Preface to the Paperback Edition

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Alan Dundes was arguably the most globally renowned and influential folklorist of the twentieth century. Preparing *The Meaning of Folklore* early in the twenty-first century, I had to wonder if his ideas, his theories, and indeed his spirit would still resonate into the new millennium and whether new directions in folkloristics would depart from, or be inspired by, his example. That query about the afterlife of the "Lord of Lores," the lofty title that a journalist bestowed upon Alan (McDonald 2014), led me to listen extra attentively at American Folklore Society and Western States Folklore Society annual meetings for retrospectives on his career in addition to citations and applications of his work. I closely read reviews of *Meaning* not only for the response to my selection of, and commentaries on, Dundes's essays, but also for assessments of the lasting impact, and evolution, of his vision for the study of folklore. Valuing oral sources, I gathered Dundesiana from folklorists in casual surroundings (see Bendix 1995; Zumwalt 2013, 2018a). More formally, I scoured reference lists in academic journals and databases to check the number of times he was listed as an authority.

Given the honor of delivering the 2020 Alan Dundes Lecture at the University of California, Berkeley, at the invitation of the Alan Dundes Distinguished Professor of Folklore, I retraced the steps Alan took to his office and archives at the Anthropology Department in Kroeber Hall, to look for material signs of his legacy (Briggs 2020). Beyond noting the obvious onomastic tributes to Alan, I visited the offices of the Berkeley Folklore Archive, which Alan had established as part of what Wolfgang Mieder called the "Mecca of Folklore Studies" for international, comparative cultural analysis (Mieder 2011, 410; see also Zumwalt 2017). Mieder knew firsthand that going to Berkeley meant visiting Alan, and he witnessed Alan seemingly always being at the head of the academic pack. Alan stood out and drew attention wherever he went. His fervid mentoring of students—and colleagues—implied that Alan in death had gained status as an intellectual prophet. And like prophets, he was capable of stirring controversy and attracting doubters. Was his a prophetic "voice calling in the wilderness" (Matthew 3:1–3) or a man of the moment who changed his age? By way of reflecting on this new edition of Alan's writings more than fifteen years after his death, let me report what I found on his "good name" in scholarly and public discourse.

The new edition of *The Meaning of Folklore* three decades into the twenty-first century is manifest evidence that Alan Dundes's influence on theory and method remains not only in folkloristics but across many disciplines concerned with the study of society, arts, and culture. A decade after Dundes's death, the editors of *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology* (2014) featured his biography as a major theorist of anthropology with relevance to the latest trends (Bronner 2014), and *SAGE Research Methods* (2019), which

claimed to be the largest encyclopedia of social science research ever published, highlighted his biography under the heading of "pioneers" alongside an impressive pantheon of scholarly giants in the twentieth century such as Franz Boas, Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman, and C. Wright Mills (Bronner 2019a). Absorbed as Alan was by the forms and symbolism of folklore, I would guess that he would actually have preferred the original categorization of the honorees as "game changers." He was, with Linda Dégh and Vladimir Propp, one of three folklorists listed and the only one who was born in the Americas. Although his intellectual reach extended to many disciplines and most of his teaching career was in an anthropology department, he remained throughout his life an advocate for thinking of folkloristics as a distinct discipline. Indeed, more than an advocate, he led the charge for the study of folklore wherever he went, and he was invited to speak far and wide.

Many folklorists active in the first quarter of the twenty-first century trace their interest to a transformative moment after meeting him or upon reading his work. Observing a cadre of adherents drawn to Alan, one visiting professor at Berkeley, in awe of his charisma and pronounced sense of mission, declared him "the Pied Piper of Folklore" and another called him "Folklore's Guru" (Mieder 2006, 217; Narayan 2018; see also Bronner 2018). Folklore historian Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt (2020) identified Alan with friendly rivals Richard M. Dorson and Roger Abrahams as among a select group of academic leaders that she dubbed the "Great Team of American Folklorists" during the last third of the twentieth century as each in his own way stared down naysayers. Of the three, though, Alan was the only one inducted into the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2001) that gathers scholars at the forefront of all knowledge. Reflecting on the strides made by this "Great Team" devoted to growing folklore studies as a discipline, Zumwalt questioned whether their positions as program and audience builders for folklore would, or could, be repeated in the twenty-first century.

