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The Expertise Of Muhammad Al-Hafizh Al-Misri At-Tijani (1897-1978) In Hadith

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Abstract: This writing aims to examine the prolific aspects and biography of one of the remarkable lives and multifaceted scholarly endeavours of Sayyid Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri at-Tijani, a towering figure in Islamic scholarship in Egypt during the late 19th century. Revered as a Muhaddith¹, Mufassir, Mutasawwif, and Mujahid, he exemplified a profound spiritual connection alongside an unparalleled commitment to the preservation and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Born into a noble lineage, his scholarly pursuits took him across the Islamic world, where he garnered authority from renowned scholars and meticulously preserved rare manuscripts. A passionate lover of hadith, he dedicated himself to the exhaustive verification and organisation of foundational texts, enhancing their accessibility for future generations. Furthermore, his instructional efforts, notably his recurrent teachings of Sahih Bukhari, earned him the esteemed title of Master of the Muhaddiths. Beyond scholarship, he valiantly defended Islam against colonial onslaughts, employing both his intellectual prowess and military acumen. Endowed with miraculous abilities, his legacy transcends time, serving as a beacon of spiritual enlightenment and scholarly excellence for generations to come.

Keywords: Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri; at-Tijani; Muhaddiths

¹ Partee, Nabil. "Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri." Tijani Flood (blog). Accessed July 30, 2024. https://npartee.wordpress.com/tijaniyyah/shaykh-muhammad-al-hafiz-al-misri/.

Introduction

A significant figure in contemporary history is Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri at-Tijani. Renowned for his profound engagement with and personal experience of spiritual states and stages, he also memorized the entirety of Sahih Bukhari along with numerous other hadith collections.² Shaykh al-Tijani exemplified the demanding yet esteemed legacy of the Muhaddithun. Furthermore, he addressed the military, intellectual, and philosophical challenges posed by secularliberal Western civilization, all within the framework of Islamic Kalam, Sufic, and Fighi intellectual and spiritual traditions.

Sheikh Muhammad al-Hafiz bin Abdul Latif bin Salem, a renowned scholar of hadith, was born in 1315 AH (1897 CE) in Rabi' al-Thani, Kafr Qurs, Ashmoun district, Menoufia province, Egypt. His father's lineage connects him to the Husseini family, while his paternal arandmother's ancestry traces back to our master al-Hassan and the family of Sayyid Sheikh Salim al-Saba'i, associated with Cairo's al-Sabtiya mosque. His mother's lineage includes Bani Razah, descendants of Sayyid Omar bin al-Khattab of Bani Adi bin Ka'b, with maternal ties to the esteemed al-Khatib family of Bani Rizah.³

Research Method

The method of research utilising library resources, commonly referred to as library research, plays a pivotal role in gathering data and information. This approach involves several critical steps. Initially, researchers formulate clear and focused research questions or hypotheses. Subsequently, conducting comprehensive searches of library resources such as books, scholarly journals, articles, research reports, and other pertinent documents related to the research topic.4

Following the collection of relevant literature, researchers proceed with meticulous analysis to grasp the intricacies of the research theme. Furthermore, interpretation of the gathered data and information is integral to this method, as researchers contextualise findings from the literature to align with the ultimate research objectives.

Thus, library research transcends mere information retrieval; it

² Tijani Flood. "Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri," March 24, 2011. https://npartee.wordpress.com/tijaniyyah/shaykh-muhammad-al-hafiz-al-misri/.

Owaisi, Shaykh Fakhruddin. "Tijani Flood. "https://npartee.wordpress.com/tijaniyyah/shaykh-muhammad-al-hafiz-al-misri/.

⁴ Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. The Craft of Research. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

encompasses an intellectual process of comprehension, analysis, and profound interpretation of relevant literature pertinent to the research topic.

This research mostly be conducted through digital and physical library platforms, such as university libraries, online databases (including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ProQuest), and national or international library catalogues.⁵

Once relevant sources have been gathered, the next step is to analyse the information obtained. Researchers need to identify patterns, differences, and similarities in the various perspectives found in the selected literature. Finally, the results of this literature analysis are used to support arguments in academic writing, such as papers, research reports, or theses. Researchers must ensure that all utilised information is correctly cited according to recognized referencing styles. This research method has the advantage of allowing researchers to access a wide range of perspectives and previous research results comprehensively, providing a solid foundation for building new knowledge or refining understanding of the topic being studied.6

Discussion And Result

A. The early life of The Shaykh

His upbringing was marked by the nurturing guidance of his parents, described by Sheikh Muhammad Aal in Fata, Sheikh of Islam in Mauritania, as being between two exemplary and conscientious figures who were dedicated to his education and moral development.⁷ This upbringing bore evident fruits in his character and conduct, as he grew in humility and asceticism, sharing the company of peers and disciples without distinction. He engaged with princes and the impoverished alike in the same modest attire, shunning pretence and worldly allurements for the sake of Allah. He maintained integrity in his dealings, accepting gifts only from those known for their honesty and reciprocating generously, following the example of his esteemed grandfather, peace be upon him, who accepted gifts with gratitude to preserve the feelings of the giver. He

⁵ Creswell, John W. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014.

