The Fearful Merging of Self and Other: Intra-civilizational and Inter-civilizational Colonial Cultures in Richard E. Kim's *Lost Names*

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Abstract. Although most colonisations have been invasions of territory by neighbouring peoples with similar appearances, languages, and customs, postcolonial theory is dominated by cases of inter-civilizational imperialism between the West and the non-West. This article argues that a new theoretical framework is needed to describe intra-civilizational colonial encounters because the psychological conflicts of the intra-civilizational colonial sphere and their political ramifications function differently to those described in postcolonial theory. Drawing on Nobel Prize nominee Richard E. Kim's memoir of growing up in Korea during the Japanese Occupation, this article explicates the primary differences between the two forms of colonialism with reference to Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry. It argues that without a visible racial difference between coloniser and colonised, hybridity and mimicry are imperial strategies of assimilation rather than native strategies of resistance and that the growth of cultural nationalism is a logical response.
Keywords: postcolonial theory, imperialism, hybridity, mimicry, intra-civilizational imperialism, inter-civilizational imperialism

INTRODUCTION

Despite numerous studies of colonial cultures, postcolonial theory remains dominated by formulations arising from inter-civilizational imperialism between the West and the non-West. This has led to three major approaches: first, studying how imperial discourses construct the colonised as Other in preparation for political and economic exploitation, as demonstrated by Edward Said in *Orientalism*; second, analysing how hybridisation destabilizes imperial discourses, as elucidated particularly by Homi Bhabha; and third, examining narratives of imperialism and native nationalism from the perspective of marginalised groups to show how discourses of power disenfranchise particular segments of the community, as argued in the works of Gayatri Spivak. It should be noted that these theorists primarily derive their formulations from the colonial encounters that influenced their own backgrounds – Western intervention

in the Middle East for Said and the British Raj for Spivak and Bhabha (Loomba, 2005: 19).

These cases are all from what may be called inter-civilizational imperialism, which involves radical differences in race, language, and culture between coloniser and colonised that facilitate the intellectual construction of Otherness. Yet most colonial encounters have been intra-civilizational, i.e. invasions of territory by a neighbouring people with similar appearances, related languages, or familiar cultures, and often all three together. The Roman and Incan empires, for example, grew by assimilating peoples in their immediate vicinity. One has only to look at a map of Europe in the fifteenth century to realize how many independent regions have since been absorbed into modern nation-states. Such regions often continue to resist total absorption through cultural and political strategies. The modern world is thus shaped as much by intra-civilizational imperialism as the encounter between the West and the non-West.

The problem for postcolonial theory is that the frameworks for investigating colonialism are designed to explain patterns in inter-civilizational imperialism but don't apply to the intra-civilizational sphere. Elleke Boehmer, for example, in her study of colonial and postcolonial Anglophone literature, deliberately excludes Ireland "because its history has been so closely and so long linked to that of Britain" (Boehmer, 1995: 4), yet it is precisely such closeness that marks the difference between both types of imperialism and creates the need for separate theoretical frameworks. In particular, inter-civilizational theories misconstrue the psychological conflict between coloniser and colonised in intra-civilizational colonialism and its political ramifications. In order to highlight the key areas, this paper will focus on a non-Western example of intra-civilizational imperialism, the Japanese colonization of Korea from 1910-1945, and will argue that a new paradigm is necessary to understand colonial encounters between neighbouring peoples.

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND RICHARD E. KIM

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, a newly modernised Japan rapidly became the dominant power in East Asia and its colonization of Korea from 1910-1945 offers a paradigmatic example of intra-civilizational imperialism: the racial difference between the two peoples is easily blurred

and crossed; both share similar religious traditions; both have common literary traditions through the use of classical Chinese characters and languages which are similar in grammatical structure and concepts; and the two neighbours share a long history of cultural interaction. There exists, within significant differences, both familiarity and similarity. Imperial policy was thus to turn Koreans into second-class Japanese citizens. The Korean language was progressively outlawed. Koreans were forced to take Japanese names and Japanese became the language of education, administration, and commerce. Meanwhile, industrialization uprooted Korea's traditional agrarian culture, transforming the country under Japanese supervision. Koreans generally view this period as an attempt at cultural genocide and the scars left by the Occupation continue to affect Korean-Japanese relations (Lee, 1984; Cuming, 1997; Eckert et al., 1991).

