SLAVES & HOUSEHOLDS IN THE NEAR EAST

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS



The Oriental Institute
The University of Chicago
March 5-6, 2010

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SLAVES & HOUSEHOLDS IN THE NEAR EAST

Organized by Laura Culbertson
The Oriental Institute – The University of Chicago

PROGRAM

Friday, March 5, 2010

8:30-9:00	Coffee
9:00-9:15	Welcome and Introduction, Gil Stein, Director of the Oriental Institute
9:15-9:30	Introduction, Laura Culbertson (The Oriental Institute)

SESSION 1: EARLY MESOPOTAMIA

Chair: Christopher Woods

9:30-10:00 Robert Englund (University of California, Los Angeles)
"Corporate Slaves in Third-Millennium Sumer"

10:00-10:30 Hans Neumann (Universität Münster)
"Slavery in Private Households Toward the End of the Third Millennium B.C."

10:30-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-11:15 Laura Culbertson (The Oriental Institute)
"Un-Free Children in Elite Households of Early Mesopotamia"

11:15-11:45 Andrea Seri (The Oriental Institute)
"On Domestic Female Slaves in the Old Babylonian Period"

11:45-12:00 Questions and Discussion

SESSION 2: THE ISLAMIC NEAR EAST

Chair: Fred Donner

2:00-2:30 Matthew Gordon (Miami University)
 "Singers and Soldiers: Slave and Slave Families of the Third-Century A.H./Ninth-Century A.D. Islamic Near East"
 2:30-3:00 Kathryn Babayan (University of Michigan)
 "On Manumission and Declarations of Freedom in Seventeenth-Century

Isfahan"

3:00-3:30	Ehud Toledano (Tel Aviv University) "An Empire of Many Households: The Case of Ottoman Enslavement"
3:30-4:00	Discussion
4:00-5:30	Reception in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery

Saturday, March 6, 2010

SESSION 3: THE SECOND AND FIRST MILLENNIUM EMPIRES

Chair: Matthew Stolper

9:00-9:30	Coffee
9:30-10:00	Jonathan Tenney (Loyola University New Orleans) "Household Structure and Population Dynamics of the Middle Babylonian Provincial Slave Population"
10:00-10:30	F. Rachel Magdalene (Universität Leipzig) "Slavery Between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience"
10:30-11:00	Kristin Kleber (Freie Universität Berlin) "Slave, Serf, and Freeman: A Neo-Babylonian Perspective"

SESSION 4: RESPONDENTS AND FINAL DISCUSSION

Respondents

11:00-11:15	Indrani Chatterjee (Rutgers University)
11:15-11:30	Martha Roth (The Oriental Institute)
11:30-12:00	Discussion

ABSTRACTS & BIOS

Kathryn Babayan (University of Michigan)

Title: "On Manumission and Declarations of Freedom in Seventeenth-Century Isfahan" (Friday, 2:30–3:00)

Abstract: This paper is part of a larger investigation into the meanings of "freedom" (azad) for slaves in early modern Isfahan. What did this new status as "free" imply? To begin to probe these issues, I focus on the language of "manumission declarations" (azadname) preserved in a large body of primary sources termed "anthologies" (majmu'as) among Iran's manuscript collections. These anthologies invigorate social and cultural inquiries previously unfeasible for the historian of the Safavi period. The practices of manumission were frequently recorded in these anthologies and serve as a source to explore the contours of freedom and enslavement with respect to the ownership of body and property.

Bio: Kathryn Babayan is Associate Professor of Iranian History and Culture at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She received her Ph.D. in Islamic History from Princeton University. She specializes in the cultural and social histories of early-modern Iran. She is the author of Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran (Cambridge: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, 2003), which earned her honorable mention for the Saidi-Sirjani Book Award in 2004. Babayan has also co-authored Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavi Iran, with Sussan Babaie, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad (London: I. B. Taurus, 2004), and co-edited with Afsaneh Najmabadi Islamicate Sexualities: Translations Across Temporal Geographies of Desire (Cambridge: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, 2008). She is currently working on a monograph that explores the history of friendship and literacy in early-modern Iran.

