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AN EXTENDED BROAD SPECTRUM OF PAPERS
PRESENTED TO LEENDERT LOUWE KOOIJMANS

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23 A note on prehistoric routes on the Veluwe and near Uelzen

Jan Albert Bakker

23.1 Introduction

In 1964 I visited the excavation of a settlement of the Funnel Beaker or TRB culture at Beekhuizerzand bij Harderwijk (Modderman *et al*. 1976), which was undertaken by Jan Verwers, Professor Modderman, and students of the Leiden Instituut voor Prehistorie. I remember the sand storms, the finds and the friendly reception. Besides there was an alert student in a khaki overall, who inquisitively joined in the conversation. That was Leendert Louwe Kooijmans.

Since then Leendert has hardly at all occupied himself with the TRB culture, but I will not leave unnoticed his two important observations concerning the TRB culture: he completed the unique footed bowl (*depas amphykupellon*) from hunebed D19-Drouwen, excavated in 1912 and often illustrated in incomplete form, with two handles and turned it upside down (Bakker 1979, 59, fig. 26a), and he found a collared flask and *Tiefstich*-decorated TRB sherds in the Vlaardingen layers around the Hazendonk, of which he illustrated the sherds upside-down (Louwe Kooijmans 1976, fig. 23; Bakker 1979, 165, n. 3:10).

I would have liked to continue here with a study on recent developments in TRB West Group research, but because this became too unmanageable I present here instead a note on rows of prehistoric barrows and megaliths to my esteemed colleague and dear friend. These rows were placed along important on-going routes, like Roman sepulchral monuments along the Via Appia, to display to as many people as possible that locally important personalities were buried and venerated there, and to show the traveller that he entered the territory of active residents who were proud of their ancestors and country. They allow us to reconstruct such ancient routes. The first research of ancient routes happened around 1900 (Krause/Schoetensack 1893; Müller 1903; 1904; Belloc 1904), and further detail is given in my synoptic articles on the subject (Bakker 1976; 1991; 2004; cf. Jager 1985; 1993). Beside rows of funeral monuments and later on other features, that were directly connected to roads, the lie of the land is an important indicator: routes took their course from pass to pass through boggy or otherwise 'traffic-unfriendly' areas and avoided slopes and difficult terrain wherever possible. Routes in northwest Jutland, for instance, preferred courses along the border line of sandy and loamy soils, passable in winter as well as in summer, that also avoided steep slopes (Mathiassen 1948). Cart traffic in sandy areas tended to take parallel courses between the passes, however, when the tracks had become too loose. Although four and two-wheeled wagons were in use since 3400 cal BC (Anthony 2007; Burmeister 2002; Bakker *et al*. 1999), the massive destruction of the sandy road surfaces and the ensuing large expansion of drift-sands on the Veluwe and in the northern Netherlands and north-western Germany started in the Bronze Age (Van Gijn/Waterbolk 1984).[1] Good routes usually lasted for ages. Several even derive from the paths of Mesolithic hunters and remained in use until the present day. Alignments of TRB tombs (3400-2800 cal BC) were later often reinforced by earthen barrows (2800-700 cal BC).

Because modern and sub-recent roads often still coincide with prehistoric routes, 16th to19th-century maps are indispensable for the study of the latter (see the excellent introduction to the use of old regional maps of the Netherlands by Horsten 2005).

23.2 Routes on the north-eastern Veluwe

The Veluwe is an area of sandy hills in the centre of the Netherlands between Amersfoort and Apeldoorn. Most of it is 'traffic-friendly' because wetlands and other barriers are rare. Large patches of drift sand developed in essence after the Neolithic. Megalithic TRB tombs (hunebeds) are unknown here, but earthen barrows from 2800 cal BC onwards abound. A 6 km long alignment of barrows occurs between Niersen in the SW and Epe to the NE. A detailed map, based on P.J.R. Modderman's fieldwork in 1948 and to a lesser degree that of J. Butter and others, was published by me (1976) and by Louwe Kooijmans (Bloemers *et al*. 1981, 51, much reduced). Later work by Klok (1978-9; 1982; 1988) showed, however, that 26 barrows should be added to the picture, which is here given in its updated form (fig. 23.1).