This situation produces an alternative array of psychological and political issues for the relationship between coloniser and colonised than is generally employed in postcolonial theory. Perhaps the best way to approach these issues is through the work of Nobel Prize-nominated author Richard E. Kim. Kim studied philosophy and literature in the USA after the Korean War and in 1970 published a memoir, *Lost Names*, based on his life growing up under the Japanese Occupation. In form, *Lost Names* is a classic Bildungsroman with the protagonist overcoming challenges in order to find his place in society; however, as this society is a colonial environment, the challenges the protagonist faces are the dilemmas of growing up as a colonial subject in the intra-civilizational sphere. Given that *Lost Names* is primarily concerned with the relationship between the Japanese and Koreans, this article will draw conclusions about the differences between inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational imperialism in relation to Homi Bhabha's theoretical framework regarding hybridity, mimicry, and resistance in the colonial encounter.

HYBRIDITY

Bhabha's most important insight into inter-civilizational colonialism involves how hybridization disturbs the colonial desire to fix permanently the power relationships and identities of both coloniser and colonised. "The difference between the two terms sustains the distinction between the colonizing and colonised subjects on which colonial control de-

pends" (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 120). With reference to the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Bhabha argues that the imperial gaze can never be totalizing because the psychological processes of identification undermine the desire for stable identities. The attempt to create a stable distinction between coloniser and colonised is continually under threat from hybridity; the colonised adopt and adapt the coloniser's ways, distorting familiar patterns of behaviour and alienating the coloniser from himself. The Indian native, for example, learns English and adopts Western customs, becoming "a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized, is *emphatically* not to be English" (Bhabha, 1994: 125). The distinction between Anglicized and English is unstable, however, disturbing the coloniser's self-image and denying him the fixed identity he craves.

This situation is completely reversed in intra-civilizational colonialism. In Bhabha's paradigmatic example, Anglicized is never identical with English because there is always implicitly a distinctive racial difference. In the intra-civilizational sphere there is no clear racial difference between coloniser and colonised. The imperial goal is to absorb the native culture, which means effacing differences completely. The coloniser's identity does not depend on maintaining an identity gap; instead it tries to erase that gap in order to assimilate new peoples and permanently expand its territory, while the colonised resist by preserving a distinctive identity. In intra-civilizational colonialism, hybridity works to the coloniser's advantage by indicating the extent to which the native is being absorbed; it is the colonised who fear hybridization because it turns them into simply a regional variant of imperial culture. Without a distinctive racial difference, conflicts in the intra-civilizational sphere typically revolve around attempts to maintain differences of language and culture. Generally speaking, the colonised strive to maintain the purity of their native language and customs, while any imperial intrusions or even hybrid forms are seen as capitulation.

The narrator of *Lost Names* encounters this on his first day at school when the Japanese attempt to reform him into a model Japanese schoolboy.

> The principal, who is Japanese, at first insisted that I be put in the first grade, so that I could *start everything new and fresh*, meaning that whatever education I have had at the missionary-run school in the town in Manchuria ought to be discredited (Kim, 1998: 22),

yet his grandfather tells him "the Japanese can insult you and humiliate you […] but they can't take your brain away" (Kim, 1998: 23). This simple statement is put to the test at the school, where the boy attempts to resist or subvert rituals of indoctrination, a situation that begins comically and rapidly becomes more serious.

Morning assembly "is very much like a military formation, parade, and ceremony" (Kim, 1998: 29). The Korean students are addressed in Japanese and commanded to face east and bow to the emperor, an action the narrator performs while humorously imagining what would happen if the Emperor were on the toilet while the children were bowing. In this way, the boy prevents himself from becoming indoctrinated, but it is important to distinguish between resistance and subversion. The boy resists indoctrination through humour, but he does not subvert it because he still carries it out. The coloniser is in no way disturbed by his disloyal imagination so long as he performs the rite.

