

Japan's Development Assistance in Timor-Leste

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Abstract

This paper is a discussion of Japan's aid relations with Timor-Leste. It first takes a historical approach, examining Japan's changing attitude towards Timor-Leste. Japan's recent aid has tended to be apolitical, avoiding contentious areas that might be more beneficial for the long-term development of the new state. Despite this, research carried out by the Japanese government and the UN suggest that Japanese aid is seen by local people in a positive light.

keywords: aid, Japanese ODA, JICA, Timor-Leste

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1. Introduction

Japan is increasingly directing its foreign policy towards a more pro-active role, both regionally and globally. In part due to natural inclination and partly due to Constitutional limitations, Japan often works under United Nations auspices. Japan's recent activities in Timor-Leste (formerly and more commonly known as East Timor), provide a good case study of Japan taking a leading role in conjunction with the UN and other international partners. The amount of follow-up research in Timor-Leste on these development efforts will help development policy makers improve their aid structures and the quality of the aid delivered.

In this paper, we first briefly outline Japan's historical relations with Timor-Leste up to the present. Next we examine Japan's development assistance and the role of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Timor-Leste, and the policy evaluation carried out by the UN, JICA and the Japanese Government. Next, we discuss development projects jointly carried out by Japan and the UN. Finally, we conclude that although Japan avoids involving itself in projects that address the causes and consequences of conflict, it has a positive image amongst local people.

2. A Brief History of Japan's Relationship with Timor-Leste

The history of Japan's relationship with Timor-Leste goes back to World War II. During this period, Timor-Leste was known as Portuguese Timor. During World War II, Portuguese Timorese fought against the Japanese advance towards Australia. In *East Timor: a rough passage to independence*, James Dunn argues that:

As a result of the Allied intrusion in December 1941 and the subsequent military opera-

tions in the territory, East Timor was one of the great catastrophes of World War II in terms of relative loss of life. Having in mind the human cost alone, Portuguese Timor suffered far worse than any other South-East Asian country occupied by the Japanese.¹

In fact, the battle against Japan led to a great loss of life. In 1930, Portuguese Timor's population was 472,221. The figure for 1947 showed that it had fallen to 433,412. Therefore, almost 40,000 Timorese died as a result of the War - over 8% of the population.²

On 7 December 1975, more than 1,000 Indonesian army commandos parachuted into East Timor's capital of Dili in the first wave of an attack in which the Indonesian troops secured the airport, military headquarters and the former Portuguese administrative building within four hours.³ About 2,000 inhabitants of Dili, 8 per cent of the city's population, were killed in the first days of the Indonesian invasion. This was the first episode of Indonesia's involvement in East Timor. On 22 December 1975, UN Security Council Resolution 384 (1975) on the situation in East Timor was unanimously adopted. Resolution 384 recognised the inalienable right of the people of East Timor to self-determination and independence and called upon the Indonesian Government to withdraw without delay all its forces from the territory. Japan was one of the non-permanent members of Security Council. In the debate of the UN Security Council concerning Resolution 384, the stance of Japan, which had long-standing economic ties with Indonesia, was completely pro-Indonesia and anti-Timor. A Japanese representative to the Security Council debate stated that life in East Timor was gradually returning to normal, and that Indonesia was widely acknowledged as firmly supporting the right to self-determination of the peoples in colonial states. He also said that the Japanese Government was assured that Indonesia had no claims on East Timor and that it respected the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination.⁴ Japan's behaviour in the Security Council was very clear: its geo-political and economic relations with Indonesia convinced it not to take the East Timor issue any further.

In addition to the two UN Security Council Resolutions (Resolution 384 (1975) and 389 of 1976), there were eight General Assembly Resolutions⁵ on the situation in East Timor. In the votes of the eight General Assembly Resolutions condemning Indonesia's actions, Japan consistently voted alongside India, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand in support of Indonesia. It should be noted that Japan had not only economic but also political relations with Indonesia. The Indonesia political leader Sukarno had supported Japanese imperialism during the 1930s and the 1940s and his successor Suharto had also maintained an intimate relationship with his Japanese counterparts.

