

The Balanced Combination of Excitement and Stillness in IRAN's Mosques in Architectural Periods

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ABSTRACT

The Muslim artists do not create a work of art for gaining material outcomes or satisfying their aesthetical sense. Rather, they always try to exhibit the most sublime truths of creation in the material forms through secrets and ironies. Among these secrets, there are the excitement and stillness of the mosque structure, which is focus of this article. As for the significance of this study, we should bear in mind that some contemporary mosques are built without the least attention to the lofty conceptual aspects. The purpose of this paper is to display how the traditional mosques could provide a situation to create these concepts for making use of space and preparing man for invocation to and communion with Allah. For this purpose, first the concepts of excitement and stillness are theoretically examined. Finally, the author tries to find the bodily-spatial features, which epitomize these concepts. The method of study is rational reasoning, and in the case study, it is observation of the Iran's Mosques in different periods. The findings of the research indicate that in the traditional mosques, the architects, creatively using the elements of lighting, color, material reduction, and lightening it, managed to create these concepts (excitement and stillness) in the viewers. By stillness, the author means a kind of stillness beyond the worldly stillness, and the excitement is something more than being provoked.

KEY WORDS: Excitement, stillness, Mosque

1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture is created when man presents something beyond the initial application of a structure by creating spaces and defining surfaces, choosing the structure and determining its relationships with the surroundings. The concepts that emerges from the interaction between surfaces and volumes and that everybody gets involved with are enthusiasm and stillness in the architecture of mosques. In fact, architecture, consists of art, technology, knowledge and creativity by which human beings both meet their material needs and formulate concepts, using available construction materials (e.g., stone, earth, wood, etc.) [1]. Among these concepts are excitement and stillness, and this article attempts to examine them and factors framing them.

1.1. Mosque and Internal States of the Human's Soul

Faith is an inner component that forms man's thoughts, desires and behaviors. Faith is an inner belief that is reinforced and stabilized through bodily actions, and it can be said to be the starting point of human movement towards God. It is faith that makes man a divine and heavenly creature. Thus, changes in human's heart influence his mind and personality traits. The standard of the one who frequents the mosque changes through the faith he acquires from the mosque, and he sees everything from this perspective and reaches such a rank where his love and hatred, and his emotions, grief and joy are formed on the basis of this strand [2].

"Mosque" is a familiar name to Muslim believers in God. There one can have inner stillness and fly from the niche of worship to the zenith of the heaven [3]. The Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad said, "When some people gather in a mosque of the Almighty God in order to recite and learn the Holy Quran, they are covered by stillness and divine mercy, and God includes them in those who are in His presence." In another narration, he said, "If the mosque is somebody's home, God guarantees him comfort, stillness and the secured crossing of Sirat [a path in the hereafter on the Day of Judgment]" [4]. The mosque is abode of hope, illuminated by the light of God and prayer and refreshed by the pleasant breeze of prayer, remembrance of God and supplication.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2. 1. Theoretical Analysis of the Concepts of Stillness and excitement

Stillness somehow means emptying one of everything. It means the stillness of the soul the when one is enthusiastic. Excitement results from various intuitions about a space, and what brings about this excitement is contrast (i.e., heterogeneity) in the building. Contrasts consist of largeness and smallness, shortness and longness, indentation and protrusion, uniqueness and repetitiveness, construction materials, colors, etc. The factors such as

rhythm and repetition, hierarchy, spatial geometry, etc. also play a very important role in the creation of stillness or excitement in the building. excitement means movement and movement, and excitement means serenity of mind, reassurance, safety and security.

Restlessness made me so relaxed----the same way that the movement of cradle made the child quiet (by: Sa'ib Tabrizi, the Persian poet)

2.2. The Nature of Stillness

The same way that it is easy and common for everybody to understand "stillness" instinctively and naturally, it is difficult to define the word "stillness" in words. Moreover, when imagining "stillness", everyone defines it by considering a belonging. One may find stillness in a situation which does not conform with the definition of stillness. At least, he assumes he is in stillness. In some cases, stillness is defined by its opposites states such as fear, excitement, anxiety, etc. Therefore, stillness can be defined as some kind of comfort, relaxation, quiet, and physical, emotional, and mental satisfaction [5]. When man experiences and understands that he belongs to God, Who love him, he feels more love in his life and worries less.