A more serious incident occurs when the narrator is asked to sing for the class and he chooses a foreign song, "Danny Boy," thereby infuriating a Japanese teacher:

> The teacher shakes his head and shouts at me in Japanese, which I do not understand. I simply shake my head, meaning that I do not understand him, that I can't understand Japanese. He slaps me on the cheek, so hard that I stagger and crumple back into my seat. (Kim, 1998: 41)

The boy's misunderstanding of the teacher's intent moves him from resistance to unwitting subversion of the imperial desire for a unified language and culture. Subversion, however, brings immediate consequences. The boy receives a beating for disobedience and is saved only when a Korean teacher intervenes, even though he knows he will later receive his own punishment for doing so. Resistance in intra-civilizational colonialism is any action or mental habit that maintains the identity gap; subversion is an action that actively expands that gap, but such actions tend to bring immediate and violent retribution.

Language is a major battleground in intra-civilizational colonialism as the coloniser attempts to supplant the native language while the colonised desperately cling to it, as can be seen in the novel's psychological nadir when Koreans are forced to relinquish their family names and adopt Japanese names. The narrator's father chooses "Iwamoto," to which the Inspector comments,

It is a very fine name, sir. It does justice to your person. It reminds me of your house by the mountains and, also, of your orchard, with all those rocky mountains around it. (Kim, 1998: 105)

The boy muses on the name's meaning, "*Iwa* – rock. *Moto* – root… base… foundation. *Rock-Foundation*. So this is our *new* surname, our Japanese *family* name" (Kim, 1998: 105). However, when the boy asks what it means, his father quotes the Bible and says, "On this rock I will build my church" (Kim, 1998: 106), invoking memories of early Christianity's fight against and ultimate triumph over persecution. By deploying an interpretive framework from outside East Asia, the boy's father creates multiple interpretations of their Japanese name, making it carry connotations that elude the Japanese inspector.

This seems to cry out for a postmodern reading of how the name is a multiply determined signifier that indicates resistance through its excess of meaning, yet we should be precise and state that the choice of name *resists* colonial domination but does not *subvert* it. From the perspective of colonial administration, it is enough that orders be obeyed; small acts of resistance are strategies of survival, not rebellion. The villagers' reaction to the loss of their names underscores how ineffective resistance is in destabilizing colonial authority. Gathering at the cemetery, they mourn the loss of their names before the graves of their forefathers. Suddenly disgusted, the boy exclaims, "What good will all this do to change what happened" (Kim, 1998: 114)? Kim thus rejects the idea that the excess of signification and mutation of imperial desires through language are prime sources of imperial instability. Actually, it is the other way round; transformations of language are more threatening to the colonised than the coloniser.

The novel contains frequent references to the growing domination of Japanese. The local book store owner says, "I see fewer and fewer books in Korean, and you know that, pretty soon there won't be any book in our language being published" (Kim, 1998: 78). The elimination of Korean gathers pace when Korean names are banned and the narrator's mother "is instructing my sister, the second-grader, because they are not teaching anything Korean at the school" (Kim, 1998: 117). When the Americans drop propaganda leaflets in Korean, "most of the children weren't able to understand it, except for those in the fifth grade and beyond who could remember Korean" (Kim, 1998: 121). The unspoken fear is the possibility that Koreans may be wholly assimilated. The narra-

tor subtly indicates this when "looking at the map of Europe, finding England and Ireland there and thinking especially about that chestnut-haired boy – was he English or Irish? (I never knew the difference)" (Kim, 1998: 35).

The colonial relationship between England and Ireland is roughly analogous to that between Japan and Korea, except Gaelic was effectively extinguished during the 19th century and so the average Irish person today is a native English speaker and (after adjusting the accent) can easily pass for English. This, however, was far more threatening to Irish identity than English because the Irish were faced with total assimilation into the imperial power structure. Similarly, although the racial differences between Japanese and Koreans are more pronounced as the two countries did not have the same sustained levels of interaction, Koreans in *Lost Names* who speak fluent Japanese can pass for Japanese. This presented a horrifying existential question: if you look Japanese, speak only Japanese, know only Japanese history and have a Japanese passport, what is to prevent you from *being* Japanese?

