

Kihipuka: The Rebirth of An Aloha 'Āina Decision Making Framework

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Abstract:

If collective knowledge constitutes nations, Aloha 'Āina, the philosophy of the Kanaka 'Ōiwi (indigenous people of Hawai'i) is captured in our mo'olelo, oral histories. The purpose of this paper is to develop an understanding of the variables, parameters, and process involved in Kanaka 'Ōiwi decision making based on the examples transmitted in Ka Mo'olelo o Hi'iakaikapoliopole, recorded in Hawaiian newspapers in the early 1900s by Kanaka 'Ōiwi scholar, Ho'oulumāhie. Through the examples, the authors will describe a framework for Aloha 'Āina decision making which is built on three key interconnected pillars: Akua (Gods, natural forces), 'Āina (land), and Kānaka (people). A pono (moral, balanced) decision is one which considers and satisfies all three. When haole (foreign) settlers gained influence and control of the educational system of Hawai'i, educational policies were implemented which resulted in Kanaka 'Ōiwi language loss and devaluation of Kanaka 'Ōiwi epistemologies. This delegitimization of Aloha 'Āina has had a severe negative impact on both the Kanaka 'Ōiwi as well as the islands of Hawai'i. This research is being conducted in an effort to rebirth an Aloha 'Āina based decision making process, to help reverse the negative damage of colonization for future generations of Kanaka 'Ōiwi. The authors further suggest that the Aloha 'Āina decision making process is important for today's society to implement regularly, as decisions made from this philosophy allowed Kanaka 'Ōiwi to thrive on limited resources with limited detrimental environmental impact for hundreds of years prior to European arrival.

Keywords: Indigenous Philosophy, Decision Making, Aloha 'Āina, Education

Introduction

Over generations the Kanaka 'Ōiwi (indigenous people of Hawai'i) thrived and developed a unique system of values and beliefs intimately tied to our island home (Charlot 2005). Education, the transmission of information from one generation to the next, was provided through mo'olelo, oral histories. As an oral people, these wondrous and informative stories conveyed the collective knowledge of generations and Aloha 'Āina, the philosophy of the Kanaka 'Ōiwi. Mo'olelo was factual and fantastical capturing the realities, dreams, and ideals of the people. Aloha 'Āina and the decision making processes based in this philosophy allowed Kanaka 'Ōiwi to thrive on limited resources with limited detrimental environmental impact for hundreds of years.

American occupation and the violent settler colonial assimilationist policies and practices of the haole (foreign) government systematically worked to delegitimize and divorce the Kanaka 'Ōiwi from mo'olelo and subsequently Aloha 'Āina. Educational policies which encouraged language loss in combination with devaluation of the Kanaka 'Ōiwi epistemology has resulted in many modern Kanaka 'Ōiwi having a limited or distorted understanding of the knowledge and ideals of our ancestors (Goodyear-Kaopua, 2014). The current dominant method of decision making based on the haole settler philosophies has negatively impacted the health and wellness of Kanaka 'Ōiwi, the 'Āina (land), and Akua (gods/natural phenomena) of Hawai'i.

The Kanaka 'Ōiwi divided the night into five periods, the title of this paper “kihipuka” refers to the last section of night, the end of the darkness the edge of night that is broken by the beginnings of the sunrise. This research is being conducted as an initial effort to rebirth an Aloha 'Āina based decision making process, in hopes of finding healing following the negative damage of colonization for future generations of Hawai'i. We look to reestablish our connection and understanding of Aloha 'Āina by once again utilizing mo'olelo to educate ourselves.

By studying and examining mo'olelo this paper will use the characters and their actions to distill an Aloha 'Āina decision making framework. First, we will start by describing how three primary character types (Kanaka, 'Āina, and Akua) are the pillars upon which the Aloha 'Āina philosophy is based. Their interactions and relationships will then be analyzed to show the reader the strong connection between pillars. Second, a synopsis of a chapter of the selected mo'olelo will be closely examined with a focus on decisions made. The decisions will then be analyzed, highlighting potential pono (moral, balanced) and/or hewa (opposite of pono) outcomes. Finally, based on the analysis, this paper will then summarize and discuss a Kanaka 'Ōiwi decision making framework based on the Aloha 'Āina philosophy.