Indrani Chatterjee (Rutgers University)

Indrani Chatterjee is a respondent (Saturday, 11:00-11:15)

Bio: Indrani Chatterjee is currently Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University. Dr. Chatterjee received her Ph.D. from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. Even though she teaches on a variety of subjects related to South Asian history, her research interests include slavery in early modern and modern South Asia, the histories of women and sexuality, of law, and the cultural and intellectual histories at the intersection of the family in the subcontinent. Dr. Chatterjee recently compiled and edited a volume on the history of the family in the transition between early modern and modern South Asia and is currently researching the place of slavery in the intellectual histories of the subcontinent and jointly editing a volume on slavery and South Asian histories.

Laura Culbertson (The Oriental Institute)

Laura Culbertson is the organizer

Title: "Un-Free Children in Elite Households of Early Mesopotamia" (Friday, 10:45-11:15)

Abstract: As other papers of this seminar discuss, elite private households of early Mesopotamia consisted of adult men and women and their families, as well as a mixture of people designated as "slaves" (arad, sag), including adults, their dependents, and children who were sold to elite families by their own impoverished or

debt-ridden parents. Some of these un-free children were attached to the households as "slaves" permanently, while others were entitled to leave after a fixed term and return to their own families. Still others were released of the designation "slave" while remaining attached to the household. Families could thus be at least temporarily spread across social contexts and include both free and un-free members, and a complicated variety of relationships between elite households and their un-free subordinates existed. Despite the evidence for this and the fact that "child slavery" in various ancient and pre-modern societies has grown into a branch of slave studies, the paper entitled "Child Slavery in Early Mesopotamia" cannot be written for a number of reasons. To name a few, even though there were many thousands of enslaved children in the Ur III period, there are no attested forms of slavery that were entirely exclusive to children, and early Mesopotamian legal statuses do not attribute protected status to children or employ a category of "minors" when making legal decisions. Still, a consideration of cases in which children were given to or released from the status of "slave" opens a number of questions about how slave status was established, reaffirmed, or overturned in general, and what strategies families used to reunite or gain a chance at social mobility, freedom, or a better quality of life. All this is especially accessible in court records, which document occasions at which households conducted a sort of social audit, usually upon the death of an elite household member. During such proceedings, the precise social and legal statuses, entitlements, and familial affiliations of various household members were evaluated, including those of the un-free children.

Bio: Laura Culbertson is currently a post-doctoral scholar at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Dr. Culbertson received her Ph.D. in 2009 from the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan, writing her dissertation on "Dispute Resolution in the Courts of the Third Dynasty of Ur." Dr. Culbertson's primary research interests involve the social and economic history of early Mesopotamia, especially during the third millennium.

Robert Englund (University of California, Los Angeles)

Title: "Corporate Slaves in Third-Millennium Sumer" (Friday, 9:30-10:00)

Abstract: One of the many contributions to our understanding of Mesopotamian history made by the Chicago Assyriologist Ignace Gelb was his famous 1972 paper "From Freedom to Slavery," presented at the 1970 Rencontre assyriologique organized by Dietz Edzard. The topic of that conference, "Social Classes in Ancient Mesopotamia," drew a wide range of specialists, but most significantly it gave Gelb an opportunity to review the debate between him and the Russian scholar Igor Diakonoff concerning the status of the large numbers of household dependents. Another participant in that 1970 conference has just published a commentary of a large group of cuneiform accounts that left Iraq in the 1990s; Wolfgang Heimpel's 2009 treatment of the labor records from Ur III Garshana is a welcome discussion of the status of individuals of late third-millennium B.C. Babylonia that will leave us rethinking many of our conceptions about "slaves," "helots," and "serfs" in the agricultural economy. In this contribution, I review these and other new resources that may help us to better define the roles and the backgrounds of both chattel slaves and of state dependents whose social standing may perhaps best be characterized as that of a "corporate slave": one not liable to the whims of the slave market sale, yet one whose legal status was little better than that of the house slave who was tallied in household inventories next to oxen and furniture.