⁶ Hart, Chris. Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination. London: Sage Publications, 2001.

حجة الإسلام العارف بالله سيدي الشيخ محمد الحافظ " .Ahmad Muhammad al-Hafidh ⁷ Tidianiya. Accessed "التحاني July 3, 2024. رضي https://tidjaniya.com/ar/mohamed-hafidh/.

refrained from actions that could cause discomfort to others, consistently demonstrating exemplary manners rooted in the Sunnah, steadfastly avoiding innovation and deviation. He treated all companions equally, offering smiles to each, showing compassion to the young, reverence to the elderly, and delivering sermons that resonated deeply, reflecting the sincerity and depth of his heart. This is in line with the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) stating that the believer who possesses the most complete faith is the one who exhibits the best manners among them.⁸ The hadith narrated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasises the integral connection between faith and good manners. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The most perfect believer in terms of his faith is the one who has the most excellent manners, and the best of you are those who are best to their womenfolk."9 According to his teachings, the completeness of a believer's faith is not solely defined by ritual observances or doctrinal adherence, but rather by the quality of their conduct and character. By highlighting the importance of exemplary manners, the Prophet underscores that genuine faith is manifested through kindness. compassion, honesty, and respect in interactions with others. This holistic view suggests that ethical behaviour and interpersonal virtues are essential components of true faith, reflecting a deeper spiritual maturity and alignment with the teachings of Islam. Thus, it encourages believers to strive for excellence in both their faith and their manners, recognizing that these aspects are inseparable in achieving spiritual integrity and moral excellence.

In terms of The Sheikh's attire, he adorned himself in well-chosen garments, reflecting his refined taste and cleanliness. He wore a dignified white turban, which he wrapped meticulously around his head, securing it under his chin and allowing its end to gracefully hang behind him, with the tail extending down between his shoulders, following the Moroccan style, a practice rooted in the Sunnah as it is attributed to the prophet Muhammad SAW. The companion of the Prophet SAW, Umar bin al-Khattab said "tijanu hazihi al-ummah al-imamah", "The crowns of this ummah are the turbans."¹⁰ The statement is also recorded in Muahultav's al-Zahr al-Basim and is attributed to Ali bin Abi Talib, Mughultay also

⁸ Sunan Abi Dawud. Edited by Ahmad Hasan. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'llmiyyah, 2008. Book 42, Hadith 87.

⁹ At-Tirmidhi, Jami' At-Tirmidhi, Book 46, Hadith 1162.

¹⁰ Al-Jahiz, al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin, Abdul al-Salam Muhammad Harun, ed., n.p., Beirut: fourth edition, vol.3, p. 100 and vol. 2, p. 88; al-Raghib al-Isfahani, Muhadarah al-Udaba, vol. 3-4, p. 371

mentioned that it was attributed to the Prophet as well. 11

Haji Abdullah Nawi noted that his turban resembled those worn by horse riders, deemed particularly suitable for jihad. It is recounted that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, once wrapped his turban similarly around Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, allowing it to hang down between his shoulders. 12 When guestioned about the Prophet's turban, Sheikh Abdul Hafeez Othman remarked that their style closely resembled that of the Sheikh, citing biographical sources to support this.

Despite criticisms from adversaries, unintentionally affirming his virtues with numerous supporters, he maintained a dignified silence, embodying forgiveness and tolerance, traits inherent in the Muhammadan legacy and divine guidance. His generosity extended to all, reflecting a steadfast adherence to moral principles. Generosity is a prominent attribute of Allah. One of His Names, 'Al-Kareem', denotes Him as exceedingly giving, replete with favour, and infinitely generous.¹³

His teachers

He undertook the study of the Qur'an with Sheikh Abdullah Hamada and Sheikh Suleiman al-Banna, following the Hafs narration¹⁴. In addition, he received instruction from Sheikh Khalil al-Janaini through Sheikh Metwally, a prominent Quranic reciter in Egypt. His linguistic studies were guided by Sheikh Youssef al-Komi, Sheikh Muhammad al-Mahdi, and Sheikh Ismail al-Islambouli. He engaged with Sheikh Abdul-Moneim Qasim, a notable Maliki jurist, for legal interpretations and gained insights from Sheikh Youssef al-Dajwi on Islamic jurisprudence. He also studied under Sheikh Muhammad Madi al-Rakhawi, renowned for his expertise in Al-Azhar's principles during his time, and Sheikh al-Iskandari. His close association with Sheikh Salama al-Azami al-Qudaati al-Shafi'i, a leading authority of his era in religious sciences, underscored his dedication to learning from all his students throughout their companionship.