2.3. Stillness in Religious Statements

When we examine the relationship between stillness and religion, what do we talk about what? In the spiritual teachings, to what extent is the importance of stillness discussed? And how much do spiritual concepts bring stillness to people? In other words, how much do spiritual statements contribute to having stillness? To what extent does spirituality help to have stillness? A component of religiousness is to acquire inner stillness. That is, by following mystical-religious doctrine, man feels some kind of inner stillness.

How do acts of worship contribute to inner stillness? First, some or most acts of worship cause concentration and strengthen willpower, and strong willpower brings man stillness. Second, in the acts of worship, man's attention is drawn to the Heaven, and man's soul is elevated to a higher ran. The more elevated one's soul is, the more stillness of mind he will have. In return for these acts of worship, God will descend stillness on man's heart and reassures him.

2.4. The Nature of excitement

In the everyday language, excitement is equivalent to excitement, feelings, reactions, and sentiments. It refers to a general and brief reaction to an unexpected reality, along with a pleasant or unpleasant emotional state. excitement is also equivalent to word "emotion" the root of which refers to a factor such as anger, fear, and love that provokes an organism. [6]

2.5. The Components of excitement

Every instance of excitement includes knowledge, actions and feelings, and all instances of it move through the following stages:

1. mental, internal feeling
2. stimulation of the automatic system
3. cognitive evaluation of the situation
4. expressing excitement
5. general reaction

6. practical orientation: the amount of excitement that originates from a feeling and is expressed in the form of a particular behavior depends on the individual experience [7].

The delicate interaction between cognition and emotion/ excitement has always been the driving force behind the great artistic achievements in all eras. Now there is a growing interest in accepting the idea that emotional responses are useful and even necessary tools for the interaction with the social setting. Emotional states and experiences greatly affect our understanding of society and its representation [8].

2.6. Stillness and excitement in the Quranic Verses

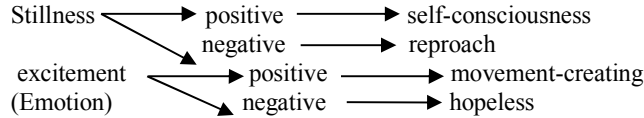
2.6.1. Remembrance of God

Faith, belief, and in general, religiousness mean inner stillness. Remembrance of God can bring about either stillness or excitement. God said in the Holy Quran says in chapter Ra'd, verse no. 28, "Surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest." Among the benefits of invocation and remembrance of God (prayer) is that it removes sorrows and one can unburden oneself to the Creator (because man always need to unburden himself to somebody), and believers always feel relaxed and confident. One can vent his feelings by speaking to God. If one can empty himself of complexes, grudges, and hardships, he finds stillness. In fact, through releasing energy, his anxiety is released and he finds stillness.

Another important issue is trust in God. Trust refers to the belief that all world events occur with God's knowledge and will. Attributing activities and events to God naturally leads to inner stillness, and results in serenity of mind and quiet extremely. Trust relieves man's anxiety and anguish. [9]

In the mystic path, reliance on piety and knowledge equals disbelief---although wayfarer has hundreds of arts, he should trust in God (by: Hafez, the Persian poet)

Thus, the first way to have inner stillness is to connect oneself to the true origin of the universe, God, the Exalted. This stillness has to be promoted inside us so that it paves the way for the architect to promote our inner stillness, using bodily concept in his architectural design, and he has no duty except this. In addition to bringing stillness, remembrance of God can create positive and movement-creating excitement and emotion, too. "...those whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned" (the Holy Quran, chapter al-Anfal: 2).