Bio: Robert K. Englund teaches at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA. His major research areas range from the proto-cuneiform texts from late fourth-millennium B.C. Mesopotamia to various topics on early Mesopotamian economy and administration. Dr. Englund wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on "Verwaltung und Organisation der Ur III-Fischerei" ("The Administration and Organization of Ur III Fisheries"), which exemplifies his use of archival studies and technical terminology in analyses social and administrative

configurations. Currently, Dr. Englund is also chief coordinator of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative and editor and contributor to its publications.

Matthew Gordon (Miami University)

Title: "Singers and Soldiers: Slave and Slave Families of the Third-Century A.H./Ninth-Century A.D. Islamic Near East" (Friday, 2:00-2:30)

Abstract: Individuals of slave descent led significant households in Baghdad and Samarra, the capitals of the third-/ninth-century Abbasid caliphate. This paper considers the history of two particular groups. The first consisted of elite singers (qiyan), properly considered courtesans by virtue of their professional duties and networks of contacts across contemporary urban society. The members of the second and quite distinct group were officers (quwwad), men of Turkish/Inner Asian descent serving as commanders of the Abbasid caliphate's slave military. Their standing for a time was such that for a brief, violent period, they nearly eclipsed the authority of the imperial house. Initial comments introduce the two groups and the nature of their service to empire and court. The paper then considers patterns common to both histories: social mobility and the establishment of extensive, independent households.

Bio: Matthew Gordon is Associate Professor of Islamic and Middle East History at Miami University. A specialist in the sociopolitical history of the Islamic world, Dr. Gordon received his Ph.D. in 1993 from Columbia University and is the author of *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A Study of Samarran Turkish Military* (SUNY Press, 2001). He is currently working on a biography of Ahmad ibn Tulun, a military governor of ninth-century Egypt, and is developing a longer-term project on courtesans of the ninth-century Abbasid court.

Kristin Kleber (Freie Universität Berlin)

Title: "Slave, Serf, and Freeman: A Neo-Babylonian Perspective" (Saturday, 10:30-11:00)

Abstract: This presentation will deal with the different categories of personal status in Neo-Babylonian society. First, I discuss the usage of the terms normally translated as "free citizen" and "slave" or "serf." Were they mutually exclusive or could two different terms have been applied to the same person? Second, since *širkutu* (temple-"slavery" or temple-"serfdom") is the most debated of the three categories, I explore the social, legal, and economic circumstances of *širkus* in opposition to that of chattel slaves. The talk aims at stimulating a discussion about the question of whether the term temple-slavery is correctly applied. Emphasis is laid on the inclusion of social parameters as an important constituent element of status.

Bio: Kristin Kleber is currently a Research Associate at the research cluster TOPOI at the Freie Universität Berlin, working on an edition of cuneiform texts on local, interregional, and long-distance trade. Dr. Kleber has studied Near Eastern languages, archaeology, and Semitics at the universities of Berlin, Münster, and Johns Hopkins University. Her dissertation (Ph.D. in March 2008 from the University of Münster) deals with the relationship between the temple and the royal administration in the Late Babylonian period (published in 2008 as AOAT 358). Between 2005 and 2008 Dr. Kleber has worked for the START-project, "An Economic History of the First Millennium B.C.," in Vienna.

