

# POLICIES FOR RELIGIOUS AND THE PRACTICE OF BURNING VOTIVE PAPERS FOR THE DECEASED: A SURVEY IN VIETNAM

## DESENVOLVENDO RECURSOS HUMANOS DE ALTA QUALIDADE PROVÍNCIA DE BINH DUONG, VIETNÃ - SOLUÇÕES E POLÍTICAS

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**Abstract:** Every foreigner who comes to Vietnam on Tet and other spiritual holiday of the year is very surprised when witnessing the phenomenon of offering votive papers for the dead everywhere. This fact has received great attention from domestic and international scientists. However, previous studies only stopped at qualitative research. To enrich the research literature, this study explores the relationship between individual religious orientation and the behavior of Vietnamese people to burn votive papers for the dead. This study was conducted through a cross-sectional survey using intentional sampling technique (n=200). Multivariate linear regression analysis technique was applied to prove the hypotheses. Research results show that there is a relationship between religious orientation and Vietnamese people's behavior of burning votive papers for the dead. Individuals with external religious orientation tend to offer votive papers to the dead from non-religious motives. Individuals with an inner religious orientation tend to offer votive papers to the dead out of religious motives.

**Keywords:** Inner religious orientation. External religious orientation. Offering votive papers to the dead. Moral obligation to offer votive paper. Investing in votive paper.

**Resumo:** Todo estrangeiro que vem ao Vietnã no Tet e em outros feriados espirituais do ano fica muito surpreso ao testemunhar o fenômeno de oferecer papéis votivos para os mortos em todos os lugares. Este fato tem recebido grande atenção de cientistas nacionais e internacionais. No entanto, estudos anteriores apenas pararam em pesquisas qualitativas.

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Para enriquecer a literatura da pesquisa, este estudo explora a relação entre a orientação religiosa individual e o comportamento dos vietnamitas para queimar papéis votivos para os mortos. Este estudo foi conduzido através de uma pesquisa transversal utilizando a técnica de amostragem intencional (n=200). A técnica de análise de regressão linear multivariada foi aplicada para provar as hipóteses. Os resultados da pesquisa mostram que existe uma relação entre a orientação religiosa e o comportamento do povo vietnamita de queimar papéis votivos para os mortos. Indivíduos com orientação religiosa externa tendem a oferecer papéis votivos para os mortos por motivos não religiosos. Indivíduos com orientação religiosa interna tendem a oferecer documentos votivos aos mortos por motivos religiosos.

**Palavras-chave:** Orientação religiosa interna. Orientação religiosa externa. Oferta de papéis votivos aos mortos. Obrigação moral de oferecer papel votivo. Investir em papel votivo.

## 1. Introduction

Offering votive papers is a part of spiritual and economic well-being, playing an important role in the “performance of religious activities in “this country as well as for the Vietnamese people. In the last few years, the scope of production, trade and delivery of votive papers for the deceased has expanded, to include new forms and references to new new means of paper (Gertrud Hüwelmeier, 2016; Kwon & Heonik, 2007; Kwon, 2007). Vietnamese people make offerings to the wandering souls who died in war, to their ancestors (Bodemer, 2005), credit cosmology (Chu, 2010). The rich history of votive paper in Vietnam in recent years is part of the revival of religious practices in Vietnam (Endres, 2011; Pham, 2009; Taylo, 2007), the result of the relationship between increased economic growth with the increase of religious life (Endres & Lauser, 2012; Hefner, 2010; Salemink, 2008).

According to Kwon (2007), votive offerings are a popular religious practice in Vietnam, associated with the reciprocal exchange and positive emotions between the dead and the living. When burning votive paper, religious people not only talk about gifts for ancestors, “but also pay debts to spirits, gods, ancestors.

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## 2. Literature Reviews

### *Religious orientation:*

According to Allport (1950), religious orientation includes internal religious orientation and external religious “orientation. People with an inner religious orientation view religion as deeply personal, view religion as a goal (Hills, Francis, Argyle, & Jackson, 2004), and vice versa (Allport, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967) ). Inner religious orientation refers to a mature form of religious feeling that serves as the main driver and driver of an individual's lifestyle, while outer religious orientation refers to immature faith to allow selfish goals to be achieved (Tiliopoulos, Bikker, Coxon, & Hawkin, 2007).