2.7. Psychological Evaluation of the Concepts of excitement and Stillness

Chinese researchers believed that humans have four basic emotions: anger, happiness, sadness and fear. William James combined Darwin and Descartes' views and presented detailed physiological theory of emotion/ excitement. According to him, emotion is to feel some physical changes that occur after perceiving reality. In this sentence, the relationship between cognition (perception of reality) and emotion/ excitement is discussed. [10] Lang, Bradley and Cuthbert divide all kinds of emotion/ excitement into two categories:

Table 1. Types of Emotion/ excitement

excitement	form	type	consequence
	Positive (pleasant)	joy and strength	Turning to, attachment and inclination somebody/something
	Negative (unpleasant)	sadness and anger	avoidance, withdrawal of and escape from somebody/ something

Lang et al. differentiate between the two dimensions of excitation and attraction, on the one hand, and the pleasantness/unpleasantness of emotions, on the other hand, and believe that both positive and negative emotions can be found at opposite poles of excitation and attraction. [10]

When a person is in control of himself, his life and his problem, and nobody can take this control away and change his destiny, stillness is achieved. In order to relieve patients' anxiety, psychologists always try to correct his behaviors which are influenced by his thoughts and attitudes.

Spiritual engagement, religiousness, and belief in God bring man complete relaxation and stillness of mind. "Relaxation" is one of the techniques used by some psychotherapists to treat mental illness, and one can learn it by practice.

Attention to devotional acts and constantly practicing them cause man to immerse in God with his entire body and all his senses for a moment and to turn away from all his worldly engagements and problems. This disregard for problems when performing acts of worship has a great therapeutic effect on relieving anxiety. [11]

2.8. Architectural Standards: Fulfilling of excitement and Stillness

Since the architecture is expressed in form, space, volume, color, and light, it is usually the source of excitement and stillness, too. The human being is sensitive to form, and some forms are static, and some are very dynamic. If a form comes out of static state, it can create excitement. On the other hand, static forms can create stillness.

According to environmental psychology, the feeling that our surroundings evoke in us aesthetically makes us understand and convey the meanings and concepts. According to experimental aesthetics and environmental psychology, our surroundings affect our feelings (because the environment is made up of forms, colors, shades, light, space, etc.), and this causes greater interest in and acceptance of the environment. Hence, identifying the relationship between visual characteristics and human emotions help designers to design buildings which are more appropriate to the users' needs.

2.9. Architectural Standards

Excitement → the use of any contrast (heterogeneity): contrast between the heights, largeness and smallness, an arc with a static body, the difference between elements of space in a façade (i.e., contrast between the façade and adjacent structures, dimensions of façade) / contrast in dome chambers including its height proportionate to adjacent spaces, diversity and contrast in color, light, etc.

Stillness → the use of static and axis-oriented bodily elements/ rhythm and repetition
 → symmetry in bodies and façades, particularly facing Qiblah of Muslims (Ka'bah)

For this purpose, the research method is logical reasoning through case study of mosques in different periods of Iranian architecture.

3. DISCUSSION

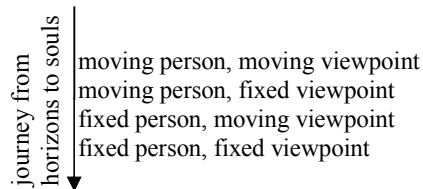
3.1. The Effects of excitement and Stillness

Table 2. Types of Emotion/ excitement

Concept	Form	The impact of form	Immediate impact	Conventional impact
Emotion	Dynamic	Ambiguity	Definite and recognizable	Attraction
Stillness	Static	Control	Neutral and non-recognition of context	Repulsion

3.2. Investigating excitement and Stillness in Iran's Architectural Periods

The process of reaching the main part of traditional buildings is the journey from horizons (macrocosm) to souls (microcosm). The astuteness and creativity of traditional architects for reaching the inside of building is really worthy of note. This process depends on the movement of object and man's eyes (vision). In fact, this process from horizons to souls is as follows:



3.3. Khorasani Style

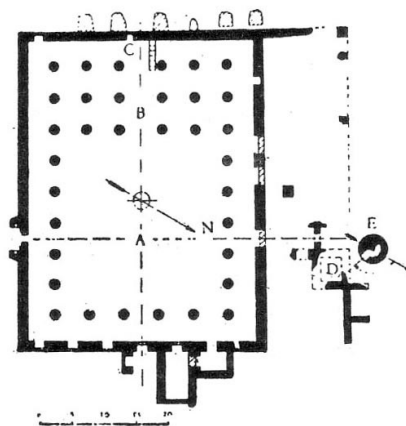
This style started in the first century A.H. (i.e., after migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina) and lasted until the fourth century A.H. What is clear about the culture in that time is that cultural changes occurred mostly in Khorasan. With the advent of Islam, there occurred some changes in house construction, including:

- constructing buildings which were more human-like, with short walls → lower height of buildings reduced its grandeur of the building, gave people this feeling that they were more in control of everything, and brought them stillness
- using local construction materials
- Very simple designs. [12]

3.3.1. Case study: Tarikhane in the city of Damghan

Façade

Brick façade of the building is very simple and void of decoration. Its entrance is located in the farthest corner. This shows only a perspective of court to people and increases the attraction and excitement for reaching the inside. Here there is bodily and visual (most macrocosmic) movement. On the other hand, simplicity of façade construction materials causes plainness and stillness of mind.