These barrows were doubtlessly placed along a path or un-metalled road, which has now disappeared for the greater part. Only in the NE a road still follows the barrow line; it continues to the village of Epe and, almost exactly in the same direction but without accompaniment of barrows, to the village of Heerde in the NE. The middle and south-western parts of the barrow line lay in a treeless heath until it was

afforested in the 1910s. This changed the road system completely, but no sandy tracks along the barrow line are shown by earlier topographic maps either.

Two or three side tracks branched off. One 2.5 km long barrow alignment runs E-W and coincides with the present Lange Weg, an ancient sandy road still in use. Another, 2 km long alignment runs N-S through the large Celtic Field of Vaassen (Brongers 1974). Another barrow-aligned track did perhaps branch off in WSW direction, to the left margin of the drawing. The earliest known date of one or more of these barrows reaches back to 2500 cal BC (AOO Beaker graves), but several were still used for interment during the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, up to 700 cal BC or perhaps even the Roman period. The Celtic Field of Vaassen (Brongers 1974) and the four other, smaller, Celtic Fields may be dated from the Early Iron Age to the Roman Period (Harsema 2005, 543). These consisted of square arable plots (*c*. 30 × 30 m wide) separated by low earthen banks. They are here also clearly connected to the barrow routes, but because no road track was left open in the Vaassen Celtic Field, it may ultimately have blocked the N-S route. Possibly this occurred also with the other Celtic Fields on the map. Very little is known about the settlements of the barrow makers – unfortunately no systematic investigation of these has been performed.

The long SW-NE 'barrow' route follows the main eastern slope of the Veluwe hill ridge tangentially (fig. 23.1). It crosses five steep-sided dry periglacial valleys, while avoiding their bifurcations (geomorphological map by G.C. Maarleveld in Brongers 1974). It crosses one of these at co-ordinates 193.5/481.7 (fig. 23.1) near the hamlet of Schaveren ('sheep-ford'?). The E-W barrow line and Lange Weg are situated on a low spur, and they keep clear of a W-E dry valley directly to the south.

Probable continuations of the barrow routes of figure 23.1 have not yet been traced in detail. The SW-NE route may have connected the dry southern flanks of the lakes Uddeler Meer and Bleke Meer, and the stream Leuvenumse Beek, to the north-eastern flanks of the Veluwe hills at Heerde-Hattem, and possible crossings of the river IJssel/Isel. Several other barrow alingments on the Veluwe (maps in Klok 1978-9; 1982; 1988; Fokkens 2005, fig. 16.7) give an impression of the original road pattern (Lange 1996).

P. Garwood studied the barrows of the north-eastern Veluwe with the help of R.H.J. Klok and myself in 1988/9. Unfortunately he did not publish his findings, but stressed the enormous raw scientific potential of Veluwe barrows in conversation. He did not think in terms of road networks, but compared these aligned barrow 'cemeteries' to those in Wiltshire, England, which, admittedly, seem not to indicate on-going routes, and seem to lead from nowhere to nowhere. Garwood found that the long NE-SW barrow alignment of figure 23.1 pointed exactly to the Midwinter sunset and the Midsummer sunrise (or to the southernmost moonset and the northernmost moonrise).[2] I am not yet convinced that this barrow-aligned route was a purely sacral one, without practical use for traffic. And what about the other barrow alignments of figure 23.1, those elsewhere on the Veluwe and in the other sandy regions of the northern Netherlands and Germany?

