

A Glimpse of Master Yinshun's Life and His System of Thought

Dharma Retreat
July 2015

Yinshun (1906 ~ 2005)

- Published *An Ordinary Life (revised edition)* in 2005, age 100 Passed away in 2005
- Published *An Ordinary Life (supplemented edition)* in 1994, age 89
- Published *Human Realm Buddhism: A Timely Teaching of the Timeless Truth* in 1989, age 84
- Completed *Cultivating Concentration / Cultivating the Mind, the Mere-Mind, and the Esoteric Vehicle* in 1988, age 83 alternative translation
- Completed *A History of Indian Buddhist Thought* in 1987, age 82
- Published *A Sixty-Year Voyage in the Ocean of Dharma* in 1984, age 79
- Published *An Ordinary Life* in 1971, age 66
- Published *Buddhism in India* in 1942, age 37
- Ordained in 1930, age 25
- Born in 1906

Master Yinshun's Writings

A Sixty-Year Voyage on the Ocean of Dharma Appendix:

This listing provides publication information on Master Yinshun's works mentioned in this translation.

Title in this translation	Chinese title	Publication info	Hwa Tsun trans.
<i>Abhidharma and the Abhidharma Masters of Northwestern India, The "Alternative Discussion on the Mind that Reflects Humanity and the Mind that Reflects the Way, An"</i>	《西北印度之論典與論師》 Xibeyinduzhi lunjian yu lunshi (人心與道心別觀) Renxin yu daoxin bieshuan	Mitayun Collection (no.19), vol.3-6, pp.147-78.	
<i>Anthology of Textual Research on Buddhist History and Geography, An</i>	《佛教史地考論》 Fojiao shidi kaolun	Mitayun Collection (no.22), vol.3-9.	
<i>"Apply the Principles of the Buddha Dharma to the Studying of the Buddha Dharma"</i>	《以佛法研究佛法》 Yi fo fa yanjiu fo fa	Mitayun Collection (no.16), vol.3-3, pp.1-14.	Applying Dharma in Studying t Dharma
<i>"Between Emptiness and Existence"</i>	《空有之間》 Kongyou zhijian	Mitayun Collection (no.20), vol.3-7, pp.107-16.	
<i>"Between God and Jehovah"</i>	《上帝與耶和華之間》 shangdi yu yehohua zhijian	Mitayun Collection (no.19), vol.3-6, pp.273-300.	
<i>"Bodhidharma Chan and the Song Dynasty Translated"</i>	《宋譯楞伽與達磨禪》 Songyilengqie yu damochan	Mitayun Collection (no.17), vol.3-4, pp.165-80.	

Master Yinshun's Writings

印順導師著作年表

民國 30年 40年 50年 60年 70年 80年 回首頁

時間	地點	名稱	記錄	集存
民國20年	廈門南普陀	《抉擇三時教》		《現代僧伽》
	閩南佛學院	《共不共之研究》		《現代僧伽》
	福州鼓山湧泉寺	《評破守培上人論唯識新舊不同論之意見》		張曼濤主編《現代佛教學術叢刊》第二八冊《唯識問題研究》
民國21年	普陀佛頂山慧濟寺	《佛法之危機及其救濟》		《海潮音月刊》13卷7月號
民國22年	普陀佛頂山慧濟寺	《答守培法師駁評破唯識新舊二譯不同論後之意見》		張曼濤主編《現代佛教學術叢刊》第二八冊《唯識問題研究》
民國23年	武昌佛學院	《三論宗傳承考》		張曼濤主編《現代佛教學術叢刊》第四七冊《三論宗之發展及其思想》(署名「啞言」)
	武昌佛學院	《中論史之研究》		存目
	武昌佛學院	《清辯與護法》		張曼濤主編《現代佛教學術叢刊》第二四冊《唯識學的發展與傳承》
				張曼濤主編《現代僧伽》

Yinshun Daoshi Biography

- A documentary produced by the Tzu-Chi Foundation in 2003
- *Daoshi*:
 - A *daoshi* refers to a teacher acting as the leader of a group of students
 - B.B. translates it as “mentor”
- Eight episodes

