
MOGADOR: ENTRE UN PAISAJE PATRIMONIAL Y UN DESTINO TURÍSTICO

MOGADOR: BETWEEN A HERITAGE LANDSCAPE AND A TOURIST DESTINATION

Ikrame SELKANI ¹

Abstract

Mogador, también conocida actualmente como Essaouira o Swira, es una ciudad de la costa atlántica de Marruecos, en el sur del país. Está construida sobre un afloramiento rocoso en el mar. Un puerto natural con grandes profundidades permite desembarcar con seguridad durante todo el año debido a la curvatura de sus costas. La enorme isla de Mogador está a unos 1500 metros de la playa. Essaouira es un ejemplo excepcional y bien conservado de una ciudad portuaria fortificada de mediados del siglo XVIII con importantes influencias europeas trasladadas a un entorno norteafricano.

La medina de Essaouira, conocida históricamente como Mogador (del término fenicio Migdol, que significa "pequeña fortaleza"), es un raro ejemplo de ciudad fortificada de mediados del siglo XVIII rodeada por una muralla al estilo de Vauban, que sirvió de importante puerto comercial internacional durante siglos, conectando Marruecos y el África subsahariana con Europa y el resto del mundo. Famosa durante mucho tiempo como el Puerto de Tombuctú, Essaouira se convirtió en un importante lugar de comercio africano-europeo a finales del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX.

La ciudad es también un ejemplo de foco multicultural, como demuestra la cohabitación de numerosas etnias, entre ellas amazigh, árabes, africanos y europeos, así como de comunidades multiconfesionales, desde sus inicios (musulmanes, cristianos y judíos)

La medina, declarada Patrimonio de la Humanidad por la UNESCO, el islote de Mogador, su puerto, que data del siglo XVIII, y sus playas, que permiten la práctica de deportes náuticos, hacen de la provincia un destino turístico de calidad.

Palabras Clave: Essaouira, Marruecos, Mogador, Patrimonio, Paisaje.

¹ University of Cordoba Spain ikrame.selkani@gmail.com. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1618-011X>.

1. Introduction

Through the history of Essaouira, the city has many nicknames: the City of Winds, the White, Amogdul in Berber ("the well guarded"), Mogador... But no matter how it is called, it seduces those who visit it. Formerly a Portuguese city, it was later cherished by artists and hippies, then by fans of board sports (Bergier et al., 2012).

Completed in the 19th century and clearly delimited by its rampart, the medina of Essaouira has all the essential elements for its integrity. Constituting a homogeneous whole associating natural assets (archipelago of Mogador) and cultural goods of great quality, the city still keeps today its integrity and its original stamp. Although its integrity has been somewhat altered, notably because of the degradation of the buildings in the Mellah district, the degree of loss does not compromise the significance of the property as a whole.

Essaouira is a port city located on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. It has a long and rich history, which it reveals with authenticity and spontaneity, from its ramparts to its Medina, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, passing through its port, its souks, its galleries...

Criterion (ii): Essaouira is an outstanding and well-preserved example of a mid-18th-century fortified port city with a strong European influence, transposed to a North African context.

Criterion (iv): With the opening of Morocco to the rest of the world in the late 17th century, the medina of Essaouira was designed by a French architect deeply influenced by the work of the military engineer Vauban in Saint Malo. It has largely retained the appearance of a European city.

However, the island of Mogador is home to a breeding population of a species emblematic and protected internationally to know the Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonora*), with an estimated 1,500 pairs, making known that this late summer visitor begins its nesting from July with the arrival of small migratory birds (passerines) that are its food source.

In this paper, we will figure out the history of Mogador, and what makes it as an ideal tourist destination. We will find out the items that formulate it as a destination full of landscape heritage through its islands (Bergier et al., 2012).

2. Mogador: richness in history and culture

Founded in the mid-18th century, the medina of Mogador has retained much of its authenticity in terms of design and form as well as materials (use of the local manjour stone) and construction methods, despite some inappropriate use of modern materials for repairs and reconstruction. Despite the action of the swell on the sea side and humidity everywhere else, the fortifications and the urban fabric retain, on the whole, their original configuration (Biondi, 1998).