23.3 Hunebed alignments in Landkreis Uelzen

P.B. Richter documented the localities of the TRB culture in the *Landkreis* Uelzen, a roughly circular region with a diameter of 42 km, halfway between Hannover and Hamburg in Germany (Richter 2002, figs 55, 88).[3] She analysed the distribution patterns of tombs and settlements in all possible detail. No less than 287 former or extant megalithic tombs were inventorised in *Landkreis* Uelzen on basis of the work of Von Estorff (1846) and other 19th-century sources (fig. 23.2). I call them briefly 'hunebeds' here. Their original number she estimated at about 350. East of the river Ilmenau the hunebed distribution seems fairly representative, in contrast to the area west of it, where hunebed destruction and stone trade may have started before the tombs were documented.[4] Only 22 settlement sites and one flat grave are known. Like those from Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age, the settlements are usually situated along the river valleys (Richter 2002, figs 50-51, 55). Figure 23.2 shows the contrasting distribution of both categories. Several alignments of hunebeds are visible, the majority of which coincide with still-existing roads along them. The most conspicuous is a 9 km long S-N alignment from Uelzen to Haassel, which prefers high terraces and watersheds and avoids rivers. Its northern part is 1.5-2.15 km removed from the river Ilmenau and its settlements to the west. To the east it keeps a distance of 0.5 to 1 km from the Röbelbach stream, but no TRB settlements are known yet from that valley. More routes on watersheds are also present, but other, generally E-W, hunebed alignments follow the river valleys at some distance (*e.g.* along the river Wipperau). Wet soils were avoided, but as with barrows on the Veluwe and hunebeds in Drenthe (Bakker 1980; 1982; Bakker/Groenman-van Waateringe 1988), there is no further relation to specific soil types (Richter 2002, 194 *vs*. Schirnig 1979). There is also no relation to relative or absolute altitudes and although the tombs were usually situated on slopes and elevations for local visibility, there was no dominant preference for summits and spurs.

Apart from the alignments, Richter discerns two other typical hunebed distributions. Several apparently unstructured concentrations are difficult to explain, but perhaps they were connected to crossroads. At first sight and on the small scale of figure 23.2, the hunebeds to the east of Uelzen seem quite randomly distributed, but this is due to the fine dispersion