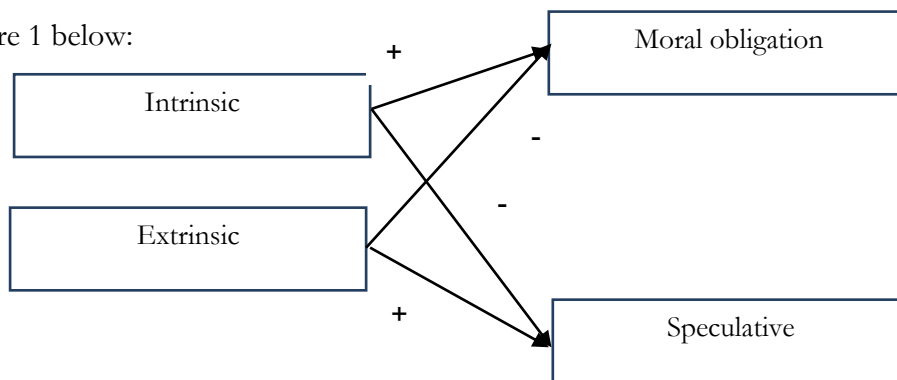
### *Votive offerings:*

Also votive is embedded in many mediating processes between transcendence and immanence (Meyer, 2006), reconciliation between the two worlds of life and death (De Vries, 2001; Mazzarella, 2004; Hirschkind, 2006; Eisenlohr, 2011, 2011). 2012; Engelke, 2010; Meyer,

2010; Morris, 2015). Burning votive papers is a popular religious practice in Vietnam, associated with the exchange and positive emotions between the dead and the living. When burning votive paper, religious people not only refer to offerings as gifts to ancestors, but also to repay debts to spirits, gods, and ancestors (Kwon, 2007). In the dead, money is a means and is synonymous with luck. By burning soul money and other goods made of paper and by offering real food and drink in rituals, believers establish and strengthen community between this world and the other (Scheppe, 2015).

Burning votive paper as a gift to ancestors, which repays debts to spirits, gods, ancestors (Kwon, 2007), good luck (Scheppe, 2015; Morris, 2015; Jellema, 2007). By burning votive paper, religious practitioners fulfill their moral obligation to the deceased and invite ancestors to participate in the wealth and social status of the living, whereby practitioners obtain the blessings and protection of souls in their future social and economic lives (Morris, 2015). In summary, the researches on Vietnamese people offering votive papers to people to fulfill their moral obligations towards the dead: “repay the ancestors, gods, souls; venerate ancestors, gods, and souls. In addition, offering votive papers to the dead for the purpose of speculation includes praying for blessings, protection, luck, and prosperity.

From the research overview, the authors have built a research model about what as shown in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1.** The Research Model

In the above research model, the independent variables (intrinsic and extrinsic) affect the dependent variable (moral obligation and speculative) to different degrees depending on the respondents’ point of view, thereby revealing the actual motivations of the respondents and the code has a dead person. This is the task that the author needs to study to clarify the relationship between these variables.

### 3. Hypotheses

From the above overview, the research team put forward the following research hypotheses:

*H1.* The intrinsic factor has a positive and significant effect on the moral obligation factor in offerings and codes for the dead.

*H2.* The extrinsic factor has a positive and significant effect on the speculative factor in votive offerings for the dead.

*H3.* The intrinsic factor has the opposite effect and is significant for the speculative factor in votive offerings for the dead.

*H4.* The extrinsic factor has the opposite and significant effect on the moral obligation factor in offering votive papers to the dead.

### 4. Research Method

#### *Surveyed Area:*

The study was conducted at pagodas and temples in Hanoi in March 2020. It has more than 200 temples and shrines. Participating in the survey are mature Hanoians. At the beginning of the year, Hanoi people have the habit of going to temples “and pagodas to pray for peace and luck for their families.