¹¹ Mughultay, al-Zahr al-Basim, Leiden, Or. 370, fol. 219b. And see Ibn al-Daiba, Taysir al-Wusul ila Jami' al-Usul min hazihi al-Rasul. Cairo 1390/1970. vol. 4 p. 286.

¹² Sunan an-Nasa'i. Edited by Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000.

¹³ See in the Quran, Surah al-Infitar verse 6

¹⁴ Fatimah Assayyid. "الشيخ العلامة المحدث محمد الحافظ التجاني." Uploaded February 2023. Scribd. Accessed July 2024. 11, الشيخ-العلامة-المحدث-محمد-الحافظ-/https://www.scribd.com/document/625230536 .التجاني

B. His works on hadith

Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz's dedication to the study and teaching of Hadith is profoundly reflected in his unparalleled expertise and extensive contributions to the field. His mastery of Hadith literature was evident in his repeated teachings of the Sahih al-Bukhari, a cornerstone of Hadith collections, which he taught over forty times throughout his career in Egypt. Sahih al-Bukhari is one of the most authentic and respected collections of hadith in Islam. Compiled by the Persian scholar Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (810–870 CE), this collection is regarded by Sunni Muslims as the most reliable source of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and actions, second only to the Quran. Al-Bukhari spent 16 years compiling his collection, which contains approximately 7,275 hadiths, including repetitions. He was known for his rigorous methodology, which included verifying the chain of narrators (isnad) and ensuring the text (matn) was free from inconsistencies or errors. To be included in his collection, a hadith had to meet strict criteria of authenticity, including continuous and reliable transmission from the Prophet Muhammad to the time of compilation. Example of a Hadith from Sahih al-Bukhari: The Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Actions are judged by intentions, so each man will have what he intended. Thus, he whose migration was to Allah and His Messenger, his migration was to Allah and His Messenger; and he whose migration was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration was to that for which he migrated". 15 This feat alone underscores his profound knowledge and deep commitment to preserving and disseminating the Hadith tradition.

Moreover, Shaykh al-Hafiz was known for his prodigious memory, a critical asset for a scholar in his field. Anecdotes of his ability to teach entire Hadith collections from memory highlight his exceptional memorization skills and intimate familiarity with the texts. For instance, during his visit to Fez, Morocco, his reputation preceded him, and local shaykhs eagerly requested him to teach Imam al-Nawawi's Forty Hadith, a collection revered for its conciseness and depth. He complied, delivering the teachings from memory, which further solidified his status as a preeminent Hadith scholar.¹⁶

¹⁵ Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail. Sahih al-Bukhari. Book 1, Hadith 1.

¹⁶ Shaykh Fakhruddin Owaisi, "Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri," last modified January 2023, https://npartee.wordpress.com/tijaniyyah/shaykh-muhammad-al-hafiz-al-misri/?fbclid=lwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0NxWnv-

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In addition to his teaching, Shaykh al-Hafiz made significant scholarly contributions through his writings. He authored numerous

works that spanned various Islamic disciplines, including Hadith, Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), history, and Sufism (tasawwuf). His approach to Hadith was not merely academic but also practical and spiritual, integrating the rigorous standards of traditional Islamic scholarship with the spiritual insights of Sufism.

One of his notable scholarly pursuits was the tahqiq (verification) of original Hadith manuscripts. Tahqiq involves a meticulous process of authenticating and clarifying texts, often requiring extensive knowledge of various manuscript traditions and historical contexts. Shaykh al-Hafiz's private library was a testament to his dedication to this meticulous work. It housed one of the most esteemed collections of manuscripts in Egypt, featuring texts he had painstakingly copied and collected from some of the oldest and most respected libraries across the Islamic world. His travels took him to Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo, Fez, Tunis, Sudan, and other centres of Islamic learning, where he acquired rare and valuable manuscripts, enriching his personal collection and, by extension, the broader Islamic scholarly tradition.