Another reason for Japan showing little sympathy towards East Timor was ideological. It was widely perceived that Fretilin, which was the political party in East Timor strongly supporting inde-

pendence, was linked with left-wing groups in Portugal and Africa. Therefore, the Japanese Government feared that an independent East Timor might become a regional “Cuba”, threatening Asian security.

However, since Japan's response to East Timor's problem was in part originally ideologically related, the end of the Cold War naturally affected Japan's policy towards East Timor and Indonesia. Japan's policy change was ignited by an incident, the “Santa Cruz massacre” of 1991. On November 12, 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on groups of East Timorese as they walked from Motael Church to the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili to place flowers on the grave of one East Timorese shot dead by troops at the church two weeks earlier. Reportedly, about 180 people were killed and many injured.⁶ The Japanese Government was shocked at this incident, and the Japanese Ambassador in Jakarta informed the Indonesian Defence Minister that he could not promise the incident would not affect Japan's ODA to Indonesia.⁷

The 1997 East Asian currency crisis provided a significant opportunity for East Timor. A stock market crash resulted in the Indonesian currency, the rupiah, devaluing by 50%. The following economic turmoil led to mounting debt and rising unemployment in Indonesia. On 12 May 1998, the killing of four university students by the Indonesian military triggered mass riots targeting the Chinese community. The riots resulted in military intervention, and these events terminated Suharto's regime which had lasted for 32 years. The then commander-in-chief, General Wiranto, brokered a handover of power between Suharto and the Vice President, B.J. Habibie.⁸ Habibie took a conciliatory stance towards East Timor's issue. On 27 January 1999, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas announced that his government was prepared to accept immediate independence for East Timor if the East Timorese rejected the autonomy proposal offered by Indonesia. His announcement triggered Japan's first public reaction to Habibie's East Timor policy, and the Japanese Government welcomed the decision and proclaimed its hopes for a peaceful solution in East Timor.⁹

On 5 May 1999, the so-called “5 May Agreement” was signed by Indonesia, Portugal and the UN, enabling the UN Secretary-General to hold a referendum on Indonesia's autonomy package on 8 August 1999. Therefore, the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1246 on June 11 to organise and conduct the referendum. Sending three civilian police officers and a few more liaison officers for UNAMET was the first contribution of Japan to East Timor's peace-building process.¹⁰ Furthermore, Japan, as well as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, constituted a Core Group of coordinating support of UNAMET. Coordination ranged from practical efforts to get UNAMET established to the critical day-to-day diplomacy geared towards the referendum of August 1999. Japan also contributed funding to UNAMET, enhancing its engagement and information; and Japanese ministers

and officials visited East Timor during the referendum term.¹¹

However, there was a huge anti-independence campaign by militias during the referendum period. They maintained the strong suspicion that the result was engineered by the UNAMET. After the referendum, on 4 September 1999 UNAMET announced that 78.5 percent of the East Timorese voters rejected the Indonesian Government's autonomy proposal, with 21.5 per cent voting for it. Within hours of the announcement, pro-integration militias predictably began attacking pro-independence supporters. Accordingly, on 15 September, the UN Security Council authorised an Australian-led multinational force (INTERFET) to restore peace and security in East Timor. However, by the time the first INTERFET forces were deployed, thousands of East Timorese had already been killed from before and after the referendum, and over 500,000 people in East Timor from a population of only 800,000 had been displaced. 200,000 of these had crossed the border and become refugees in West Timor. In Dili, 70 to 80 per cent of the business district buildings had been burnt. Therefore, East Timor had to create its nation from scratch and needed massive international assistance for peace and nation-building from major donors like Japan.

