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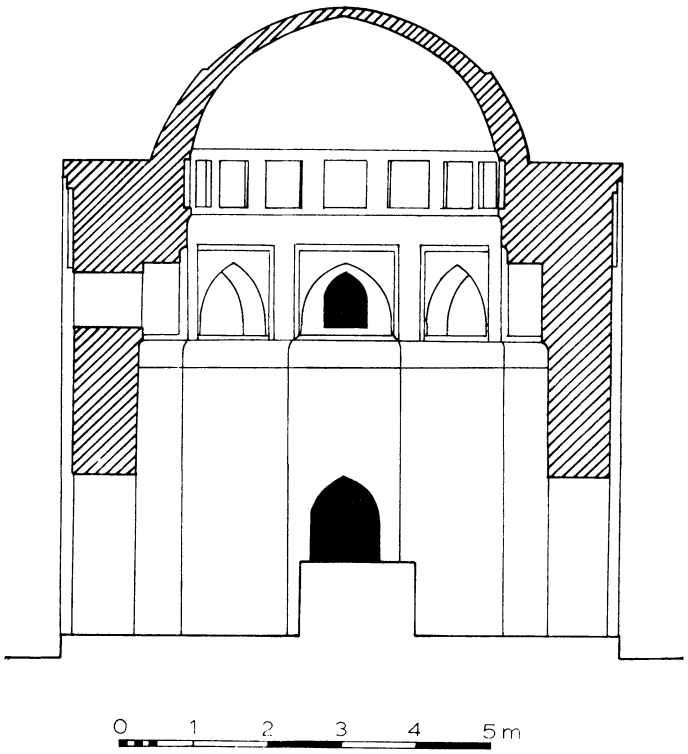

Fig. 14. Imāmzāda Ḥusain Riḍā, Varāmīn: section through A–B.

fī ghurra Jumādā 'l-Awwal[197] *sanat 841* (in figures) "At the beginning of the month of Jumādā I year 841 "/November 1437 (Pl. IVc). The decade of the figure is not quite clear; a case could also be made for 821.

Discussion. Structurally the monument presents no innovations. The fourteenth century tomb towers of Qum, e.g. the Imāmzāda Ja'far,[198] present close parallels. Had the monument not been dated one might have been tempted to ascribe it to the fourteenth century. The remains of stucco decoration on the double minaret portal at Qum was probably one factor in its attribution to *c.* 1325,[199] when in fact the date 830/1426–27 is preserved on one of the minarets.[200] The importance of the Imāmzāda Ḥusain Riḍā lies in the extension of the *terminus ante quem* for this type of stucco decoration, which had died out by the middle of the fifteenth century.[201]

JOHN BELL OF ANTERMONY, AND HIS TRAVELS IN IRAN

By Roger Stevens

It is a small but curious irony of history that both the first and last British travellers to Iran during the Ṣafavid Dynasty were Russian-based. Anthony Jenkinson was the forerunner, in 1561, of five expeditions organized by the Muscovy Company to seek trade at the court of Shah Ṭahmāsp; their ventures had very limited success. The subject of this notice was a Scot who enlisted as a doctor in

[198] See n. 196 above.
[199] Wilbur, op. cit., p. 167.
[200] See Mudarrisi Ṭabātabā'ī, *Turbat-i Pākān* vol. II (Qum 2535) pp. 127–9, Pl. 188.
[201] The last appearance of this style of stucco in Iran seems to be in the Imāmzāda Mūsā Mubarqa' at Qum, dated 851/1437–38 in a now vanished inscription (see Abbās Faiz, *Ganjīna-yi Āthār-i Qum* (Qum, 1330 A.S.H.), vol. II, pp. 536–60 and Ṭabātabā'ī, op. cit., pp. 78–81). A fuller discussion of Timurid stucco will appear in the Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Symposium on Archaeological Research in Iran.