Text Selection

Our re-education begins with a close examination of one mo'olelo (histories): [Ka Mo'olelo o Hi'ikaikapoliopole](#). Both were published in the early 1900's by Ho'oulumāhiehie, a pen name for Joseph Moku'ōhai Poepoe. Poepoe lived in a time where he saw the Kanaka 'Ōiwi language and culture being pushed aside and diminishing in prevalence. Poepoe documented that the nature and culture of Hawaii is contained in mo'olelo and worked diligently to capture this knowledge (Silva, Locations 3223-3225). He also wrote:

E hoomaopopoia, eia na poe naauao o kakou iho nei a me ko na aina e ke apu mai nei i na moolelo kahiko o Hawaii nei, [a o ka] kakou poe opio naau—[naauapo or naauao] hoi, ke hoohemahema nui nei i keia kumu waiwai nui o ka aina oiwi. Aohe huli, aohe imi, aohe no he makemake [i] ia mau mea. Aka, no makou iho, ke hoomau nei makou i keia hana no ka makemake maoli e hoouluia a hoomauiaku ka ikeia ana o na moolelo a kaao kahiko o Hawaii nei i hiki ai ke malamala e kakou, ka lahui. (Silva, 2016, loc 3312-3320)

Understand that there are educated people amongst us from foreign lands who are snatching our traditional mo'olelo and are greatly distorting this valuable resource of

this our native land. Doing so without examining, without researching, and without any value for these histories. So, it is upon us (Kanaka 'Ōiwi) to carry out this work, those with a true desire to grow and perpetuate the knowledge which is contained within our traditional tales of Hawaii so that they can enlighten us, the nation.

This quote identifies the impetus at the time by scholars to gather the collective knowledge of the Kanaka 'Ōiwi and publish it widely in order to capture pure, unadulterated versions of mo'olelo written from and for the Kanaka 'Ōiwi so that future generations will continue to benefit from the kumu waiwai (valuable resources) of our homeland in contrast to the distorted haole version.

“Ho'oulumāhiehie is a pseudonym that (Joseph Moku'ōhai) Poepoe used when he made substantial contributions to and editing of manuscripts written by others” (Silva, 2016, loc 3043-3044). Ho'oulumāhiehie can be translated as “to decorate finely”. In order to capture the most comprehensive version of mo'olelo, Poepoe gathered information from a variety of sources and perspectives. By collecting and consolidating different versions of mo'olelo he was able to publish a version that was universally accepted by all Kanaka 'Ōiwi. He also invited readers to participate in the refinement of mo'olelo by inviting discussion and making amendments as necessary. This methodology would therefore highlight and accentuate universally accepted truths capturing Aloha 'Āina. It is because of this finely decorated methodology that works published by Ho'oulumāhiehie are being utilized for this research.

Ho'oulumāhiehie published the mo'olelo selected in this paper as a series of newspaper articles. Published as a daily series from 1905 through 1906, *Ka Mo'olelo o Hi'iakaikapoliopole* (Hi'iaka) tells the story of Hi'iaka as she and her friends are sent on a quest by the goddess Pele. Sections from the story will be analyzed and examined in an effort to develop an understanding of Aloha 'Āina based decision making.

Primary Agents

A commonality in all mo'olelo is that the characters are either Akua, 'Āina, and/or Kanaka. It is the characters of the story which are either faced with making decisions or are affected by decisions made. It is important to understand the nature of each of these types of characters as they each have a unique function in the Kanaka 'Ōiwi understanding of the world and thereby each portray a unique perspective. Based on this, 'Āina, Akua, and Kanaka are the pillars upon which the Aloha 'Āina philosophy is based.

'Āina

'Āina, which is commonly defined as land, is comprised of two words: “ai” and “na”. The Puku'i dictionary defines “ai” as “food” and “na” as the preposition for “belonging to” or “by” (Pukui, 1986). 'Āina, therefore, is more than just land, it is the physical entity that provides the basic needs for survival. In order for Kanaka to thrive, it is necessary to observe the 'Āina and work

with 'Āina. In this way it can be said that 'Āina provides 'ike (knowledge) regarding the physical world, tangible knowledge. By observing the 'Āina over many years, the Kānaka 'Ōiwi documented natural patterns and worked with the 'Āina which helped the people to thrive prior to colonization. 'Āina knowledge can include such things as measurable information, as well as historical and cautionary tales (Charlot 2005).

