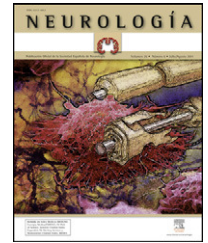




# NEUROLOGÍA

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# The first Catalan Neurological Societies and their protagonists<sup>☆</sup>

A. Arboix\*, M.G. Fabregas

Unidad de Enfermedades Vasculares Cerebrales, Servicio de Neurología, Hospital Universitari del Sagrat Cor, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

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Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona;  
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Association of Psychiatry and Neurology;  
Association of Neurological Sciences;  
Catalan Society of Neurology

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Little is known about the first Catalan neurological societies. Our aim was to analyse them from the formation of the pioneering Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona founded in 1911.

**Development:** We performed a literature search using MEDLINE using the key words: neurological societies, using the doctoral thesis of MG Fabregas: "History of Neurology in Catalonia from 1882 to 1949" and original historical bibliographical sources of the Library of the Academy of Sciences Mèdiques de Catalunya i Balears. The presence of neurological societies in Catalunya is relatively recent. The first society was established a century ago, and was the Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona, founded by Artur Galcerán i Granés in 1911. This became the Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry in 1934 under the presidency of Belarmino Rodríguez Arias. With the civil war, the society broke up and reappeared under the name Association of Psychiatry and Neurology presided over by José Córdoba Rodríguez (1941), emerging in 1968 as the Association of Neurological Sciences with Lluís Barraquer Bordas as President. In 1973 it assumed the current name of Catalan Society of Neurology under Agustí Codina Puiggrós.

**Conclusions:** The Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona founded in 1911 by Galcerán i Granés was the first neurological society and was a precursor of the Catalan Society of Neurology. It should be highlighted that in 2011 it will be 100 years since the founding of the first neurological society in Catalonia and Spain.

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [aarboix@hscor.com](mailto:aarboix@hscor.com) (A. Arboix).

**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Sociedad de  
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Asociación de  
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Societat Catalana de  
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**Las primeras sociedades neurológicas catalanas y sus protagonistas****Resumen**

**Introduction:** El conocimiento de las sociedades neurológicas anteriores a la Sociedad Española de Neurología (año 1949) es escaso. Las analizamos partiendo de la pionera Sociedad de Psiquiatría y Neurología de Barcelona, fundada en 1911.

**Desarrollo:** Efectuamos una búsqueda bibliográfica mediante MEDLINE a partir de la palabra clave neurological societies, utilizando también la tesis doctoral de M.G. Fabregas "Història de la Neurologia a Catalunya. De l'any 1882 a l'any 1949" y de fuentes bibliográficas históricas originales de la Biblioteca de la Acadèmia de Ciències Mèdiques de Catalunya i Balears de Barcelona. En Cataluña y en España, la primera sociedad neurológica se creó hace un siglo, y fue la Sociedad de Psiquiatría y Neurología de Barcelona, fundada por Artur Galcerán i Granés en 1911. Posteriormente, se denominaría Societat Catalana de Psiquiatría i Neurologia y en 1934 estaría presidida por Belarmino Rodríguez Arias. Con la guerra civil se disolvió y reaparecería con el nombre de Asociación de Psiquiatría y Neurología y estaría presidida por José Córdoba Rodríguez (1941). Dicha sociedad sería precursora de la Asociación de Ciencias Neurológicas de Barraquer Bordas (año 1968) y ésta lo sería de la Societat Catalana de Neurología, fundada por Codina Puiggrós en 1973.

**Conclusiones:** La Sociedad de Psiquiatría y Neurología de Barcelona fundada en 1911 por Galcerán i Granés, y precursora de la Societat Catalana de Neurologia, fue la primera sociedad neurológica. Se debe remarcar que en el año 2011 se cumplen 100 años de la fundación de la primera sociedad neurológica catalana y española.

