



Analysis of Religious Values in the Cow Birthday Tradition

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The rapid advancement of technology has influenced village communities, leading to a gradual loss of identity and neglect of local culture, customs, and wisdom, as foreign cultures become more favored. This study aims to explore the procession and religious values embedded in the cow birthday tradition in Tegalagung Village, Semanding District, Tuban Regency.

Methodology: This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The sample is selected using purposive sampling, involving respondents such as religious leaders, community figures, and Tegalagung village officials. Data collection methods include interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis involves data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

Main Findings: The cow birthday tradition involves a series of activities starting with the preparation of *ketupat* (rice cakes wrapped in palm leaves or *janur*). Neighbors gather at the cowshed, followed by a communal prayer. The cow is then decorated with *ketupat sungu* and *ketupat kepal*, and the *ketupat* is distributed.

Novelty/Originality of the Study: This study offers a unique perspective by examining the intersection of indigenous traditions and religious values. It highlights how rural communities maintain religious awareness through cultural practices. The findings suggest that preserving such traditions, in harmony with modern religious understanding, can strengthen community bonds and spiritual consciousness. Future research may explore similar traditions in different cultural settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Based on historical records, the entry of Islam into Indonesia is not the same as the entry of Islam in other countries. This is due to the entry of Islam into Indonesia in a peaceful way brought by merchants and missionaries. Islam came to Indonesia through a long journey brought by Muslims from various countries. Now Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Islam came to Indonesia brought by people from various nations. Some of them came to trade while spreading Islam [1]. There are also those who come to spread Islam. The way of spreading Islam in Java that uses peaceful and polite methods seems to express in the true sense the spirit of Islam as a religion that Rahmatal Lil Alamin [2]. This spirit must also be passed on by the next generation [3]. In that way, the people in the land of Java accepted it well, not only that in the process of spreading it also did not eliminate the traditions of the local community, as long as it did not contradict the teachings of Islam [3].

In the source of the babad, there are famous spreaders of Islam on the island of Java, especially when viewed from the context of the acculturation process, they are called Walisongo. Where there is a growing tradition of Hindu Buddhist palaces. On the other hand, groups of farmers and traders began to absorb elements of Islamic religious teachings [4]. The supporters of the new culture were the middle class, such as traders, Kyai, teachers, and the Tarekat. In terms of social, Wali Songo made a big change. Wali Songo's moral teachings can change the behavior of Javanese people [5]. Wali Songo who had royal/noble blood, such as Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kalijogo, and Sunan Gunung Jati pioneered a new system in the relationship between leaders and the people, slowly changing the leadership structure of Javanese Hinduism. The process of peaceful da'wah by Wali Songo is also seen in their principle to eradicate animistic and hinduistic local traditions [6].

This cow birthday tradition is an activity that has existed and has been going on since ancient times, it has been running hundreds of years ago, until now cattle breeders in the Tuban area, East Java continue to carry out this activity [7]. The implementation of this tradition contains teaching the value of love for pet animals and giving alms in the form of food distributed to neighbors [8]. Most of the current generation has begun to forget their identity which is starting to relate to foreign cultures rather than their own culture, therefore researchers took this title to introduce regional culture [9].

The tradition of celebrating the “Cow Birthday” in Tegalagung Village, Semanding District, Tuban Regency, reflects a unique cultural and religious practice embedded within the local community. However, despite its rich historical and spiritual significance, this tradition has not been thoroughly examined from an academic perspective, particularly in terms of its religious values [10]-[12]. The spread of Islam in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java, differed significantly from other parts of the world. It occurred through peaceful means—trade, marriage, and spiritual guidance rather than conquest [13]. Carried by traders, scholars, and missionaries, Islamic teachings were gradually accepted by local communities due to the adaptive and inclusive approach of figures like the Walisongo, who embraced local traditions as long as they did not contradict Islamic teachings [14]. One such surviving local tradition is the “Cow Birthday” (*ulang tahun sapi*) in Tegalagung Village, Semanding District, Tuban Regency. This tradition, still practiced by cattle breeders, represents a synthesis of cultural identity, communal values, and religious consciousness. It includes symbolic acts such as decorating cows, communal prayers, and food sharing, all of which reflect Islamic ethical principles such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation) and *sadaqah* (charity) [15], [16].