Akua

Akua is often defined as “god”, but from a Kanaka 'Ōiwi perspective, Akua can better be understood to be natural and supernatural phenomena, as well as the source for feelings. Akua therefore provides information and learning based on intangible wisdom transmitted through the na'au (intuition, gut), which from the Kanaka 'Ōiwi perspective is the seat of thought, intellect, and affections (Charlot 2005). Akua are able to communicate through na'au but also through hō'ailona, which are omens which speak to the na'au. This serendipitous observation of hō'ailona may be insignificant for most, but life changing for another. Akua knowledge can include such things as the personalities of all the people involved as well as any possible signs of godly communication (Charlot 2005). Therefore, it was also just as important for Kanaka 'Ōiwi to observe their Akua knowledge in order to thrive. In the Kanaka 'Ōiwi perspective this intangible information was equally as valuable as the tangible.

Kanaka

Kanaka are humans. In the Aloha 'Āina philosophy it is Kanaka who are tasked to behave in a Pono way by making choices based on information gathered from the tangible as well as intangible information, 'Āina and Akua. The choices and behaviors exhibited by Kanaka develops 'ano (personality and characteristics). The ideal is for Kanaka to develop an 'ano which is na'auao, one who possesses a na'au filled with light, as opposed to a na'aupo, one that is filled with darkness.

Interrelatedness

Charlot when describing the Kanaka 'Ōiwi epistemology states, “The universe is thus a family tree, the different members of which bear a family resemblance to each other. Much Hawaiian thinking and literature explores this network of resemblances, resemblances which reveal genuine interrelations of the different parts of the universe. Those relations are in fact real connections, like those in a family” (2014, pg. 85). Therefore, each pillar above is different in its primary function and appearance. However, it is important to understand the fluidity and flexibility between the three. In the Aloha 'Āina perspective all three are genetically related. The Kanaka 'Ōiwi cosmology, the Kumulipo reminds the Kanaka, that we are the younger siblings to both the Akua and 'Āina. Just as we sometimes see that a grandchild can suddenly produce a smile similar to a great grandfather he had never met, it is possible for anyone within this family to demonstrate behaviors of other family members, 'Āina, Akua, and/or Kanaka. In this way, physical form does not limit the ability for any one pillar to at least temporarily demonstrate behaviors consistent with another or that of multiple character types simultaneously. Within the mo'olelo we are provided with multiple examples of this fluidity

and the interrelatedness between the three types of characters and their unique and fluctuating perspectives.

The function of characters in all stories, including mo'olelo, is to drive the progression of the narrative by encountering situations which require a decision to be made. The subsequent action or inaction on the part of the character produces some result or effect. This is what makes the narrative interesting and also educational. In the case of mo'olelo, all three pillar character types are faced with situations requiring decisions to be made. In order to analyze Aloha 'Āina based decision making, it is first necessary to answer the question, "What is a decision?" Decision making is described by Doya et. al as, "Almost any interesting cognitive function can be framed as a decision of some sort, because once the function admits flexibility, contingency, or a provisional plan, it embraces elements of deliberation and commitment" (2012 pg. 911).

In our previous work (Silva and Watson 2016) we document that the Aloha 'Āina philosophy suggests that the purpose of "existence is to find, recognize, establish, and fortify Pono in the world" (pg.7). Pono is defined as "righteous, moral, just, balanced" (Pukui, 1986). Since mo'olelo is the means of transmission of this philosophy then through mo'olelo we, the audience, learn how to make Pono decisions. We find that Pono choices are rewarded whereas when a character makes a Hewa (opposite of Pono) choice, difficulties arise. In order to make a Pono choice, it is often necessary to compromise your individual desires and wishes.

Aloha 'Āina Decision Making Framework

We look closely at mo'olelo to determine what considerations are made prior to making a decision when functioning within an Aloha 'Āina philosophy. The highlighted chapter of the mo'olelo was selected as it provided multiple opportunities to see the results of pono and hewa decision making and carefully considers the behaviors of each character when faced with "interesting cognitive functions." Each decision is carefully considered and we are able to see the results of their choices. From there, we then analyze the decision made and how it affects the Kākou (entirety of the system: Akua, 'Āina, Kanaka) . Through this we learn that prior to making a decision, the character gathers information, both 'Āina (tangible) and Akua (intangible). With this information, the character in order to make a Pono decision must weigh the options/choices. In the weighing of choices it is necessary to consider the effects of the decision on Akua, 'Āina, and Kanaka. The option which best benefits kākou is the best choice, the Pono choice. Using this construct we identify this process in the decisions made.