F. Rachel Magdalene (Universität Leipzig)

Title: "Slavery Between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience" (Saturday, 10:00–10:30)

Abstract: Much scholarly work has been done on the institution of slavery as documented in the Hebrew Bible and corpus of Neo-Babylonian documents. From these studies, we know that the authors of the Hebrew Bible attempted to distinguish the Israelite practice of slavery from its neighbors. Soon-to-be-published documents from two Judaean communities in exile in rural Babylon reflect the institution of slavery among the Judaeans over four generations that traverse both the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. This research asks two questions: 1) What do these documents reflect about the institution of slavery in the Judaean exilic community? and 2) Is this practice more consistent with practices described in the Neo-Babylonian corpus or in the Hebrew Bible?

Bio: F. Rachel Magdalene holds a J.D. from the University of Colorado School of Law and a Ph.D. in Biblical Interpretation (Hebrew Bible) from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology Joint Ph.D. Program. She also did supplemental doctoral studies in Assyriology, Hebrew Bible, and ancient comparative law at Johns Hopkins University. She practiced tax and securities law for twelve years before pursuing her Ph.D. She is currently Visiting Research Scholar at the Universität Leipzig and Guest of the Faculty at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Magdalene is the author of On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007), among other works.

Hans Neumann (Universität Münster)

Title: "Slavery in Private Households Toward the End of the Third Millennium B.C." (Friday, 10:00-10:30)

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent and the significance of slavery in private domestic units during the Ur III period in Mesopotamia (21st century B.C.). It deals with the different sources of slavery (such as enslavement as a kind of punishment, self-sale, sale of children), with the number of slaves, and with the economic role of slavery in private households. Looking into the Ur III (and also Sargonic) private legal documents and court records it can be shown that privately owned slaves were employed as farmers, gardeners, shepherds, brewers, and as craftsmen or craftswomen. Skilled slaves worked, for instance, in privately owned workshops of smiths, goldsmiths, and weavers. It turns out that in some private Ur III industries the unfree labor was of economic significance.

Bio: Professor Hans Neumann works currently at the Institut für Altorientalische Philologie und Vorderasiatische Altertumskunde at the University of Münster. Dr. Neumann received his Ph.D. in 1980 and completed his Habilitaion at the Fach Altorientalische Philologie at Freie Universität Berlin in 1998, writing on Old Akkadian legal practices ("Rechtspraktiken und ihr sozialökonomischer Hintergrund in altakkadischer Zeit"). Publishing extensively, Dr. Neumann has worked on a variety of topics covering early Mesopotamian economy, administration, society, and law. In particular, he has examined the organization and dynamics of labor and economic units in third-millennium states of Mesopotamia.

Martha Roth (The Oriental Institute)

Martha Roth is a respondent (Saturday, 11:15-11:30)

Bio: Martha Roth is Professor of Assyriology at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, where she also serves on the Committee on Jewish Studies and as Dean of Humanities in the College. Dr. Roth is one of the foremost scholars on ancient Near Eastern law, researching and publishing on the legal and social history

of Mesopotamia in particular. Her primary interests have been (a) on family law and on women's legal and social issues, and (b) on the compilation and transmission law norms. Currently, she is working on a project on Mesopotamian law cases. Dr. Roth is also editor-in-charge of the Oriental Institute's Chicago Assyrian Dictionary Project, which recently saw the final compilation of the twenty-six volume Chicago Assyrian Dictionary.

Andrea Seri (The Oriental Institute)

Title: "On Domestic Female Slaves in the Old Babylonian Period" (Friday, 11:15-11:45)

