

Original Paper

Boundary between Religion and Social Conflict
—Perspective from the Civil Rights Movement

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Abstract

Based on the background of American civil rights movement in which religious factors participated, this study analyzes the function of religious factors in civil rights movement from the perspective of political participation and the principle of separation of politics and religion, in order to consider the research paradigm of the relationship between religion and social conflict. It is believed that religious participation is helpful to exert the positive force of social conflict, the right of religious freedom has, to a certain extent, become the “safety valve” of social stability, and the development of religion is the embodiment of social pluralism and symbiosis.

Keywords

Civil Rights Movement, religion, social conflict, political participation, boundary

1. Background

This year is the famous speech of Martin Luther King Jr. in 2013—“I have a dream” for the 50th anniversary. However, in July 2013, the incident of a white police officer shooting a black youth was defined as innocent. This decision has caused widespread social debate due to strong racial factors. As one of the earliest groups in the North American continent, black people have made great contributions to the development of the United States. But until today, many black people still live at the bottom of society; they are difficult to integrate into the mainstream of American society. Lincoln published the “Declaration of the Emancipation of Black Slaves”, which once made the blacks feel the light of hope, but because of the deep-rooted racist ideas and the long-term existence of the forces, the black people’s rights to defend their rights are struggling. The civil rights movement after the Second World War not

only promoted the reform of the US federal government to eradicate apartheid, but also won the civil rights for black people, and also inspired the new democracy and freedom liberation movement of American society, which promoted and influenced the modern women's movement. A wave of social movements, such as the anti-war movement, the New Left movement and the struggle for rights by other ethnic groups. Their appeals vary, their scales vary, and their forms are diverse, which has far-reaching implications for the development of American and even Western societies.

As is known to all, religion affects all areas of American political and social life. As one of the important ethnic groups in the United States, the influence of religion on black people is self-evident. The religious inclination of black Americans is diversified, which can be roughly divided into four types: the inheritance of African primitive religion (Note 1) with respect to god, the concept of "black god" (Note 2) by Marcus Garvey, the "root-seeking" movement of Islam and the integration with native American sects (Note 3). These religious forces, which provided the necessary resources for the movement in the form of churches, were influential in the process of the civil rights movement. Considering the role of religious factors in the civil rights movement is of great practical significance not only for studying the civil rights movement and civil political participation itself, but also for correctly understanding and dealing with various social conflicts and contradictions in China and promoting social stability and development.

As a famous social movement, the American civil rights movement not only changed the fate of black Americans and endowed them with a certain degree of equality, freedom and dignity, but also profoundly affected the life philosophy and value judgment of all Americans. As the civil rights movement and the religious factors in the movement are often interwoven together, international sociology, political science, and religious circles have a certain theoretical academic research on these two major objects and their relations. However, there is still a lack of detailed literature on the civil rights movement in domestic related academic circles at present. Therefore, with the help of my study visit to Purdue University in the United States, I have made a comprehensive and systematic exposition of the relevant literature and theories at home and abroad, so as to deepen my attention to the different fields of religion, economy, politics, and society of African Americans. At the same time, it has a certain research value for the theory and practice of dealing with religious and social issues in the current transition period of China.

2. Review of China and Abroad

2.1 The Value Argument of Political Participation

The broadening of political participation and democratization of political life are the important sign of political development. But some scholars also voiced doubts; they divided the related theories into two categories: "the democracy theory emphasizing citizen participation and the democracy theory

restricting citizen participation” (Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Science, 2002). The classical Democrats, represented by Rousseau, Mill and Jefferson, advocated the theory of participatory democracy, holding that political participation is the source of social vitality and creativity, a powerful tool to resist tyranny, and an important way to concentrate collective wisdom (Walker, 1966; Ryan, 1959). The government does not have the basis of public opinion if the people who are not involved in politics are not properly represented; one of the functions of political participation is to supervise the rulers favorably; participation in politics is the best tool to improve the level of citizens’ judgment; Widespread indifference to politics is the root cause and manifestation of the weakness of the political system.