Shaykh Dr. `Abdul Halim Mahmud, the Rector of al-Azhar, eloquently summarised Shaykh al-Hafiz's impact in his obituary, declaring, "the Imam al-muhaddithin (leading Hadith scholar) has died." This acknowledgment from a prominent figure in Islamic scholarship highlights the profound respect and recognition Shaykh al-Hafiz earned throughout his lifetime for his unparalleled contributions to the study and teaching of Hadith. He collected and verified numerous Hadith manuscripts from libraries in Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo, Fez, Tunis, Sudan, and other centres of Islamic learning. His private library was considered one of the best collections of manuscripts in Egypt.¹⁷

Compilation works

The details¹⁸ of his teachings, compilation efforts, and meticulous copying by hand from original manuscripts can be found in the report authored by his son, within the book titled 'The Sheikh, the Scholar, the Hadith Expert Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Tijani.

¹⁷ Yusuf Hilliard, Shaykh Ahmad bin Muhammad Al-Hafiz Al-Misry, n.d., Flickr, n.d., https://www.flickr.com/photos/34087945%40N03/3602102099.

¹⁸ Ahmad Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Tijani. "العارف بالله سيدي محمد الحافظ التِّجاني". In Encyclopedia of Islamic Thought Figures, 928-929. Accessed July 3, 2024. Archive al-Sufi, https://archive.alsufi.com/page/details/id/285.html.

A committee was formed comprising the Sheikh's sons (Abdul Rahman, Muhammad, and Jamal) and selected Hadith scholars, including Professors Hamid Ibrahim and Muhammad al-Husayni al-Ugabi. Sheikh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Tijani, a respected Imam and Hadith scholar, also participated. This committee diligently completed its work, producing the twenty-third part under the supervision of Professor Muhammad al-Husayni al-Uqabi for Hadith graduation, with explanations provided by the Sheikh's sons and reviewed by Professor Hamid Ibrahim and Sheikh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Tijani.

Interpretation works

Before beginning his interpretations, Sheikh Ahmad Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Tijani meticulously reviewed all existing interpretations in the Tijaniyya Zawiya library. His aim was to ensure coherence and consistency in his interpretations, avoiding contradictions with established scholarship. His dedicated student, Mawlana Haji Abdul Majeed Al Sharif, guestioned the purpose of this thorough process, to which the Sheikh emphasised the importance of maintaining fidelity to established interpretations. Sheikh al-Tijani believed that thorough review and adherence to established interpretations were crucial in preserving the integrity and authenticity of the teachings of the Tijaniyya order.

This meticulous approach not only ensured the accuracy of his interpretations but also demonstrated his commitment to the principles of the Tijaniyya Sufi order. Sheikh al-Tijani's process reflected a deep respect for the traditional scholarship and a recognition of the importance of continuity in spiritual teachings. His emphasis on coherence and consistency underscored the need to honour the intellectual and spiritual legacies of past scholars while providing guidance that was relevant and accessible to contemporary followers. This approach is in line with the Quranic principle: "And follow not that of which you have no knowledge". 19

Publication works

Twenty-eight years ago, Sheikh al-Tijani initiated "The Path of Truth" magazine, a platform where he published interpretations, articles, and investigations on Sharia, Hadith, jurisprudence, monotheism, and the defence of Sufism. This publication also featured numerous fatwas

¹⁹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., 2001), Surah al-Infitar, verse 6.

addressing inquiries from diverse regions, illustrating Sheikh al-Tijani's extensive scholarly contributions. He was involved in editing and verifying many important Hadith texts, which were part of his extensive manuscript collection.20

Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz authored several influential works on Hadith, which are highly esteemed in Islamic scholarship. Notable among his contributions²¹ relate the hadith are:

1. Arrangement and Simplification of "Musnad of Imam Ahmad":

The "Musnad of Imam Ahmad" is one of the largest and most important collections of hadith in Islam, compiled by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780–855 CE). This monumental work contains over 27,000 hadiths and is organised primarily by the name of the companion who narrated the hadith. Renowned for comprehensiveness, the "Musnad" has been a cornerstone for scholars over the centuries. The effort to arrange and simplify this collection aims to enhance its accessibility and ease of reference by categorising the hadiths systematically. This approach helps scholars and students quickly locate specific hadiths and understand their contexts.

2. Arrangement of the Documentation of the Hadiths in "Ihya Ulum al-Din" According to Alphabetical Order, with Commentary on Each Hadith by Sayyid Murtada al-Zabidi:

"Ihya Ulum al-Din" (Revival of the Religious Sciences) is a seminal work in Islamic spirituality and ethics by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE). This influential text includes numerous hadiths cited to support various points. Sayyid Murtada al-Zabidi (1732-1791 CE) provided an extensive commentary on these hadiths, organising them alphabetically and adding explanations and context for each one. This meticulous arrangement allows scholars and readers to easily locate and comprehend the hadiths mentioned in al-Ghazali's work, thereby enhancing their understanding of the text's spiritual and ethical insights.

