The Etruscans (and Greeks and Romans) in Japan

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Archaeological interest is generally quite strong in Japan and extends to both Japanese and other kinds of archaeology. This popularity is reflected by many reports on television and in newspapers and journals, by an increasing number of archaeological museums (often local in character but with interesting, instructional exhibitions) and archaeological exhibitions (in public and private museums but in department stores too), and by a series of new open air archaeological parks and specialized research and restoration centers throughout the country. Japanese archaeological teams are working not only in Japan but all over the world, at sites in China, Vietnam, Peru, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and Italy.

Many of Japan’s universities offer courses and programs in “Archaeology,” meaning the prehistory and archaeology of Japan and possibly China and Korea. Comparatively few Japanese universities teach “Western” or “Mediterranean Archaeology,” a course that in most cases forms part of “Western Art History” or “Western History.” Despite the special interest of the Japanese in Egyptian and Near Eastern cultures, the number of exhibitions, museums, and private collections in Japan featuring Greek, Roman, and Etruscan art is constantly increasing and attracting Western scholars. Among the exhibitions of the last two decades, “Gold from Taranto,” “The Culture of the Etruscans,” and “Investing in the Afterlife” are especially worth mentioning. Pompeii and its wall paintings have also been particularly popular in Japan since the 1960s and have been the focus of several exhibitions such as “Pompeii Picta Fragmenta.”

Japanese museums and collections of ancient Mediterranean art feature a number of painted Greek vases, especially Attic and South Italian (mainly Apulian), which were partially published in two volumes of the CVA by A. Mizuta. This clear preference for ancient vases over objects of a larger scale reflects the traditional Japanese interest in ceramics, just as the existence of many private collections of ancient, mainly Coptic, textiles is the result of the Japanese esteem for textiles. The size, character, location and qual-
ity of these museums and collections are of course greatly varied. At least three dozen museums and collections, concentrated mainly in the Tokyo and Kansai area (Kyoto, Osaka, Nara), represent a range of national, prefectural, municipal, university and private museums, and private collections. Only a few collections such as the Ancient Mediterranean Museum in Tokyo and the Kyoto Kitazonocho Greek and Roman Museum really specialize in ancient Mediterranean art with a focus on Greek, Etruscan, and Roman objects. The two belong, respectively, to the Unimat Company and the Ninagawa family. Three other museums, the Ancient Orient Museum in Tokyo Ikebukuro, the Middle Eastern Cultural Center in Tokyo Mitaka, and the Okayama Municipal Museum of Near Eastern Art in Okayama have a special focus on Near Eastern art (Syria, Iraq, Iran, etc.) which stems from the work of Professor Egami, one of the most colorful and influential Japanese archaeologists to emerge after the last world war. In Tokyo, the Bridgestone Museum of Art and the Matsuoka Museum of Art possess remarkable collections of ancient Mediterranean art, but normally display only a limited selection at a time. Other museums, despite smaller holdings, possess some examples of outstanding quality such as the monumental Apulian red-figured volute krater in the Moa Museum of Art of Atami. Some of these museums are characterized by extraordinary modern architecture and a beautiful natural setting. One example is the Miho Museum, which was founded by a religious group in the Peach Valley and woody mountains of Shigaraki (Shiga Prefecture); its very particular architecture by the Chinese-American Ieoh Ming Pei, its gardens, and its marvellous collection have to be emphasized. Other museums are more familiar in character, such as the Hashimoto Collection, comprised mainly of Greek vases, which dates to the end of the 19th century and is located in the middle of a traditional Japanese garden near the “Silver” temple at Kyoto. Japanese aesthetics and ancient Greek culture live together in harmony here. A unique concept, meanwhile, is represented by the Otsuka Museum at Naruto founded by the pharmaceutical company Otsuka on the island of Shikoku. More than 1000 life-sized copies of European paintings from Knossos to Pop Art, worked in a special ceramic technique, offer to the Japanese public an impressive summary of the history of European painting. Tomb paintings from Tarquinia, Paestum (Tomba del Tuffatore) and Ruvo (Tomba delle Danzatrici) are featured, and Tarquinia’s Tomba degli Auguri is reconstructed in a house-like setting.