However, in view of the horrendous consequences of blind participation in history (such as in Fascist Germany), some scholars have argued that broad political participation is not only impossible, but also unworthy. They believe that it is not good for society to encourage those who are not familiar with politics and have no interest in it. Insisting that every citizen should participate in politics is to replace rational judgment of democracy with enthusiasm (Schumpeter, 1979; Dahl, 1999). Elites are better suited to be producers of policies, they must be chosen from all sectors of society, openly competing with each other, and citizens need only vote to choose; broad political activity is in some ways desirable, but also has disadvantages. For example, some of the political problems in the United States are caused by a surplus of democracy, and democracy needs moderation (Huntington, 1989), and so on. They therefore argued that the expansion of political participation also required a desirable limitation.

2.2 Social Movement in the West

From the perspective of social movement research paradigm, the interpretation of social movement in western theory can be divided into four categories: structural tension-psychological imbalance model, resource mobilization theory, political process model, new social movement theory and so on. The former three pay more attention to how individuals make behavioral choices from the micro perspective, while the new social movement theory focuses on why social movements occur.

Structural tension-psychological imbalance model. Macadam (2001) summed up the early classical theory of explaining social movements as a model of structural stress/psychological imbalance. These theories all express such a relationship-social structural tension leading to individual psychological imbalance. Psychological imbalance leads to social movements. But this paradigm fails to explain how individual psychological imbalances evolve into collective behavior (Snyder & Tilly, 1972). Is there a necessary connection between structural tension and collective struggle? Because of these defects of the classical psychological imbalance model, the theory of resource mobilization gradually replaced the theory of resource mobilization in the 1970s.

Resource mobilization theory. Theory of resource mobilization. The core idea of American resource mobilization theory is to regard the participants of social movements as a rational actor. Whether they

participate in social movements or not, and to what extent they participate, all depend on the benefits and costs that they gain and pay in the action. This hypothesis is a “reaction” to the traditional American theory of collective behavior. What it wants to know more is how the “discontent” that lurks in the minds of individuals translates into collective action on such a large scale as social movements. (McAdam, 1999) the theory of resource mobilization holds that the premise of social movement is that there are available resources, and the resources are in the hands of the elite. The existence of large-scale psychological imbalance in society is only a necessary condition for the emergence of resistance and movement, while a scattering of individuals waiting for the mobilization of the elite who control resources is a possible sufficient condition.

The political process model (McAdam, 1999). The theory of resource mobilization can only explain the organized changes initiated by the political elite. Based on the criticism of resource mobilization model, Macadam introduced the endogenous organization and collective cognitive liberation into his theoretical framework, and put forward a more complete political process model. The model includes four elements of social movement: political change, endogenous organizational strength growth, collective characteristics and changes in other organizational responses. In explaining the rise, development, and decline of the movement, these four elements interact and change diachronically.

New social movement theory. Compared with the theory of resource mobilization, the new social movement theory is mainly concerned with the macro-structural level. Why are there so many social movements in the western capitalist countries? (Feng, 2003). It regards the social movement after the second World War as the result of the transformation of the social structure of the western capitalist countries, and answers from the angle of the social structure why these “new social movements” occurred and why they have these “new” characteristics. Pay more attention to how to establish a new kind of social problems, such as the relationship between heaven and man, the relationship between characters, the relationship between body and mind, the relationship between men and women, and so on.

2.3 Relationship between Religion and Social Conflict

At present, the mainstream paradigm of analyzing the relationship between religion and social conflict is nativism and instrumentalism.

The basic idea of nativism is that religion is the driving force of political conflict (Zhong, 2003). Because of religion, religious culture and the national cultural tradition formed by the influence of religion, it will inevitably have an impact on all areas of social life. Especially when making value judgment and deciding value orientation to things and problems, it is always restricted by the judge’s religious belief, the traditional culture education and the national condition. Samuel Huntington (1993) is the most prominent and representative figure. In his view, nation-States remained the main actors in international affairs, and the main conflicts in global politics would take place in countries and groups

of countries with different civilizations. “Clash of Civilizations” will dominate Global Politics (Huntington, 2002) of all the objective factors that define civilization, religion is usually the most important.