#### *Research Samples and Methods:*

To carry out this study, the authors conducted an investigation and collected opinions of those who offered votive papers to the dead at the temple in two steps: preliminary investigation and official investigation.

#### *Preliminary investigation:*

The research team used a qualitative method by in-depth interviews with monks, experts in culture, religion and psychology to adjust the research scale and improve the questionnaire accordingly with the characteristics of the survey area. The questionnaire was built on the basis of the results of the research overview and the comments of experts. The structure of the questionnaire consists of two parts. Part 1 collects information about the characteristics of the study participants such as age, gender, education level, and occupation. Part 2 collects information on the characteristics of religious orientation and the behavior of burning votive papers for the dead. The section on collecting personal religious orientation information using The 31-item Batson and Ventis Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) (García-Alandete, Rubio-Belmonte, & Soucase-Lozano, 2019 ) includes the Intrinsic factor = 11 items, the Extrinsic

factor = items, the Question factor = 12 items were removed from the questionnaire because it was outside the research objective. The collection of information on the behavior of burning votive papers for the dead was specifically designed into a questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale from 1. Strongly disagree to 5. Strongly agree. This section includes the factor of performing a moral obligation to the dead = 2 items, the factor of speculation = 4 items.

The English part was translated into Vietnamese by two professional interpreters. The translation process is carried out according to the rules to adapt between Vietnamese cultures. After discussion and finally consensus between the translators and the principal investigator, a single Vietnamese version was created. A bilingual professional expert in education contributed to this version to create a final version. This final version was pre-tested on 40 participants selected to be demographically representative of age, sex, education, and occupation. During the assessment, participants were asked to complete this final version. This was followed by minor corrections made to improve the question structure for better understanding and the final Vietnamese version was completed using the official survey.

*Official investigation:*

The overall study was that the adult local people who participated in offering votive papers for the dead at the pagoda, arrived in Hanoi of different ages, occupations and educational levels. The questionnaire was sent directly to the respondents by non-random sampling method. As a result, 200 satisfactory votes were obtained, achieving a response rate of 100%. Table 1 shows:

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of survey participants

Content		Occupation							
		Manager		Small bussiness		Teacher		Worker	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Age	23-30 years	22	34,9%	12	19,0%	16	25,4%	13	20,6%
	31-40 years	13	31,0%	7	16,7%	13	31,0%	9	21,4%
	41-50 years	8	17,0%	11	23,4%	12	25,5%	16	34,0%
	above 50 years	12	25,0%	12	25,0%	9	18,8%	15	31,2%
Gender	female	23	25,3%	17	18,7%	23	25,3%	28	30,8%
	male	32	29,4%	25	22,9%	27	24,8%	25	22,9%
Education	Bachelor	15	25,4%	13	22,0%	17	28,8%	14	23,7%
	College	12	23,5%	9	17,6%	18	35,3%	12	23,5%
	Worker	28	31,1%	20	22,2%	15	16,7%	27	30,0%

The method of data processing is done through the following steps: (1) Verifying the scale and reliability of the measured variables by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and validating by exploratory factor analysis (EFA); (2) multiple linear regression analysis to test research models and hypotheses.

## 5. Results

Testing the Scales:

The R Programming language is used to analyze the reliability of the scale and the discovery factor. The analysis results suggest removing and merging some observed variables to help the scale evaluate concepts more accurately.

*Analyzing the "Reliability of the Scales:*

Testing the scales through Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to identify and remove junk variables to avoid creating misleading factors“when analyzing exploratory factor analysis. The verification criterion is that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient must be greater than 0.6 and the correlation coefficient of the sum variable in each scale must be greater than 0.3 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 2 shows that the scales of the factors are all standard. Therefore, all the scales of the factors are reliable and used for subsequent factor analysis.