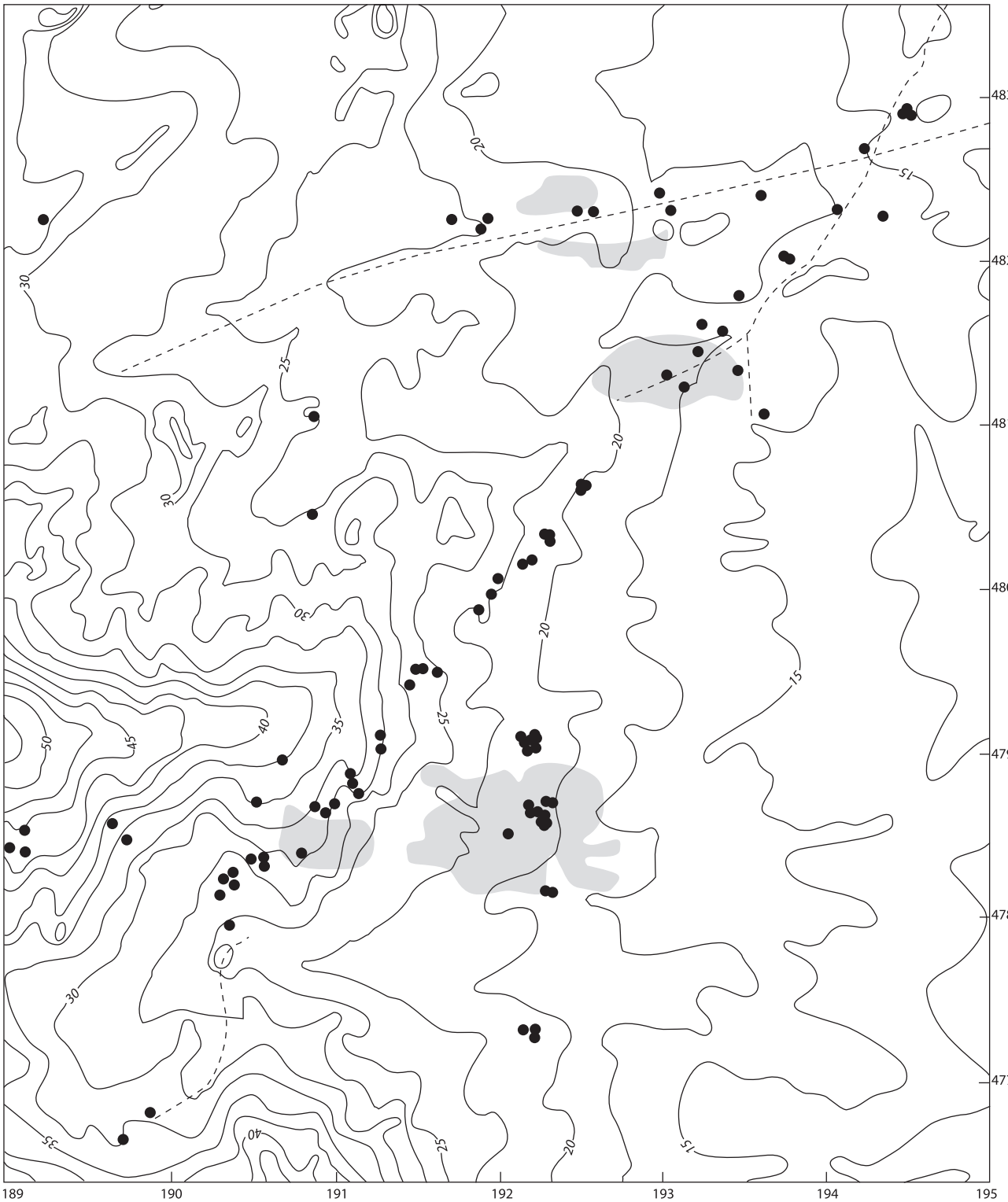

Figure 23.1 Prehistoric roads marked by earthen barrows (dots) between Niersen, Epe and Vaassen in the Veluwe. Celtic Fields are shaded. A few modern roads are indicated by interrupted lines. The numbered grid of 1 km squares and the contour lines are based on Dutch Ordnance Survey maps (update of Bakker 1976, fig. 11).