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**Introduction**

The existence of medical societies is relatively recent in the history of medicine. In Catalonia, the first neurological society was the Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona, founded a century ago by Artur Galcerán i Granés in 1911.<sup>1</sup> Only 2 medical societies had been documented previously: L'Académie d'Hygiene of Catalonia and the Hispano-American Ophthalmological Society, founded in 1904, both located in Barcelona. However, the analysis of early Catalan and Spanish neurological societies, prior to the founding of the Spanish Society of Neurology in 1949, is scarce.<sup>2</sup> With the aim of contributing to their knowledge and highlighting their importance and significance, we analysed them beginning with the pioneer Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona, founded in 1911 by A. Galcerán i Granés.

**Development**

We conducted a literature search using MEDLINE, with no date limit, starting from the keywords "neurological societies", as well as a targeted search using the doctoral thesis of Marta Gloria Fabregas Camps, "Història de la Neurologia a Catalunya. De l'any 1882 a l'any 1949" ("History of neurology in Catalonia from 1882 to 1949"), presented and defended in 1992 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona,<sup>1</sup> and original historical literature sources selected from a personal literature search by the authors in the Library of the Acadèmia de Ciències Mèdiques de Catalunya i de Balears in Barcelona. We obtained the following results.

**Precursors of the First Catalan Neurological Societies****The French neurologists**

An important contribution of the nineteenth century to the progress of medicine was the addition of the new "anatomical-clinical" neurological mentality, thanks to the figure of Jean Marie Charcot (1825–1893), who had Duchenne as a teacher and who was the founder of classical clinical neurology.<sup>3</sup> His successor would be L Déjérine. He was instrumental in providing neurology with its own specificity and provided Pierre Marie (1853–1940) with the arguments needed to raise for the first time, in 1897, an independent hospital service for neurology at Hospital Bizet. Babinski (1857–1932) would also create one at Hospital de la Pitié.<sup>1,3</sup>

These precursors constitute the seed and the necessary precedent for the birth of the first neurological society, the Society of Neurology of Paris, which was founded in 1900 by Babinski, Brissaud, Pierre Marie, Déjérine and Souques.<sup>1,3</sup>

Due to their geographical proximity, Catalan neurologists received special influence and expertise from the French neurologists.<sup>2,3</sup>

**Histology and Santiago Ramon y Cajal**

It should be noted that the central nervous system was the main histological research topic during the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dr. Santiago Ramon y Cajal contributed to its development with his micrographic findings in the cerebellum and the retina.<sup>1,4</sup> The Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine awarded to

Cajal and Golgi for the "Texture of the nervous system of man and vertebrates" was a just reward for their research concerning the "neuron theory". These morphological investigations by Dr. Ramon y Cajal also contributed to the development of neurology as a distinct and separate specialty. In 1887, Santiago Ramon y Cajal obtained the chair of Normal and Pathological Histology at Barcelona.<sup>1,5</sup> It could be said that modern histology of the nervous system was born at the School of Medicine in Barcelona.<sup>1</sup>

### Other medical and social aspects

1. Outside Catalonia: in 1911, Hörlein and Hauptmann discovered "luminal", a breakthrough that meant progress in neurological pharmacology and in the treatment of epilepsy.<sup>1</sup> In 1913, Sigmund Freud founded the School of Analytical Psychology in 1914, which was the year of the outbreak of the First World War. In 1916, Guillain, Barré and Strohl described acute polyradiculoneuritis<sup>3</sup> and 1917 was the year of the Soviet revolution. In 1919 Gandhi began using passive resistance against the British authorities. In 1940 Merritt used hydantoins as a new antiepileptic drug<sup>3</sup> and in 1945 the Second World War ended.
2. In Catalonia: in 1882, Lluís Barraquer Roviralta founded what would become the first Electrotherapy and Neurology Clinic in Barcelona, starting a new medical specialty.<sup>6</sup> Its staff would be known as "medical electricians".<sup>7</sup> The First Congress of Catalan-speaking Physicians was held in 1913, and in 1914 Barraquer Roviralta published a significant contribution to the semiology of the peripheral nervous system in "Nouvelle iconographie de la salpêtrière".<sup>6</sup> During this period, the community of Catalonia was already consolidated and a new medical society founded by Dr. Galcerán i Granés in 1911, the Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona, was already established. This would become the first Catalan and Spanish Neurological Society.<sup>8</sup> Later, in 1916, Raventós would operate on a brain tumour and the unofficial opening of Hospital Sant Pau took place; in 1919 Barraquer Roviralta joined the Royal Academy of Medicine of Barcelona with his master conference "Semiological value of idiomuscular contraction".<sup>1</sup>