However, there exists a significant research gap. Most existing studies focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of such traditions, while the religious-spiritual values they encompass remain underexplored [17]-[20]. The *Cow Birthday* tradition has received limited academic attention, particularly in how it embodies Islamic values within a local cultural framework. The erosion of cultural identity among younger generations due to globalization and the preference for foreign cultures makes this research urgent. Local traditions like the Cow Birthday face the threat of extinction or misinterpretation. Understanding the religious underpinnings of such traditions can serve as a strategic framework for cultural preservation, intergenerational education, and community resilience [21]-[23].

Moreover, this study offers a problem-solving perspective by framing indigenous traditions not as relics, but as vehicles for religious and moral education. Highlighting how Islamic values are embedded in local rituals can support educators, religious leaders, and policymakers in designing culturally relevant approaches to spiritual development. Previous studies on local traditions have focused largely on their cultural and social aspects, with minimal emphasis on the religious values embedded within them. This research aims to bridge that gap by analyzing how religious principles manifest in the Cow Birthday tradition. The urgency of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the preservation of indigenous traditions while also providing a framework for understanding their relevance to contemporary religious practices.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design. The sample consists of community members, religious leaders, and local authorities who participate in the tradition. Purposive sampling is used to select respondents with deep knowledge of the tradition. Data analysis follows a thematic approach, wherein collected data is categorized based on recurring themes related to religious values. Triangulation techniques ensure the validity of the findings by comparing information from multiple sources [24], [25].

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, namely data collection on a natural background with the intention of interpreting the phenomenon that occurs where the researcher is a key instrument, sampling data sources is carried out purposively and snowbaal, collection techniques by triangulation (combined), inductive analysis, and qualitative research results emphasize the meaning of generalization. The research utilizes in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis as data collection methods. The data collection instrument includes an observation guide and an interview protocol designed to extract detailed information on religious values embedded in the tradition. Data Collection Techniques is one of the most strategic and very

important steps in research because without knowing or through good data processing techniques, a researcher will not get accurate data and meet the set data standards. In this study, the researcher uses the following stages.

An interview is a conversation process carried out by an *interviewer* (interviewer) and *interviewee* (who is interviewed) with a specific purpose, with guidelines, and can be face-to-face or through communication tools. Interviews are used in qualitative research because they can reveal information across time, namely related to the past, present, and future. And the data generated from the interviews is open, comprehensive, and unlimited, so that it is able to form complete information and inform qualitative research [26]. Morris defined observation as the activity of recording a symptom with the help of instruments and recording it for scientific or other purposes. Furthermore, it is said that observation is a collection of impressions of the surrounding world based on all the abilities of the human senses. Observations were made by researchers on the cow birthday tradition, so that researchers know how this tradition runs and takes place. This observation is also to analyze the values of Islamic religious education contained in the implementation of the tradition. The documentation method, that is, looking for data on things or variables in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, meeting minutes, agendas, and so on. With the documentation method, it is observed that it is not a living object but a dead banda. If there is a variable that is sought, then the researcher only needs to record a check or tally mark in the appropriate place. To record things that are free or unspecified in the list of variables, researchers can use free sentences [27].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Implementation of Cow Birthday Tradition in Tegalagung Village

The cow birthday tradition is a tradition in Tegalagung Village, Semanding District, Tuban Regency. This tradition is carried out with the aim of gratitude to God for the blessings bestowed on the people of Tegalagung Village in the form of *rajakaya*. According to Mr. Sutomo as the Head of Tegalagung Village, in an interview conducted by the researcher revealed:

The implementation of this tradition (cow's birthday) the people of Tegalagung Village feel grateful for the provision of rajakaya animals, and so that rajakaya increase blessings, barokah, be kept away from logs (disasters), can breed smoothly, can be passed down to posterity, and can cover needs.