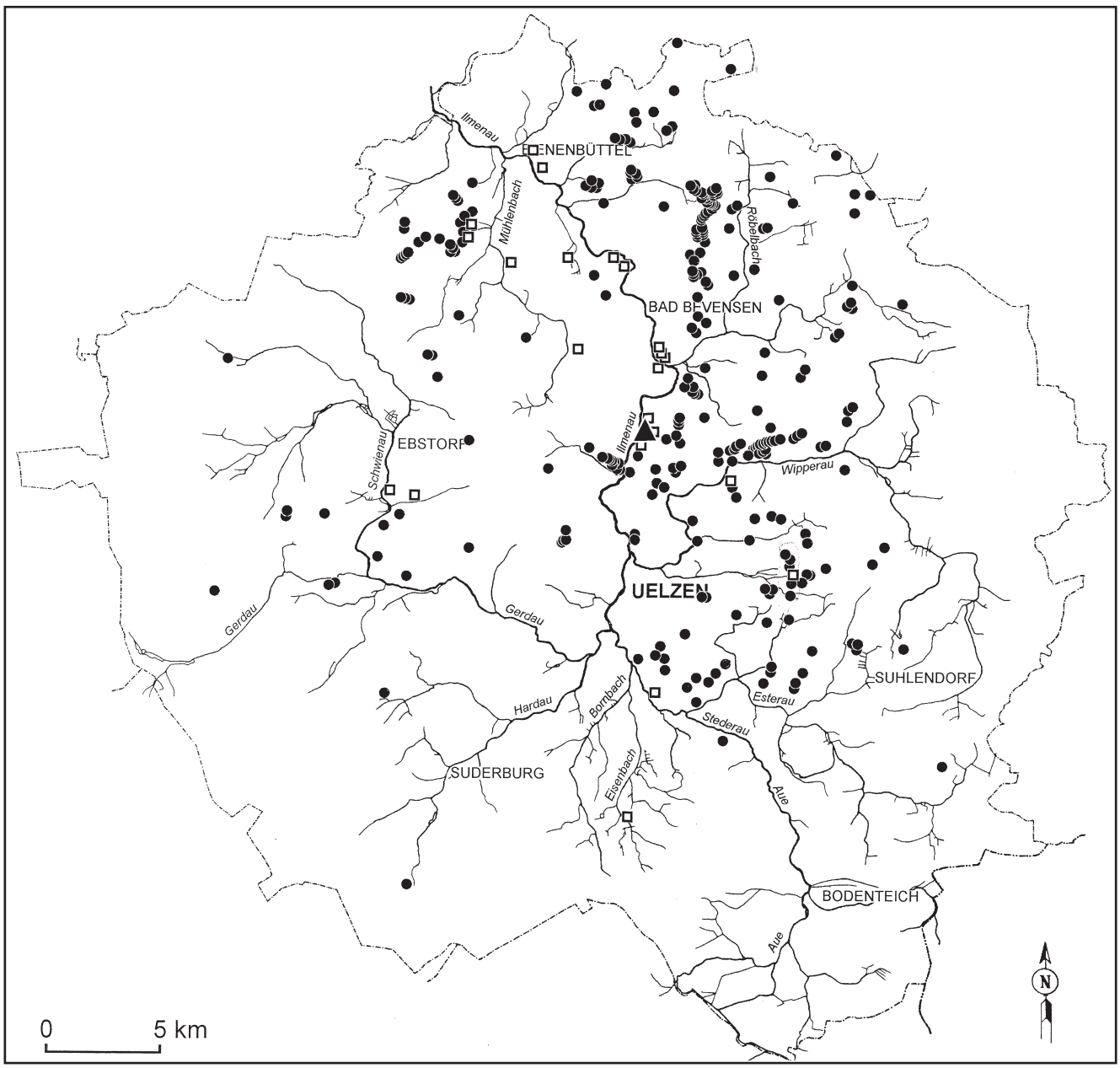

Figure 23.2 Distribution of hunebeds (dots), settlements (squares) and the Walmsdorf banked and ditched enclosure (triangle) in Landkreis Uelzen, Germany (Richter 2002, fig. 88).

of streams and ridges. The only known settlement here, at Rätzlingen, lies at the ford through a rivulet, within an almost 2 km long hunebed aligned N-S route. The only other settlement site, at some distance to the east of the Ilmenau, is at Masendorf on the southern bank of the Wipperau, from which part of the W-E hunebed alignment behind the northern bank could have been clearly visible, according to the author. Two tombs south of the settlement may indicate that it was also situated at a river ford. I note here that the often supposed intervisibility of hunebeds – which is not discussed by Richter – was non-existant, as I noted for the hunebed cluster at Borger in Drenthe (Bakker, in prep.).

A similar absence was found in the Altmark region to the SE of Uelzen (D. Demnick, pers. comm. 2006).

There are no other obvious connections between settlements and hunebeds. This is due to the much too small number of known settlements, and to the small number of hunebeds and settlements that have produced enough typical ceramics to even think of relating them, as Richter concludes. But I wonder, whether a much better knowledge of the pottery would give an answer to such questions. In Drenthe, where many large ceramic hunebed assemblages have been excavated, ideosyncratic traits can be discerned in the pottery decoration (Bakker/Luijten 1990). It appears that products of the same female potter or the same local type ('L1, K3, K1') were dispersed no further than 1-3.5 km, and that a small cluster of hunebeds showed a predilection for such particular decorations. No direct relation between a tomb and a distinct type of pottery was apparent, however. Pots with a directly related type of decoration ('K2') were found up to 24 km apart. Identically decorated pots made in the Kornerup settlement in Denmark travelled 11.5 and 9.5 km to two passage graves (Ebbesen 1975, 129-131, fig. 110) and almost identically decorated pots occurred 6 km apart at Kleinenkneten and Hogenbögen in Oldenburg, Germany (Steffens 1970, 18; Fansa 1982, pls. 3:28, 42:2672). Although decorated sherds were collected from many settlement sites in Drenthe, no systematic study of them has been undertaken. Besides it is questionable if the small size of these sherds would allow for recognising ideosyncraticism in decoration patterns. Although this approach would seem a fruitful subject for further study in Drenthe, it might display rather the pottery exchange between different small communities, than demonstrate one-to-one relationships between hunebeds and contemporary settlements. Were the same pottery exchange to have taken place near Uelzen, and were enough pottery to be found to show ideosyncratic features, even then probably no simple relationships between tombs and settlement sites may be expected to be found. Neither can much be expected from an as yet non-existing great number of radiocarbon dates, because these are not enough precise.

Notes

1 All given dates are approximate, calibrated radiocarbon dates.

2 Pers. comm. P. Garwood 1989. I have forgotten which of both lines was involved about 2500 cal BC. Cf. figs 189-190 in Chippindale (1983).

3 Comparable geographical studies on the TRB Westgroup (3350-2800 cal BC) are almost absent.

4 Stone export to Holland was interdicted by the Hannover government as early as 1728 (Richter 2002, 179), *i.e.* before the teredo catastrophe manifested itself in 1730-33 in the Netherlands. All wooden dike fences in salt water were demolished and the then invented stone covered dikes required huge amounts of erratic stone from wherever possible.

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