3. Japan's Development Assistance in Timor-Leste

3.1 Government's Decision

Japan has contributed to national development in East Timor with like-minded donors in the recognition that stability and development in East Timor is significant for peace and stability in the entire region. Japan's enthusiasm to assist the development of nation-building in East Timor can be recognized by the fact that Japan became the first host government of the Donors' Conference for East Timor. In the meeting, Japan pledged 130 million dollars of financial aids over three years for the development for East Timor. (100 million dollars for development, and 30 million dollars for humanitarian assistance). In the sixth Donor's Conference for East Timor in Dili, the Japanese Government pledged another 60 million dollars of financial aid over three years. Since then Japan has strengthened its bilateral relationship with East Timor. In April and May 2006 when serious riots happened in Dili, Japan responded to UN's emergency appeal, giving 50 million dollars for resolving the riots. Furthermore, in February 2007 Japan provided 720,000 dollars of grant aids for the coming presidential and parliamentary elections.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially states that Japan's development assistance in East Timor consists of following four priority areas: 1. Agriculture and Rural Development; 2. Maintenance and Improvement of Infrastructure; 3. Human Resources Development and Institution Building; and 4. Consolidation of Peace.¹² Most of them have been conducted by the Japan International

Cooperation Agency (JICA), through the finance of ODA.

Table 1. Japan's ODA in East Timor (million dollars)

Year	Technical Assistance	Grant Aid	Total
2001	8.6	0.33	8.93
2002	4.93	0.81	5.74
2003	5.62	3.31	8.93
2004	3.82	6.06	9.88
2005	5.48	27.93	33.41
Total	28.87	67.51	96.38

(Sources: JICA, 5 June 2007)

As can be seen from Table 1, the amount of Japan's ODA in East Timor has been increasing. Especially, 27.93 million dollars of grant aid in 2005 was the eight largest amount among the Asian states. This figure is considered relatively significant for a micro-state of East Timor. Even China's grant aid from Japan in 2005 was 34.03 million dollars.¹³

3.2 JICA's Analysis and Implementation

In July 2002, JICA published a comprehensive report called *A Study of the Framework for Assistance of Effective Reconstruction and Development*. This report analyzed several needs for the effective reconstruction and development process comparing the cases of Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and East Timor. This research categorized such needs into three types: (A) areas which caused the conflicts but have not been solved; (B) areas which was caused by the conflicts and would relapse unless solved; and (C) areas which were not directly related to the conflicts but need to be solved for reconstruction. The result of the analysis and the subsequent JICA's project implementation are as follows in Table 2.

Table 2. Areas, Needs and Categories for Reconstruction in Timor-Leste, and JICA's Projects

Areas	Needs for Reconstruction	Categories	JICA's Projects
Emergency Assistance	Refugee Repatriation	B	Nil
	Confrontation between pro- and anti-independence group	A	Nil
	Legal commitment to ex-militiamen	A	Nil
	Postponement of repatriation by anti-independence group	B	Nil
Security Maintenance	Absence of security organizations	B	Training local police
	Procrastination of demobilization in West Timor	B	Nil
Social Infrastructure	Wrecked infrastructure (road, electricity, water etc.)	C	Investigation of emergency reconstruction and infrastructure maintenance. Investigation of database of geography information for emergency reconstruction. Investigation of water supply system.
	Collapse of education system	C	Reconstruction assistance for the Department of Engineer at the University of East Timor. Assistance for making the curriculum of the Department of Engineer.
	Deteriorated medical and sanitation system	C	Reconstruction Programme of medical system in East Timor. Alliance of Friends for Medical-care in East Timor. Health Education Promotion Project in Ermera District.
	Environmental destruction	C	Environmental Conservation Project in Dili and Liquica.
Governance	Underdeveloped human rights standard	A	Nil
	Dispute on property rights	A	Nil
	Absence of common language	B	Nil
	Absence of elite group	C	Dispatching staff in UNTAET. Group seminars in Japan. Group seminars in the third countries
	Underdeveloped judicial system	C	Group seminars in the third countries
	Underdeveloped financial system	C	Nil
Economic Reconstruction	Increasing unemployed people	B	Nil
	Underdeveloped agricultural and industrial sectors	C	Investigation of development programme for agriculture, forestry and fishery. Providing agricultural machinery. Dispatching specialists. Reconstruction of rice farming and development programme.
	Collapse of transportation system	C	Reconstruction programme of transportation system in Dili market
	Poverty in rural areas	C	Reconstruction programme of economy in agricultural and fishery villages
Aid for the Vulnerable	Trauma	C	Nil
	Improvement of women's status	C	Nil