Etruscan art in Japan is mainly represented by a variety of ceramics such as impasto, bucchero, black figured, red-figured and black glaze vases, stone and terracotta urns with relief decorations from Volterra and Chiusi, a terracotta sarcophagus from Tuscania, terracotta heads and other such anatomical votives, architectural terracottas such as antefixes, bronze fibulae, belts and weapons and at least five bronze mirrors with incised decoration. There are also objects such as biconical urns from the Villanovan period. Other pre Roman Italic cultures are represented by red-figured and black glaze vases from Southern Italy, Apulian geometric vases (mainly Daunian), and a unique incised tomb stele from Daunian Siponto. The best collections of Etruscan and Italic art belong to the Kyoto Kitazonocho Greek Roman Museum, the Ancient Mediterranean Museum in Tokyo, the Osaka Municipal Museum of Art, and the private Okuma collection in
Kawasaki. The small vase collection in the Kyoto Municipal Museum (also the seat of the Paleontological Association) includes mostly Etruscan vases and was a gift of a former Japanese consul in Milan. Apart from a few extraordinary monuments and a large number of objects of mediocre quality, several fakes are also to be found in some Japanese collections. The most obvious examples are in the Tenri University Sankokan Museum, founded by a religious sect near Nara. Golden jewelry such as fibulae, ivories with figural decorations, monumental stone sculptures “from Chiusi,” bronze statuettes “from Cerveteri,” terracotta antefixes “from Tarquinia” and a “Villanovan” hut urn with strange figural elements are clearly modern, poorly executed fakes.

The origins of Japanese collections of Ancient Mediterranean art trace back in some cases to the Meiji period of the late 19th century. Thanks to a policy of openness in the Meiji period and the presence of many Western scholars and artists in Japan, it was then that an interest in ancient Mediterranean culture and art was first roused among Japanese intellectuals. Most of the Japanese collections, however, were created after the last world war and bought from auction houses and art dealers in New York, London, and Switzerland. Some objects of the Okuma Collection at Kawasaki, for example, were already known and published at the beginning of the 20th century and belonged originally to old European collections. Other monuments such as the extraordinary Apulian red-figured volute krater in the Ancient Mediterranean Museum of Tokyo that is attributed to the Baltimore Painter were unknown even to specialists such as AD Trendall, a clear sign that we are dealing here with many recently excavated (probably by *tombaroli*) and illegally exported objects. After a certain “boom” in collecting Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art from the 1960s to the 1980s, there has been a recent drop in acquisitions due at least partly to Japan’s economic crisis. Generally one notices among Japanese scholars, collectors, and the public a clear preference for Near Eastern, Egyptian and Central Asian, ‘Silkroad’ and Gandhara art over Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art, which is reflected in the focus of most Japanese expeditions, excavations and research.

In terms of the publication of ancient Mediterranean art held in Japanese museums and private collections, there exist a number of systematic catalogues which vary in quality and are mainly published in Japanese only. An exception is the detailed catalogue of the Kurashiki Ninagawa Museum published in English by the German scholar Erika Simon. The catalogue of the Ancient Mediterranean Museum in Tokyo by several Japanese authors in the Japanese language is well illustrated but the texts cannot be considered sufficiently academic. The state of publication of Greek and South Italian vases in Japan is quite good, as we have two CVA volumes by A. Mizuta, the leading Japanese specialist, and a third in preparation. In addition, a series of exhibition catalogues including ancient Mediterranean objects from Japanese collections contribute considerably to a better popular knowledge and understanding of Greek, Etruscan and Roman art. This growing interest in ancient Mediterranean cultures is reflected in the ever-growing number of Japanese tourists visiting Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, etc., and coming into contact with original sites and monuments. The Japanese interest in Etruscan culture, although modest, is also growing. There is still missing, however, a general, comprehensive publication on Etruscan (and Italic) objects in Japanese museums and collections that
reviews “The Etruscans in Japan.”