In 1923, the coup by Primo de Rivera took place and the military dictatorship began, a situation that led to the abolition of the democratic system of the community of Catalonia. In 1929, Barraquer Ferrer was appointed director of the first hospital neurology service at Hospital Sant Pau.<sup>1</sup> The medical conference of Catalan-speaking alienists and neurologists took place in Barcelona in that same year. It was the year of the Universal Exhibition of Barcelona and the same in which the dictatorship fell. It was also the year of the New York stock market crash. In 1930, King Alfonso XIII officially opened the Hospital Sant Pau.<sup>1</sup>

The first International Congress of Neurology was held in 1931, in the Swiss city of Bern.<sup>1</sup> The Second Republic was proclaimed. In 1933, Rodríguez Arias obtained the first Chair of Neurology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.<sup>9</sup> The transfer of healthcare and social assistance to the Generalitat of Catalonia was decreed. The creation

of the Municipal Neurological Institute of Barcelona took place in 1936. That same year, L. Barraquer Ferré, I. De Gispert and E. Castañer published their "Treaty on Nervous Diseases"<sup>2,10</sup> and the Spanish Civil War also began. In 1939 the Civil War ended, leading to the exile of many scientists. The last meeting in Spain of the Republican Parliament took place in Figueres. It was the time of the lathyrism epidemic in Barcelona.<sup>1</sup>

Political isolation after the Civil War significantly slowed and hindered scientific progress. The National Congress of Neuropsychiatry was held in Barcelona in 1942, and in 1949 L. Barraquer Ferré, B. Rodríguez Arias and A. Subirana created the Spanish Society of Neurology in Barcelona.<sup>2,11</sup>

### The teachers of the first experts (immediate precursors of the neurological specialty in Catalonia)

The figure of Dr. Bartomeu Robert i Yarzabal<sup>12-14</sup> stands out as the immediate precursor and promoter of the neurological specialty in Catalonia. He foresaw the importance of neurology as a fully differentiated specialty and aided Dr. Barraquer Roviralta in the creation of the first neurology and electrotherapy clinic at Hospital de la Santa Creu, in 1882. Dr. Bertran i Rubió was another pioneering figure and a precursor of clinical neurology who joined the Catalan Royal Academy of Medicine in 1865, and was the first person to be accepted at the academy as a neurologist and "electrologist".<sup>1,15</sup>

### The first Catalan Neurological Societies

#### Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona

The last third of the nineteenth century is known in Catalonia as "Renaixença" (Renaissance) and is characterised by a period of economic awakening, as well as artistic, social, cultural, political, scientific and medical development. It was the time of birth of the different medical specialties. The birth and consolidation of the various medical societies took place in the early twentieth century. The Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona was founded in this context. Its statutes were published in the prestigious medical journal of the time "The Catalan Medical Gazette"<sup>16</sup> (Figs. 1 and 2). It was the first Catalan and Spanish neurological society and it was chaired by Artur Galcerán i Granés (Girona, 1850–Barcelona, 1919) (Fig. 3). The other physicians who comprised the first Board were Xercavins i Rius, Moles Ornella, Conill Mataro, Farreras Sampere, Ribas Pujol and Salforcada. The doctors Martí Julia and Rodríguez Morini also contributed.<sup>16,17</sup>