(Sources: JICA, *A Study of the Framework for Assistance of Effective Reconstruction and Development*, July 2002)

It can be said that in 2002 JICA's projects were relatively extensive although most of them were categorized (C), the areas which were not directly related to the conflicts but need to be solved for reconstruction. Therefore, JICA's projects were not strictly related to the conflicts but were genuinely oriented by development. At present, the implementation of JICA's projects has not been changing significantly. According to its annual reports, in terms of Agriculture and Rural Development, JICA works on improving productivity and marketing of rice and coffee. It also works with both government and local communities to realize sustainable development by assignment of policy advisor at the central government level as well as at community level. JICA has especially focused on the projects called Irrigation & Rice Project in Manatuto District.¹⁴

As far as Maintenance and Improvement of Infrastructure is concerned, JICA has been engaged in technical cooperation to improve capacity building of the public sector. In 2006, JICA implemented three technical projects, the Project for the Capacity Building of Road Maintenance, the Project for Capacity Development by Training and Preparation of Guidelines and manual Roads, and the Project for Capacity Development of Teaching Staff in the Faculty of Engineering.¹⁵

In the sector of Human resources Development and Institution Building, JICA launched a project for the training of civil servants called the Project for Strengthening of Capacity of the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP). JICA also arranged third country training programs in collaboration with ASEAN countries such as Japan Singapore Support Program, Malaysia Technical Cooperation Program, Thailand Cooperation Program and Philippine Cooperation Program.¹⁶

Regarding Consolidation of Peace, JICA has been working closely with the Policia National de Timor Leste (PNTL) for Koban police box system, Japan's community police system, and Community Protection Unit Posters as well as sending Timorese official to training courses in Malaysia for Consolidation of Peace for Post-conflict Countries.¹⁷

3.3 Statistical and Policy Evaluations

In October 2003, JICA was reorganized and Sadako Ogata, who was previously the head of the UNHCR, was appointed the new president of JICA. Ogata recognized that development assistance should be highly related to the post-conflict process in peace-building and advocated and pledged to reform JICA.¹⁸ Ogata is also well known as an advocate of the concept of human security. Therefore, the interface of development assistance, peace-building and human security should be the main theme for the international community. However, as described above, the implementation of projects by JICA in Timor-Leste has still been genuinely development-oriented, and has not been positively involved in areas which caused the conflicts or areas which were caused by the conflicts. Following field research carried out by Ishizuka in Timor-Leste in March 2007, JICA is highly rec-

ommended to have a stronger commitment to the sectors including human rights standards, judicial system, employment, and disputes on property rights.

Meanwhile, Table 2 gives the results of questionnaires for local people on Japan's development assistance in the war-torn areas in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and East Timor. The figures in the table are the points of the local people in each area who answered "very helpful" to each area which Japanese contingents such as JICA staff conducted for development. It is clear that Japan's development assistance in East Timor has been very successful, compared with Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, even better than Cambodia. It can be said that JICA's four priority areas, mentioned above, were all positively assessed by local people.

Table 3. Japan's Development Assistance in War-torn Areas in Asia
(Points of local people who answered "very helpful")

	Afghanistan (100)	Sri Lanka (100)	Cambodia (102)	East Timor (103)
Refugee repatriation	39	32	45	72
Dispatching specialists for rural development	24	31	76	76
De-mining	54	36	76	41
Monitoring elections	57	22	65	52
Improving law enforcement	36	22	65	52
Training civil administrators	28	28	59	65
Anti-corruption training	27	23	51	64
Reforming police service	19	22	46	60
Dispatching specialists for decommission	47	13	17	44
Dispatching specialists for the handicapped	33	36	34	66
Improving rehabilitation centers	41	36	46	62
Dispatching specialists for agricultural policy	33	30	64	66
Instructing agricultural skills	33	33	72	66
Providing agricultural machinery	30	42	73	76
Improving irrigation system	33	44	76	66
Maintenance of power stations	27	38	83	63
Road and port construction	59	47	59	67
Dispatching specialists for medical policy	38	34	50	56
Dispatching specialists for infectious diseases	39	32	43	62
Building schools	66	51	65	70
Education for women	44	32	44	60
Dispatching specialists for job-training	32	37	46	52