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the service of Peter the Great in 1714, and in the following year was sent to Iran as a member of a trade and diplomatic mission, spending a year and a half in the country (November 1716 to June 1718). His account of his journey, published in 1763 at the instigation of Lord Granville on the basis of notes made during his travels, provides a clear, accurate and occasionally diverting picture of life in Iran during the final years of the reign of Shah Sulṭān Ḥusain. If his *Journey from St. Petersburg in Russia to Isfahan in Persia*[202] is not as well known as it deserves, the reason may be that it has been overshadowed by his account of his later mission to Pekin (1719–22), which occupies the greater part of his book.[203]

Strangely, few Scots found their way to Iran in the seventeenth century; most visitors from Britain were English or Welsh. An outstanding Scots traveller a century earlier had been George Strachan, Catholic and orientalist, whom Pietro della Valle came across in Isfahan composing an Arabic dictionary and teaching the Carmelites Arabic after spending two years among the desert Arabs.[204] For a brief period in 1622 he was employed by the East India Company at Gombroon (Bandar Abbas) where he was of much help to Pietro in the final stages of his tragic journey. Strachan was a born traveller of a type later to become more familiar. He found life among the Arabs, Pietro tells us, *gustissimo*, both for the pleasure of constant but not tiring travel, for the hunting, and for the free manner of living not confined within the walls of a city.

His fellow Scot, John Bell of Antermony, was of a different mould. Though his father was a Jacobite, the family was Protestant; and he had no claim to Oriental scholarship. He probably arrived in Iran with little briefing or background knowledge, and had to pick up the threads as he went along. On the business of his mission he was discreetly silent, probably for reasons of state. But he was a shrewd observer, with an eye for telling detail, and his sober factual style contrasted notably with that of his more florid English predecessors.

Bell was born at Antermony, a small estate in the parish of Campsie in Stirlingshire in 1691. He attended Glasgow University from 1707 to 1711 and qualified as a medical doctor in 1713 at the age of 22. In the following year he set out for Russia with a letter of introduction to Dr. Areskine or Erskine, a prominent Jacobite who had been in Russia since 1704 and was by now Chief Physician and Privy Counsellor (so Bell tells us in his Preface) to Peter the Great. On arriving at St. Petersburg, Bell indicated to Areskine that he was anxious to travel to the Orient, and it was through Areskine that Bell's attachment to the mission of Artemii Petrovich Volynsky was arranged.[205]

The previous history of Russian embassies to Iran had been eventful but unhappy. Two envoys accompanied by a suite of eight hundred persons had arrived in Isfahan in 1664. Their appearance and behaviour were equally uncouth; when it transpired that they had brought a large stock of goods for sale without paying customs dues they were given short shrift. Another ambassador in 1673 created a public scene over where he should dismount from his horse before a royal reception.[206] Engelbert Kaempfer reported the presence of two overlapping Russian envoys in 1684. Under Peter the Great the pace of contact quickened still further. He wanted both to divert the silk trade from Aleppo and Smyrna through Russia and also to develop the Caspian as a commercial route and as a channel for Russian expansion in Transcaspia. His envoy sent in 1697 had insisted on delivering his letters of credence to the Shah personally in the first instance, instead of through the I'timād al-Daula, had " become somewhat noisy and threatening " when told that this was contrary to precedent, and finally had to be put under guard. The Russians got their own back in 1700 when Prince Galitzin seized and destroyed letters sent by the Shah to the Tsar, the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.[207] In 1706 a Russian Ambassador of Armenian origin, Israel Ori, arriving with a large suite, had been the object of deep, though unjustified, Persian suspicion, a feeling zealously fanned by Catholic missionaries (who feared he would seek their expulsion) and by Western traders (who foresaw a damaging diversion of trade). The mission of 1715 appears to have been better planned and more successful. Volynsky was instructed to collect information about Iranian communications and military strength; and he

[202] *Sic.* But in the body of his book Bell says that the Persians call it Iran, and I have referred to Iran throughout.

[203] *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia*, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1763).

[204] Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi* II (Rome, 1650), p. 50.

[205] For these and other details about Bell's background, see J. L. Stevenson's edition of Bell's travels, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Pekin 1719–22* (Edinburgh, 1965).

[206] Chardin, *Voyages en Perse* I, (Amsterdam, 1711), pp. 257–8.

[207] *A Chronicle of the Carmelites* I (London, 1927), p. 489.