It should be stressed that in those times neurology and psychiatry were covered by a single medical branch and were known as "medical neuropsychiatry".<sup>18,19</sup> Consequently, the precursors of modern psychiatry also had significant neurological training and, conversely, the precursors of modern neurology also had a solid background in psychiatry.<sup>1</sup>

## SECCIÓN OFICIAL

### ESTATUTOS DE LA SOCIEDAD DE PSIQUIATRÍA Y NEUROLOGÍA

#### Objeto de la Sociedad

Art. 1.º Con la denominación de «Sociedad de Psiquiatría y Neurología» se constituye una sociedad científica que tiene por objeto:

- a) Llevar á la realidad las bases formuladas el día del acuerdo de su constitución y que á continuación se copian;
- b) Conseguir la creación y desarrollo de las instituciones nosocomiales adecuadas á los distintos grupos de enfermos correspondientes á la Psiquiatría y Neurología;
- c) Llevar á la práctica cuantas iniciativas apruebe la Sociedad y tengan relación con su vida científica, profesional y funciones sociales.

#### Bases aprobadas

- 1.ª Conseguir una legislación modernamente científica sobre alienados, por lo que se refiere á asuntos de responsabilidad y capacidad.
- 2.ª Conseguir una legislación perfectamente adecuada á las necesidades de los enfermos de la mente, por lo que respecta al ingreso, estancia y salida de los mismos, en los establecimientos correspondientes.
- 3.ª Procurar el desarrollo de la enseñanza de la Psiquiatría y Neurología, y la creación de Cátedras, Laboratorios, Museos, Clínicas y Dispensarios correspondientes á las especialidades referidas.
- 4.ª Procurar sea adaptada una clasificación de enfermedades mentales, temporalmente obligatoria para los médicos españoles á los efectos de las estadísticas y trabajos científicos.
- 5.ª Gestionar la creación de un cuerpo de médicos alienistas con las atribuciones que son propias de la especialidad.
- 6.ª Gestionar la fundación de patronatos en favor de los alienados pobres salidos del frenocomio curados ó convalecientes, socorriéndoles pecuniariamente hasta que encuentren trabajo ó procurándosele y facilitar el pronto reingreso de los recidivantes, extendiendo igual beneficio á los anormales y abandonados.
- 7.ª Organizar un cuerpo de enfermeros y enfermeras, idóneos para el servicio de los establecimientos especiales.

#### Organización de la Sociedad

Art. 2.º La Sociedad estará constituida por los médicos dedicados á la Psiquiatría y Neurología, y por cuantas personas puedan cooperar á los fines de la misma.

Art. 3.º Los socios serán fundadores, numerarios y correspondientes:

- a) *Socios fundadores* serán aquellos que ingresen al tiempo de constituirse la Sociedad;
- b) *Numerarios*, los que se inscriban después;
- c) *Corresponsales*, los que residan fuera de España, siendo propuestos por cinco socios numerarios;
- d) Será potestativo de la Sociedad el nombramiento de *Socios de honor*, con la condición de que el agraciado reúna las cuatro quintas partes de votos de la totalidad de socios.

Art. 4.º El ingreso de los socios numerarios tendrá lugar mediante la propuesta de dos socios y la aprobación de la Sociedad.