In 1994 the Ancient Mediterranean Museum was founded by the private Unimat Company in the central area of Tokyo Idabashi. Presently closed, the museum includes a series of Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan and Roman objects of rather good quality. The collection and its historical background are explained (in Japanese) in a well-illustrated catalogue and accompanying video. The objects date from the Cycladic culture of the third millennium BC to the late Roman period of the 4th century AD and consist of Cycladic marble idols, Egyptian miniature figures, glasses of Phoenician and Roman production, gems, Hellenistic bronze statuettes, terracotta figures from Boeotia and South Italy/Magna Graecia, Corinthian, Ionian, Attic and Apulian painted vases and local geometric ceramics from Apulia, Roman marble statues, heads and sarcophagus fragments, fragments of wall paintings and Campana reliefs, and a large number of oil lamps. Notable among the Etruscan objects are a painted male terracotta torso of the Hellenistic period and an interesting, relatively well-preserved bronze mirror (15.7 cm in diameter) with a mythological scene of Thetis and Peleus and an inscription naming its female owner, dated to the beginning of the 5th century BC (The mirror was most recently studied and published by N. De Grummond, who confirmed its authenticity: see the bibliography following this article). A highpoint of the Ancient Mediterranean Museum is undoubtedly a monumental Apulian red-figured volute krater whose importance was emphasized by the late AD Trendall. It can be attributed to the so called Baltimore Painter and dates from between 330 to 310 BC.

The important ancient art collection of the Ninagawa Museum in the picturesque Japanese town of Kurashiki was published in a catalogue by E. Simon in 1982. In the 1990s most objects of this private collection were moved to the new Kyoto Kitazonocho Greek and Roman Museum. The museum is located in a quiet residential area of Kyoto overlooking the woody mountains, in a house that combines classical Western and Japanese elements. The family who owns it lives next door in a traditional Japanese house. The collection is concentrated on Greek, South Italian and Etruscan ceramics but also includes sculptures, sarcophagi, architectural fragments, mosaics, bronzes, and terracottas. Its Etruscan and Italic section, arguably the most important in Japan, consists of a Villanovan biconical urn, a terracotta sarcophagus from Tuscania, a male canopic urn from Chiusi, bronze objects including two mirrors (showing the Dioscuri and the winged Artemis with Ariadne respectively), fibulae, belts, horse snaffles, a pair of sandals and a South Italian helmet, anatomical terracotta votives, an archaic nenfro head, (perhaps of a sphinx) from Vulci(?), and various ceramics such as impasto (large pithoi and braziers with relief decoration), buccero sottile and pesante, Etruscan Corinthian, black figure, red figure (such as a Volterran kelebe by the Ninagawa Painter), Faliscan red figure (including a cup of the Nazzano Painter), a pococol/pocusum with inscription, Apulian red figure (including a dinos of the Dareios Painter), Apulian geometric and Canosan polychrome, including a huge pyxis from Centuripe with a representation of a scene from one of Menander’s comedies. Unique in Japan is a Daunian tomb stele from the Siponto area in limestone (1.05 x 0.48 m) dating from the 7th century with (originally painted) incised decoration showing a shield, geometric patterns on
the clothing and figural scenes such as horsemen, carts, horses and other animals.

Among the private collections of ancient Mediterranean art in Japan, the Okuma collection in Kawasaki is of special interest. The hospitable owner and his wife (a restorer of ancient vases) lived for a long time in Europe and are true connoisseurs. The collection in their private house includes Egyptian, Cypriot, Greek, Etruscan, Roman, and Byzantine objects alongside Chinese pieces. Some of their Attic vases are of especially fine quality. The Etruscan section has a series of urns—one in alabaster from Volterra, two in limestone, and one in terracotta from Chiusi—whose reliefs show a battle scene, a Kentauromachia, a Skylla, and the Echelos myth. In addition to these are terracotta antefixes from the Late Archaic period and terracotta votive heads from the Hellenistic period.