**Table 2.** Summary of Reliability and Relative Minimum Variables of Scales

Scales	Number of variables observed	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha)	The correlation coefficient of the smallest total variable
Intrinsic	11	0.896	0.568
Extrinsic	8	0.861	0.504
Moral obligation (MO)	2	0.603	0.342
Speculative	4	0.795	0.585

After testing Cronbach's Alpha, the author uses exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to preliminary evaluate the unidirectional, convergent and discriminant values of the scales. EFA was used by extracting the Principal Components Analysis Factor and Varimax rotation to group the factors. With a sample size of 200, the factor loading of the observed variables must be greater than 0.5; variables converge on the same factor and are distinguished from other factors. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient (KMO) is an index used to consider the adequacy of factor analysis that must be in the range  $0.5 \leq \text{KMO} \leq 1$  (Cerny & Kaiser, 1977; Kaiser, 1974).

The analysis results in Table 3 show that all factor loading coefficients of the observed variables are greater than 0.5; Bartlett test with Sig meaning. = 0.000 with KMO coefficient =

0.92. All 34 variables after using EFA were extracted into 4 factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1 and Cumulative variance percent = 53%. Thus, the research model consisting of 2 independent variables and 2 dependent variables is used for linear regression analysis and subsequent hypothesis testing.

**Table 3.** Exploratory factor analysis

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Call: principal(r = data1, nfactors = 4, rotate = "varimax")
Standardized loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix
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item	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4	h2	u2	com
Intrinsic10	0.74				0.57	0.43	1.1
Intrinsic7	0.72				0.56	0.44	1.1
Intrinsic6	0.70				0.56	0.44	1.3
Intrinsic2	0.69				0.57	0.43	1.4
Intrinsic4	0.68				0.50	0.50	1.2
Intrinsic11	0.67				0.49	0.51	1.2
Intrinsic9	0.66				0.50	0.50	1.3
Intrinsic3	0.66				0.51	0.49	1.4
Intrinsic8	0.65				0.44	0.56	1.1
Intrinsic5	0.64				0.47	0.53	1.3
Intrinsic1	0.60				0.43	0.57	1.4
Extrinsic8		0.76			0.60	0.40	1.1
Extrinsic6		0.73			0.57	0.43	1.1
Extrinsic4		0.71			0.57	0.43	1.2
Extrinsic7		0.71			0.59	0.41	1.3
Extrinsic3		0.69			0.55	0.45	1.3
Extrinsic2		0.67			0.55	0.45	1.5
Extrinsic1		0.62			0.54	0.46	1.7
Extrinsic5		0.57			0.39	0.61	1.5
OM1			0.78		0.70	0.30	1.3
OM2			0.68		0.58	0.42	1.6
Speculative2				0.68	0.48	0.52	1.1
Speculative3				0.64	0.46	0.54	1.3

	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4
SS loadings	5.42	4.09	1.57	1.12
Proportion Var	0.24	0.18	0.07	0.05
Cumulative Var	0.24	0.41	0.48	0.53
Proportion Explained	0.44	0.34	0.13	0.09
Cumulative Proportion	0.44	0.78	0.91	1.00

Mean item complexity = 1.3

Test of the hypothesis that 4 components are sufficient.