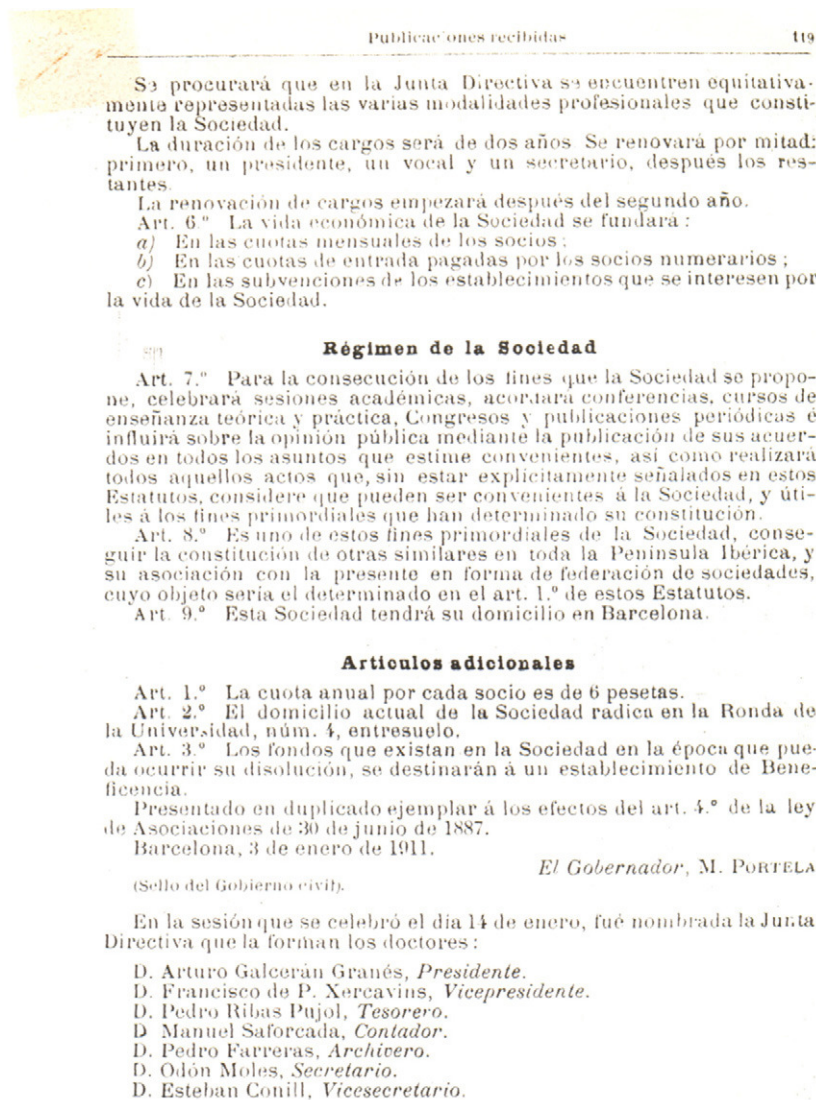
Art. 5.º De entre los socios se constituirá una Junta Directiva formada por Presidente, Vicepresidente, Tesorero, Vocal Archivero, Vocal Contador, Secretario, Vicesecretario.

Figure 1 First page of the statutes of the pioneer Society of Neurology and Psychiatry of Barcelona, published in 1911 in the "Catalan Medical Gazette" (p. 118–9).<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Artur Galcerán i Granés was a disciple of the psychiatry school of Joan Giné i Partagas. However, he unequivocally referred to himself as a "neurologist and mentalist" in his publications<sup>20–24</sup> (Fig. 4). He was director of the mental

hospital of Sant Boi in Llobregat and afterwards of Hospital Pere Mata in Reus. Dr. Domingo Martí i Julia (1860–1917) relieved him as President from 1915 to 1917.<sup>1</sup> Galcerán i Granés died in Barcelona in the year 1919.<sup>1</sup>





**Figure 2** Second page of the statutes of the Society of Neurology and Psychiatry of Barcelona, published in 1911 in the "Catalan Medical Gazette" (p. 118–9).<sup>16</sup>

We must stress that Barraquer Roviralta, the founder of Catalan and Spanish clinical neurology, was a contemporary of Galcerán i Granés. It is striking, however, that neither he nor any of his disciples, such as Celestino Vilumara and Bonaventura Clotet, formed part of the board of the pioneer Society of Psychiatry and Neurology. This was perhaps because it was composed of practitioners with a mainly clinical or exclusively forensic and psychiatric approach.<sup>1,2</sup>

We should also note that 1 year after the death of Galcerán i Granés, the 1920 "Annual of Hospital de la Santa Creu" already mentioned that the Neuropathology and Electrotherapy Service had Dr. Barraquer Roviralta as a teacher, Alberto Roca i Munnar as an assistant physician and E. Peres Casañas as a medical intern.<sup>2</sup> Neurology as a distinct and exclusive specialty separate from psychiatry had begun its journey.

### Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry

The Society of Psychiatry and Neurology of Barcelona became the Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry and would be chaired in 1934 by Belarmino Rodríguez Arias, another of the great figures in the history of Catalan neurology.<sup>9</sup> This evolution was possible because, since 1930, there had been active involvement in society of many neurologists with scientific interest, such as Barraquer Ferré, Rodríguez Arias, Subirana, Gispert Cruz and Castañer Vendrell, among others. Finally, in 1934, the combination of this circumstance facilitated the creation of the Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry, which replaced the previous one.<sup>25</sup> Another important development was the 1936 creation of the Municipal Neurological Institute of Barcelona, which was the first hospital centre devoted exclusively to neurological patients.<sup>1,25</sup> This hospital also conducted



**Figure 3** Dr. A. Galcerán i Granés became president of the Society of Neurology and Psychiatry of Barcelona in 1911.

significant clinical research and teaching duties. Its manager was Rodríguez Arias, who was president of the Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry at the time (Fig. 5). He would also be appointed assistant professor of Neurology, in the first chair of this specialty existing in Spain.<sup>1,9</sup>

### Birth and evolution of other neurological societies

In 1932, a hybrid society bringing together specialists in neurology, psychiatry, ophthalmology and ENT was created in Barcelona. It was known as the Oto-Neuro-Ophthalmology Society of Barcelona. Dr. Barraquer Ferré was the president of this medical society in 1935.<sup>1</sup>

## Cursos y Conferencias

### La Neurología en Cataluña (\*)

Por el doctor B. RODRIGUEZ ARIAS

Profesor de Neurología en la Facultad de Medicina de Barcelona  
Presidente de la "Societat Catalana de Psiquiatria i Neurologia"

**Figure 5** Article by Belarmino Rodríguez Arias, as president of the Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry, in the "Medical Journal of Barcelona" in 1934.<sup>15</sup>

With the Spanish Civil War, the Catalan Society of Neurology and Psychiatry was dissolved. After the war, it would reappear in 1941 under the name Neurology and Psychiatry Association, chaired by the psychiatrist Jose Cordoba Rodríguez.<sup>25</sup> The monthly meetings of the association presented both neurological and psychiatric articles. Sometimes, these were devoted to a single specialty or to specific issues. The association included not only neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuropsychiatrists and psychiatrists, but also those interested in the neurological subspecialties that gradually arose, such as EEG specialists or neuroradiologists.<sup>25</sup> The existence of this wide range of subspecialties stemming from the common branch of neurology and their growth and development were reasonable grounds that consolidated the foundations of the subsequent and necessary separation of neurology and psychiatry, from the clinical and healthcare perspectives.

The year 1949 witnessed the foundation in Barcelona of the Spanish Society of Neurology, by L. Barraquer Ferré, B. Rodríguez Arias and A. Subirana.<sup>1,2</sup> Later, in 1968, the Association of Neurological Sciences was created, presided by Lluís Barraquer Bordas.<sup>25</sup> Finally, in 1973, Codina Puiggròs was appointed president of the Association of Neurological Sciences, and with his secretary Martí Vilalta, changed the name to its current version: Catalan Society of Neurology.<sup>25,26</sup>

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POR EL

DOCTOR GALCERÁN GRANÉS

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**Figure 4** Article by A. Galcerán i Granés — who referred to himself as a neurologist and mentalist — presenting a literature review of neurological topics of his time.

## Conclusions

The Society of Neurology and Psychiatry of Barcelona, founded in 1911 by Galcerán i Granés and precursor of the Catalan Society of Neurology, was the first neurological society. It must be stressed that the year 2011 saw the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first Catalan and Spanish Neurological Society.

## Conflict of interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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