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succeeded in securing an agreement which enabled Russian merchants to trade freely throughout the country, without any limit on their purchases of raw silk.[208]

Bell recorded none of this, though he clearly had eyes for both commercial opportunities and political omens. Already, travelling through Russia, he noted that the merchants of Kazan lived " very decently ", many having grown rich through trade with Turkey and Iran; that eastern traders had their own caravanserai at Astrakhan; and that the Iranian trade there was carried out largely by Armenians, " for the Persians themselves seldom go out of their own country ". A ruined caravanserai in Georgia was " the first instance that occurred of remissness and inattention in the present government of Persia". The walls of Isfahan, he noted, were broken down in many places, " so that, if the army is defeated in the field, Isfahan cannot defend itself one day ".[209] He recorded that on the journey home news reached the mission of " the bad success of the Shah's forces which were sent to Kandahar against the rebel Mery Mahmut ".

Volynsky's party—the numbers are not recorded—travelled from St. Petersburg to Moscow and thence by boat to the Oka and the Volga, arriving at Astrakhan on July 13th 1716. They landed on the Caspian coast south of Derbend at the end of August, and were conducted overland to Shemākha where they remained until December. Their arrival at Shemākha almost coincided with the return from Paris of Moḥammad Riżā Beg, Iranian Ambassador to France, whose exploits, culminating in the smuggling out from Le Havre in a packing case of the Marquise d'Epinay,[210] provoked critical comment from Montesquieu in his " Lettres Persanes "; and Bell describes his subsequent fate:

> The ministry at Isfahan had perfect intelligence of his whole conduct which he came to understand; and being afraid to undergo a trial at court went directly to Erivan ... where as it was reported he poisoned himself.

The party was delayed at the Shīrvān capital by the customary dispute about an adequate travel allowance from the Shah, ultimately resolved by the intervention of a Frenchman, M. Bourgard, employed by the English East India Company.

Their onward route lay across the Mūghān steppe to Āhar and Tabrīz (reached on December 27) and thence by Miyāneh, Zenjān and Sāveh to Isfahan. Though they were received in the larger towns with the traditional ceremonies, it is clear that in the more remote country districts security was not what it had been fifty years before.[211] At Āhar the headman ordered the populace to arm and oppose their entry, on which Bell comments soberly:

> ... had we been admitted, the inhabitants must all have left their houses; and where could a parcel of poor women and children have found shelter in such extremity of cold?

Also, the neighbourhood of Araseng (south of Qazvīn) was " much pestered with strong gangs of highway men ".

In Tabrīz John Bell was impressed by " an old temple converted into a mosque now neglected and ruinous ". This was presumably the Blue Mosque, for he continues:

> The roof is supported by many stately pillars of porphyry, almost entire, some of which are of a greenish colour, with other colours and veins of gold interspersed. The proportions seemed to be regular and the workmanship very fine and curious.

The Capuchin mission at which Chardin stayed in 1672 while he sorted out his jewellery and other possessions[212] was still extant. To the south-east of the city Bell noted the ruins of a bridge on top of a hill which he was told had been built by a whimsical priest with the object of attracting to himself the attention of Shah 'Abbās. At Sulṭāniyeh he observed " a brass gate of lattice work in the tomb of a Persian prince "; at Kushkanut he found in the upper room of a caravanserai " the names of many

[208] Lockhart, in his *The Fall of the Safavid Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation* (Cambridge 1958) gives much useful information about Irano-Russian relations at this period.

[209] The siege of Isfahan in 1722 lasted six months, so this statement was probably not hindsight.

[210] Herbette, in *Une Ambassade Persane sous Louis XIV* (Paris, 1907), gives an amusing account of this embassy.

[211] Cf. Tavernier. " We were in the dominions of the Shah of Persia where there is so much security in travelling ", and Herbert, " One may travel in any place at any time without all danger ".

[212] Chardin, op. cit., I, p. 188.