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Yinshun Daoshi Biography

- Pursuing the Right View* (episodes 1 & 2)
With tranquility and clarity, aspire for the profound, empty and vast
- Establishing the Right Convictions* (episodes 3 & 4)
With immovable adherence, go through eons of time
- Holding fast on the Right Practice* (episodes 5 & 6)
The immeasurable approaches to the Dharma all appear at present
- Passing down the Right Dharma* (episodes 7 & 8)
Having obtained great wisdom, connect to all dharmas

- Eight episodes

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Yinshun Daoshi Biography

*"I firmly believe that
the Triple Gem comes from the right view.
On the basis of the right view
there arise in one the right convictions,
which then may induce the right practice
that leads one towards the path of the Buddhahood
-- to benefit oneself, benefit others,
and protect and carry on the right Dharma."*

- Eight episodes

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Timely Teaching Outline

- 1) The Convictions and Attitude that Underlie My Quest for the Buddha Dharma
- 2) Analytical Demarcations of the History of Indian Buddhist Thought
- 3) Comments on the Tiantai and Xianshou Schools' Taxonomies of Teachings from the Perspective of the History of IBT
- 4) The Course of Transmutation of Indian Buddhism
- 5) The Principle that Underlies This Analytical Classification of Buddhist Thought

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Timely Teaching Outline

- 6) The Buddhism that is in Accord with the Truth and Suitably Adapts to the World
- 7) Human-Realm Buddhism—A “Vigorous Prime”
- 8) The Liberation Path and the Spirit and Practice of Compassion
- 9) A True and Actual Picture of the Human-Bodhisattva Practice
- 10) Marching toward the Correct Goal

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1. The Convictions and Attitude that Underlie Master Yinshun's Quest for the Buddha Dharma

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Motivation and Direction

“There is a distance between the Buddha's teaching and the embodiment of Buddhism in the actual world.” This is an issue that has constantly persisted in my mind. After eight years of study as a monk, I realized that Buddhism, though no doubt much distorted by Chinese culture, had actually begun to lose its original purity in India a long time before, and that the deterioration had gotten worse with time. Therefore, I could do nothing but devote my mind and energy to the investigation of Indian Buddhism.

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....

I firmly believe that since Buddhism has been developing for a long time, there must be some parts of it that have lost the original [essence of the Buddha Dharma] due to evolution and changes. To uncover its original tenor and to understand its evolution and changes so as to distinguish and select [the sound and healthy teachings from among all variations of Buddhism] and further refine it, I pledge to start by researching Indian Buddhism.

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To examine where and how a [Buddhist system of] thought originated, the intention through which it came about, and what actual benefits it brought to our body and mind and our country, and to do so without being clouded by floridly embellished arguments—I pledge to take these as my intentions and research the Buddhism of India.

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....

I have one conviction based on which I continuously explore, and I go through the entire Buddhist teachings to distinguish and select the approach to Dharma that I want to promote. As the scope of the subjects I touch on is somewhat extensive, the purport of what I want to promote, instead [of being instantly clear], leaves the readers at a loss!

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Stance and Attitude

I am not a traditionalist, and I am definitely not an innovator either. I believe in re-energizing the Buddhist teachings that are pure and true through adapting to the present reality while not going against the fundamental characteristic of the Buddha Dharma.

....

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I deeply feel that Buddhism in its earliest stage, because of its characteristic of adapting to a particular historical time, could not fully express the true meaning of the Blessed Śākya's teaching.

The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism in response to changing trends ... indeed had its unique strength.... The effort to widely propagate the Buddha Dharma should not be limited or obscured by the expedient means of the past.

We should let the Buddha Dharma unfold through new adaptations. . . .

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....

I pay attention to uncovering the old [adaptations/teachings] in the hope of “piercing through both ends” (not being biased toward either the Mahāyāna or the Hīnayāna but able to connect to both) so that the Buddha Dharma, along the right path in this human life, may be gradually outfitted with new adaptive means and thus spread and expand!

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Central Thought

Set roots in the purity and simplicity of root-period Buddhism; propagate the practice and the insights of middle-period Buddhism (being cautious of the Brahmanic orientation); and adopt the correct and suitable portion of later-period Buddhism. Thus, with hope, we are able to reinvigorate the Buddhist religion and fully convey the original intention of the Buddha!

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Methodology

- Apply the Principles of the Buddha Dharma to the Studying of the Buddha Dharma
- The Three Hallmarks of Dharma:
 - All formations are impermanent
 - All things are self-less
 - Nirvāṇa is quiescence!

