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British Paradigm of Urban Administrative Centrality: Intransient Continuity in the Postcolonial State

Abstract

Exploring the British paradigm of the shift of Urban-Administrative centers from one city to other, the paper examines the nature of traditional Urban administrative centers on the one hand and the factors, forces and processes working behind the shift of Urban-Administrative centers on the other hand.. For, exploring the patterns of the development of colonial system of irrigation, settlement and communication/transportation as key factors in the emergence of new Urban centers, it analysis how and why administrative centers were shifted to these new urban centers. The paper also explores the continuity of these colonial patterns of developments and shift of Urban-administrative centrality in postmodern, postcolonial politics administration of a nation state. For, The paper revolves around the theme that colonial paradigm and patterns of development are intransient and even post-colonial patterns of politics of urban-administrative centres is following the same paradigm. For, the paper focuses on mid-nineteenth century urban-administrative configuration of Sara-i-Sidho Tehsil of Multan district of 1849 and examines that how this Tehsil headquarter was later replaced with Kabirwala and how Khanewal district emerge out of these patterns of developments.

1.   Introduction:

The impact of colonial modernity on South Asian development occupies a central place in the academic discourse on the nature of socio-politics and economics. Having a clear cut stance on the negativity of 'imperialism/colonialism', still a large number of intellectuals represent British Imperialism as a 'lesser evil' than the other Imperialisms functioning in the history of mankind.[1] In the recent debate, three major schools have potentially contributed to the evaluation of British Imperial impact on India.

Postmodernist anti-Imperialist Americanized school of social scientists believes what the British had been doing in the empire, was an 'illusion of permanence', 'rhetoric of empire' and 'masks to conquests'. To achieve its colonial ends, the British destroyed the indigenous system and culture and developed 'colonial forms of knowledge'.[2] They owe the debt of socio-political and economic miseries in South Asia to the British. Still it was the failure of the British to establish a permanent empire and left a permanent impact. There was a resurgence and revivalism among colonized people which ultimately destroyed the British Empire. This view traces the genealogy of post-colonial socio-political, cultural and constitutional problems or 'Ghosts of Empire' to the liquidation of the

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British Empire.[3] The long standing and most destructive territorial dispute between India and Pakistan on Kashmir is also considered legacy of the British Indian Empire.[4] (Reference) Lakshami Iyer concludes that areas that experienced direct British rule have significantly lower levels of access to schools, health centres, and roads in the postcolonial period and the quality of governance in the colonial period has a significant and persistent and often negative effect on postcolonial outcomes.[5]

The Modernists and so called 'Civilization Missionaries' believe that it was 'white men burden to make the world civilized' and the British imparted 'useful knowledge ' and extended the fruits of western civilization, science and technology to the uncivilized world. The liquidation of the British Empire was not a failure of the civilization mission.[6] It was the globalization of British Imperial civilization and the empire is still ideologically intact in the form of the 'British Commonwealth of Nations'.[7] The British had left a strong institutional, cultural, economic and political legacy. The British claim the credit of the introduction of western modernity and global citizenship or globalization to the empire.[8] Fareed Zakariya asserts that postcolonial system owes much to the institutions put in place by the British. British had relatively a temporary presence in other parts of the world than in India and established lasting institutions of government throughout the country--courts, universities, administrative agencies, even more importantly, the first generations of post-independence leadership who nurtured the best traditions of the British.[9]

The Subaltern Studies School has very sharply criticized the creation of centrality and marginality by the British modernism. The difference was not only institutionalized rather was customized and culturalized. The subaltern took up the cause of 'sub' and 'alter' without challenging the mainstream imperial/colonial paradigm.[10]

In this perspective, the impact of colonialism is not only highly debated issue, rather through the discourse on the nature of impact of colonialism, a sort of historical lessons to extend control by some powerful new 'Economic Empires' and to develop 'Economic Imperialism' are being derived. For, the levels of evils are also being constructed to make justification for the acceptance of 'Imperialism/colonialism' as a lesser evil to make the world 'civilized' or in now current jargon, to make the world 'more democratic'.[11]

2.   Thematic Framework

Focusing on some prominent means of Urban-administrative centrality, what Karl Marx pointed out as the means of production, sources of communication/transportation and class structure,[12] the paper explores the pattern of the emergence of new urban centers and shift of colonial administration from traditional towns to these new cities. The continuity and impact of these new centers in the postcolonial structure of time and space mark the major part of analysis. The paper revolves around the theme that colonial paradigm and patterns of development of urban-administrative centrality and marginality are intransient and even postcolonial patterns of politics of urban-administrative centers are following the same paradigm. This continuity can be explained in multiple theoretical perspectives.