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Europeans cut in the wall, in different languages; among which was that of Olearius, secretary to the Holstein ambassadors, who published a very exact account of that fruitless journey"; at Qum Volynsky and a few members of his party were allowed to enter the shrine. The mission's entry into Isfahan, on March 14th 1717, was conducted with due ceremony, and witnessed by large crowds both in the streets and from the tops of houses. Two days later, Volynsky was invited to call on the I'timād al-Daula, Fatḥ 'Alī Khān Dāghestānī, which he refused, demanding first an audience of the Shah himself like his predecessor in 1699. In the end he had his way, but it was not until May 4th that Shah Sulṭān consented to receive him.

John Bell's account of this audience is his finest set piece. The party waited for over two hours in a courtyard reached through the 'Ālī Qapu watching ministers of state, officers of the household, an elephant and two lions pass by. They then entered a spacious garden and were impressed by the sight of twenty horses richly caparisoned and still more by the novelty of their reception:

> As the Ambassador passed both the lions couched and the elephant bent his foreknee at a word pronouced by the keepers.

They next came in sight of the Audience hall, the Talar Tavileh,[213] which, though backing on to the seraglio, seemed to stand by itself in the middle of a garden. Only the Ambassador and six of his party (of whom Bell was one) were admitted beyond this point into the hall, which he described as a magnificent building with an arched ceiling covered with mirrors of different sizes to within three feet of the floor. What ensued deserves full quotation:

> At our entry into the hall we were stopped about three minutes at the first fountain, in order to raise the greater respect; the pipes were contrived to play so high that the water fell into the bason like a thick rain. Nothing could be distinguished for some time, and the Shach himself appeared as in a fog. While we moved forward, everything was as still as death. The master of the ceremonies took the ambassador by the arm and conducted him within six yards of the throne, who, offering to advance, in order to deliver his credentials, was prevented by the Etmadowlett, or prime minister. This minister received the credentials, and laid them before the Shach, who touched them with his hand, as a mark of respect. This part of the ceremony had been very difficult to adjust. For the ambassador insisted on delivering his letters into the Shach's own hands. The Persian ministers, on the other hand, affirmed that their Kings never received letters directly, from the ambassadors of the greatest emperors on earth.
>
> The ambassador now made a short speech, which the Sophy answered, through the Etmadowlett, in very obliging terms. He then enquired after his Czarish majesty's health, and asked several questions about the Swedish war; and whether the ambassador had suffered any hardships on the road during so long a journey? To all of which he returned answers suitable to the occasion. At last he was desired to take his seat, to which he was led by the master of the ceremonies. It was about a foot high, and placed at a distance of ten yards from the King. A little behind the ambassador were placed his attendants, on seats of nearly the same height. During all this ceremony, musick played; consisting of a variety of instruments, which are not unharmonious, and the mufty, or high priest, read, without intermission, chapters of the Koran.
>
> Before the Ambassador was seated, the presents from his Czarish Majesty to the Sophy, carried by fifty men, were brought to the entry, and received by the proper officers. They consisted of sables, and other valuable furs, falcons, a variety of fine tea, musical clocks, gold watches set in diamonds, &c.
>
> As soon as the ambassador had taken his seat, all the ministers of state sate down on their hams, on both sides of the hall, in rows; for none are allowed to sit cross legged in the presence of the Sophy.
>
> There was now placed before the company little tables, on which were set all kinds of sweet-meats, and confections; and before the ambassador was laid a golden calianne, or tobacco-pipe; which the Persians reckon an high instance of respect.
>
> The musick continued playing, and the mufty still continued reading; but everything else was silent. Several messages passed between the King and the ambassador, by means of the master of the ceremonies, and our interpreter. The King spoke the Persian language, and the ambassador the Russian, while the other two used the Turkish.

[213] So-called because it adjoined the stables; according to Chardin, it was chosen for audiences because visiting envoys were able to admire the horses *en route*. It was said to have been more than twice the size of the Chehel Sutūn, and had been the scene of Shah Sulaimān's coronation ceremony.

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In the mean time some pure water, with a bit of ice in it, was brought in golden basons to drink. About an hour after, victuals were brought by a number of servants, who carried them on their heads, in large square baskets. First the Shach was served, and next the ambassador with his retinue, then all the officers of state that sat in the hall. The grand steward of the household waited on the King, and his assistants on the rest of the company, according to their different ranks. At the same time our servants were entertained in the garden.