Despite Alan's denial of having ardent "followers" (Hansen 2005, 246), I can personally attest to meeting fervent admirers all over the world who mythologized him (Bronner 2018; Zumwalt 2013). His loyal students (estimated at over 20,000 by Wolfgang Mieder [2011, 410]) fanned out into teaching positions across academe and made his books and articles required reading for new generations of academic movers and shakers. He also had a popular influence, conspicuous during the coronavirus pandemic of 2019–2020 when pundits invoked his name to discuss apparently "sick" humor in response to tragedy (Deutsch 2020) and rumor-mongering evident in Jewish scapegoating (Conspiracy Watch 2020; Topor 2020). Triggered by toilet-paper shortages at the time, Dundes's controversial claims in the 1980s about German national character based upon anxiety over feces, and by extension the question of a cultural personality, drew commentary anew in the European popular press (Maesel 2020; Schmidbauer 2020; see also Bronner 2011a). As Wolfgang Mieder points out, Dundes wrote plainly and profoundly for a wide audience, for he was "an exemplary educator, an innovative scholar, and a humanist whose knowledge is that of a Renaissance person" (2006, 219). Mieder went on to declare that if a Nobel Prize existed for folklore, Alan would be everyone's first choice. Mieder proposed that Alan's search for fundamental, structural concepts of expressive forms that constitute the social and textual basis of folklore and their theoretical implications is modeled in his studies of the proverb, which Alan would reexamine in other more narrative genres. I also see an analytical foundation in his work on belief, related of course to the wisdom of the proverb, as a cognitive concept underlying the urge, indeed the need, to express oneself traditionally and ritually (see Dundes 1961). In this volume I have made the case that besides the interrelated issues

of communicative form and structure, symbolism and groups are additional key components of his overarching framework of folklore as a projective tool humans need as well as a marker of cultural difference and identity.

If much of Alan's theory centered on the projective function of folklore, his insistence in numerous lectures on "getting the folk and lore together," as an essay title included in *Meaning* suggests, constitutes his main methodological contribution. By that he meant that textual (and structural components), contextual (group and tradition-bearer), and textural (stylistic-performative) information should all be recorded, and analyzed, together, to arrive at the meaning of expressive culture. And he cajoled various stripes of academics that even if they did not identify as folklorists, they should give attention to the evidence of folklore in material as well as social and oral forms, because it is symbolic material that often expresses what people have difficulty expressing otherwise, and that ultimately gives voice to the voiceless. He also had a message of applying this knowledge, often about material that was disturbing, because by knowing the ways that people speak their mind through the psychological license given in folklore, society could better address issues of injustice and inequality (Bell 2019; see also the opening paragraph of Dundes's essay in this volume "The Ritual Murder or Blood Libel Legend"). He railed passionately against the misconception that folklore constituted error or backwardness and therefore should be eradicated. He expounded on folklore's critical value to reveal human beliefs and attitudes and pointed out that folklorists' findings should be essential to community leaders as well as to teachers (see the opening paragraphs of "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture" in this volume). To make the study of folklore more socially relevant, he often pleaded with folklorists to be less preoccupied with old collectanea and more with interpreting texts and explaining contemporary, traditionalized human thought and action. In that process he conceptualized folkloristics as a set of tools for unlocking timely puzzles rather than a salvage project of capturing inert, extinct specimens to lock away (see especially his essay in this volume "The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation").

The need for interpretation in folkloristics is well accepted now but disputes naturally arise in the discipline about the most appropriate interpretative approach. In the introduction to the first edition, I underscored the point that it is misleading to narrow Alan's approach solely to psychoanalysis, although he was certainly a leading voice for incorporating, and revising, Freudian perspectives in folkloristics. I viewed Alan's interpretative message as connected more broadly to a view of humans as distinctive symbol-making, social beings who rely on traditions to express themselves—in joy and anguish—in the frames or situations of culture (this point especially comes through in "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture"). In the tradition of folklore as an overarching label for interconnected traditions, Alan, "more than anybody else in folklore studies," according to Wolfgang Mieder, "knew how to make sense out of incomprehensible or seemingly nonsensical folkloric traditions, from toys to symbols, from folk narratives to myths, from riddles to proverbs, from art to mass lore, from tradition to innovation, from ethnics slurs to national character, from belief to worldview" (2011, 411). He made sense of them by treating them as forms in which the present and past question and sometimes come into conflict with each other. He approached the panoply of examples as symbolic, cultural reactions of groups to surrounding conditions that often placed psychological, social, and political pressure on people, and he sought to know the sources and motivations for those responses.