Abstract: The Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000–1595 B.C.) is one of the best-documented epochs of ancient history. Several thousand cuneiform tablets record a wealth of institutional and private transactions. Yet there is no comprehensive study of slavery during this first half of the second millennium, except for the few articles on foreign slaves, slave prices, and runaways. In this paper, I study documents mentioning female slaves dated to the reigns of Hammurabi and his son Samsuiluna, although I also consider evidence dated to other kings when pertinent. All the records come from Babylonia, that is, the lands of Sumer and Akkad, according to ancient scribes. These sources deal with female slaves affiliated with domestic households independent of whether the slave owner had connections with institutions such as the temple or the palace. Tablets were exclusively issued by and for the upper classes, and female slaves are mentioned mostly in their condition of being commodities sold, transferred, hired, or disputed. Although the characteristics of the documents prevent the historian from undertaking history from below or from rescuing the voice of the oppressed, there are certain interstices through which it is possible to explore aspects of female domestic slavery not immediately apparent from the main bulk of slave documents. I discuss a number of economic and legal records in which certain female slaves seemed to have been valued as human beings more than as merchandise, for they played an important role in the lives of their owners who occasionally released and adopted their slaves. The coexistence of privileged alongside underprivileged female slaves shows the complexity and diversity of slave conditions during the Old Babylonian period.

Bio: Andrea Seri has been Assistant Professor of Assyriology at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago since 2008. Dr. Seri received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2003 and has since held positions at Michigan and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. Seri is the author of Local Power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia (London: Equinox, 2005). Dr. Seri is finishing preparations on her second book, The House of Prisoners: Slavery and State in Uruk during the Revolt against Samsuiluna, on slaves and prisoners during the Old Babylonian period.

Jonathan Tenney (Loyola University New Orleans)

Title: "Household Structure and Population Dynamics of the Middle Babylonian Provincial Slave Population" (Saturday, 9:30–10:00)

Abstract: In the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C., thousands of people were forced by the administrators of Nippur province to work in weaving houses, kitchens, gardens, and pastures for the government, temples, and private individuals. Although the degree of their unfreedom is never explicitly stated in any written source, the quantitative data from administrative records demonstrate that this population was under considerable stress and had a demographic profile similar to a recently established slave population. It also seems that it was a closed system — children born to servile parents also became members — with almost no chance of legitimate release. Statistically speaking, a worker had a better chance of dying during an escape attempt than being freed.

The same sources are useful in reconstructing other population dynamics, including the size and structure of servile families and households. This paper focuses on two of the four themes of the seminar (slaves and the family and slaves and the state) in light of the Middle Babylonian servile population. It considers how the households of these public "slaves" were organized, how they compare with households of other premodern societies, and how the household and family functioned as a unit of social and administrative cohesion. It argues from the viewpoint of historical demography and defines a household as a domestic and residential unit made up of related individuals (by blood or marriage) who share a residence or were considered by the bureaucracy at Nippur to share a residence.

Bio: Jonathan Tenney is Visiting Assistant Professor at Loyola University, New Orleans. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in June 2009. His dissertation won the 2009 U.S. Dissertation of the Year Award from The American Academic Research Institute of Iraq (TAARI) and will be published by Brill in the series Culture and History of the Ancient Near East under the title *Life on the Bottom of Babylonian Society: Servile Laborers around Nippur in the Fourteenth and Thirteenth Centuries B.C.* He is working on textual treatments — also to be published by Brill — of several hundred Middle Babylonian legal and administrative documents from Nippur. The project has been funded with a TAARII research fellowship.

Ehud Toledano (Tel Aviv University)

Title: "An Empire of Many Households: The Case of Ottoman Enslavement" (Friday, 3:00–3:30)

Abstract: The Ottoman Empire was not, by commonly used definitions, a "slave society," but rather a "society with slaves." Nevertheless, enslavement was central to a number of its founding state and societal institutions; it included diverse types such as military-administrative (*kul*), harem, menial, and domestic slavery. Ruled from its inception by a "household government," the imperial system relied on enslavement of outsiders — from European prisoners of war (until the late eighteenth century) to Africans and Circassians, captured or purchased for trade across deserts and seas (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). These enslaved persons commanded its armies and bureaucracy and served in urban elite households at the center and in the provinces. Thus, enslavement and households are both essential notions for understanding Ottoman political, social, and cultural history; although slavery had an economic value in Ottoman societies, the significance of unfree labor was not mainly economic, but social.