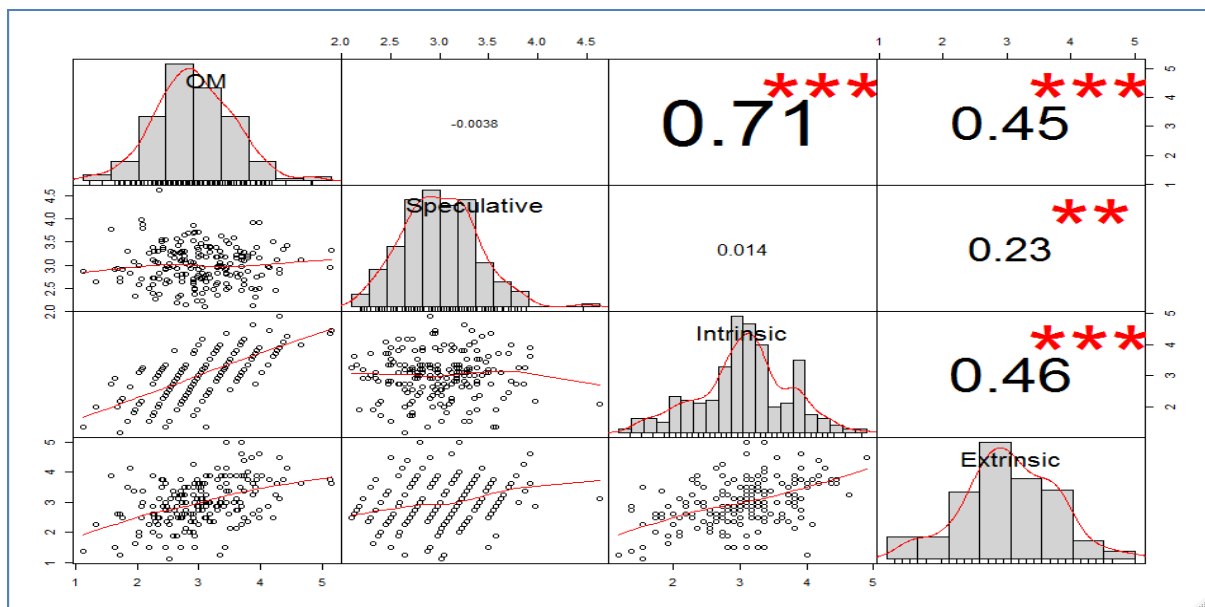
The root mean square of the residuals (RMSR) is 0.06  
with the empirical chi square 346.1 with prob < 1.4e-14

Fit based upon off diagonal values = 0.96

*Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing:*

The author uses Pearson correlation analysis to analyze the correlation between quantitative variables. Table 4 shows that, at the 5% level of significance, the correlation coefficient shows that the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable is statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05). The magnitude of the correlation coefficients ensures that multicollinearity does not occur. Therefore, other statistics can be used to verify the relationship between variables.

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation analysis results



“Next, the author conducts multivariable linear regression analysis on the relationship between two independent variables and two dependent variables. Two independent variables include Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Two dependent variables include Speculative and Moral obligation (OM). Table 5 shows that model1 has  $R^2 = 0.518$  and model2 has  $R^2 = 0.640$ , showing that the built linear regression model fits the data set model 1 = 0.518 % and model 2 = 0.640%, respectively. Both models ensure the conditions for testing multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and Heteroskedasticity.

The results in the two regression models show that the independent variables have a significant impact on the dependent variable. Only 1 independent variable has a negative impact on the dependent variable, which is the Intrinsic variable in model 2.

**Table 5.** Multivariable linear regression analysis



	Dependent variable:	
	OM (Model 1)	Speculative (Model 2)
Intrinsic	0.617*** (0.054)	-0.068* (0.045)
Extrinsic	0.146*** (0.053)	0.160*** (0.044)
Constant	0.717*** (0.169)	2.730*** (0.141)
Observations	200	200
R2	0.518	0.640
Adjusted R2	0.513	0.550
Residual Std. Error (df = 197)	0.488	0.405
F Statistic (df = 2; 197)	105.823***	6.745***
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Based on the results of multiple linear regression analysis in Table 5, we have 2 linear regression models of the following form:

$$MO = 0.717 + 0.617 * Intrinsic + 0.146 * Extrinsic + e \quad (1)$$

$$Speculative = 2.730 - 0.068 * Intrinsic + 0.160 * Extrinsic + e \quad (2)$$

Based on several regression coefficients  $\beta$  of model1 shows that the factor Intrinsic has the strongest effect on the MO factor with  $\beta = 0.617$ , followed by the Extrinsic factor with  $\beta = 0.146$ . Based on several regression coefficients  $\beta$  of model2 shows that Extrinsic factor affects Speculative factor with  $\beta = 0.160$ . It is noteworthy that the Intrinsic factor affects the Speculative factor with  $\beta = -0.068$ . With this result, 4 proposed research hypotheses were accepted.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