For Koreans, this process was only halted by Japan's defeat in World War II, leaving a terrifying blank. As Kim later said, "if the Japanese had been victorious, if the war had lasted another four or five years, maybe most Koreans would have become *Japanized*" (Interview). Thus, Bhabha's assertion that the shifting gap between "Anglicised" and "English" destabilizes the coloniser seems to depend on there being some inassimilable (racial) difference. Where there is no such difference, the possibility of closing the gap is an existential threat to the colonised and drives a concomitant desire to protect distinctive language and cultural traditions, even as the coloniser attempts to eradicate them.

MIMICRY

In "Of Mimicry and Men," Bhabha argues that the colonised may disturb the colonial gaze by simultaneously mirroring the coloniser while being manifestly Other and thus troubling the distinctions on which colonial superiority is based:

> The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry* – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to *menace* – a difference that is almost total but not quite. And in that other scene of colonial power, where history turns to farce

and presence to "a part" can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably. (Bhabha, 1994: 131)

Like hybridity, though, mimicry is implicitly dependent on an inassimilable racial difference, the "not quite/not white" on which Bhabha's formulation hangs. In the intra-civilizational sphere, this difference really does have the potential to be nothing. Instead of always manifesting a partial presence, the colonised may manifest a wholly assimilated presence. *Lost Names* dramatizes this in an illuminating manner.

The threats to the boy's identity climax when he is asked to play the role of a Japanese officer in the school play.

My father neither says a word about the play nor suggests a possible way out of my predicament. My mother says that, because I have had no choice as to what role I am to play, the townspeople will understand. (Kim, 1998: 118)

According to Bhabha, passive mimicry alone destabilizes the coloniser's self-identity, but the important question in the intra-civilizational sphere is what it will do the boy's sense of self. Should he perform his assigned role?

As in earlier chapters, an adult character echoes the boy's dilemma, in this case a Korean officer in the Japanese Higher Police, a man also playing a role but in real life rather than on stage. This potentially gives him the power to disrupt colonial administration, but he becomes trapped between two worlds. When the narrator is about to be beaten for disobedience, he speaks to the boy:

I am a Korean. Do you know that? I am a good friend of your father's. So, will you listen to me? […] We went to school together […] don't you believe that I am your father's friend? (Kim, 1998: 133)

The narrator later discovers this is true but that does not mean the inspector can be trusted. He cannot jeopardize his position by being too sympathetic to Koreans. Therefore, he stands by while the teacher beats the boy into unconsciousness and only steps in when the boy screams treasonous remarks. To maintain his position, the Inspector must go along with his role as much as possible. He makes a deal with the boy's father to monitor the "contingency plan for the police […] when the Japanese knew they were defeated, they would round up the Koreans on

their black list and shoot them" (Kim, 1998: 136). However, he is incapable of doing anything when the moment comes and the boy's father ends up in a concentration camp days before liberation.

The difficulty with playing a role in colonial administration is that, in order to maintain one's position, the Inspector must behave as any member of the Higher Police would behave in his place; his presence neither offers help to those who resist nor subverts colonial governance. Passive mimicry is an ineffective form of resistance in the intra-civilizational sphere because there is no pronounced difference that makes the native disturbingly Other. Tellingly, the inspector has to identify himself as Korean to the boy; the boy in turn recognizes that self-identification is irrelevant compared to inspector's official position and replies, "I believe you are an officer of the Higher Police" (Kim, 1998: 133). The man is now inseparable from the uniform.

The episode offers the boy an insight into his own dilemma and he rejects passive mimicry in favour of a more subversive strategy. He hobbles down to where the play is being held, "dragging yourself out onto the stage, leaning on that long saber as if it were a cane, your face puffed up and bruised, and you could hardly walk straight. And, of course, everyone knew what happened to you" (Kim, 1998: 140). The boy's appearance manifests the violence that underpins colonialism; no encomiums for the Crown Prince's birthday can seem fitting coming from the narrator's "cut, bloated lips" (Kim, 1998: 141). By refusing his assigned role and instead forcing the violence of the imperial system to manifest itself, the boy subverts the demands of authority by exposing its lack of legitimacy.