This paper examines the transition from the recruitment and socialization monopoly enjoyed by the imperial household until the early seventeenth century, to the proliferation of central and provincial Ottoman-local households, which broke up that monopoly. Because enslavement was one of the main recruitment channels into households, the changes that occurred as a result of that transition also had a major impact on the entry and employment of enslaved men and women in the Ottoman Empire from the middle of the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth. The gradually diminishing role played by the *kul*-harem system, the shift from European to African and Caucasian sources of enslavement, and the ensuing impact on gender and culture are also discussed.

Bio: Ehud R. Toledano is Professor of Ottoman and Middle Eastern History, and the Director of the Graduate School of Historical Studies at Tel Aviv University. He holds a Ph.D. from Princeton (1979) and has since occupied teaching and research positions at the University of Oxford, University of Pennsylvania, and UCLA. Toledano has spent extensive periods of time conducting research in Istanbul, Cairo, London, and Paris. Among his books are *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression, 1840–1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982 [also published in Turkish]), State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), and recently As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

Notes

ON SALE AT THE SUQ MARCH 5-6, 2010

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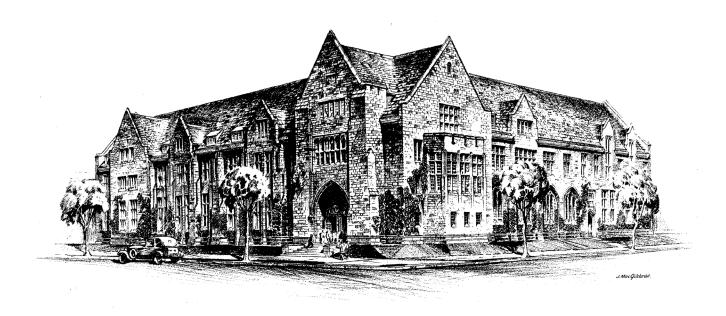
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- 2. Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures. Edited by Seth L. Sanders, with contributions by Seth L. Sanders, John Kelly, Gonzalo Rubio, Jacco Dieleman, Jerrold S. Cooper, Christopher Woods, Annick Payne, William Schniedewind, Michael Silverstein, Piotr Michalowski, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, Theo van den Hout, Paul Zimansky, Sheldon Pollock, and Peter Machinist. Second printing with minor corrections, 2007. Pp. xi + 300; 9 figures. \$24.95
- 3. Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean. Edited by Nicola Laneri, with contributions by Nicola Laneri, Ellen F. Morris, Glenn M. Schwartz, Robert Chapman, Massimo Cultraro, Meredith S. Chesson, Alessandro Naso, Adam T. Smith, Dina Katz, Seth Richardson, Susan Pollock, Ian Rutherford, John Pollini, John Robb, and James A. Brown. Second printing with minor corrections, 2008. Pp. xviii + 318; 86 figures, 5 tables. \$24.95
- 4. Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond. Edited by Nicole Brisch, with contributions by Nicole Brisch, Gebhard J. Selz, Piotr Michalowski, Paul John Frandsen, Irene J. Winter, Erica Ehenberg, Clemens Reichel, Reinhard Bernbeck, Michelle Gilbert, David Freidel, Michael Puett, Bruce Lincoln, Greg Woolf, Jerrold S. Cooper, and Kathleen D. Morrison. 2008. Pp. xiii + 271; 7 figures. \$24.95
- 5. Nomads, Tribes, and the State in the Ancient Near East: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives. Edited by Jeffrey Szuchman, with contributions by Jeffrey Szuchman, Hans Barnard, Robert Ritner, Steven A. Rosen, Benjamin A. Saidel, Eveline van der Steen, Anatoly M. Khazanov, Abbas Alizadeh, Thomas E. Levy, Bertille Lyonnet, Anne Porter, Daniel E. Fleming, Donald Whitcomb, and Frank Hole. 2009. Pp. xvi + 288; 70 figures, 7 tables. \$24.95
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