The city would have been inhabited since antiquity, by the Berber natives. Its development began in the Vile century before Jesus Christ with the Phoenicians who made a stopover in Mogador during their travels to the equator, then with the Romans. It was then occupied by the Portuguese, who built a fortress and ramparts in the 16th century, and then by the sultans of the Saadian dynasty. However, it was the Alawite sultan Mohammed ben Abdellah who really launched the construction of the city of Essaouira in the 18th century,

calling on great architects of the time, notably Théodore Cornut, a disciple of Vauban, who drew up the plan of the city. The sultan had great ambitions for the city, which he wanted to adapt to the needs of foreign merchants. His objective was to make Essaouira a commercial center as well as a royal port. Essaouira is a city rich in history and culture

Mogador made its mark: once built, its development was exceptional, the fortified city became the most important port in Morocco as well as its diplomatic capital.

Essaouira has been known by numerous names throughout its history, including the City of Winds, Amogdul (Berber for "the well guarded"), and Mogador. No matter what name it goes by, it seduces anybody who visits. Essaouira, a port city on Morocco's Atlantic coast, it has a long and rich history, which conveys with authenticity and spontaneity, from its ramparts to its Medina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to its port, souks, galleries... It was a former Portuguese city that was eventually appreciated by artists, hippies, and snow sports fans (Bergier et al., 2012).

The medina of Essaouira, formerly known as Mogador (from the Phoenician word Migdol meaning "small fortress"), is an exceptional example of a mid-18th century fortified city surrounded by a Vauban-style wall. Built in North Africa according to the principles of European military architecture of the time, in perfect association with the precepts of Arab-Muslim architecture and urban planning, it played, for centuries, the role of a major international trading port linking Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa to Europe and the rest of the world (Bergier et al., 2012).

The city also offers the example of a multicultural center as evidenced by the coexistence, since its conception, of various ethnicities such as Amazighs, Arabs, Africans, and Europeans and multi-faith (Muslims, Christians and Jews). Inseparable from the medina, the archipelago of Mogador includes a large number of cultural properties and natural sites of outstanding universal value. Its relatively late foundation compared to other North African medinas was the work of the Alawite Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah (1757-1790), who wanted to make this small Atlantic city a royal port and a center of Moroccan foreign trade. Long known as the Port of Timbuktu, Mogador became one of the centers of Atlantic trade between Africa and Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

At the end of the French protectorate in 1956, the Moroccan authorities chose to rename Mogador, a city on the Atlantic coast long occupied by the Portuguese, to its former name, "Souira", to which was added the prefix "es". There are several interpretations of the origin of this name. According to the most likely, it comes from sour, "rock" or "fortified place" in Arabic. In the etymology of Mogador, we probably find the same idea of fortress. For some, this name would come from Sidi Mogdoul, patron saint and protector of the city, whose tomb is located at the entrance of the city. But we also find in the ancient literature the name of Amogdoul to designate the site. Now mogdoul would mean "fortified place" in Arabic. Thus, the Portuguese would have assimilated this name to that of their city of Mogadouro, probably during the construction of their castello real ("royal castle") at the beginning of the 16th century, before making the name Mogador official in 1765. (Biondi,1998).

Then called the Port of Timbuktu, Essaouira became a stopover and a place for trade between Africa and Europe, even in the 19th century. Gold, sugar, salt, and even ostrich feathers, all passed through its port!

Essaouira has always been a cultural model, since its creation the city has welcomed all nationalities, whether Arabs, Amazighs, Europeans or Africans, whatever their religion. A true multicultural center, it is also the rallying point or home of many artists. In the 50's and 60's, stars and artists found refuge there, such as Jimmy Hendrix or Cat Steven, not to mention the fact that the medina of Essaouira was used as a shooting location for the famous film Othello by Orson Welles.

The Sultan Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah wanted to have a port that was accessible all year round and well defended, unlike the northern ports which, because of their silting up, were inaccessible outside the rainy season. Also concerned about the distance between Safi and Agadir, leaving too much of the coast unprotected (which had allowed the Portuguese invasion in the 16th century), he decided to install fortifications. In 1767, the sultan called upon Théodore Cornut, the French architect, to build the new city. The latter made this city born of sand and wind into a kasbah surrounded by ramparts. The Sultan played on the distance between the islands and the mainland of the bay in order to protect each entrance of the bay, whether it was the northern one thanks to the Borj El Âssa and Borj El Baroude, or the southern one with the help of the Borj Moulay Ben Nasser and the Borj El Barmil thanks to crossfire batteries. The defense of Essaouira is done in two styles and types of ramparts: first the Cherifian style which protects the land side of the city reminding the fortifications of Marrakech, then the sea side of the city through the European style (Vauban style ...)