Picture 1.: Simple Design: Damghan's Tarikhane [13]

Veranda

After passing by the façade, one reaches a veranda which is located in three sides of the court. Because in the veranda horizontal elongation is more than vertical elongation,
 —→ One is invited to bodily movement.

Court

Different depths in the walls leads to the bodily and visual movements whose outcomes is excitement for getting into the building. On the other hand, the square plan of court invites the visitor to the center and stillness for a short time.



Picture 2. local construction materials. Damghan's Tarikhane [13]

Prayer hall

Prayer hall is located across from the entrance. The number of pillars and homogeneity of space (are equal value everywhere, and no particular point catches the eyes)
 —→ reduced bodily and visual movements —→ bodily and visual stillness.

3.3.1.1. The role of prayer hall pillars in creating spatial stillness

If there were no pillars in the prayer hall, the visitor would be awestruck by its mystique, resulting in negative emotions and fear and ultimately lack of spatial attraction. On the other hand, pillars themselves enhance stillness and centralization of the space. They also prevent the prayer hall from seeming empty, resulting in one's feeling safe.

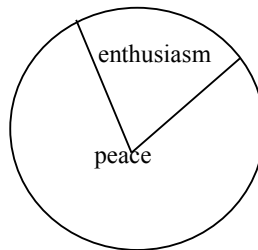


Fig. 1. the plan of man's mental states in Damghan's Tarikhane

Table 3. Stillness and excitement in Damghan's Tarikhane

Stillness	excitement
Prayer hall	Façade
Court	Veranda
Façade	Court

3.4. Razi Style

Progress in the construction of roof and dome (the dome construction in Razi style reached its peak), using high-quality construction materials in the entire building: enameled and un enameled cutted and formed brick, plaster work done excellently and uniquely like mosaic tile work, and creating figures with it causes visual diversity.

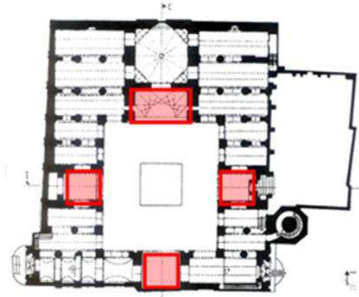
3.4.1. Case Study: the Congregation Mosque of Zawareh

Façade

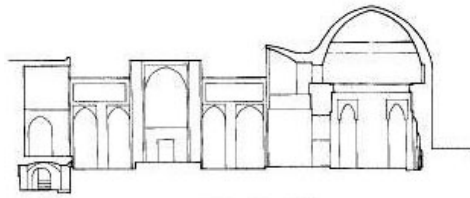
Bodily movement —→ bodily excitement which is modified with spiritual stillness that is created through colors and decorations (worldly excitement, spiritual stillness)

Veranda

-some mosques with pillared prayer hall changed into a four-veranda construction (Pirnia, 2006)
The veranda movement and excitement, but since the verandas function as a pre-entrance, they have more spiritual excitement(movement).



Picture 3. The mosque is turned into a four-veranda construction.
The Congregation Mosque of Zawareh, Damghan [13]



Picture 4. progress in the construction of roof. the Congregation Mosque of Zawareh, Damghan [13]

Court

There is a pond in the middle of mosque court. Here because of:

- horizontal elongation which is more than vertical elongation and
- The symmetry of the façade and the symmetry due to the reflection of building in water
—→ invitation to stillness and stillness

bodily movement, bodily stillness, visual movement, visual stillness

Dome chamber

integrity and polarity —→ inclination to veranda movement toward the center, and visual movement toward the focus —→ There is less stillness in dome chamber than prayer hall.