Step 1: Gather information

- 'Āina: Tangible information
- Akua: Intangible information

Step 2: Ideate

- Number of options

Step 3: Consider the potential effects of each choice on the kākou

- How will 'Āina be affected?
- How will Akua be affected?
- How will Kanaka be affected?

Step 4: Select best option

- Ideally the option selected will benefit all pillars equally
- If an ideal option is not available then the best choice is one that has the least detriment

Analyzing mo'olelo with the Aloha 'Āina decision making framework

The authors selected one chapter from the mo'olelo to demonstrate decision making from each character using the Aloha 'Āina based decision making framework. A synopsis of the chapter will be provided, followed by an in-depth analyzation of the decisions made and the subsequent effects that follow. Through examining information, both 'Āina (tangible) and Akua (intangible), received by the character, and their subsequent decisions based on that collection of knowledge, the authors indicate whether the decision was pono or hewa, based on the effects it has to the kākou.

Hi'iakaikapoliopole: Hi'iakaikapoliopole approaches Pana'ewa (From the sections published from 8/6-23/1906)

Pele, the volcano goddess, sends her youngest sister, Hi'iaka, on a mission which requires Hi'iaka to leave their home, the volcanic crater Kilauea, and head toward the island of Kaua'i. In order to accomplish this mission in a timely manner Hi'iaka must pass through the area of Pana'ewa. There is a firm edict in Pana'ewa that no one is allowed to pass without permission. Pana'ewa would never welcome Hi'iaka or her sisters within. Wahine'ōma'o, the travel companion of Hi'iaka, is aware of the dangers of travelling through Pana'ewa and warns Hi'iaka that taking the path through Pana'ewa could mean their death. Hi'iaka understands this and after considering Wahine'ōma'o's input, continues to head toward Pana'ewa. It is customary for Kanaka 'Ōiwi to chant prior to entering spaces that are not familiar and so at the border of Pana'ewa, Hi'iaka politely chants asking permission to enter. In her chant she describes the lush beauty of Pana'ewa, acknowledges that Pana'ewa may not like her very much and so ends the chant with, "E aloha mai! E uē kāua" which suggests that they share love and cry together in the happiness that comes from that shared love. Pana'ewa faced with this decision to admit Hi'iaka or not, weighs his options. Although he has heard the request and promise of aloha from Hi'iaka, Pana'ewa chooses to ignore her humble loving voice and denies her request based on what others have said about their experience with Hi'iaka and her sisters. Pana'ewa doesn't just deny the request, but does so rudely. Pana'ewa's reply references the destruction that often accompanies Pele and her family, calling them eaters of stone, crossers of boundaries, and eaters of trees. Pana'ewa also understands that while their entry can not be blocked, it can be made difficult. Pana'ewa warns Hi'iaka, "If you are stronger than me then you will escape, if not you will die." Hi'iaka considers this threat and decides to continue to proceed through Pana'ewa. Before deciding to go through Pana'ewa, Hi'iaka predicts, "Pana'ewa's will be the morning, and ours will be the evening" suggesting to Wahine'ōma'o that initially the going will be rough but will end with their success. She continues to prepare Wahine'ōma'o for the tribulations ahead by instructing Wahine'ōma'o to hold fast to her magic skirt and to trust in Pele and akua to get them through this difficult situation. Prepared with information and instruction, Wahine'ōma'o decides to swallow her doubt and have faith in

Hi'iaka's ability to get them through. As promised, Pana'ewa then uses all the forces possible to make their journey treacherous. Travelling is difficult during the morning and when at the edge of their ability to make it alone, Hi'iaka calls upon Pele and her other siblings for help. In the evening, just as predicted, with assistance from a storm and a volcanic eruption, Hi'iaka is able to best Pana'ewa. With Pana'ewa successfully conquered, Hi'iaka asks Pana'ewa to make an offering of a chant in order to spare his life. Pana'ewa refuses to chant politely and so Hi'iaka ends Pana'ewa. Instead of destroying all of Pana'ewa, she spares a grove of 'ōhi'a trees so that all from the nearby area of Hilo will remember what happened.