Thematically, one can trace the irony of historical process while discussing the nature of the British impact. The idea of the purity of blood and race and even singular linage of institutional and constitutional bodies is foremost rejected in the resent theories.[13] Simultaneously, the concept of historical process develops a belief in the permanence and continuity of historical actions and compounding nature of historical results wherefrom the impact of British in the formation of the modern history cannot be repealed. Likewise, Ibn khaldun[14] and A.J. Toynbee[15] believe in the parental relations between priory and posterity cultures, civilizations and empires in the bio-sociological frames of chronologies. Fundamentally, the dialectical theories of all sort are establishing same sort of relationships within the chronological frame of development. In this context, theoretically and philosophically, digression of British from the formation of modern world especially in South Asia, is not possible. In this theoretical perspective, any idea of the post-colonial state and society free of colonial perspective must be considered a blunder-sum assumption. The post-colonial state and society is not only a continuity of the colonial paradigm, rather the resistance to the colonialism has emerged from within the colonial paradigm, which reflects the intransient nature of British paradigm of urban administrative development. In the South Asia, the British institutions almost radically changed the political culture, economic culture, class structure, education, literature, language and even the concept of modernity. Even the resistance movements and intellectual movements were and are being run by the westernized political and intellectual elite. Subaltern, alternate and parallel structures are not challenging, the colonial paradigm, rather, are focusing on the marginalized which were also set by the colonizers.[16] For this theoretical construct, the paper focuses on late nineteenth century urban-administrative configuration of Multan district. It tries to determine that how new administrative centers emerged in Multan District and how traditional centers became victims of colonial patterns of development. For, the paper focuses on one early Tehsil of Multan, Sara-i-Sidho and emergence of Kabirwala and Khanewal out of this center. The emergence of Khanewal District in the 1980s represents the intransience of colonial model.

Following the theme of Sheldon Pollock that one 'cannot know how colonialism changed South Asia if [one does] not know what was there to be changed' (Pollock 2004: 19), the study assumes that colonial impact can be understood through a thorough reading of history of British developments in the British Multan. The nineteenth century British debates had a lot of arguments and plans for how to make the colonized 'civilized' in western British sense and those plans and ideals were systematically applied to the development of regional administrative centrality and marginality. For T. B. Macaulay, Europe was the best civilization in the world, which was at its best represented by the British, especially the English. Macaulay wanted to impart western institutions and patterns of development in South Asia and same model was applied to the regional development frame work. In his speech in the Parliament in London in 1935, he explained:

I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation,

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which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation."

Same sort of argument he explained in the letter to his father Zachary Macaulay on 12 October 1836.[17]

The theme is dealt in with three approach: First; the traditional structure of urban-administrative centrality; second; the formation of new British Administrative centers and continuity of British urban-administrative paradigm in Postcolonial Pakistan with reference to Multan district.

3.   Traditional Structure of Urban-Administrative Centrality in Multan.

Traditionally, like other areas of Punjab, Multan had inherited a Mughal feudal administrative structure, based on rural economy and revenue administration with the exception of a few very small towns inhabited around the centers of the feudal administration. Only one major city could be expected as provincial Headquarter. During the Sikh period, before the British, the same sort of structure continued to work. Multan was divided into twenty 'Kardaris', administrative unit worth Tehsils including Ludden, Tibbi, Mailsi, Kahror, Bahadurpur, Kotli Adil, Punjani, Gazipur, Multan, Khanpur, Khai, Shahpur, Sikanderabad, Shujabad, Sardar Pur, Sidhnai, and Tulamba. Each Kardi was administered by a 'Kardar' and a 'Munshi'. When the British conquered the Multan region, it was considered a center of 'Multani' Language and culture with a tradition of incorporating different races and castes, Indian, Middle Eastern and Central Asians, into one homogeneous and harmonized society. The British declared Multan not only as a District Headquarter rather Divisional Headquarter. The District was also divided into Tehsils, sub-Tehsils and Mouzas, mostly with rural base.[18]