This tradition is carried out to express gratitude to God for having a rich king. This tradition is carried out on Friday after the harvest season and will carry out replanting. This tradition is carried out for people who own cows, regardless of the number, young or adult cows. So everyone who has a cow must carry out this tradition [28]. This tradition is carried out around the place where the cow is kept (cow pen), not in the private house/living room of the cow owner. People who have two cowsheds/raise two cows in different places only need to do the tradition/size once and the person is free to choose which place to go. And apanila has been done in one place, so there is no need to do it again in another place [29].

The procession of implementing this tradition is as follows: This tradition is carried out by making ketupat, lepet, sungu ketupat, and kepal ketupat made from palm leaves. Ketupat is prepared for the implementation of this cow's birthday tradition which contains 44 seeds placed in a container. Then the surrounding neighbors were gathered to attend the traditional event, then a prayer was carried out together. The prayer is recited in Javanese bemtuk by the person who leads, and then after the Javanese prayer is recited, it is followed by a prayer in Arabic [30]. But there are also people who carry out this tradition by directly reciting prayers in Arabic.

Then after that the cow is wrapped in ketupat sungu and ketupat kepal, so that the cow can also feel the enjoyment. After the prayer was completed, the ketupat, lepet, and so on that had been presented were distributed to all those present in the implementation [31]. This activity is carried out in every cage/place where every person who has a cow is raised, so this tradition is carried out from one place to another, not carried out simultaneously or together in one place, but in the cowshed of everyone who has this cattle. So that the person who leads the prayer, the person who is an expert in prayer or can be called modern will go around to the place of the person who will carry out this tradition [32], [33]. This tradition is carried out to express gratitude to God for having a rich king. This tradition is carried out on Friday after the harvest season and will carry out replanting [19], [34]. This tradition is carried out for people who own cows, regardless of the number, young or adult cows. So everyone who has a cow must carry out this tradition.

3.2 Religious Values in the Implementation of Cow Birthdays in Tegalagung Village

Worship Values

The results of the research obtained by the researcher are from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. The value of worship in the implementation of this tradition is: *first*, in the procession of the implementation of the tradition of giving alms/distributing food in the form of ketupat totaling 44 to the neighbors of Bucu (close neighbors). This act is classified or included in *ghoiru mahdhoh worship*, where *ghoiru*

mahdhoh worship is a worship whose implementation procedures are not regulated in detail by Allah and the Messenger. Because in giving alms or giving, there are no provisions that regulate how much we should give alms, how much we should give at least and how much we should give alms.

Alms can be any amount, there is no minimum limit in giving alms, whether it is a lot or a little, the important thing is not the intention to show off or want to get praise from others.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: What is the meaning of the Qur'an in the Qur'an, and it is not the case that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'O Allaah, the Allaah, the All-" Powerful

Translation:

O you who believe! Do not ruin your alms by mentioning them and hurting them, like a person who gives his wealth out of rejoicing (showing off) to people and he does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. The analogy is like a slippery rock on which there is dust, and then the stone is hit by heavy rain, so the stone is slippery again. They don't get anything out of what they do. And Allah did not give guidance to the disbelievers. (QS Al-Baqarah [2]264).

Second, reciting praises addressed to Allah and praying wholeheartedly, where the chanting of praises and prayers to Allah includes human servitude to Allah, as the meaning of worship in language is submission (*al-khudlu*), and obedience (*al-tha'ah*). So *ubudiyah* means submission and humility. While worship in terms means full self-servitude to achieve Allah's pleasure and hope for its reward in the hereafter.

Praying is an activity that Allah commands his servants, as stated by Allah in Surah Al-Mu'min: 60 which reads as follows:

And your Lord said, "Call upon Me, and I will answer you, for those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell in hell."

Translation:

And your Lord said, "Pray to me, and I will allow it for you. Indeed, those who are proud and do not want to worship Me will go to Hell in a state of contempt. (QS Al-Mu'min [40] 60).