However, instrumentalist view is the opposite. The fundamental cause of conflicts between nations and nations is economic and political interests. On the surface, religious conflicts and sectarian disputes are conflicts of beliefs and ideologies, but in essence, such conflicts and disputes are still ethnic, and even caused by differences in political and economic interests within the same ethnic group (Jin, 2002). The representative is Marx (1995): religion is the ruling class used to paralyze the masses of the people’s spiritual tools, “Religion is the opium of the people”. Of course, Huntington’s paradigm of conflict of civilizations has also been strongly criticized by instrumentalists in the contemporary era. According to Fowler (2011), the worldwide conflicts caused by power, wealth, unfair distribution of influence and lack of respect by big countries for small countries are far more than the clash of civilizations between Christianity, Confucianism and Islam. Culture is a vehicle for expressing conflict, not a cause (Mazur, 2011). The real cause of the conflict is socio-economic, not civilization. While it is true that differences in civilizations have contributed to many undesirable conflicts, they are not necessarily related to some conflicts, but are only functioning as one of many factors. The focus of the debate is: where is the origin of the social conflict with religious background? Is it spiritual or material? The two sides are at odds with each other.

3. God and Caesar

If the “reality” of the success of the American civil rights movement has been proved by practice, is it “justified” for religious factors to participate in the political movement? The political and academic circles are still arguing about the boundary between the government and the church. The first Congress of the United States was convened to amend the Constitution of 1787 (Note 4) for the first time. Among them, the amendment to article 1st of the Constitution stipulates that: “the National Assembly shall not make laws on the establishment of religion or on the prohibition of freedom of religion”. Jefferson, the president of the United States, famously said, “My neighbor said that God has twenty or none. It didn’t do me any harm. Neither took out my purse nor broke my legs (Note 5)”. One of the leaders of this far-reaching civil rights movement was Martin Luther King, a Baptist pastor. So are pastors and churches represented by Martin Luther King suspected of religious interference in politics?

3.1 Role Identity

In modern society, people’s role conflict is inevitable. Can the “Baptist” pastor, a social function of Martin Luther King, be evidence of religious interference in politics? When we judge its behavior attribute, we must carefully analyze the influence and the consequence which its behavior brings. Some Protestants and churches suffered from political embarrassment, they did not want to hear any political

issues, but also believe that religion and politics are opposed. But the truth is that Martin Luther King's church did not revoke his pastor status because of his involvement in the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King was acting in his own capacity, not on behalf of the church. The African-American civil rights movement he led was aimed at opposing racial discrimination and racial oppression, and fighting for the right to political, economic, and social equality. This right is a legitimate civil right guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence. It is a matter of social justice, not a religious right. In this sense, Martin Luther King is leading a civil society movement, not just a religious movement.

3.2 Separation of Church and State

The phrase "give Caesar to Caesar and God to God" from the New Testament is Jesus' perfect interpretation of the combination of earthly and spiritual life. The Pharisees sent men with the Herodians to ask Jesus if he could pay his taxes to Caesar. Herodians belong to the Herod Party, a political party, while the Pharisees belong to a faction of Judaism. The question they ask Jesus is really whether a religious believer can do his civic duty. Jesus answered, "Caesar's things should go to Caesar, and God's things to God". This was Jesus' idea of the separation of religion from politics, and this phrase became the principle of the separation of church and state in the modern political system.

Many scholars have a lot of misunderstandings about the relationship between church and state, church and state, rather than politics and religion. It refers to the separation of government from religious organizations, not from politics and religion. We know that the United States is in history with a strong Christian color of immigration, can be called a "Christian country". Now, in the public and private lives of the American people, everywhere there is a strong religious color. For example, when the Supreme Court sits daily, it prays for God; when both houses of Congress meet, it prays; and when a president takes office, he or she asks for God's blessing and help. And in the relationship between the party and the church, as a personal political belief, if the candidate is an atheist is certainly not the president. Because voters need to know the candidate's religious beliefs, determine the choice of religious believers. Christian beliefs, norms of conduct, habits and other deeply rooted in all aspects of American society and culture, and is generally recognized by society.

Religion becomes the "tool" used by political forces. Such "politicized religion" is an extreme. What is this extreme? Religion is not indifferent to social problems. Biblical truth covers every aspect of social life, and it cannot be confined or enclosed within certain spheres. Separation of church and state does not mean that Christians and churches give way to the political sphere. The true meaning of the separation of church and state is not to replace the government with the church, not to rely on the state machine to suppress other religious beliefs. It is to be deeply involved in national politics with respect for the authority of legitimate government.