4.   Establishment of British administrative Centers

The British established a new administrative system. The Sikh province of Multan was demolished and made part of the province of Punjab. The Provincial administration was divided into Divisions under Commissioner, Districts under Deputy Commissioner, Tehisls-under Assistant Commissioners and sub-teshils or Parganas/Taaluqas under some Tehsildar and Naib Tehsildar. In this structure Multan was included the Districts of Gogera, Jhang, Multan and Muzafargarh as a Division. Multan District was divided into Five Tehsils: Multan, Mailsi, Lodhran, Shujabad, and Sara-i-Sadhu. These Tehsils were further divided into sub-Tehsils.[19]

Figure 1Map of British Multan Before 1882[20]

Focusing on the development in one Tehsil, the paper shall deal will the administrative centrality and marginality in Sara-i-Sidho region in three phases.

4.1.   First Phase: Sara-i-Sidho as an Administrative Centre

The small town or previously 'Kardari' of Sara-i- Sidho was more significant for its historical and mythological-communal importance than for its geo-demographic space in the region. The Sikhs has developed it as a new administrative centre to counter the influence of the elites of Tulumba: an historical town in the East of Sera-i-Sidhu. This shift created a sort of new communal-political elite. Traditionally, Tulamba city had been a strong hold of Muslim political elites of Multan, either as an independent state or as an Imperial province.[21] After the independence of Multan under the Afghans, during later Mughal period, the region became an important part of new state of Multan as most of the revenue was generated from this region. By the changer of political regime during Sikh period, the conflict of loyalty to old and new regimes became sharp; therefore, the Sikh Regime shifted the administrative centrality to Sara-i-Sadho, a well-connected centre with River route like Tulamba. It could also provide communal support to the new Sikh-Hindu Regime as the area around Sara-i-Sidho was well venerated among the Hindus.[22]

Sara-i-Sidho not only continued to hold the centrality of Sikh regime rather occupied more prominent pace during early British period. The British did not shifted the administrative centers immediately, rather reorganized the administrative structure. Therefore, Sara-i-Sidho became a Tehsil headquarter under the British with a space of more than 1700 square miles. Its population in 1870 was more than 42000[23] and in 1888 more than 80000.[24] It was a fast flourishing region of Multan district and was further divided into four administrative units of Purganas: Sidhna, Tulamba, Sara-i-Sidho and Sirdar Pur,

although, Tulamba and Sirdar Pur were two major centers of traditional Muslim elites. This Tehsils was te center of a huge and vast periphery from the North West of Multan to the Extreme East of Multan extended to the District of Jhang in the North, to the District of Gogeera in the East and to the Tehsil Mailsi of Multan District in the South. In the West Sera-i-Sidho was separated by Chenab River from Muzzaffargarh District at the junction of Ravi and Chenab rivers.[25]

As a Tehsil headquarter, Sara-i-Sidho became an office place of an Assistant Commissioner and Tehsildar along with other revenue administration, health, education and policing departments. British Anglo-Vernacular Middle School and a Deonagri Girls School system was introduced at this centre initially along with western hospital system.[26] These developments placed Sara-i-Sidho at a regional centrality in the early colonization and modernization project.. However, this status began to shift with the emergence of new semi-urban centers such Kabir Khanewal, Salar Wahan, Mamdal and Dadwana by the 1980s.[27]