Alan did not produce a definitive magnum opus on this theory as much as he sowed seeds of multiple research projects and hypothesis-testing in his teaching, presentations,

and many essays. He often challenged audiences to understand his interpretations as original proposals that spur further research, and with that in mind, I subjectively selected his most provocative as well as foundational articles. Reviewers of the volume sometimes complained that my commentaries were either too critical or praising; my goal, however, was not to evaluate but rather to expose, and explain, the underlying logic of his propositions and the personal and intellectual backgrounds out of which they grew. Especially important to make this book a living document is to discern directions that future work could take from Alan's central examples and their interpretations.

In conference papers and publications that I perused as part of my ongoing project of the historiography of folklore studies (see Bronner 1987, 1998, 2019b), ideas that can be credited to Alan often go uncited, an indication of his sway on the discipline. For example, the distinction between "emic" and "etic" classification systems is commonplace in folkloristic discourse and have as a source Alan's essay, reproduced in this volume, "From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales." His conceptualization of the folk group as two or more persons who share a trait in common and use folklore to gain a sense of identity is, I daresay, part of every introductory class on modern folklore. Use of "allomotif" is widespread in structuralist narrative studies, often without recognizing Alan's reasons for proposing the term. Another popular term, "metafolklore," even if not footnoted, owes to Alan's "Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism," also in this book. Although "worldview" is not of Alan's coinage, his usage of it being composed of folk ideas based on an understanding of beliefs underlying folk speech is fundamental and conspicuous in the titles of three essays in this volume (see also Dundes 1969; 1989, 83–91. Indeed, the basic modern concept of "context" as an analytical tool can be traced to Alan's analysis of the components of folklore as texture, context, and text (Dundes 1964).

Alan believed that scholarship was a cumulative enterprise and he highly valued bibliography. One indication is the Alan Dundes Folkloristic Collection of 9,000 books donated to the University of Southern California's Libraries Special Collections. It is notable not just for the rare individual titles but for bookshelves that integrate psychology and ethnography with genre studies of folktales, legends, jokes, proverbs, speech, and games, which suggest ultimately a movement toward a folkloristic theory of mind and structuralist inquiry (see Dundes's essays "Structuralism and Folklore" and "On Game Morphology" in this book). Delivering the keynote for the unveiling of the books to the public in 2011, Wolfgang Mieder gushed that the books "are proof and testimony of the work of a world-class folklorist, a book lover through and through, and a bookish philologist unequaled in modern times. This personal collection of books will keep the work and memory of Alan Dundes alive, and it will inspire future generations of folklorists to carry on Alan Dundes' conviction that 'Folklore Matters'!" (Mieder 2011, 416). The declaration, drawing from the title of an early compilation of his essays featuring the relation of folklore to the formation of social identity (Dundes 1989), is conspicuous on a huge poster designed for the introduction of his papers at the Bancroft Library. The poster had multiple images of Alan with the message "Folklore Matters" repeated in red and white, as if to invite a subliminal psychological command to engage folklore research. Speaking to journalists covering the opening, Alan's son and executor of his estate David Dundes reminded the audience that they should look ahead rather than dwell on his past, and his father's famous essay on future orientation came to mind (Dundes 1969). He asserted that his father "didn't want a memorial. He felt his scholarship was his legacy" (quoted in McDonald 2014). Alan's daughter Alison Dundes Renteln, professor of political science, anthropology, public policy, and law

at the University of Southern California, reflected that her own teaching and scholarship, for example, was "inspired by [her] father." She continued, "I encourage students to reconsider their tacit assumptions, appreciate different points of view, and empower them to use their research to make the world a better place" (quoted in Bell 2019).