Among Etruscan and Italic arts Etruscan Tomb Painting in particular has become a very popular topic in Japan. The idea to publish for the first time a kind of corpus of all Etruscan tomb paintings originated in Japan and was realized by Iwanami Shoten Publisher of Tokyo in 1985. *Etruscan Painting*, edited by S. Steingräber, was published in four languages including Japanese. The marvellous color photos in the volume were produced by the famous Japanese art photographer T. Okamura. Several of his photographs of paintings, printed at full scale and mounted on canvas, are actually kept in the Kawaguchiko Museum near Mount Fuji and have been shown in several exhibitions. The most important exhibitions of Etruscan and Italic art, meanwhile, took place in 1967 and 1990-91 in several Japanese cities. In 1987 an original Etruscan painted tomb, the Tomba delle Olimpiadi from Tarquinia, traveled to Japan for the first time and was one of the highlights of an exhibition in Tokyo. An exhibition in 2000 entitled “Investing in the Afterlife” on monumental tomb architecture, tomb paintings, burial gifts and customs in ancient Etruria, Southern Italy, Macedonia, and Thrace, brought to the Tokyo University Museum a selection of 19th century lucidi, facsimiles and (partly watercolored) drawings of Etruscan tomb paintings in Tarquinia, Vulci and Chiusi. On view for the first time in Japan, these documents from the archives of the German Archaeological Institute in Rome were combined with life-sized photographic reproductions of Etruscan and Paestanian tomb paintings and original Etruscan and South Italian burial gifts from Japanese museums and collections.

Academic and personal relations between Japanese and Western scholars of Mediterranean archaeology have intensified during the last few decades, as a number of Japanese archaeologists have studied at European universities. These include R. Hirata, M. Aoyagi, T. Miyasaka and M. Hirose in Rome, S. Imai in Trento, M. Haga in Pavia and Munich, T. Iizuka in Naples and Berlin, N. Nakayama in Freiburg, T. Seki in Bochum, A. Mizuta in Vienna, and T. Osada in Salzburg. In the United States, meanwhile, R. Nakamura completed her doctorate at Harvard. Several Japanese students are presently studying archaeology in Europe, but few are specializing in Etruscan archaeology.

Among the many visits of Western scholars in Archaeology and Etruscology to Japan, that of Massimo Pallottino the founder of modern Etruscology and President of the Istituto di Studi Etruschi e Italici—in December 1989 just after his 80th birthday was of special importance. He visited Tokyo, Kyoto and Nara, gave several lectures, and was impressed by his Japanese experience. After his death in February 1995 the Istituto
Italiano di Cultura at Tokyo organized a series of lectures on Etruscan topics in his memory. The outstanding importance of Pallottino’s personality and lifework was emphasized in a speech by R. Hirata, Japan’s most prominent scholar in Etruscan studies who studied under him in the 1960s at the University of Rome and has since contributed several important studies to the fields of Etruscan history and religion. Under the leadership of Giuseppina Cerulli Irelli, meanwhile, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura also promoted Etruscan studies in Japan in the 1990s by hosting western scholars and organizing lectures and seminars on topics such as Etruscan language and epigraphy. Courses in Mediterranean Archaeology that included Etruscan and Italic themes, taught by S. Steingräber at the University of Tokyo (Todai) from 1994 to 2001, further contributed to an understanding of Etruscan Archaeology among Japanese students.

In terms of excavations, Japanese archaeologists are generally more active in Near Eastern sites in Turkey and Egypt, although recently projects in Italy have also emerged. A team from the University of Tokyo under the direction of M. Aoyagi has been excavating a Roman maritime villa in Loc. Cazzanello near Tarquinia since 1992, thereby contributing to our understanding of Romanization in Etruria and the area of Tarquinia in particular. The results of this excavation have been published in the Annual Reports of the Institute for the Study of Cultural Exchange of Tokyo University since its inception. Since 1993, meanwhile, a team of the Palaeological Association of Japan in Kyoto has been excavating in Pompeii at Porta Capuana and contributing to research on the city’s pre Roman period, under the direction of B. Tsunoda. The results have been published annually in Opuscula Pompeiana since 1994.

VISITS AND TEACHING OF SCHOLARS SPECIALIZED IN ETRUSCOLOGY AND ANTICHITÀ ITALICHE IN JAPAN

1980 and other times
E. Simon

1989
M. Pallottino

1994-2001
S. Steingräber (Tokyo University)

1996
M. Del Chiari

1996 and 2000
H. Blanck

1997
M. Nielsen
1998
N. De Grummond

2000
M. Cipriani, A. Pontrandolfo, A. Rouveret, V. Sampaolo

ACADEMIC MEETINGS AND CONGRESSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

1996
Le ville romane d’Italia e del Mediterraneo antico (Etruscan topics included)

1999
Hellenistic Painting: Characteristics and Meaning, Problems, Prospects (including Etruscan and South Italian painting)

2000
During the exhibition “Investing in the Afterlife,” a series of lectures by international scholars was organized in the Tokyo University Museum with some topics of Etruscan and Italic interest.