5. British Pattern of Development and the Formation of New British Administrative Centers

The peripheral central space of Multan district in the imperial administration of the region began to change by the new colonial establishments, especially by the development of new irrigation and communication system and the rise of communal politics. Basically, the nineteenth century economy was agrarian. Therefore the focus of the British for revenue generation was on the administration of agriculture. For, a through grounded policy for the settlement of agrarian land was developed. Multan district was famous for its agricultural produces and wealth based on irrigation by four rivers: Chenab, Ravi, Bias and Sutlej. Therefore became the central point of agrarian policy. The region was well known for its agricultural products and natural system of irrigation, with more than 290 natural water channels from rivers (Kusses).[28] The new system was established on two bases: the land settlement and establishment of new canal system. For the assessment of land of Multan districts, from 1857 to 1920 four settlements completed in 1859, 1877, 1896 and 1821, changed the ethnic and commercial-agrarian nature of Multan district. Through these settlements, first of all cultivated and non-cultivated areas of demarcated. The permanent settlement defined the law of ownership. The uncultivated land was to be made cultivatable. To make the uncultivated land cultivatable, the people of agrarian background were to be settled in those areas. As uncultivated areas were huge, therefore, its settlement brought a lot of new ethnic groups allotted land into the region.

This settlement was supported by the new canal system. The establishment of canal system facilitated the emergence of canal colonies of settlers to make the land cultivatable. The opening of Sidhnai Canal in 1886 opened up a flux of settlement colonies, very systematically planned by settlement officers in the district.

These economic ethnic and geographical changes led to the establishment of new economic centers in the newly colonized areas. As these were agrarian settlements therefore required new market places called 'Mandis'.[29] A number of new 'mandis' were established in the settlement area by the British which flourished extraordinarily as the beneficiaries of settlement and canal colonies. Popular among them in Sara-i-Sidho Tehsil of Multan was Kabirwala.

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These settlements also generated a new metal road infrastructure, linking the region with other areas effectively and potentially. The traditional centrality of water channels for communication and transportation was challenged through these roads either on the canal Banks or on the settlement demarcations.

The settlers of these settlements and canal colonies were more loyal to the British as beneficiaries of these developments and work of administration and revenue generation was mostly concerned with these areas, therefore, the British began to shift administrative centers to these areas.

5.1. Emergence of Kabirwala as a New Administrative center and Marginalization of Sara-i-Sidho.

The tehsil of Sara-i-Sidho was divided into four taaluqas or sub-Tehsils: Sidhna, Tulamba, Sardar Pur and Sara-i-Sidho. In 1873, Northern India Canal and Drainage Act VIII was passed and was applied to the system of land settlement, water management and revenue collection in Multan region and Sidhnai Canal region, including Koranga Fazal Shah and Abdul Hakim Canals.[30] This led to the development of new centers of trade and commerce such as Khanewal and Kabirwala. Simultaneously, rise of communal politics the India led to the shift and formation of new administrative centres in the region. Kabirwala was   linking Multan with Head-Sidhnai, Shor Kot, Jhang and with Northern Punjab. With these considerations, the plan of shift of Tehsil administration offices from Sara-i-Sidho was made in 1870s. After the considerations, it was materialized in 1890s and was shifted to Kabirwala as a most suitable place.

Kabirwala was a small village at the time of the British occupation of the region. The village was founded as a seminary Syed Ahmad Kabir Bukhari in sixteenth century during the times of Great Mughal Emperor Hamayun, at the junction area of River Ravi and Chenab. This seminary was converted into a village of followers of Syed Ahmad Kabir. However, by the beginning of Settlement and Canal Colonization and due to the British pattern of development, the village began to emerge as a central place in the region and ultimately became a Tehsil headquarter in1889.

By the emergence of Kabirwala as a Tehsil headquarter, two important trends began to appear.

First was the shift of administrative centrality to Kabirwala along with all Tehsil offices and officers and activities.

Second was initiation of a culture of socio-political, social and cultural development at new centre.

Third was the breakup of the process of development at Sara-i-Sidho due to these processes.