The entertainment consisted mostly of different kinds of rice boiled with butter, fowls, mutton, boiled and roast lamb. The whole was served in large gold or china dishes, and placed in the baskets, which stood on a long cloth spread above the carpet. The dishes were interspersed with saucers filled with aromatic herbs, sugar and vinegar. But, according to the custom of the country, we had neither napkins, spoons, knives nor forks; for the Shach himself eat with his fingers, and every one followed his example. There were indeed, besides the common bread, some very large thin cakes, which we used instead of napkins, to wipe our fingers. They are made of wheat-flower, the Persians sometimes eat them, they are not disagreeable. Our drink was sherbet, and water cooled with ice. Formerly it was usual, on such occasions, to drink wine, and have women to dance and sing. But the present Sophy, being a sober and devout prince, thought it proper to abolish a custom productive of so many indecencies, and directly contrary to the rules of the Koran. We had therefore only men to sing, and no dancing.

The ambassador, and all the gentlemen who were admitted into the hall, continued with their heads covered during all the time of the audience. They only, on hearing the royal presence, uncovered once and bowed to his majesty.

The sobriety of the occasion seems to have been in marked contrast to the revels organized by earlier Ṣafavid monarchs for visiting ambassadors, or indeed to what we hear from other sources of the private life of Shah Sulṭān Ḥusain himself.[214] In other respects, however, Bell's account of this monarch accords with that of contemporary visitors:

The Shach's name is Hussein; he is about thirty years of age, of a middle stature, open countenance, and has a small black beard. It is said that his legs are remarkably short, in proportion to his body. He is very good natured, and of a beneficent disposition. He has several children by different ladies. Tachmaz the oldest, at present in his minority, seldom appears out of the Haram. Hussain himself, though a prince adorned with many virtues, yet being educated in the Haram among the women, is little acquainted with the world, and leaves the management of the empire wholly to his ministers; in them he places an intire confidence; and they, in their turn, persuade him, that it is below his dignity to attend any publick affairs whatever.

Volynsky had three further audiences of the Shah: the first was on May 11th, again at the Talar Tavileh; the second, on June 12th, took place at Ḥusain's new palace of Faraḥābād, where during supper on the terrace a squall of wind blew the thin broad cakes which the Persians use as napkins to the ground; the third on July 3rd " at a palace in the city " was a farewell audience, at which the ambassador took his leave.

During his five months' sojourn in Isfahan, Bell had ample opportunity to observe the local scene. He was entertained by the English and Dutch agents; he called on the Chief Court Physician and discussed medical matters with him; he visited the Shah's aviary near the Allāh Verdi Khān bridge; he dined with the Keeper of the Great Seal and was entertained with jugglers who let snakes out of their turbans—but he was assured that the snakes were inoffensive and toothless (*sic*); but he and his master were prevented from going on a hunting trip because of a royal *qurq*, " on which occasions it is death for anyone to be seen near the place where the court passes ".[215]

[214] According to Krusinski, he was persuaded by an impish grandmother to lift the ban which he initially, and with pious intent, had imposed on wine, and after that never looked back, so that it was rare to find him sober. Le Bruyn described him as " so given to women that he knows no bounds of his lewd practices and is quite careless of the welfare of the state. . . ." Perhaps, however, he continued to maintain outward form on state occasions. Perhaps, too, the Court may have been particularly wary of serving wine when entertaining Russians. Earlier Russian ambassadors (in 1664) had drunk so much that according to Chardin (I, p. 257) they had lost consciousness, with the result that, in 1673, ambassadors were not served with wine, though the Persians drank it and the Russian ambassador present was consoled with vodka!

[215] The practice of clearing the streets when the royal retinue passed by was designed to protect the ladies of the Ḥaram from masculine gaze. It became an abuse under the later Ṣafavids, and in the early years of Shah Sulaimān's reign was almost a daily (or nightly) occurrence. Fryer described how " the King like a dunghill cock struts at the head of his Amazonian army ".