In Bhabha's theoretical formulation, mimicry destabilizes colonial rule without any active participation on the part of the colonised:

> Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the 'content' of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power. (Bhabha, 1994: 158)

Such resistance, however, depends on "signs of cultural difference" which are ineradicable; in the intra-civilizational sphere, these signs are potentially eradicable so resistance needs to be defined as anything the

colonised do to maintain difference and subversion as anything that expands it. This requires a more active conception of native agency.

NATIONALISM

The conflicts described so far logically lead towards a rapid growth of nationalism among colonial peoples in the intra-civilizational sphere. The historical record certainly bears this out. In colonial cases like Korea or Ireland, the threat of assimilation was met with a renewed emphasis on cultural distinctiveness. Yet this aspect of colonial resistance is hotly debated in postcolonial theory because many refuse to condone nationalism as a resistance strategy. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* lamented nationalistic responses to colonialism, with many theorists viewing nationalism as colonialism's mirror image. Other scholars, however, have argued that nationalism as a strategy of colonial resistance should not be conflated so easily with the nationalism that fuels imperialism (Parry, 1994; Chatterjee, 1986; Lazarus, 1994; Lloyd, 1997), especially as in practice it has proved to be a potent force for emancipation.

Bhabha's framework elides this dispute by connecting colonial resistance with cosmopolitanism. For Bhabha, both national and imperial narratives seek to create imagined communities that turn the complex, hybridising present into a static homogeneous unit known as "the people." These narratives can be disturbed by examining them from the margins, where "counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalising boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha, 1994: 213). The hybridity that undermines imperialism also undermines postcolonial nationalism, which dovetails neatly with the discipline's ideological preferences. Casting colonial resistance in terms of hybridization and multiple, fluid identities tempts scholars to superimpose the ideals of conservatism and cosmopolitanism onto the coloniser and colonised respectively, thereby limning an acceptable political solution to anti-colonial nationalism.

In the intra-civilizational sphere, however, the politics of resistance are not so accommodating. The superimposition of conservative and liberal values doesn't work; it is the coloniser who promotes radical change and the colonised who are the social conservatives resisting the change being imposed. Hybridization is the handmaiden of colonization, so the colo-

nised demand cultural purity. Such attitudes logically lead to nationalism. In the post-Occupation era, for example, Korean leaders often stressed the importance of the *minjok* (ethnic people, but also a synonym for race or nation) and the ethnic homogeneity and distinctive ancient culture of the Korean people. Such ideas are:

> just what one would expect from an ancient people prizing ethnic homogeneity and long subject to outside threat. For the American who has rarely had to think about how to preserve a nation surrounded by predators, such views are bloody-minded, solipsistic, recalcitrant, obnoxious, unreasonable at every turn. But these are popular ideas in Korea. (Cuming, 1997: 207)

A key difficulty scholars have in dealing with intra-civilizational colonialism is that they find the strategies necessary for survival repugnant. Bhabha's framework offers a solution by connecting colonial and postmodern resistance, but in the intra-civilizational sphere this connection is invalid.

Lost Names opens with the narrator's mother attempting to keep the family together despite the atomising force of colonial rule. When her husband is detained as they try to cross into Manchuria, the mother must choose between going on without him or disembarking and abandoning the family's possessions. However, two Koreans promise to ensure the family's luggage is safely stored across the river so she jumps off the train after her husband. When he is released, an elderly Korean couple leads them over the treacherous frozen ice to the other side, alongside many other Koreans, "people move on like ghosts, silently […] people without a country" (17). The constant references to thin ice emphasize the importance of land, the national ground on which the people can no longer stand, but the help of other Koreans shows how maintaining the national community aids individual survival.