Alan coedited with Alison a two-volume work *Folk Law: Essays in the Theory and Practice of Lex Non Scripta* (1994) and maintained an interest in politics and the law through his life. His father was a lawyer who taught comparative politics in the evening in New York City. An intersection of his studies of humor and politics/law comes through in a number of essays on political humor, such as those about American politicians Gary Hart (1989) and Bill Clinton (1999), and restrictions in the former Soviet bloc (with C. Banc 1986, 1990), some of which were posthumously published in *"The Kushmaker" and Other Essays on Folk Speech and Folk Humor*, edited by Wolfgang Mieder (Dundes 2008). This intersection of topics and processes is evident into the new millennium in the work of Marc Galanter, Professor of Law Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin Law School, who dedicated his book *Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture* (2006) to Alan and who wrote the foreword to *Cracking Jokes: Studies of Sick Humor Cycles and Stereotypes* (1987), reprinted in 2017.

With much of the attention after Alan's death to his library and personal papers, and his campaign to expand interpretation, his collections and fieldwork might be overlooked, and I probably did not mention them enough in my previous introduction. Certainly the massive Berkeley archives is testament to his pushing students to experience folklore in situ and document the components, and meta-information, of folklore. In "The Study of Folklore and Literature: Identification and Interpretation" in this volume, Alan made a point of using "a fine example of folklore in culture from William Mzechteno, a 74-year-old Prairie Band Potawatomi in Lawrence, Kansas." Showing his sensitivity to the agency of the narrator, Alan recounts the questions about changes that Mzechteno makes to the narrative and his understanding of their symbolic meanings. His more extensive work in the field is most conspicuous in *La Terra in Piazza: An Interpretation of the Palio of Siena* (1975, winner of the Chicago Folklore Prize in 1976), which he coauthored with Alessandro Falassi of the University of Siena. His interest began during summer 1972 spent immersed in Siena and, as occurred with other projects, was sparked by apparent paradoxes of local customs, which he sought to resolve. (A similar inquiry while in Israel sparked the writing of *The Shabbat Elevator and other Sabbath Subterfuges: An Unorthodox Essay on Circumventing Custom and Jewish Character* [2002], and the idea of his often-reprinted essay "The Number Three in American Culture" [1968] was sparked by the birth of his third child, David.)

With Alan's devotion to the success of Berkeley's graduate students, he certainly would be heartened by the establishment of the Alan Dundes Graduate Fellowship Fund at the institution where he taught for forty-three years, in addition to the teaching chair and lecture in his honor (Briggs 2019). A noticeable omission of his name, however, is in American Folklore Society honorifics, probably a sign of a long-standing ambivalence of society leaders, who were sensitive to his outspoken criticism of the organization and the Indiana University home of the society. (Alan's name was proposed as a fitting title for the society's lifetime scholarly achievement award, but the proposal did not move forward; Alan was president of the society in 1980.) A manifestation of this tension was the publication in 2016 of *Grand Theory in Folkloristics*, edited by Lee Haring, following an earlier special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* in 2008. It leads with Dundes's 2004 plenary

address to the society criticizing current trends of society folklorists (2005), followed by a number of responses. What this sequence epitomized was that even if Alan is gone, he is still leading the debates. Not muted even in death, his voice is front and center into the third decade of the twenty-first century. Eminent sociologist Gary Alan Fine noted in his chapter Alan Dundes's lead in advancing the view that "folkloristics must self-consciously incorporate large-scale, overarching theories of self, society, or narrative, such as those propounded by Freud, Lévi-Strauss, Marx, Propp, or Bakhtin. Dundes tried to move folklore away from its allergy to theory and its preoccupation with the presentation of texts and description of action, remarking on 'the continued lack of innovation in what we might term 'grand theory'" (Fine 2008, 12). For Lee Haring (2008), that allergy was a symptom of anti-theoretical attitudes of American scholars from which Alan departed. Offering a global perspective, Kirin Narayan, one of Alan's former students, added a defense that Alan's projective theory offers "broad applicability and capacity to deliver otherwise hidden insights" (2008, 84).