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The Volynsky mission finally left Isfahan on September 1st, their numbers swelled by an elephant, two lions, two leopards, three parrots, three horses and a mynah bird, all presents from the Shah. They passed through Qazvīn, which had been ravaged by plague, and where several members of the party fell ill, and Resht, where many were seized with ague; and they were forced to winter at Shemākha where plague had raged all summer and which they did not finally leave till June 16th 1718.

A year later, John Bell set out with another Russian mission to Pekin which lasted three years. He is believed to have returned to Scotland about 1724, but went back to Russia as Secretary to the British Minister Resident in 1734 and was sent on a further mission—British this time—to Constantinople in 1737–38. After a further two years in St. Petersburg he returned to Constantinople as a merchant, remaining there until 1746, when he married one Marie Peters, apparently a Russian lady, with whom he retired to Antermony, where he died in 1780, at the age of 89. After his death he was described as having been " remarkable for an amiable simplicity of manners in private life and the most sacred regard for truth in all he said and did."[216]

FROM TABRĪZ TO SIIRT — RELOCATION OF A 13th CENTURY METALWORKING SCHOOL

By J. W. Allan

Since my short paper in the last issue of *Iran* enough evidence has come to my notice to suggest that the continued attribution of the metalworking school in question to Azarbaijan, in particular Tabrīz, is wrong. The evidence is as follows. First of all, Rice's translation of a passage from al-Qazwīnī which is the basis for the traditional attribution is incorrect. The passage reads: *wa-nuqūduhā wa-nuqūd akthar bilād ādharbāyjān al-ṣufr al-maḍrūb fulūsan wa-qiṭā' al-ṭanjīr wa'l-hāwan wa'l-manāra idhā arādū al-mu'āmala 'alayhā ishtarau bihā al-matā' famā faḍila akhadhū bihi qiṭ'a saghīra.*[217] This was translated by Rice: " The coinage of Tabrīz is made of bronze (*ṣufr*) from which *fils* are struck. They (the inhabitants) also use objects (*qiṭa'*) such as pots (*ṭanjīr*), mortars (*hāwin*), and candlesticks (*manār*) as currency. When they make use of these objects for commercial transactions they buy goods and take the change in small pieces ".[218] The key words in Rice's argument are " they also use objects such as . . . " but this is manifestly a wrong translation, for *qiṭā'* is the word used in the text, not *qiṭa'*, and the former is the plural of *qiṭ'*, meaning " a piece of something ". Thus the inhabitants of Tabrīz were not using complete candlesticks as money, but pieces of such objects, i.e. pieces of bronze, and if they needed change they received back in exchange small pieces of the same sort. The main evidence put forward by Rice for a Tabrīzī provenance for the candlesticks is therefore without foundation, and the other two supporting pieces are also wrong. For the cast bronze aquamanile of a zebu and calf is not a north-western object but a Herātī product of the pre-Mongol period, and it is now virtually certain that the composite copper and tin ore said to have been found at Angert in Azarbaijan from which bronzes could have been made directly is a myth; it was certainly not used in medieval times, when Persian tin was imported first from the Far East and later from Europe.

Secondly, of the fifty-two candlesticks mentioned by Rice or Atil[219] at least eighteen are in Turkish collections, and none have been recorded as being found in Iran. This strongly suggests their source as being well within the boundaries of modern Turkey. Thirdly, a pottery stem bowl akin to the type discussed in my earlier article is illustrated in an article by Feher,[220] and it appears to be an example of Anatolian sgraffiato ware. Finally, Melikian-Chirvani has drawn attention to a passage from al-Mustawfī quoted by Le Strange in connection with the town of Siirt, in Jazīra province, east of

[216] The Revd. James Lapslie, in the *Old Statistical Account* (1795) quoted by Stevenson, op. cit., Introd., p. 6.

[217] al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād* ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1848, II, p. 227.

[218] D. S. Rice, " The seasons and the labors of the months ", *Ars Orientalis* II (1954), pp. 1–40.

[219] E. Atil, " Two Īl-Ḫānid candlesticks at the University of Michigan ", *Kunst des Orients*, VIII (1972), pp. 1–33.

[220] G. Feher, " Turkish pottery and copperwork in Hungary " [in Turkish], *Türkiyemiz* (Haziran 1976), p. 24.

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