Kabirwala began to flourish and Sara-i-Sidho began to shrink. As per Census Report 1988, against 17000 population of Union Council Center Sara-i-Sidho, the population of Kabirwala city is more than one hundred thousand. [31]

5.2.   New Transportation/ Communication System and Emergence of Khanewal.

The centrality of Kabirwala as a market place of canal settlement region and as a road transportation junction was challenged by new paradigm of communication and transportation development system along the Railway junctions. In 1917, Kabirwala was divided into two parts and a new centre of Tehsil administration was created in the name of Khanewal. The emergence of Khanewal was different from the emergence of Kabirwala as Kabirwala was made a Tehsil headquarter shifting the offices from Sara-i-Sidho that almost hampered the growth of Sara-i-Sidho. In the case of Khanewal, Kabirwala continue to be a Tehsil headquarter and Khanewal was established as a new centre. However, its emergence was similar to Kabirwala in many ways, as it was a new region of settlement emerging out of the establishment of Lower Bari Doab Canal system. It was also a new Agrarian Market (Mandi) in the settlement region, and most importantly it was a new centre on the Multan-Lahore road, linking all South Punjab with Provincial Headquarter of Lahore. Therefore, in the Fourth settlement, in 1917, Khanewal was proposed to be separated from Kabirwala and was made Tehsil Headquarter.[32] As a Tehsil Headquarter and as a centre on the main road and railway Junction Khanewal began to grow faster than Kabirwala. It was a main 'Junction' linling the Northern Railways or upstream to Southern Railway with down-stream of Pakistan with a carriage factory. Initially, it was one of the four major junctions from Lahore to Karachi including Rohri Junction near Sakkhar in Sind Province.[33]

6.   Intransient Continuity of Urban Administrative Centrality in the Postcolonial Paradigm

This tradition of Urban administrative centrality worked without transition for more than one hundred years until the administrative changes brought during Second Martial Law of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1980s. During the Zia era, under the non-political parties structure of Politics, a new wave of decentralization of authority began to seek political support from the peripheral political elite facing issues of administrative centrality of Multan. For, a policy of liquidation of administrative-political authority was considered a best suited to block the way of traditional political authority. As per this policy, the British paradigm of main stream road and rail centers administrative centrality was kept intact rather was revived. As a result in the 1980s Multan District was divided into Four Districts. Multan as a traditional district was minimized and three British Tehsils, all on the main stream Road links and Railway Track in the canal colonies were upgraded to the Districts. Mutan District was squeezed to a small district consist of only two Tehsils: Multan and Shujabad. One Tehsil of JalalPur Pirwala was added by dividing Shujabad Tehsil, converting figure into three. Three new districts emerging out ofMultan, were Khanewal, Lodhran and Vehari.

Figure 2

Current Map of Multan District

Source: Current Map of Multan District in District Government Record[34]

Khanewal was separated from Kabirwal Tehsil of Multan in 1917 and since then it grew uncomparably. Its four Tehsils, Kabirwala, Khanewal, Mian Chanu and Jahanian were, basically constituent of one old and initial British center of Sara-i-Sidho. However, these new towns have grown up incomparably. For example, at the initial time of the British, Sara-i-Sidho was a town of 8000 person which is now reduced to 40000 persons. Kabirwal is now a city of More than 150000 people. However, Khanewal which was a suburb of Kabirwala has become a city parallel to Multan with a population of more than 200000 people. The same is the case with Vehari and Lodhran. The traditional cities of early British period are marginalized and the cities established by the British Canal Colonies' Settlement have become central.
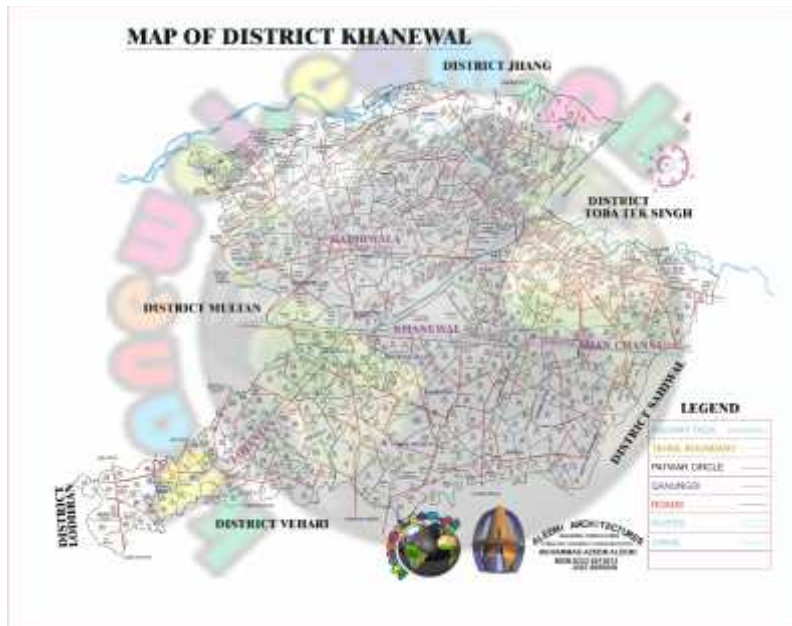
The emergence of Khanewal owes its debt of extraordinary development within one hundred years of its establishment, completely to the British patterns of developments as a Railway Junction that populated it very fast and densely. Its merit of up gradation was also set by new elite of canal settlement. Other two districts of Lodhran and Vehari had a minimum travel distance of 90 kilometers from Multan city and that is why the elites of these lands claimed to be separated from Multan and given a local center of administration. Contrarily, Khanewal was/is just 35 Kilometers away from Multan and justification of its being up graded to a district was controversial. However that controversy does not fall in the domain of current undertaking.[36]