Pana'ewa's Refusal

Let us begin with Pana'ewa's decision to obstruct Hi'iaka. Pana'ewa makes this choice based both on tangible and intangible information ('Āina, Akua). The 'Āina information is the knowledge that historically when Pele and her sisters traverse an area, destruction follows, which is why he refers to them as tree and rock eaters. The Akua information is Pana'ewa's attachment and protective feelings toward the 'ōhi'a forest. The possibility of trees being eaten causes an extreme fear and subsequent inflexibility. In denying the request, Pana'ewa makes the following consideration, Pana'ewa recognizes that Hi'iaka may ultimately be successful if she is stronger than him. Confident in his superior strength, Pana'ewa proceeds by rudely denying her passing.

By denying the request, Pana'ewa ignores the needs of kākou. Pana'ewa's decision was not Pono. Because of this Hewa decision, there were a number of negative consequences which affected kākou. Although Hi'iaka generously saved a portion of the forest, most of the trees that Pana'ewa loved so much were scorched. Pana'ewa and many of Pana'ewa's followers ultimately lost their lives. Had Hi'iaka obeyed Pana'ewa's refusal her journey would have taken more time than she had been allotted by Pele. Both Hi'iaka and Wahine'ōma'o came with good intentions and aloha, Pana'ewa responded with violence and rudeness, negatively impacting Hi'iaka both tangibly and intangibly. This was not Pono.

Hi'iaka proceeds

Hi'iaka purposefully approached Pana'ewa as she is there in the course of accomplishing a task for Pele. She respects Pana'ewa's control of the area and recognizes that Pana'ewa may have ill feelings toward her because of the family's history of destruction. So in her humble request to Pana'ewa she acknowledges that history ('Āina). Although she was denied entry by Pana'ewa, at the same time, she was on a time sensitive mission. Confident that she was polite acting from a na'au filled with genuine aloha, she has faith that she will be protected by Pele if a conflict with Pana'ewa should arise (Akua). Considering her options, Hi'iaka recognizes that violence will ensue based both on Pana'ewa's threat as well as evidenced by her prediction of difficulties in the morning. However confident that she will be successful in the evening, Hi'iaka decides that she will proceed through Pana'ewa's area anyway.

As we consider how Hi'iaka's decision affected others, kākou, we the readers, must remember that Pana'ewa's Hewa decision to not allow Hi'iaka's entry has put her in this predicament. Although it would have been better to negotiate with Pana'ewa, Pana'ewa refused

to cooperate, because of this, all available options would result in negative consequences. Hi'iaka in crossing without permission, selected the choice with the least negative impact to kākou. In this case, the mitigation of negative consequences to kākou is the best choice, the Pono choice.

Hi'iaka was not in Pana'ewa for selfish reasons, but rather for the love of her sister. This task which Pele sent her on was time sensitive and if not completed in a timely manner may possibly result in the death of someone that she cares for deeply. When crossing Pana'ewa, Hi'iaka tried to persevere on her own for as long as possible. She recognized that calling for help would result in even more significant damage to Pana'ewa and all who populate the area. Faced with the threat of her own doom as well as that of her travelling companion Wahine'ōma'o, Hi'iaka had no choice but to call for help. Hi'iaka is ultimately successful but even in this success still demonstrates aloha for Pana'ewa by sparing a portion of the 'ōhi'a. She intends for this 'ōhi'a to remain as a reminder to others of what transpired here possibly in hopes that people will remember her generosity, and learn that stubbornness and not cooperating has negative consequences.

Wahine'ōma'o commits

Wahine'ōma'o is committed to the journey with Hi'iaka. Her tangible information recognizes the danger which Pana'ewa presents, the magnitude of significant damage that could potentially happen if Pana'ewa and Hi'iaka were to fight. Because of her experience with Hi'iaka, Wahine'ōma'o's intangible information comes from her deep faith, loyalty, and trust in Hi'iaka. She believes in Hi'iaka's promise to protect her through this hardship.