3. Mogador: Between yesterday and today

Under the protectorate

In 1799, the city was hit by a violent plague epidemic during which 4500 people died. The appearance of the city had already been changing for a few: the city seemed to be a military city, the fortifications were destroyed, and the Mellah was built to house the Jews, as the Kasbah could no longer hold the inhabitants. In August 1844, the famous bombardments of Mogador under the authority of the Prince of Joinville, which lasted nearly twenty-six hours (in retaliation for Morocco's support of Emir Abdel Kader fighting against the French presence in Algeria), were the first signs of the tension and conflicts that would lead to the establishment of the protectorate in 1912, which would last until 1956. (Biondi, 1998).

Essaouira with the golden age

Contemporary Essaouira is the prosperity of the 18th and 19th centuries: a tremendous prosperity, due to the presence of a Jewish community of jewelers. At that time the Jews were more numerous than the Muslims. It was nicknamed "Timbuktu Port" for its caravans loaded with gold, spices and slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. The trade is exacerbated there. It is also, the port, for a long time the only one open to foreign trade First sardine port in the world. But during the Six Day War, a large number of Jews fled little by little, and other ports developed in deeper waters, which heralded the decline of the port of Essaouira.

Essaouira, now

If fishing activities remain; today Essaouira is above all a seaside resort where a large part of the activity is directed towards tourism: handicrafts (thuja wood), oil production (argan, olive), luxury accommodation (Riad in the medina), care and well being (massages, hammam, spa)... (Sedki Alaoui, 2008). After the period of the protectorate it is tourism that continues to develop, the medina becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001; will accentuate this trend (Biondi, 1998). The creation of the new city offers another alternative to the medina and new possibilities for foreigners who wish to settle there. In spite of a great demographic boom, the city remains at the size of a village (70,000 inhabitants), twinned with La Rochelle- France, it has moreover a little of the spirit of it, only more oriental! However, according to the local administrative division, Essaouira is the capital of a much larger region: the Marrakech- Tensift- El Haouz region, which covers an area of more than 6,000 km² with 57 municipalities. Major projects have been implemented to remedy the previously precarious facilities and infrastructure (Boujrouf, 2014).

4. Purpuraires Islands

Standing majestically off the coast of the city of Essaouira, as a true witness of the historical and civilizational wealth of this imperial city of Atlantic Morocco, the Island of Mogador also known as "the Great Dzira: Great Island" in the current language of the citizens, is also an ecological site of immeasurable importance (Slimani et al., (2013)

Forming with a second island called "Pharaoh's Island" with an area of 400 m² and other tiny islets (Seven in total), the Archipelago of Essaouira, Mogador Island (nearly 22.7 ha), apparently very remote, is located about 1 km from the historic port of the city of Alizés, with all that it offers in terms of exceptional beauty and splendor, including its ancestral fortifications equipped with cannons (Sedki Alaoui, 2008).

Full of history, the island of fortifications has remains of such precious value, especially with two citadels, with watchtowers in each corner and a landscape full of gulls and seagulls' nests among others (Greig-Smith, 2020).

The historical richness of the Purpuraires Islands (from the Latin *purpura*, name of the purple color) is not to be demonstrated anymore, if we have to note that in 1950, coins made of silver and bronze dating from the year 18 and 19 B.C., as well as shards of vase of Arezzo of Mogadorian writing (from 3000 years ago), were discovered, forming the oldest texts and the oldest archives of the history of Morocco.

On the Island of Mogador on the far left, one can see, with the naked eye, from the cornice of Essaouira, a mosque flanked by its minaret, which testifies to the fact that the Island of Mogador has remained, over the centuries, a living space and in permanent evolution with time.