Charles Briggs in "Disciplining Folkloristics" attributes resistance to Alan's vision for folkloristics because of the narrow characterization of his work as psychoanalysis and argues that "Dundes' difficulties in generating more interest in theory emerges from his persistent efforts to press boundary-work as the sine qua non for discipline-building—or, increasingly, discipline-preservation—strategies for folkloristics" (2008, 95; see also Briggs 2015; Bronner 2019c). That is, Dundes, in the defensive posture of the Great Team of American Folklorists identified by Zumwalt, concentrated on defining and constructing borders between folklore and non-folklore (Briggs 2008, 100). I do not share that view of Alan's legacy. While attentive to the special characteristics, and meaning, of folklore as cultural expression and idea, Alan applied the tools of folkloristics to various topics that others considered popular, and even nonfolkloric, such as photocopied broadsides (1978), toys (1989, 83–91), and American football (1980). To be sure, my argument in *Meaning* was that a reading of Dundes's interpretations revealed more of an innovative post-Freudian thinker rather than a strict adaptation of psychoanalytic premises. Among his papers that have come to light is, in fact, a letter he wrote to psychoanalyst Anna Freud, Sigmund's daughter, in which he introduces himself as "a folklorist whose primary research interest lies in the application of psychoanalytic theory to the materials of folklore" (April 11, 1979). She responded promptly that his arguments were "very persuasive," and "above all," she "was very interested in your description of the difference between fact-finding and interpretation, and work on folklore in the way you outline it seems to me a fascinating task" (May 31, 1979). Alan undoubtedly was overjoyed to read her closing statement that "my father would have been very glad to read your paper [on King Lear]" (Renteln 2020). But I am not so sure Sigmund Freud would have approved of his use of "projective inversion" or emphasis on adolescent development in later psychological interpretations included in Part III of this book.

Indeed, Alan's major contribution to psychology in addition to folkloristics was to revise the Freudian concept of projection and point out the importance of situating symbolic interpretations within cultural contexts rather than presume universal bases of thought. He advanced the move from structural to projective and symbolic concepts for explaining traditionalized or repetitive behavior framed as folkloric (see his provocative reference to framing in "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture"; see also Dundes 2003; Silverman 2016). So influential was Dundes's emphasis on interpretation, according to folklorist Elliott Oring that by the early twenty-first century, "[f]olklorists would take up

this injunction with a vengeance. We now publish interpretation after interpretation as we once published text after text" (2019, 144). He gives special praise for Alan's psychological interpretation using comparative data on the cockfight ("Gallus as Phallus," reproduced in this volume) for demonstrating the fallacy of anthropologist Clifford Geertz's localized interpretation based on social structure, which became the basis for many ethnographers' use of "thick description." With that essay Alan threw down a gauntlet for the next generation of scholars to make the next step from interpretation to explanation based upon not only depth psychology but more generally on symbolic and frame analysis (Bronner 2010, 2019c).

Giving Alan more tribute than the American Folklore Society in North America was the Western States Folklore Society, which published a special issue "Dundes Matters," whose title is a variation of Alan's book *Folklore Matters* (1993) (Gürel and Zumwalt 2014; see also Gürel 2005). Composed of essays by Alan's former students, the issue might be most notable for the essays by Stephanie Malia Hom (2014), which identifies a "Dundesian Reading" of the Festival of St. Agatha in eastern Sicily, and by Anthony Bak Buccitelli (2014), who applies the master's ideas on the mass-mediation of folklore (originally presented by Alan for the facsimile machine; see Dundes and Pagter 1978) to digital media (for more of a psychoanalytic reading, see Bronner 2011b). Observing the way that the festival with the central saint figure stirs "up male passions," Hom applies Alan's precepts that such framed events represent broadly an analysis of folklore as a "much-needed outlet for the expression of inner tensions and anxieties that cannot be stated otherwise in sociocultural milieux" and "one can say and do in folkloric form things otherwise interdicted in everyday life" (Hom 2014, 147). So as not to repeat the Geertzian fallacy of attributing meaning to a single location, she examines, as her mentor would have insisted, comparative examples to venerate St. Agatha in Italy and other venues so as to determine the distinctive meanings that are generated.