The Value of Tawhid

In the implementation of this cow birthday tradition, there is also the value of monotheism, namely: First, *bero'a*. For monotheism is to recognize Allah, as the only Substance in His *Rububiyah*, His *Uluhiyah*, and all His attributes and names. By praying we prove that man needs Allah, therefore we pray, plead, and ask only to Allah. This human devotion to Allah is called worship. Human devotion is not for the benefit of Allah because Allah does not need others, who need God is a human being. Human devotion is meant to serve its creator, so that his life in this world and in the hereafter is pleasing to Allah.

The main task of being created on earth is to worship, serve, and worship Allah SWT. Both worshipping *mahdhah*, which is maintaining the relationship between humans and Allah, and *ghairu mahdhah* worship, which is a conscious effort that must be made by humans as social beings who need the help of fellow creatures. Because every worship that human beings do, whether it is worship that is directly related to Allah or related to the creatures of Allah, it all contains deep and fundamental philosophical values to be understood by humans, to make it easier to carry out the noble tasks carried out by humans [35]-[38].

The virtues of praying are as follows:

- a. Praying is Allah's Command
- b. Granting the Prayer of Him
- c. Prayer is Worship
- d. Allah Greatly Glorifies Prayer
- e. Can change Qadha'.

This human devotion to Allah is called worship. Human devotion is not for the benefit of Allah because Allah does not need others, who need God is a human being. Human devotion is meant to serve its creator, so that his life in this world and in the hereafter is pleasing to Allah. Even if a servant disbelieves, refuses to worship, and obeys Allah, it does not disturb him [39], [40].

Second, being grateful, because gratitude is the steadiness of a servant's heart to love who has given favors, namely Allah, all his limbs are eager to always obey and his words always praise him and call his name. Gratitude can be felt by the grateful person himself, this will be a provision for his life in this world and also in the hereafter. As carried out in the implementation of this cow birthday tradition, the implementation of the tradition is a form of gratitude to the Tegalagung Village Community for the blessings that have been given by Allah in the form of cattle. Where cows are rich and are savings for most people because of their high price that can be used for urgent needs. From the information above, it can be concluded that gratitude is beneficial for ourselves both in this world and in the hereafter. A grateful person will feel happier in his life because he feels

enough of the blessings that Allah has given him, and will not complain about the blessings that Allah has given him.

Moral Values

The implementation of this tradition also teaches about morals, including: *first*, educating morals about how we treat God's creatures, because morals are ethics, habits, and character. In everyday communication, morals are often equated with morals or ethics. This can be seen from this traditional procession, these livestock are also appreciated such as being sheathed with ketupat sungu and ketupat kepal, so that the cow can feel the pleasure of ketupat. This animal is like a man, which according to the Qurtubi, as proved by Quraish Shihab, should not be persecuted, either on the battlefield or in peace. Islam prohibits the destruction of the environment or animals unless compelled. Hurting animals and overloading them beyond their capabilities. If a person burdens with what he cannot carry, then the leader has the right to prohibit it. If the animal is breastfeeding and has children, it is not allowed to take its milk except to the extent that it does not cause adverse effects on the child.

Second, getting used to or educating them to give alms, and giving an image that giving alms does not have to be in the form of money and expensive/good goods. This alms is very important and special, this alms has positive impacts on social relations, such as relationships between neighbors, relationships between fellow Muslims, and most importantly improving the quality of the personality of a person who is diligent in giving alms. The legal alms are sunnah *muakkadah*, but it is highly recommended to be carried out by all Muslims because it has a very great wisdom for the perpetrators. Seeing so many benefits will be a loss for people who do not give alms.

Third, educate to always be grateful for the blessings that have been given by Allah, as the purpose of carrying out this cow birthday tradition is to express gratitude for having been given livestock in the form of cows or commonly called *rajakaya animals*. The opposite of gratitude is complaining, a person who likes to complain is a person who is less grateful for what he has, what happens to him, and always feels inadequate. Complaining is one of the characteristics of people who find it difficult to be grateful, whether the complaint is uttered openly or described through behavior and gestures, complaints are not always aimed at personal conditions, but also the condition of the family, environment, and even the state.