Ecologically, the importance of the islands forming the Mogador Archipelago is quite remarkable. It is a kind of "rampart" naturally installed to protect the Bay and the beach of Essaouira, against the rollers of the Atlantic (Boujrouf, 2014).

Better still, the Island of Mogador has been set up, currently, as a biological and ornithological reserve among the most prized, peacefully hosting a variety of birds such as seagulls, ash gulls, large Moroccan cormorants, the pale swift, the rock pigeons, or warblers but also, increasingly rare species such as Eleonora's falcons that settle there to reproduce between April and October, before starting their migration to Madagascar (Ait Messaoud El Hadari, 1995)

This archipelago is also a stopover site for migratory birds during their two journeys of the year (autumn, spring), also has some species of reptiles, as well as wild hares, which take possession of the place, thus establishing the natural cycle of what should be "wild life", notes Mr. Rguibi Idrissi Hamid, professor at the Faculty of Science, under the University Mohammed V in Rabat.

Crenellated walls, the breath of the trade winds, houses with white and blue facades, the color of the foam and the wave, Essaouira, the former Mogador is the "Bride of the Atlantic". (Declève and Hibo, 2004)

Mogador Island is located opposite Essaouira beach. Covering more than 30 hectares, it is the largest island in the Purpuraires Islands archipelago (Ait Messaoud El Hadari, 1995) A prison was built there at the end of the 19th century, as well as a mosque and some abandoned fortifications. Like the Purpuraires islands, the island of Mogador is today a protected bird reserve. There are seagulls and gulls, as well as a rare and protected species: the Eléonore falcons. It is not possible to travel to the island, however, you can walk around it.

The small maritime city was born from the sea. The Phoenicians, some VII centuries before J.C. left traces of their presence (Ait Messaoud El Hadari, 1995) The islet Mogador, currently one kilometer off Essaouira, was certainly the first commercial outpost in the history of the city (Declève and Hibo, 2004)

Numerous archaeological traces attest to the passage of Phoenicians, Berbers and Romans who had all sensed the strategic interest of the place.

The Purpuraires islands are occupied since the III century before J.C. A Berber monarchy settled there and around 146 BC the Romans made it a client state and finally annexed it. The name of the islands comes from an astonishing raw material, a shell, the murex which, once treated, becomes a dye and gives purple (Qninba et al., 2011).

The fame of the islands is mainly due to the fact that this color was for centuries the symbol of social power. The caciques of the hierarchical heights wore this color, a true sign of caste recognition, and were the only ones entitled to it (Greig-Smith, 2020).

Today, when you rent a boat in the port, the trip is above all one of imagination. The islands cannot be visited, except by special dispensation, but their remains and the thousands of birds in the bird sanctuary are a spectacle that gives the bay its beauty (Qninba et al., 2011).

Essaouira offers, from the open sea, a magical spectacle. The bright white, the deep blue and the green of the argan forests are so sharp that the city seems an impressionist painting (Ait Messaoud El Hadari, 1995)

And then along the coast, we discover a succession of immense beaches, wild wadis and dense forests (Declève and Hibo, 2004)

The Atlantic is a clear blue, the rollers are frothy and the seagulls always as noisy and agitated. It is this grandiose maritime nature that inspired so many artists and made Essaouira a city of arts and nature (Qninba et al., 2008).

Esta sección se puede dividir por subapartados. La autoría debe discutir, respaldar y comparar los resultados de acuerdo con la literatura existente (utilizando referencias de estudios similares) y cómo pueden interpretarse en la perspectiva de estudios anteriores y de las hipótesis de trabajo. Los hallazgos y sus implicaciones deben discutirse en el contexto más amplio posible. También se pueden resaltar futuras direcciones de investigación.

5. Tourism in Mogador

Essaouira is one of those coastal cities where nautical activities are very common. We can see the Purpuraires islands, the falcons, the seagulls and the gulls that hover above this natural reserve. In the distance, surfers, windsurfers and kitesurfers can't get enough of the wind!

Among the most beautiful in Morocco, it is classified by Unesco. Finally, every summer, the city is bathed in music: the Gnaoua festival is held there, which celebrates Afro-Maghrebin rhythms (Schroeter, 1979). For several years now, Morocco has adopted a responsible tourism and this establishment participates in this ambition as well as the beaches of the surroundings labeled Blue Flag, guarantee of their quality (Ducène, 2022).