7.   Conclusion

The British pattern of urban administrative centrality seems to be going through a continuous process of transition. Although, accepting their inability to develop new centers, immediately, after the British conquest of Multan, the British opted the traditional center of Sara-i-Sidho. However, simultaneously, they began to reform and organize sources of agrarian production and initiate a process of land settlement which led not only to the emergence of new urban centers but also, to the emergence of new elite. These two phases were complemented by the introduction of new mechanical technology in the early twentieth century. The center encompassing this third stage became paramount and the centers reflecting traditional continuity became obsolete or insignificant. This transition develops the story of rise of Khanewal and decline of Sara-i-Sidho. The rise of Khanewal also becomes significant in the sense that it did not claimed a logic of distance of administrative centrality, rather, it was continuity of pure British paradigm of

canal colonies settlement and mechanical technological centrality, along with settled elites' power perspective. It seems that after the establishment of Pakistan, we have not been able to plan a new development plan or even paradigm. The regions facing British animosity seems still be placed in the same paradigm.

In this perspective a comprehensive plan of urban administrative development and centrality on a justified scale seems to an urgent need. This plan should be chalked out on the basis of a paradigm of historical centrality, peripheral marginality, elitist power perspectives and interconnectivity and distance measurement of historical centers and colonial settlement centers. Emergence of new paradigm of industrialization is the prerogative of governmental policy and such industrial development plan must have a just distribution of planned industrial estates and industrial settlement. It will help resolve a mess of problems emerging out of unplanned urban development including the problem of law and order.

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miracle of Ram and Lakshman. According to local Hindu mythology, one day Ram and Lakshman were taking bath in the Ravi and there was no one to watch there clothes. While swimming they desired the river to flow straight so that they could watch their clothes. They swim about nine miles and the river began to change its course and became straight according to the wishes of Ram and Lakshman.[22] Another story relates that Ram was watching Sita who was sitting on the bank of River Ravi (at Sita Kund) and was washing her clothes.[22] Ram wanted to watch her beauty and the river respected his wish. After swimming nine miles they came out from the river: Ram on the Left bank and Lakshman on the right bank. Two sacred places began to be known as Ram Choutra and Lukshman Choutra and were well venerated among the Hindus of the region. Temples were erected on the spots and an annual fair was used to held on these places in the month of Besakh (April). Dewan Sawan Mal of Multan not only rebuilt the temple of Ram Choutra but also erected a temple in Sara-i-Sidho which is still being used as a school.(Lala Fateh Chand.46, 79; Lal Chand, *Geography Zila Multan*, (Multan: Lal Chand Publishers, n.d.), p.18; Also presented by J. H. Morris, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Mooltan District in the Mooltan Division,* Lahore: Punjabee Press, 1870)

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[35] www.khanewal.com.pk/KwlMap.php

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