Nilai Oops

The implementation of this tradition also contains the values of Islamic religious education, namely *ukhuwah* which, *ukhuwah* itself has the meaning of brotherhood, brotherhood here has a general meaning both tribe, nation, culture and even religion. In the implementation of the cow's birthday tradition, Islamic *ukhuwah*, and *Insaniyah* *ukhuwah* are performed.

First, the relationship between humans and Allah, because in the implementation of the tradition of praying together with neighbors, prayers are offered to Allah. These Muslims are brothers, and they are obliged to establish brotherhood among fellow Muslims, make them brothers and do not consider them enemies because of trivial and meaningless matters.

But the believers are brothers, so reconcile between your brothers and fear God, that you may have mercy on you.

Meaning:

Indeed, the believers are brothers, so make peace between your two brothers and fear Allah so that you may have mercy. (QS Al-Hujurat [49] 10).

Second, distributing food to the ketangga, and gathering neighbors, by gathering neighbors around can make people communicate, which makes the relationship between neighbors can be well established. This is classified as *ukhuwah insaniyah* because the brotherhood established in this tradition does not distinguish social status, stream, and so on. *Ukhuwah insaniyah* must be based on the teaching that all human beings are creatures of Allah.

Brotherhood or *ukhuwah* is very important to be built in order to create a harmonious and peaceful social order, the benefits of *ukhuwah* include:

- 1) Brotherhood is the pillar of Islamic strength.
- 2) Brotherhood is the most important part of faith.
- 3) Brotherhood is a fortress in facing the enemies of Islam.
- 4) Solid brotherhood can make it easier to build an ideal society.

Ukhuwah or brotherhood contains positive values, including:

- 1) Affection, love, empathy, and sincere concern for fellow brothers.
- 2) Help each other, work together, forgive, and care.
- 3) The beauty of morals is such as love, affection, and friendliness.
- 4) Realize a safe, peaceful, and harmonious life without hostility and hatred among fellow brothers.

5) Take care of each other and ensure safety while avoiding harmful things.

The things that can damage brotherhood or *ukhuwah* include. Lack of understanding of Islam. Differences of opinion between Muslims will not occur without a reason. This lack of understanding can lead to many differences and debates, because of which seeds of hatred arise between peoples. Excessive fanaticism. Exaggerating his group will consider him the most righteous. Until finally underestimating other groups.

The findings indicate that the Cow Birthday tradition encapsulates several religious values, including gratitude (*shukr*), community solidarity, and a sense of divine providence. Participants view the tradition as a means to express thankfulness to God for the sustenance provided through their cattle. Ritual practices such as communal prayers and food sharing reinforce social cohesion and spiritual consciousness among the villagers. The interpretation of findings reveals that the Cow Birthday tradition serves as a medium for religious expression, reinforcing local Islamic teachings on gratitude and community bonding. Compared to similar studies on religious traditions in rural communities, this research highlights how religious values are maintained through customary rituals.

This study suggests that local traditions play a crucial role in sustaining religious values in rural societies. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on cultural-religious integration, emphasizing the importance of preserving such traditions in ways that align with contemporary religious understanding. The Cow Birthday tradition (*Ulang Tahun Sapi*) in Tegalagung Village represents more than a cultural celebration; it is a manifestation of deep-rooted religious values embedded in the daily life of the local Muslim community. Based on data from interviews, observations, and documentation, several core religious values emerge worship, tawhid (monotheism), morality, and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood)—which are expressed through unique local rituals. The practice of offering *ketupat* and conducting collective prayers around the cowsheds highlights the value of *ibadah ghairu mahdhoh*, a form of worship not specifically outlined in Islamic texts but grounded in noble intentions such as almsgiving (*sadaqah*) and gratitude (*shukr*). This illustrates how worship in rural communities often takes contextual, adaptive forms that remain in line with Islamic principles.