Selflessness of person [i.e. the researcher]
Selflessness of dharmas [i.e. things to be researched]

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Selflessness of things to be researched

- Oneself and others are dependently co-productive
- The whole and the individuals are related
- The instances of coming together and breaking apart are intertwined

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Selflessness of the Researcher

One does not obstinately fix on a personal bias and approach research with any (pre-determined) view.

Allow the original meaning of each scripture to present itself.

21

All Formations are Impermanent

Finding truth in historical facts is NOT the basis on which one begins the study.

It is not valid to claim: “the earlier a teaching appeared the truer it is” or “the later a teaching appeared the more complete and closer to the ultimate it is.”

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Nirvāṇa, the Quiescence

Nirvāṇa, the Quiescence, is the destination of one's faith and ideal; one should research for the purpose of attaining this sublime ideal of the Buddha Dharma.

“Those who study and pursue the Buddha Dharma should not only aim to take to their heart the actual meaning conveyed in the text, but also to understand the impermanence and selflessness of the text itself and to realize cessation directly from the text.”

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Nirvāṇa, the Quiescence

First, the subject to be studied is the Buddha Dharma; the researcher must value its religious nature.

Second, those who take Buddhist Study as the study of a religious faith and engage in historical textual research should weigh the pursuit of factual truth highly.

Third, historical textual research should aim at pursuing truth. In the research for truth, modern Buddhist studies should [recognize that this aim] has a practical meaning—that is, to take examples from the past as a warning.

(From the perspective of a follower of Buddhist teaching, the truth that one has researched should be applied as the guideline for one's understanding and faith.)

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Basic Convictions

Eighth: To study the history of Buddhism, we ought to understand the real circumstances of its past and to learn from and remember the lessons in its past rise and decline. As believers of the Buddha Dharma, shouldn't we treasure the glory of the past and at the same time identify the internal factors that previously led to decay so as to take precautions in the future? How can we just do some research that has nothing to do with ourselves and is only for adding to collections in libraries or bibliographies!

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Basic Convictions

Four: Considering that the Buddha Dharma exists in the human world, changes are sure to occur, as they should. Nonetheless, the Buddha Dharma has a distinctive characteristic that qualifies it as the Buddha Dharma. No matter how [Buddhism] changes, it cannot overlook the distinctive characteristic of the Buddha Dharma. The overdevelopment of certain points of focus or partial elements (such as focusing only on meditative practice, only on doctrine, only on institutional rules, only on profound and lofty teaching, only on popular teaching, only on cultivating faith, and so forth) to the extreme will break apart the integrity of the Buddha Dharma and compromise the distinctive characteristic of the Buddha Dharma.

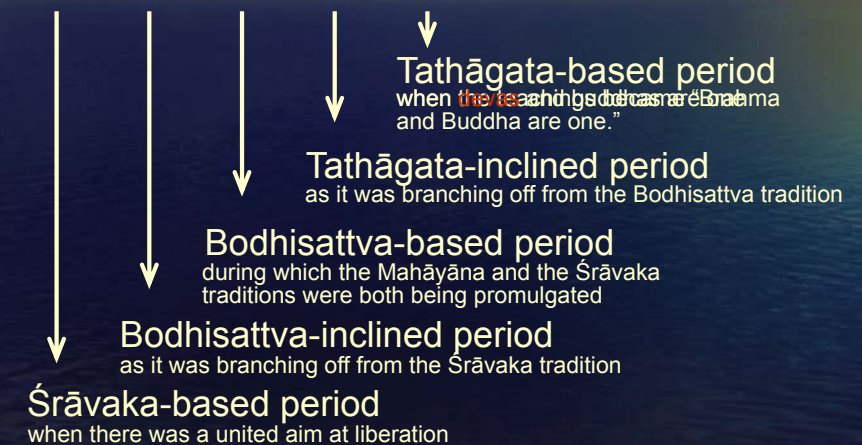
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Basic Convictions

If we absorb non-Buddhist teachings and adapt to them without paying attention to the distinctive characteristic of the Buddha Dharma, we will be unable to distinguish between the Buddha and Mara after a while. These are all facts that exist in the Buddhist religion. Evolution and development do not equal progress, and they are not equivalent to being correct.