ACTIVITIES OF THE ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA AT TOKYO

Since 1994, several lectures and seminars on Etruscan and Italic topics, including an introduction course in Etruscan epigraphy and language and a series of lectures in 1995 in memory of M. Pallottino (by R. Hirata and S. Steingräber in particular)

JAPANESE EXCAVATIONS IN ITALY

Realmonte, near Agrigento
Roman Villa (M. Aoyagi, Tokyo University, 1981-1985)

Tarquinia, Loc. Cazzanello
Roman Villa (M. Aoyagi, Tokyo University, since 1992)

Somma Vesuviana
Roman Villa (M. Aoyagi, Tokyo University, since 2002)

Pompeii
Porta Capuana (B. Tsunoda, The Paleological Association of Japan, Kyoto, since 1993)
Japanese Museums and Collections Including Greek, Roman, Etruscan and Italic Objects

Atami
- Moa Museum of Art (includes a monumental Apulian red figure volute krater)

Fukuoka
- Fukuoka Art Museum

Kamakura
- Collection Hirayama

Kawaguchiko City
- Kawaguchiko Museum (includes life-sized photographic reproductions on canvas of many Etruscan tomb paintings)

Kawasaki
- Okuma Collection (includes Etruscan urns from Volterra and Chiusi, terracotta antefixes and votive heads, Apulian red-figured vases, South Italian and Sicilian terracotta statuettes)

Kurashiki
- Kurashiki Ninagawa Museum
- Ancient Near Eastern Art Hall

Kyoto
- Hashimoto Collection (includes Apulian red figure vases)
- Kyoto Kitazonocho Greek and Roman Museum (includes an Etruscan terracotta sarcophagus from Tuscania, a male canopic urn from Chiusi, an Etruscan nenfro head of a sphinx from Vulci(?), two Etruscan bronze mirrors with figural scenes and other bronze objects such as weapons, fibulae and sandals, a South Italian bronze helmet, Etruscan anatomical votive terracottas, South Italian terracotta statuettes, Villanovian ceramics, Etruscan impasto (Caeretan olle, pithoi and braziers with relief stamps), bucchero, Etrusco Corinthian, Etruscan black figure, Etruscan red figure, Faliscan red-figure, Apulian red figure, Apulian geometric indigenous, Lucanian red figure and Gnathia vases, a pocolon with inscription, polychrome vases and statuettes from Canosa and a pyxis from Centuripe, and a Daunian stele from Siponto with figural carvings)
- Kyoto Municipal Museum/Paleological Association of Japan (includes a Villanovian biconical urn, Etruscan bucchero, Etrusco Corinthian, Etruscan black figure and red figure and Apulian indigenous geometric vases)
- Museum of the University of Kyoto
Nara
– Shoso in Treasure House

Naruto
– Otsuka Museum of Art (life-sized ceramic copies of Etruscan and South Italian tomb paintings from Tarquinia, Paestum and Ruvo)

Okayama
– Collection R.O.
– Okayama Municipal Museum of Near Eastern Art

Osaka
– Osaka Municipal Museum of Art (includes two Villanovian biconical urns, Etruscan impasto, bucchero and geometric vases, genuilia vessels, Gnathian vases, Apulian red-figured and indigenous geometric vases, Campanian black glaze vases, Etruscan terracotta votive objects such as heads, busts and statuettes, Etruscan architectural terracottas such as antefixes, lion heads and frieze fragments, Etruscan and Italic bronze statuettes and objects)

Osaka Sakai
– Oka Collection

Shigaraki
– Miho Museum

Shimonoseki
– Shimonoseki City Art Museum (includes an Etruscan bronze mirror with Gorgoneion and a bucchero kantharos, Apulian red-figured and indigenous geometric vases, Gnathia vases and South Italian black glaze vases)