The act of wrapping cows with *ketupat sungu* and *ketupat kepal* reflects moral education and ethical treatment of animals underscoring Islamic teachings that stress compassion toward all living beings. Likewise, the tradition reinforces gratitude toward Allah (*QS Al-Mu'min: 60, QS Al-Baqarah: 264*), and strengthens the doctrine of *tawhid* by acknowledging divine providence in sustaining livelihood through *rajakaya* (livestock). Moreover, the ritual facilitates social harmony and cohesion (*ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *ukhuwah insaniyah*) by bringing together neighbors in shared prayer and communal meals. This aligns with *QS Al-Hujurat: 10*, which emphasizes unity and reconciliation among believers.

The findings resonate with previous research, which examined the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Central Java and its role in expressing gratitude to Allah and maintaining social bonds within agrarian communities [41]. Similarly, found that the *Tedak Siten* tradition in Javanese culture integrates Islamic values with local customs to convey spiritual and moral lessons to the younger generation [12], [42]-[44]. What distinguishes the Cow Birthday tradition, however, is the specific focus on livestock—a vital economic asset in rural communities and the ritual's mobile nature, where religious leaders move from one cowshed to another [45], [46]. This aspect strengthens the personal, decentralized religious experience and is rarely found in other traditional Islamic rituals.

This research suggests that local traditions serve as accessible, culturally resonant vehicles for transmitting and reinforcing Islamic religious values in rural societies. By contextualizing religious teachings within daily life, such traditions promote sustained spiritual awareness and social unity [47]-[49]. From a broader perspective, the findings imply that integrating religious values into customary practices can enhance religious literacy and moral conduct in communities with limited formal religious education infrastructure [50]-[52]. This has implications for religious educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to preserve religious identity in a culturally sensitive manner [53], [54].

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on an under-documented local tradition—Cow Birthday—as a locus of religious expression. Unlike more widely studied traditional practices such as *slametan* or *sedekah laut*, this study illuminates how religious values are embedded in rituals centered on animal husbandry, providing a fresh perspective on the intersection between Islam, agriculture, and rural livelihood. This study is limited by its focus on a single village, potentially restricting the generalizability of findings. Additionally, while the qualitative data offers rich insight into community perspectives, the absence of longitudinal data means the research does not account for evolving perceptions or the potential decline of the tradition over time.

Future research should explore similar traditions in other rural settings to identify patterns of religious-cultural integration. Comparative studies across regions could enhance our understanding of how Islam adapts to local sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, researchers should consider incorporating youth perspectives to examine intergenerational transmission of such values. For policymakers and educators, this study recommends the inclusion of local traditions in Islamic religious education to foster contextual relevance and deeper engagement. Preserving such traditions through documentation, community participation, and formal recognition can also contribute to the cultural sustainability of rural religious life.

4. CONCLUSION

The cow birthday tradition is a tradition that is carried out to express gratitude to God Almighty for being blessed with livestock in the form of rajaya. This tradition is carried out on Friday Pahing after the harvest season and will carry out replanting, between April and May this tradition is usually carried out. The procession of carrying out this tradition begins by making ketupat made from palm leaves or janur (young coconut leaves), then ketupat is placed in a container and invites the neighbors of the bud (close neighbors), after that the cow is wrapped with ketupat sungu and ketupat kepal, prayer reading, after the ketupat is distributed. The values of Islamic religious education contained in the implementation of the cow's birthday tradition are: (1) The value of worship, because in the procession of the implementation of this tradition they pray together which this prayer includes worship commanded by Allah as described above, and distributing food to neighbors who are classified as almsgiving. (2) The value of monotheism, in the procession of carrying out the tradition of praying, and it proves that human beings need Allah and are servants to Allah because it is an ibdah. (3) Moral values, because the implementation of this tradition cows are not used for work and even cows are garnished with ketupat sungu and fists that can be eaten by cows. (4) The value of ukhuwah, in the implementation of the tradition of gathering neighbors around which includes strengthening the bond of brotherhood between fellow human beings. One limitation of this study is its focus on a single community, which may not represent broader regional variations. Future research could explore similar traditions in different locations to provide comparative insights. Additionally, collaboration with religious scholars and cultural experts is recommended to deepen the analysis of religious interpretations in traditional practices.

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