²⁰ Tijani Flood. "Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri." March 24, 2011. https://npartee.wordpress.com/tijaniyyah/shaykh-muhammad-al-hafiz-al-misri/.

²¹ "Mawqi' al-Sufiyah - al-Shaykh al-'Allamah al-Muhaddith Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Mawai' al-Sufiyah Mawai' al-Sufiyah." n.d. https://archive.alsufi.com/page/details/id/285.html.

3. Documentation of the Hadiths in "Jawahir al-Ma'ani":

"Jawahir al-Ma'ani" (Jewels of Meanings) is a significant work within the Tijani Sufi order, authored by Sidi al-Hajj Ali Harazem Berrada (d. 1797 CE). This text includes numerous hadiths used to support the teachings and practices of the Tijani order. The documentation process involves verifying the authenticity of these hadiths and providing references from original sources. This rigorous verification ensures that the hadiths cited in "Jawahir al-Ma'ani" are reliable and properly attributed, thereby strengthening the credibility of the teachings within the Sufi tradition.

4. Documentation of the Hadiths in the Book "Al-Luma" by Abu Nasr al-Tusi:

"Al-Luma" (The Sparks) is a foundational text in Sufism, written by Abu Nasr al-Tusi (d. 973 CE). This work incorporates numerous hadiths to illustrate Sufi concepts and practices. The documentation of these hadiths involves thorough verification of their sources and authenticity. Ensuring the reliability of the hadiths used in "Al-Luma" is essential for scholars studying the integration of hadith literature within Sufi teachings, as it provides a solid foundation for understanding Sufi principles and their derivation from Islamic traditions.

5. Verification of the Weak Hadiths in "Sunan al-Tirmidhi":

"Sunan al-Tirmidhi" is one of the six major hadith collections in Sunni Islam, compiled by Imam al-Tirmidhi (824–892 CE). This extensive collection includes numerous hadiths, some of which are classified as weak (da'if). The verification process entails a meticulous examination of these weak hadiths to determine their authenticity and reliability. This critical task is vital for maintaining the integrity of hadith literature and for scholars who rely on "Sunan al-Tirmidhi" for legal and theological rulings. By scrutinising the weak hadiths, scholars can ensure that their references and conclusions are based on sound and trustworthy sources.

Teachings

He devoted himself to spreading knowledge among disciples, followers, and all Muslims in the various centres he established, with a

strong emphasis on adhering to Islamic law. He founded a global school based on adhering to God's commandments: performing obligatory acts, avoiding prohibitions both outwardly and inwardly, drawing closer to God through voluntary acts of worship, avoiding self-promotion and ostentation. This approach cultivated a generation deeply committed to the Qur'an and Sunnah in knowledge, practice, and conduct, without boastful claims or empty slogans. This coincides with the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who said: "Whoever shows off in his deeds, Allah will show him off. And whoever acts with humility and sincerity for Allah, Allah will raise him."22 He preserved the faith of Muslims amidst the spread of missionaries, atheists, and enemies of Islam. He also established the principles of true Sufism—a science of moral refinement and self-purification—based on its original legal foundations, which is the pinnacle of adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah, following the righteous predecessors. He rejected anything contrary to Islamic law, both outwardly and inwardly. He encouraged his students to seek knowledge, and in every centre he established, he set up a library.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the remarkable contributions of Sayyid Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Misri at-Tijani, a towering figure in Islamic scholarship renowned for his profound dedication to hadith sciences. As a Muhaddith, al-Tijani's work exemplified an unparalleled commitment to the meticulous verification and organisation of hadith texts, which was instrumental in preserving their authenticity and accessibility. His comprehensive approach to hadith study, particularly through his exhaustive efforts in the verification and preservation of foundational texts, solidified his reputation as a masterful scholar. His teachings, especially his repeated instruction of Sahih Bukhari, earned him the esteemed title of Master of the Muhaddiths, underscoring his deep expertise and reverence for the prophetic traditions. Al-Tijani's scholarly endeavours not only enriched the field of hadith but also ensured that future generations could engage with these crucial texts with clarity and accuracy. His legacy in the realm of hadith remains a beacon of scholarly excellence and spiritual depth, continuing to inspire and quide Islamic scholarship today.

²² Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Edited by Muhammad Fuwad Abdul-Baqi. Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 1999. Vol. 3, Hadith no. 777.

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