Prayer hall

Decreased bodily and visual movement and homogeneity of space (the centralized viewpoint and human senses) cause bodily and visual stillness in the prayer hall. On the other hand, taking decorations into account, the condition is created for generating spiritual excitement in the prayer hall. This adjusts the amount of stillness in the prayer hall.

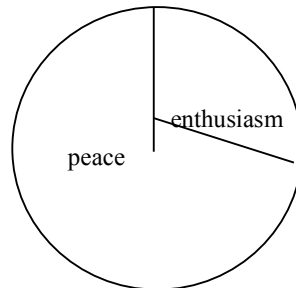


Fig. 2. plan of man's mental state in the Congregation Mosque of Zawareh, Damghan

Table 4. Stillness and excitement the Congregation Mosque of Zawareh, Damghan

stillness	excitement
prayer hall	façade
dome chamber	veranda
court	court
façade	dome chamber

3. 5. Azeri Style

- Producing complicated designs and using strong geometry/variety in the design create movement, and the outcome of this spatial movement is generating excitement in person.
- Buildings very large buildings which were unprecedented in the previous styles: Soltaniyyeh Dome
- Reduced use of bricks and instead the use of tiles and pottery decorated with raised figures, and carved tiles with seven colors.
- Use of size and uniform elements due to accelerated construction process. This feature generates negative and dull excitement. Man is always looking for spatial variety, discovery and intuition.

3.5.1. Case study: Congregation Mosque of Natanz

Entrance and its Path

Bodily movement and due to generated turns in the entrance path, there is visual movement.

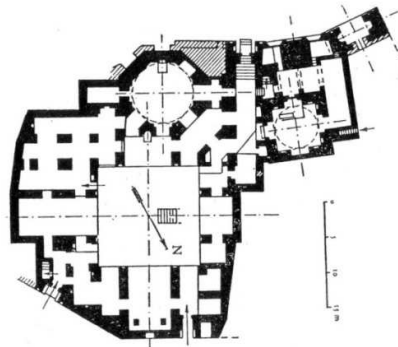
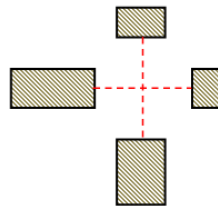
Verandas

- Use a variety of plans with a four-veranda court

Different depths in verandas arouse one's curiosity for intuition in the new space and consequently movement. This enhances excitement in the visitor (entrance excitement).

3.5.1.1. The effect of different depths on verandas

If all verandas had the same depth, the walls would be of equal value, the sense of movement and navigation would seem weaker in the person, and he would prefer staying outdoors to going because no different factor would arouse his curiosity about going and movement.

**Picture 5.** Creating Complicated Designs Using Strong Geometry. [13]**Fig. 3.** different depths in verandaes arouses enthusiasm for going inside the building. It also emphasizes the center and stillness.

Court

Creating pause and stillness at the intersection of the verandas.

Veranda movement, veranda stillness / eye movement, eye stillness.

Dome chamber

Tendency to bodily movement toward the center and visual movement toward the focus.

Prayer hall

In this style, verandas are more important than court. Yet, one can feel the stillness resulting from spatial homogeneity in the prayer hall.



Fig. 4. plan of man's mental state in the Congregation Mosque of Natanz

Table 5. Stillness and excitement in Congregation Mosque of Natanz

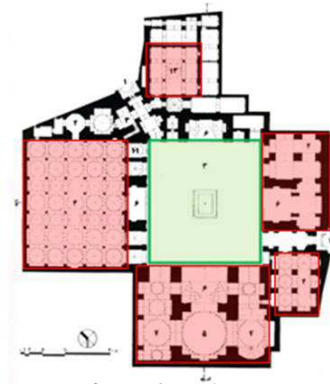
Stillness	excitement
prayer hall	entrance path
dome chamber	verandas
Court	Court
Façade	Dome chamber

3.6. Isfahani Style

- Use counter ceiling and false coatings, excessive bravery in the coatings of dome.
- design are simplified, and in most buildings, spaces are either square or rectangular.
- Sizing and using uniform sizes in the buildings. [12]

3.6.1. Case Study: Aqanour Mosque

entrance and its path → Bodily and visual movement



Picture 6. designs getting simpler and the spatil geometry getting closer to quadrilaterals. Aqanour mosque [13]

Verandas

Bodily movement and excitement, but as verandas function as pre-entrance → there is more spiritual excitement (movement).