Shizuoka
– Fuji Art Museum

Tenri
– Tenri University Sankokan Museum (includes a Villanovian biconical and hut urn, Etruscan geometric, bucchero, impasto, black-figured and red-figured vases, gold fibulae and other jewelry with granulation, ivory figures and reliefs, bronze statuettes from “Cerveteri,” terracotta antefixes from “Tarquinia” and large sized limestone sculptures from “Chiusi,” but most of the Etruscan objects can be clearly identified as fakes; three Sardinian bronze statuettes of warriors from “Populonia” have to be considered as fakes too; in addition there are Apulian red-figured and geometric indigenous vases)
Tokyo
- Ancient Mediterranean Museum (includes an Etruscan bronze mirror with a mythological scene, Etruscan bronze weapons and jewelry, a male terracotta torso, a terracotta urn lid from Chiusi, Etruscan antefixes, impasto and bucchero vases, Apulian red-figured [particularly a monumental volute krater attributed to the Baltimore Painter] and geometric indigenous vases, South Italian black glaze vases)
- Ancient Orient Museum (Ikebukuro)
- Bridgestone Museum of Art/Ishibashi Collection (includes a late archaic Etruscan terracotta frieze fragment with a painted figural scene, Etruscan bucchero and black figure, Campanian red-figured, Apulian red-figured and Gnathian vases and a Sicilian terracotta statuette)
- Eisei Bunko Museum
- Kyoritsu Women’s University Museum
- Matsubara Museum of Art (includes a monumental Apulian red-figured volute krater attributed to the Hades Painter, Etruscan terracottas, Etruscan and Umbrian bronze statuettes and South Italian/Tarentine terracottas)
- Middle Eastern Culture Center (Tokyo Mitaka) (includes Campanian and Sicilian terracotta antefixes, a Tarentine bronze statuette, a polychrome vase from Centuripe, an Etruscan terracotta mask, a griffin head, an impasto amphora and bronze statuettes)
- Museum of the National Academy of Art
- Museum of the University of Tokyo (includes Apulian and Campanian red-figured vases)
- Tokyo National Museum
- Tanikawa Collection (includes an Etruscan bronze mirror)
- Collection

Toyama
- Toyama Art Museum

Yokohama
- Negishi Equine Museum

EXHIBITIONS OF ETRUSCAN AND ITALIC ART IN JAPAN

1967
Tokyo, National Museum: Art of Ancient Italy

1985
Tokyo, Department Store: Ori di Taranto
1987
Tokyo, Museum of Western Art: Masterpieces from 2500 years of European Art from Phidias to Picasso (including the Tomba delle Olimpiadi from Tarquinia)

1990-91
Tokyo and other Japanese cities: La Civiltà degli Etruschi. Scavi e studi recenti

2000
The University of Tokyo Museum: Investing in the Afterlife (including Etruscan ceramics, mirrors and urns from Japanese collections and copies [lucidi, facsimiles, watercolors] of Etruscan tomb paintings from the archives of the German Archaeological Institute in Rome)

MA IN PUBLI CATIONS (IN C HRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Exhibition of Arts and Crafts of Ancient Greece in the Collection of Tenri University Museum. Tenri Gallery, Tokyo (1963; in Japanese)
The Oka Collection. Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art (Osaka/Sakai 1979)
Catalogue of Exhibition: Mosaics and Sculptures of Syria (Osaka 1980)
A. Mizuta, CVA Japan Fas zikel 1: Rotfigurige Vasen in japanischen Sammlungen (1981)
Masterpieces from the Osaka Municipal Museum of Art (1986; in Japanese)
The Grand Exhibition of Silk Road Civilizations. The Silk Road: The Sea Route (Nara 1988; in Japanese)
A. Mizuta, CVA Japan Fas zikel 2: Schwarz- und rotfigurige Vasen in japanischen Sammlungen (1991)


*Catalogue of the Late Mr. and Mrs. K. Ishiguro Collection.* The Middle Eastern Culture Center, Tokyo (1993; in Japanese)


*Catalogue Ishibashi Collection Western Art* (1997)

*Catalogue of the Miho Museum. The South Wing* (1997)


M. Kobayashi, “La cultura classica occidentale nelle università giapponesi.” *ACME* 52/1, 1999, 161ss.


S. Steingräber, ed. *Hellenistic Painting Characteristics and Meaning, Problems, Prospects.* Academic Meeting at the University of Tokyo, April 1999 (in preparation)

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