(Sources: MOFA, *Preventing Conflicts*, 2005)

Large scale UN peace operations intervened for the nation-building process in the cases of Cambodia and East Timor, called UNTAC and UNTAET, respectively, and both cases are relatively successful in the entire development process, as can be seen in Table 2. Therefore, as mentioned above, it is significant for JICA to co-operate with UN peace-building missions for the successful implementation of its mission. This is partly because the successful implementation of development

assistance requires local security and stability, which can be protected by UN peacekeeping forces. In fact, there are no UN peacekeeping forces in Sri Lanka, and although there is a UN peace operation in Afghanistan (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan: UNAMA), security is provided by a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and security is still fragile there. Another reason why JICA and UN peace-building should go hand in hand is because both of them are currently sharing the same values in operations such as human security and local ownership.

In fact, the interface of JICA and peace-building is in the national interest of Japan. For example, Julie Gilson, a British scholar on Japanese foreign policy, points out several benefits accruing from the Japanese Government connecting aid issues, including that of JICA, with peace-building in its foreign policy. First, the normative underpinnings of aid disbursement and calls for democratization in post-conflict peace-building operations rest on similar premises and as such do not require Japan to redefine the terms of debate over when peace operations are acceptable. Second, one of Japan's goals is to obtain a greater international presence. By linking the aid debate to that of peace-building and extending the scope of the former, Japan is trying to be seen to be making a valuable contribution and taking a proactive position on reconstruction.¹⁹

3.4 Operational Evaluations: the projects of the Government of Japan (JICA) and UNDP

In 2002, the Evaluation Office in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan jointly published an extensive report called *Post-Conflict Assistance in Kosovo and East Timor*. It focused on the post-conflict development assistance provided by the Japanese Government (JICA) through the UNDP in Kosovo and East Timor, in particular on specific projects, and made concrete evaluations and presented several lessons learnt from them. These projects for East Timor were as follows:

- Dili Water Supply System and Improvement (\$11,280,000-24 months)
- Urgent Rehabilitation of the Dilli-Ainaro Cassa Road (\$4,700,000-17 months)
- Irrigation Rehabilitation Projects (\$3,360,000-10 months)
- Rehabilitation of Small Power Stations in Rural Areas (\$2,390,000-13 months)
- Maintaining the Output Capacity of the Comoro Power Station (\$3,100,000-13 months)
- Urgent Rehabilitation Project of Restoration of Navigation Aids and Fender System at the Port of Dili (\$2,650,000-10 months)

This report initially presented several significant factors necessary for success in post-conflict

development assistance and applied them to the case of East Timor for evaluation. Among the factors, the report pointed out the significance of “beneficiary involvement”. That is, development assistance tends to be supply-driven. This problem has been identified in East Timor. For example, the donors in East Timor, such as JICA and USAID, reportedly changed their strategy without any wider consultations in accordance with the change in the security situation in East Timor. For example, USAID increasingly focused more on economic development and democratization than food security as the security situation in East Timor improved. However, the NGOs sponsored by USAID could not respond to such a transition strategy quickly, and their original aid was still demanded by local people.²⁰ The report pointed out a similar problem on the project to rehabilitate an irrigation system in the Manatuto District:

In this initial formulation, this project very possibly could not take into the high volume of water that would be needed urgently by rapidly returning farmers and on a year-around basis. Beneficiaries engaged in a political process to secure changes in project design and sequencing and these have met with some difficulties on the donor side. It is likely this situation could have been prevented had needs been more fully articulated at the outset.²¹