Beyond Hom's methodological reflection for twenty-first-century work in folklore, Buccitelli reminds readers of a Dundesian concern for the compatibility of new forms of technology with the production of folklore, imagined as a variable, repeated forms that can be visual (Dundes 1978). Often non-Dundesian readings of folkloric phenomenon, Wolfgang Mieder points out, forget the multiplicity and mediation of folklore (Mieder 2006, 219). The designation of Dundesian analysis carries an irony because of the frequent use in anthropology of a "Boasian reading." Both intellectual "pioneers" Franz Boas and Alan Dundes were known not only for groundbreaking ideas that cut against the grain of prevalent ideas of their time but also for impassioned support of their students. In an analysis that could be called Dundesian, Zumwalt noted the metaphor of "giants" in the way they were characterized by their students and admirers (Zumwalt 2013, 163). Alan's actual height was 71.5 inches, but as the title of Richard A. Reuss's well-known article declared in reference to the awe of many a conference attendee, "That Can't Be Alan Dundes! Alan Dundes Is Taller than That!" (Reuss 1974, 308).

Far beyond his American home, Alan's name resounded loudly in international settings. In 2014, the Institute of Studies of Traditional Literature in the New University of Lisbon, Portugal, organized a conference on the occasion of what would have been Alan's eightieth birthday to continue the global conversation that Alan sparked into the new millennium. Titled "We Are the Folk: Rethinking Folklore in the Twenty-First Century," the conference sought to evaluate the multiplicity of folklore's meanings and "its capacity to integrate interactions between traditional and contemporary expressions and appropriations

in particular social, cultural, and historical contexts," according to its organizers (Ermacora 2014). It invoked in its main title Alan's replacement of the evolutionist relegation of folklore to the sole possession of primitive folk as a lower stratum of society with the modernist recognition of folklore as part of everyday behavior and cognition. Speakers took Dundes's cue dramatized many years earlier to reconsider anew folklore as emergent traditions and folkloristics as a modern subject amid rapid technological and social changes in twenty-first-century societies (see Ribeiro 2017).

On another continent, the tribute to Alan was in the form of an oversized two-volume publication titled *Psycho-Cultural Analysis of Folklore: In Memory of Prof. Alan Dundes*, edited by P. Chenna Reddy and M. Sarat Babu (2018b), a dean and professor, respectively, at Telugu University and Rayalaseema University in India. They describe themselves as "disciples" of Alan who they called "a versatile genius" (Reddy and Babu 2018a, x). Alan would have been thrilled because he was especially fascinated with India as a diverse source of world mythology and folktale, and at the same time he was disturbed by the oppression of the caste system and prevalent notions of untouchability. He proudly displayed his book *Two Tales of Crow and Sparrow: A Freudian Folkloristic Essay on Caste and Untouchability* (1997), in which he used the symbolism of folklore and its connections to social historical traditions of toilet training to explain the puzzling, and to him "devastating," caste system. A large proportion of the forty-five participants in the volume edited by Reddy and Babu came from south Asia, but in keeping with the often-repeated Dundesian adage that "folklore is nothing if it is not international" (Zumwalt 2018b, v), an impressive array of writers emanated from almost every continent in the world. The south Asian editors were more sanguine about the potential for psychoanalytic analysis in folklore studies than their American colleagues, and they pointed to a general direction in the years ahead inspired by Alan toward an understanding of mind in the constant generation of, and reliance on, folklore for humans navigating through their many worlds from the self to the family, group, neighborhood, region, nation, and globe.

Going by some quantifiable indicators, Alan's articles according to the Web of Science have been cited 465 times between 2005 and 2019. That is more than any other members of the "Great Team" of American folklorists or the other folklorists designated as "pioneers" by *SAGE Research Methods*. If you go to JSTOR or Project Muse and enter "Alan Dundes" in that same period, you will receive over 1,200 choices. Or if you want to view his popularity on internet sites, a Google search will produce over 17,000 hits in that period, compared to 1,490 before then. So it is safe to say that even if one does not agree with many of Alan's interpretations, his ideas and name circulate widely. His writings continue to stimulate and invite questions—and debate. Each essay is a gem that should be examined closely for the time in which it was produced and its applicability to today's conditions. My hope for the years ahead is that the essays and various postscripts will also be engaged as a whole for their cumulative vision of an innovative intellectual giant. He still speaks to us. More than ever, he inspires—and provokes.

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