When looking at how Wahine'ōma'o's decision affects the kākou, like Hi'iaka, Wahine'ōma'o was not in Pana'ewa for selfish reasons. She was in this situation because of her promise to accompany Hi'iaka. When initially denied entry by Pana'ewa, Wahine'ōma'o voiced her opinion by providing the option of another path which would avoid danger by doing so she contributed to the effort to make the best most well informed decision. Her commitment to accompany Hi'iaka even in the face of impending danger is a model for all to follow, and demonstrates the importance of abiding by your word. Wahine'ōma'o trusts in the aloha of Hi'iaka and that aloha even in battle will result in Hi'iaka doing all that she can to mitigate the collateral damage when Pana'ewa and Hi'iaka clash.

Conclusion

Mo'olelo, oral histories, were once used in Hawai'i as a means of education. The archive of Kanaka 'Ōiwi knowledge is stored within these stories. By carefully looking at mo'olelo documented by Ho'oulumāhiehie, we were able to create a model for decision making based on Aloha 'Āina.

Now we, the authors, and you, the reader, are faced with an interesting cognitive function. Like Hi'iaka and Kawelo, we must first gather our information. In terms of 'Āina,

tangible information, we now have evidence that this decision making process based on the Aloha 'Āina philosophy exists. We also know that this process was used in Hawai'i prior to colonization and American occupation. Decisions made using this process allowed the Kanaka 'Ōiwi to thrive on the islands with limited resources while also making limited negative detrimental environmental impact. Since American occupation, the 'Āina, Akua, and Kanaka of Hawai'i are currently suffering the consequences of decisions made based on their foreign philosophy.

In terms of Akua, intangible information, we, the authors during this research process have been inspired and encouraged through ho'ailona, messages from Akua in the form of natural phenomena and serendipity, to conduct our research of Aloha 'Āina. While working on this paper, Akua provided through providence unique opportunities for the authors to successfully implement this decision making process in their professional and personal lives. We therefore have a strong belief in this process and hope for its return to dominance. As educators at a school for indigenous children, we are in the unique and powerful position to transmit and instill this decision making method to the next generation of Kanaka 'Ōiwi.

Based on both 'āina and akua information, as well as our strong desire to improve the life of kākou we must now weigh our options: to share this information or not. If we choose not to share it, then the current trend for decreased health of the 'Āina, Akua, and Kanaka of Hawai'i will continue on the path paved by the dominant decision making practice. If we do share this knowledge we hope for it to disrupt the current method of decision making in place, in hopes of birthing a better future for all of Hawai'i. We believe a decision making process which gives voice to both 'Āina and Akua, which values the tangible as well as the intangible, the sacred as well as the secular, will result in a healthier world.

Discussion

Now that we have gathered this information it has come time to make a decision. We choose to share this process. The Aloha 'Āina philosophy requires that we find, recognize, establish, and fortify Pono in the world. We believe that sharing and implementing this decision making process will contribute to the reestablishment of Pono in Hawai'i.

In order to reinstill this decision making process, we will begin the journey by incorporating it into our practice. We will share this process with the children that we work with. We have designed a visual model, the kanaka 'Ōiwi Decision Making model (figure 1). The Model shows that a "Pono decision" is one that considers all three pillars. This model will be displayed in our classrooms and referred to while guiding students through discussions of decision making, regarding characters in books, as well as when making classroom decisions, or personal decisions. We hope over time to refine this process and the explanation of it in order to share it with other educators. Ideally we would like to enlist a cohort of teachers to implement this process and gather data to see if there is an impact on our students. While we value theory and Akua information, in our experience, in order to garner support from the current educational leadership we require empirical data. Though we are optimistic that this research will be well received by the people of Hawai'i, we fear that this information will not be

appreciated by those who wish to continue on the current path toward Kanaka 'Ōiwi assimilation and/or extinction.

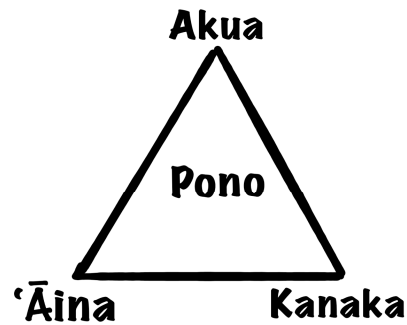


Figure 1: Kanaka 'Ōiwi Decision Making model.

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