Therefore, the evaluation team recommended that the Japanese Government and UNDP should ensure initial and repeated consultation with beneficiaries. Similarly, it is important to keep stakeholders, beneficiaries and the general public informed of intentions, commitments and progress with respect to the assistance planned or being provided.²² This problem was identified through field research by Ishizuka in the IDP (internally displaced person) camps in Dili, in March 2007. At that time, UNDP provided shelters to the IDPs, who had abandoned their houses for fear of retaliation for the so-called “East-West” confrontations, which directly triggered the serious riots that occurred in April and May 2006. Initially, according to the contract with UNDP, it would provide new shelters every three months. However, this contract was not implemented by UNDP. This was partly because UNDP had expected that the riots would have been resolved much earlier, and partly because the Government of Timor-Leste was reluctant to continue permitting such IDP camps in Dili. The Government considered that the presence of the IDP camps was the cause of the delay in ending the riots. However, the government's view was far from realistic and the IDPs had to continue using the old shelters for more than 10 months. They complained about it to a Japanese NGO, a subcontractor of JICA and UNDP, only to find the problem was still unresolved. This is an example of a lack of consultation and coordination between beneficiaries (local people), subcontractors (NGOs), and main donors (JICA, USAID or UNDP).²³

The official report from UNDP and the Japanese Government also emphasized the significance of timeliness from their experience in East Timor. When the above-mentioned six East Timor projects were signed in Dili in July 2001, the delay in receiving the funds was apparent and negatively perceived at the country level. Cost-incurring project activities could not begin, and could not begin with any assurance of when those cost commitments would be met. The evaluation team criticized the funding process for the six projects was unreasonably slow. Therefore, the team strongly suggested that internal safeguards should be created by donors for delivering post-conflict assistance on schedule.²⁴

Furthermore, most of the projects in East Timor faced the sustainability problem. They suffered from a shortage of requisite technical and management skills. This was largely because the grant aids provided only for training strictly necessary to furnish the specified assistance.²⁵

In this context, in 2003, a UNDP programme sponsored by the Japanese Government, was launched nation-wide to supported vulnerable groups in East Timorese society, such as ex-combatants, widows, unemployed youths and others, known as Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex-combatants and Communities in Timor-Leste (RESPECT). RESPECT itself is not a programme which creates employment; it plays a role as a coordinator. There exists a tendency to seek ad hoc and short-term measures to improve employment opportunities in developing nations such as East Timor. Many people have not been informed or are even ignorant of where they should go to get jobs. Furthermore, the principle of equal distribution of employment opportunity is difficult during economically and socially unstable periods. Especially, many ex-combatants are disadvantaged when competing for jobs in civilian life. Therefore, fair, neutral and informative coordinators with expertise, skills and a long-term vision, such as provided by RESPECT, are very necessary in East Timor. According to Satoru Miyazawa, a director of RESPECT in Dili, there is not only a necessity for immediate job creation for vulnerable groups such as ex-combatants and jobless youths, but also the necessity of community participation and commitment to the creation of conditions for the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants into society and of a sustainable livelihood for other vulnerable groups. He described RESPECT as adopting a self-target approach. Communities with their leaders should ensure that the most vulnerable groups would be given priority access to opportunities arising from the activities of the RESPECT program.²⁶ It can be said that RESPECT is a positive case of a joint project between the Japanese Government and UNDP.

4. Discussion & Conclusions

One of the first observations that can be made from the foregoing is the huge contrast in Japan's attitude in the periods preceding and following 1999 and the UN sponsored referendum. This was due to a number of factors including the ending of the Cold War and Indonesia's (nominal) acceptance of Timorese independence. Although not discussed above, growing Chinese and South Korean interest in the region may also have been a factor. The active participation of the United Nations legitimized Japanese participation and gave it a structure within which to operate. To this extent, Japan's role in Timor-Leste is similar to the role it plays in other international conflicts: that of partner in a multi-national (and preferably UN-led) peace-keeping operation.

As Table 3 above shows, Japan's aid is viewed positively by local people, and generally scores higher than it had done in previous operations. Clearly, Japan is learning lessons from its experience and putting these to good use.

Several conclusions or recommendations can be drawn from this investigation. Firstly, it is essential that Japan continue to carry out follow-up analysis of programs and consultation with local people throughout and after the whole process. Secondly, once a project has been approved funds should be made available more quickly than at present so that trust in the process and Japan's aid agencies amongst local people can be maintained. In much the same way, it is important that beneficiaries are able to have a genuine role in the process, both for reasons of trust and making the aid more effective. More specifically for Timor-Leste and other war-torn countries, Japan should concentrate its efforts more on peace-building and nation-building.

Notes

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