The example demonstrates why nationalism thrives among colonial peoples – it allows one to activate the assistance of specific strangers in a hostile environment. Of course, it would be nice if simple humanity were enough to do so, but in practice it isn't. No one would have known this better than the Koreans, who staged a massive peaceful demonstration against the Occupation on March 1, 1919, in the hopes of registering their case at the Versailles peace conference. The demonstration was brutally put down and the world ignored an internal Japanese affair. Ethnic or national loyalties have historically proven far more valuable

than appeals to humanity, which is why nationalism flourishes in colonial societies – it creates conditions in which you can reasonably expect a specific group's support at a time when humanity at large has abandoned you. Collaboration is thus the deadliest sin because it undermines the trust the colonised have in each other.

In contrast, claims for strategies of hybridity and mimicry focus entirely on how they subvert imperial discourses and then assume that, through an unspoken transitive property, these strategies benefit the colonised. In the intra-civilizational sphere, however, mimicry and hybridization are interpreted as capitulation because they neither promote solidarity nor threaten colonial rule. The intra-civilizational sphere is therefore more of a zero-sum game than inter-civilizational imperialism. Any narrowing of the identity gap benefits the empire; maintaining or expanding that gap benefits the colonised, which is why nationalism is so potent.

Bhabha's framework offers the attraction of uniting colonial resistance with postmodern politics, but this won't work in intra-civilizational imperialism. Nationalism is demonstrably a viable strategy because it creates solidarity among the oppressed, whereas hybridity and mimicry do not. Moreover, nationalism crucially helps maintain the identity gap, whereas hybridisation closes it. Postcolonial theory, at present, posits a 'third way' of resistance that promotes cosmopolitan thinking, but both historical evidence and theoretical reflection cast doubt on its viability. Instead, it may be more productive if research is focused on the difficult transition from nationalist resistance to postcolonial society, rather than attempting to deny the need for nationalism as a resistance strategy.

CONCLUSION

Although this article has focused on the Japanese Occupation of Korea, the lessons from it illustrate the key differences between inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational colonialism. The most crucial difference stems from nature of the identity gap between coloniser and colonised. Postcolonial theory assumes this gap will always have a visible racial component and that the coloniser desires a stable identity gap. In intra-civilizational imperialism the coloniser aims to eliminate the identity gap and expand the empire's wealth, resources, and population through absorption of other peoples. Thus, erasing the identity gap was the long-

term goal for the Japanese in Korea and maintaining that gap was essential for Korean resistance. Mimicry is not an act of subversion but one of capitulation, which is why the boy rejects it in favour of outright disobedience.

The changed function of the identity gap makes the distinction between resistance and subversion critical. Resistance by the colonised involves maintaining the gap; subversion involves expanding the gap and exposing fraudulent imperial assertions of unity. The primary vehicle of resistance and subversion in the intra-civilizational colonial sphere is an absolute refusal to abandon one's native language and culture. I see no evidence that hybridity and mimicry are effective resistance strategies in intra-civilizational colonialism. Advocates of such strategies tend to be more concerned with creating cosmopolitan modes of thinking suitable for the modern globalized world rather than understanding how oppressed peoples survive in practice, which ironically enacts the gap between metropolitan discourses and non-metropolitan locations that postcolonial theory is trying to close. One may not agree with nationalism, but it is important to understand its utility in colonial environments and this can only be done by listening closely to those who experienced these situations rather than imposing a preferred theoretical solution.

Those familiar with Irish, Scottish, or Welsh culture under British rule, or with the Basque regions of Spain, to name just a few examples, will recognize the same patterns and dilemmas described in Korean resistance to Japan. Moreover, the development of national culture in such former colonies as the USA and Australia is closely related to patterns of intra-civilizational imperialism in that they were vitally concerned with creating an identity gap between themselves and the mother country. A new theory of intra-civilizational imperialism will allow us to better understand how such conflicts have shaped and continue to shape modern culture. This theory suggests new areas of study: for example, how does the coloniser construct the colonised when the colonised are not wholly Other? Imperial Japan, for example, attempted to unite its empire on the basis of a shared "Asian-ness". Is the pattern of intra-civilizational imperialism fundamentally different from Said's analysis in *Orientalism* in that the coloniser attempts to assert the underlying similarity of the two peoples? Such questions naturally emerge once we recognize the fundamental difference between inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational imperial-

ism and promise to open up new areas of inquiry and broaden our understanding of the dynamics of imperial and colonial culture.

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