The natural and wild beauty of the old Mogador amaze in more than one way. Argan trees, cedars, Norfolk pines and other conifers cover almost half of the province of Essaouira, one of the most wooded in the Kingdom (Schroeter, 1984).

In order to preserve this protected ecosystem, composed of forests, dunes, lakes, oceans and wild coastline, a responsible and environmentally conscious tourism has been developing for some years (Sedki Alaoui, 2008). To meet these expectations, the Mogador Islands located in front of the port of Essaouira have been transformed into a nature reserve. (Schroeter, 1979). Today, they are home to Eleonora's falcon, but also to seagulls and other birds. They also protect the bay and the splendid fine sandy beach of Essaouira against the powerful waves of the Atlantic (Simone, 2000).

With its other beaches such as those of Chicht, Sidi Kaouki, Azrou or Tafedna, lovers of swimming, camel rides and water sports will not be left out. Given the ecological wealth and growing interest in biodiversity, this area is classified as a "Hunting Reserve" (ministerial order of 1962 amended in 1979). It is also a Site of Biological and Ecological Interest (SIBE) selected in 1996 as part of the Master Plan of Protected Areas of Morocco and RAMSAR site in 2005, said Rguibi Idrissi.

For this researcher also within several institutes of Ornithology in particular, in Spain, France and Germany, the archipelago of Essaouira wants to be, an island environment on the Moroccan Atlantic coast, and presents a remarkable faunistic and floristic biodiversity.

The protection of the archipelago of Essaouira as a Site of Biological and Ecological Interest (SIBE), and its closure to the public, has promoted the biodiversity of the island, noting that the management of the site allows the conservation of its habitats and its biodiversity and their restoration.

Currently, the High Commission for Water and Forests and the Fight against Desertification (HCEFLCD) is in the process of further strengthening the dynamics of conservation management already in place on the archipelago, by granting this site "a legal protection status" under the new law on protected areas, said Rguibi.

The Archipelago of Mogador is an island environment, so unique in its kind on the Atlantic coastline of the Kingdom, with an unparalleled ecological-biological importance, given the enormous natural potentialities it conceals (Greig-Smith, 2020). Spread over an area of 26.7 ha, the Archipelago of Mogador is one kilometer from the end of the western pier of the port of the city of Essaouira and 1,200 m from the mouth of Oued Ksob.

This enchanting site includes 8 islets of unequal size, namely: "L'Dzira Lakbira" (large island/main island), "Firaoun" (Pharaoh), "Smiâa d'Firaoun", "Maqtoâ", "Smiâa d'Dlimi", "Hajrat Haha", "Hajrat Rbia", and "Hatf Ghorrobo".

The Archipelago of Mogador is presented, thus, as an emblematic space by the ecological qualities that it provides, the richness of its ecosystems and its environments as well as its historical characteristics "impressive", able to strongly enrich the identity of the city of Essaouira. Enormous assets that give it a place of choice among the remarkable sites of southwest Morocco (Schroeter, 1984).

Proclaimed "cultural heritage" by UNESCO since 2001, the Archipelago has the singularity to illustrate, brilliantly, this junction between many impressive historical, geological and geomorphological characteristics, coupled with its richness in fauna and flora.

All this potential makes this coast as classified as a wetland "RAMSAR". It is also a "Site of Biological and Ecological Interest: SIBE", selected in 1996 as part of the Master Plan of Protected Areas of Morocco, given its wealth of flora, fauna and marine land (Simone, 2000).

According to the Regional Directorate of Water and Forests of the High Atlas, the Mogador Archipelago "is protected by all these national and international protection statutes (SIBE, RAMSAR Site, UNESCO cultural heritage, permanent hunting reserve)", noting that it

has a strong eco-tourism potential, and is an open-air laboratory contributing to the preservation and conservation of the animal and plant capital of the region (Sedki Alaoui, 2008).

Aware of the importance of preserving this Site, the said Directorate undertakes, as part of the achievement of its objectives, ambitious projects for the conservation of species and habitats, the development of cultural and eco-tourism assets of the site, through the establishment of landscaping and signage, and this as part of awareness programs and ambitious environmental education programs for the preservation of this site, whose wealth makes its uniqueness.