Research results show that there is evidence of a relationship between religious orientation and the motivation to offer votive papers to the dead. Specifically, individuals with an internal religious orientation who have a motive of offering votive papers to the souls of the dead are to fulfill their moral obligation to repay ancestors, gods, and souls; venerate ancestors, gods, and souls. People with external religious orientation have a motive of offering votive paper which is speculative, that is, they offer votive paper to ask for blessings, protection, luck, and prosperity... This result is similar to Morris (2015) who found that by burning votive papers, religious practitioners fulfill their moral obligation to the deceased and invite ancestors to participate in

wealth and social status of the living, whereby practitioners obtain the gifts of blessings and protection of souls in their future “social and economic lives.

Research also shows that individuals with a religious orientation on the outside are money-focused. They offer votive paper to the souls of the dead for the purpose of speculation, ie non-religious purposes. This is consistent with the findings of Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999) and Srivastava, Locke, & Bartol (2001) that money is the basis for social comparison, power seeking, ostentatiousness, and transcendence. self-doubt leads to low subjective happiness. This is similar to the view of Lawler (1971) and Michalos (1985) that people with high love of money have a large difference between their desires and assets compared to people with low love of money.

With this result, we can use individual religious orientation as variables to predict religious motives in general and motives for burning votive papers for the souls of the dead in particular.

Vietnam is seeing a resurgence of many types of popular religious practices. An increasing number of Vietnamese are returning to rituals that were previously banned. (Fjelstad & Nguyen, 2006). Offering votive papers, a part of spiritual and economic welfare, plays an important role in the performance of religious activities in this country as well as for the Vietnamese people. In the last few years, the scope of production, trade and delivery of votive papers for the deceased has expanded, to include new forms and references to new new means of paper (Gertrud Hüwelmeier, 2016; Kwon & Heonik, 2007; Kwon, 2007). Vietnamese people make offerings to the wandering souls who died in war, to their ancestors... (Bodemer, 2005), credit cosmology (Chu, 2010).

With the point of view of "the pearl is so yin", in addition to buying votive papers and daily consumer goods made from paper, preparing food, fruit, and smoke incense to offer to the dead, Vietnamese people also have paper copies of cell phones, computers, and iPads for exchange with the other world (Kendall, 2008; Kendall, Tam, & Huong, 2010; Malarney, 2003).

In Vietnam, people believe that they depend on the help and support of their ancestors, and therefore, food, fruit, tobacco, and votive offerings for the dead are seen as moral imperatives of the heart. filial piety (Jellema, 2007). By burning votive paper, religious practitioners fulfill their moral obligation to the deceased and invite ancestors to participate in the wealth and social status of the living, whereby practitioners obtain the blessings and protection of souls in their future social and economic lives (Morris, 2015). The production and crafting of luxury items made of paper can also be part of the dream world of those who cannot afford to buy prestigious items in real life, but who still want to Their ancestors entered the

luxury world of the new market, hoping that the deceased would care for the future prosperity of the living (Morris, 2015).

## **7. Limitations**

As with other empirical studies, there are limitations to this study that should be considered when discussing the results. The paper and pencil survey method was used in this study, it reflects the “subjective perception of the respondents towards the investigated questions. As a result, the data is still subjective to the respondents (Pakpour, Gellert, Asefzadeh, Updegraff, Molloy, & Snichotta, 2016). Furthermore, our data is collected over a single period of time. Non-probability sampling method is limited in generalizing and making inferences about the entire population.

Second, this study focuses on exploring the relationship between religious identification and the behavior of offering votive papers to the souls of the dead. Some other factors have been ignored, such as the difference in demographic factors such as gender, income, religion... It is also possible to evaluate the influencing factors for the behavior of offering votive paper to the people. people die by the theory of planned behavior, the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1987). Future studies should also assess the impact of additional factors that were not included in our analysis. Our research was done in a Vietnamese cultural context. Studying in other cultural contexts and drawing generalized conclusions by research develops a different research paradigm (Sun, Fang, Lim & Straub, 2012).

## **8. Conflict of interest**

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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