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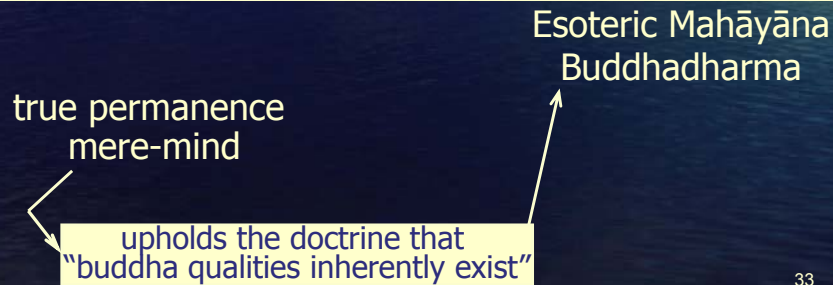
2. Analytical Demarcations of the History of Indian Buddhist Thought



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From Mahāyāna to Esoteric Mahāyāna

Only if all beings inherently possess the excellent qualities of the Tathāgata can the validity of the teaching that *one attains buddhahood in this very life*—the Vehicle of the Easy Path—be possible.



3. Comments on the Tiantai and Xianshou Schools' Taxonomies of Teachings from the Perspective of the History of Indian Buddhist Thought

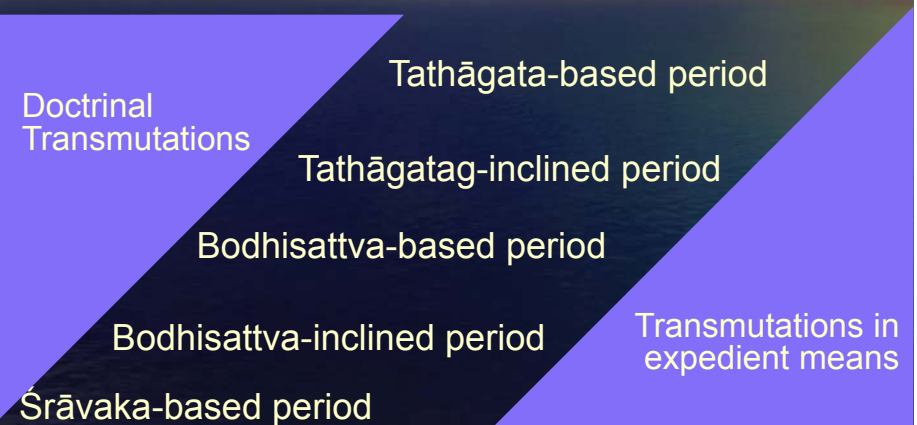
34

4. The Course of Transmutation of Indian Buddhism

Indian Buddhism went from its establishment to its decay and extinction "through an evolution over five stages; similar to the stages in a person's life, which passes through birth, childhood, vigorous prime, and then gradually degenerates to old age and death."

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The Course of Transmutation of Indian Buddhism



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Doctrinal Transmutations

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Transmutations in the Expedient Means

- Buddhadharma
 - Normal practice: the Noble Eightfold Path
 - Special practice: the Six Recollections
 - ✓ • The Buddha
 - ✓ • The Dharma
 - The Sangha
 - Precepts
 - Giving
 - ✓ • Devas

(associated with the second kind of four factors of stream entry)

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Buddha

- Early Mahāyāna Buddhadharma
 - Normal path: recollect the causal conditions that will lead to buddhahood (the six paramitas)
 - Special path: construct/worship stupas & statues
 - Take rebirth in a pure land
 - Practices such as worship, repentance, pleas for teaching, joy in the goodness of others, and the wish to transfer one's own merits to others—made in front of the presently existing buddhas of the ten directions

Easy Path

* Recollection of the Buddha that concentrates on his image

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Buddha

- Later Mahāyāna Buddhadharma

The teachings would say that all beings inherently possess the nature and the excellent qualities of a tathāgata. The meditator's focus is therefore transferred from meditating on an external buddha image to being himself a buddha.

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Buddha

- Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma

It considers the eons of cultivation of bodhisattva practice for attaining buddhahood to be too indirect and slow. Thus it teaches that one meditates on a buddha's body, a buddha's land, a buddha's wealth, and a buddha's undertakings (called "the heavenly yoga") and that one pursues the attainment of buddhahood in this very life.

Easy Path → Easy Vehicle

Attaining Buddhahood is the only goal; "the deliverance of all beings" is to be considered later.

