" (*JXZ*, p. 139).

6

The Social Dimension of the Wuchang Cult

Thus far, I have presented four stories: one about the origins of Wuchang as a symbol of ghost exorcism, a second about Ming Taizu's effort to build a new, empirewide unified format of ritual observance, a third about the incorporation of Wuchang into local pantheons or its subordination to lineages' tutelary deities in the mid-Ming metamorphosis of the official worshipping system, and a fourth about the mythological conflation between Wuchang and other pentad spirits. The meanings of Wuchang these historical processes generated were layered one upon the another, various representations built into a single popular image to form a pattern of symbolism. Behind this pattern lies one final story, that of how the changing symbolism of Wuchang reflected and helped to implement dramatic changes in class and lineage structure in the mid-Ming context and afterward. These changes affected not only state-society and elite-commoner relations, but above all gentry-merchant relations.

At the core of the mid-Ming change was the development of a money economy, particularly manifest in Huizhou, the emerging capital of mercantile activities in late imperial China. From the mid Ming onward, merchants in southern Anhui, particularly those from Huizhou, worshipped Wuchang, but not Wutong, as their patron deity of wealth. In fact, Wuchang appears to have been a mid-Ming substitute for Wutong in Huizhou and southern Anhui at large. This partially explains why the two pentad spirits converged in Huizhou folklore. However, some of the top gentry from the prefecture, and top scholars from other places in Jiangnan as well, denied any linkage between the two. The commoner devotees from southern Anhui, too, insisted that they worshipped Wuchang but

Conclusion

Let us complete our journey into the symbolic world of Wuchang by finishing the story with which we began this monograph.

In 1826, on the first day of the eighth month, in the heart of Huizhou, more than three hundred boys under the age of fifteen from Xidi of Yixian invoked Wuchang for protection in a grand procession. Wuchang was a symbol of ghost exorcism; that boys were used in the procession was part of an exorcism tradition dating back thousands of years. This age-old tradition, however, had been injected with new meanings by late imperial times. Wuchang was invoked, above all, to protect the Hu lineage; the parade was staged as part of the commemoration for the compilation of the Xidi Hus' genealogy. The boys in this case were themselves important symbols as well, symbolizing the purity, and therefore piety, of the procession organizers and the prosperity of the lineage, blessed with many sons.[1] In addition, according to a well-established tradition in Xidi (and in Huizhou as a whole), these boys were soon to leave home to learn a trade. As an old Yixian proverb has it, "We didn't build up merit a lifetime ago, so we got born in Huizhou; at thirteen or fourteen, it's out we go."[2]

---

1. In this case, it was the lineage context, not the involvement of boys in the Xidi parade, that made the boy supplicants important "new" symbols by late imperial times. As I have shown, three sons of Zhuanxu who died unnaturally became the main targets in ancient exorcism. But later they also emerged as the exorcising gods themselves. The ambiguity of Zhuanxu's sons in exorcism reflected a yearning, widely shared throughout Chinese history, to see sons healthily born and grown. See, e.g., Kang, *Nuoxi yishu yuanliu*, pp. 327, 381–382.

2. Yu, *Yixian*, p. 139.

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