In a statement to MAP, Mr. Lemdarsaoui El Mehdi, State Engineer, Head of the Center for Conservation and Development of Forest Resources Essaouira, said that the Mogador Archipelago offers a rich and varied plant cover composed of species with heritage values, and endemic species strictly Moroccan, in addition to endemic to the Canary Islands, and Mauritania among others.

As for the terrestrial fauna, the Archipelago of Mogador has a great ornithological interest and is characterized by the regular nesting of nine species of birds (2 marine, 3 species of raptors and 4 terrestrial species), 3 reptiles and the presence of a single mammal namely the rabbit, he continued.

The Archipelago also has other species, such as the Yellow-legged Gull, with about 4,000 pairs recorded, the largest Moroccan colony and the largest known southern colony of the species. A particularly dense population at the peripheral limit of the distribution area of this Mediterranean bird whose existence, in Essaouira, is closely linked to the fishing activities of the port, he said.

We also note the existence of the Great Cormorant, the Peregrine Falcon, the Kestrel, while other species populate the cliffs, such as the Common Raven, the Pale Swift, the Rock Pigeon and the Melanocephalus Warbler (Schroeter, 1984).

Mr. Lemdarsaoui did not fail to point out that "given the ecological wealth and growing interest in the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources of the Archipelago of Mogador, this site has been classified as a hunting reserve (1962), permanent biological reserve (1980), SIBE in 1996, UNESCO heritage (2001) and RAMSAR Site in 2005 (Simone, 2000).

In order to preserve this rich fauna, the birds of the island are subject to census in the framework of scientific research involving several actors (institutional actors, scientists and civil society ...), especially regarding the Eleonora's falcon.

Currently, the Department of Water and Forests plans to strengthen the dynamics of conservation management already in place on the Archipelago, by granting this Site a legal protection status, under the new law on protected areas, which will increase and sustain its protection status by classifying it as a protected area, he concluded.

In fine, the Archipelago of Mogador which is the pride of Essaouira, ancient city of Atlantic Morocco, is one of the sites combining both ecological wealth and a historical and civilizational significance unmatched, which provides a beautiful image of the authenticity of a Morocco so proud of its diversity, the uniqueness of its civilization and its identity (Greig-Smith, 2020).

6. Conclusion

The state of conservation of the medina of Essaouira continues to improve thanks to the efforts of the local authorities and the vigilance of the services directly concerned with its protection and development (Ait Messaoud El Hadari, 1995)

Finally, the Archipelago of Mogador has been added to an exhaustive list of sites combining both ecological wealth and heritage significance, to provide a beautiful image of the authenticity of a Morocco that is proud of its diversity, its thousand-year-old civilization and its unique identity.

The city's particular character is due to its ramparts. Carved with monumental gates, works of art and defense, they are also flanked by two citadels: the Squala de la Kasbah, the Squala du port. In the shadow of these walls that surround the city, take a walk to discover the city, in the network of its alleys and discover the medina: like the whole city, similar to the ancient Mogador that became Essaouira, it mixes influences, borrows from the West and the East.

This status of crossroads of civilizations also makes Essaouira a city prized by artists: there are many galleries, as many places that celebrate beauty and creation. A café is dedicated to artists, the Marea Arte Bleu Mogador, while the Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah museum maintains the memory of the region's crafts and popular traditions.

Essaouira, Tamuziga, the purpurous islands, Sidi Mogdoul, Mogador, the city on the peninsula has accumulated names throughout history. The beautiful and protected from the trade winds, rich in protected varieties: the Murex shell, the Eleonor falcon; the beautiful with the mild and temperate climate, like its inhabitants; with the landscapes of dunes and countryside with argan trees has always fascinated, since antiquity.

The verification of the initial hypotheses raised in the research is related and the interest and novelty of the work for the analyzed theme or the scientific discipline from where it has been approached is justified. This paragraph shall be clearly and precisely worded. When working at the local level, based on case studies, cross-cutting conclusions should be offered to advance general knowledge and facilitate its application to other areas of study. This section should also offer a synthesis of the progress represented by the research carried out, its applied interest and possible lines of work to be developed in the future.

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