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Dharma

- Mahāyāna Buddhadharma

Prajñāparamitā-sūtra and *Lotus Sūtra*: "[R]eading a sūtra, reciting a sūtra (either by memorizing or chanting it), writing it out, or making and offering copies of it will generate inconceivable merit that outweighs the benefit that one could receive in this life"

Prajñāparamitā Heart Sūtra: *Prajñāparamitā* "is the great magical mantra, the great luminous mantra, the unsurpassed mantra ... the king of all mantras."

Transmutations in Recollecting the Dharma

While incantation was disallowed in Buddhadharma, it gradually seeped into Mahāyāna Buddhadharma, where it was mainly to be used to protect the Dharma and to vanquish demons. Sūtra recitation and mantra incantation share a common trait, and they are also connected to the recollection of the Buddha by invoking a buddha's name. Buddhist exercises involving sound, especially the recitation of mantras, became an important subject in the practice of Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma.

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Dharma

- Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma

Invoking the Buddha's holy name / reciting sūtras
→ chanting mantras

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Devas

- **Buddhdharma**
 - The Buddha and his human disciples are positioned above the devas.
- **Early Mahāyāna Buddhadharma**
 - Bodhisattvas begin to appear in the image of deva
 - In the Flower Adornment Sūtra. . .
 - The profound (insight) & the vast (practice) are united with the popular expedients
 - world-engaging yet mystical orientation

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Transmutations in Recollecting the Devas

- **Later Mahāyāna Buddhadharma**
 - In the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Hindu gods are alternative names for the Tathāgata (in the eyes of ghosts/animal worshipers, the Tathāgata appears to them as a ghosts or an animal)
 - Doctrinally, *devas* and *buddhas* are one.
- **Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma**
 - Hindu influences are deepened, focusing on the devas of the sensual realm
 - Focus on faith, secrecy, and practice
 - The ultimate union between R.B. and R.D.

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5. The Principle that Underlies This Analytical Classification of Buddhist Thought

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Nāgārjuna's *catvāraḥ siddhāntāḥ* (the four aims/four kinds of principle & direction)

- The supreme-principle siddhānta
- The antidotal siddhānta
- The personalized (virtue-inspiring) siddhānta
- The worldly siddhānta

Supreme-principle siddhānta	That which illuminates the true meanings ([Sāratthappakāsinī] on the <i>Samyuttanikāya</i>)
Antidotal siddhānta	That which dissipates mental stagnation ([Papañcasūdanī] on the <i>Majjhimanikāya</i>)
Personalized [virtue-inspiring] siddhānta	That which satisfies wishes ([Manorathapūraṇī] on the <i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>)
Worldly siddhānta	That which is auspicious and charming ([Sumaṅgalavilāsinī] on the <i>Dīghanikāya</i>) #8

The compilation of all the Buddhist canonical scriptures is simply an unfolding of the focal points—the four great aims. Underneath the different adaptations, they directly connect to the truth that the Buddha attained on his own.

Buddhadharma	Supreme-principle siddhānta
Early Mahāyāna Buddhadharma	Antidotal siddhānta
Later Mahāyāna Buddhadharma	Personalized [virtue-inspiring] siddhānta
Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma	Worldly siddhānta

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In order to greatly benefit all beings, one cannot but seek to adapt, and one cannot do without expedient means. This is just like adding water to milk in order to make more money. With this kind of constant adaptation and constant addition of worldly expediencies, the canonical scriptures compiled over four stages are just like the milk for sale that has water added repeatedly. Eventually the true flavor of the Buddha’s teaching is thinned down, and Indian Buddhism is also gone!

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This analytical classification concentrates on the difference in the focuses of the developmental stages of Buddhism. It is not saying that the teachings of Buddhadharma are all supreme-principle siddhānta or that the teachings of Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma are all worldly siddhānta.

The Buddhist teachings of the worldly siddhānta are still superior to the theistic religions of the world because the former still contain the ingredients that lean toward liberation.

51

Set roots in the purity and simplicity of root-period Buddhism; propagate the practice and the insights of middle-period Buddhism (being cautious of the Brahmanic orientation); and adopt the correct and suitable portion of later-period Buddhism. Thus, with hope, we are able to reinvigorate the Buddhist religion and fully convey the original intention of the Buddha!

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