Court

bodily movement, bodily stillness / visual movement, eye stillness

Dome Chamber

The main part of the mosque is dome chamber. Beautiful decorations on the dome chamber of the Aqanour mosque catch the eyes and cause upward eye movement. On the other hand, the square shape of the floor and the circle shape of the ceiling emphasize the center in the middle and invite one to the center. Besides this movement and excitement (stillness of the presence), the light colors and unparalleled decorations cause stillness and stillness (stillness of presence) of the center in the person.

integrity and polarity → tendency to bodily movement toward the center and the visual movement to the focus

Prayer Hall

Prayer hall is the main area for performing prayer, and holding meetings and people's gatherings. As a result, it should be able to create stillness in the one who enters it. Way of creating stillness and stillness in the Imam mosque:

- There are various centers.
- There are numerous pillars which are regarded as the ones who pray.
- There are decorative elements including patterns, colors, etc.

Meanwhile, stillness and stillness in the prayer hall do not cause weariness.

- There are decreased eye and bodily movement.

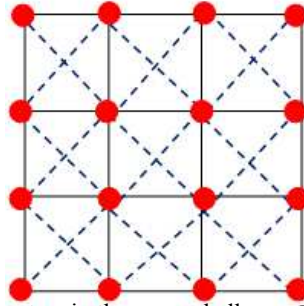


Fig. 5. Numerous centers in the prayer hall causes stillness and peace. Also, numerous pillars increase the existing peace.

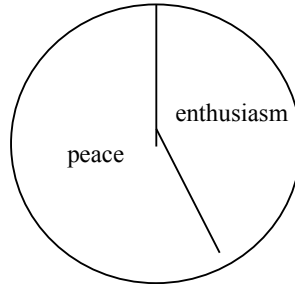


Fig. 6. plan of man's mental state in Aqanour Mosque

Table 6. Stillness and excitement in Aqanour Mosque





Stillness	excitement
prayer hall	entrance
dome chamber	veranda
court	court
Façade	Façade

4. RESULTS

Table 7. the factors in generating excitement and its percentage in different architectural periods

Architectural styles	Ways to generate excitement	percentage
Khorasani	-use of local construction materials -very simple designs	
Razi	-Progress in building roof and dome -Use of high-quality construction materials in the entire building -Use of plaster work, done excellently -Change of some mosques with pillared prayer hall to a four-veranda building	
Azeri	-Creation of complicated design using strong geometry -variety of designs -construction of very large buildings -reduced use of brick and instead use of tiles -use of various plans with four-veranda court	
Isfahani	-excessive bravery and fearlessness in dome coatings	

Table 8. the factors in creating stillness and its percentage in different architectural periods

Architectural styles	Ways to generate stillness	percentage
Khorasani	-being people-like -great simplicity of designs -using local construction materials	
Razi	-changing some mosques with pillared prayer hall into a four-veranda building	
Azeri	-using uniform sizes and elements -using a variety of plans with a four-veranda courts	
Isfahani	-sizing and using the uniform sizes -simple geometry of designs	

4. Conclusions

Patterns, forms and colors are signs or symbols for conveying hidden meanings, and audience understand these meanings intuitively through their presence in the architectural space. In general, spaces are designed in such a way that by moving from appearance to inner state, and from plurality to unity, not only man's material needs and journey in horizons (macrocosm) but also his spiritual needs and journey in souls (microcosm) are met. Ultimately, spaces have lofty and sublime goals and are considered man's ascent and the place of his ascent.

In architecture, as bodies are material, they are dependent on time and place, and for the mystic thinker, they bear meaning symbolically, enigmatically and allegorically. Bodies can partially convey meaning. In general, they are considered the best and most appropriate means of man's spiritual journey and have symbolic meanings. Likewise, every concept and value such as excitement and stillness can be manifested in partially and allegorically different, indefinite forms and bodies. Innovation and creativity in this respect, particularly with regard to all time and place requirements, have no end. Therefore, every specific concept can be manifested in numerous creative, insightful, and innovative bodies and forms.

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