3.3 Political Legitimacy

The civil rights movement led by Martin Luther king, who was premised on the recognition of the authority of the American authorities, did not constitute religious interference in politics. John Locke, an English philosopher, points out in his book on religious tolerance: “Religion is not a matter of state, but a private affair of citizens. The state should treat all churches equally, and implement a policy of tolerance”. But church activities must not harm the public interest, must not oppose the national government, and have to be subject to certain restrictions. Jefferson also formally and publicly expressed his views on the separation of church and state in his speech when he became the second president in 1805. “In religious matters, freedom of worship is provided for in the Constitution, which should be independent of the authority of the government,” he said, “I do not interfere in religious affairs in cases where religious groups recognize the authority of the State, as is the principle created by the Constitution”. But there is a very important premise that there is an institutional environment of freedom and the rule of law. In particular, freedom of religion and freedom of the press. When these fundamental civil rights cannot be guaranteed, the resistance side will not accept them passively.

4. Conflicts and Effect of Citizens’ Participation in Politics and Society

Almond and Verba, in their book *Civic Culture*, point out that “the individual’s conviction that he should participate in the political life of the community or the country does not mean that he will in fact do so”. What this means is that there is a gap between what citizens think and what they do, and that changes in behavior tend to lag behind improvements in consciousness; or that there is still a need for a bridge between the two. On the one hand, this kind of bridge is the space and necessary participation channel provided by the political system arrangement, but on the other hand, it depends on the citizen’s own desire to participate in activities and personal interests.

4.1 Dynamic and Orderly Social Stability and the Effective Political Participation of All Citizens

The orderliness and continuity of social development are the preconditions for the realization of political participation, and the realization of political participation will promote social stability. Under normal circumstances, countries with well-developed political participation generally have a higher degree of social stability. This is because: first, political participation satisfies citizens’ increasingly strong desire to participate in political life, strengthens citizens’ sense of ownership, and promotes citizens’ recognition of social system and political authority.

The civil rights movement promoted the awakening of black political consciousness. To achieve results through the boycott and other movements, the foundation of black political power must be established to guarantee racial equality, and the best weapon for black people to eliminate apartheid is to use their right to vote. Therefore, by the cooperation of “southern Christian leadership conference”, “student non-violent coordination committee”, “racial equality conference”, “naacp” and so on, a campaign of

election education was launched in the southern states, which had played an inestimable role in awakening black people's political awareness and active participation in politics. Since the civil rights movement, black political awareness in the south, enthusiasm for political participation, turnout and the number of black people holding public office have significantly increased, gradually breaking the ice of white monopoly politics. "If Martin Luther King had lived to this day, he would have been pleased, and take everything", Lewis said, "But the bottom line is elections".

From this, we can see that the embodiment of political democratization at the behavioral level is mainly political participation. But the premise is that people have a full right to know. "Silent citizens may be ideal subjects for dictators, but it is a disaster for democracy". Political participation of interest groups, It is "a source of civic education and enlightenment from which citizens receive not only information but also opportunities for discussion, consultation and the development of political skills" (Note 6). This is not only the necessary quality for the people to become politicians with independent personality, but also the subjective resource for the development of democratic politics. At the same time, the expansion of political participation is bound to greatly strengthen the sense of ownership of all citizens, and strengthen the political identity of the public to the social system and its political authority.

Second, political participation strengthens the channels of political transmission and feedback, which is conducive to the correct decision-making of the government and the timely resolution of various social contradictions or conflicts. The function of the "social safety valve" put forward by the famous scholars, such as Corse and Simmel, can vent negative emotions, which is not only beneficial to the maintenance of the social structure, but also conducive to promoting the benign operation and coordinated development of the society. It also advocates the institutionalization of the safety valve mechanism. In modern society, the expansion of political participation actually expands the channels of political transmission and feedback. At this time, in addition to the system of special channels of transmission and feedback created by the government itself. There is a frequent and multifaceted political transmission and feedback channel system caused by public political participation.

Third, the legitimacy of political participation is conducive to alleviate social conflict. In the process of social development, the political system assumes the responsibility and function of authoritative distribution of social resources. Because the legitimacy of any political rule is derived from identity, but also lost in identity. According to Lipsett's analysis, legitimacy refers to the ability of the political system to make people believe in the existing political system (Note 7). The extensive participation of the interest groups in the political process can give strong support and cooperation to the operation of the political system, and cultivate the profound mass inside information of the legitimacy of the regime. In a sense, the legitimacy of the regime is that it can meet the needs of the people to the maximum extent.

Finally, political participation itself is a broad and powerful social supervision, which is conducive to

overcoming the bureaucracy of various political institutions and curbing the growth of political corruption. The active participation of multi-interest groups in political life has developed their own ability of autonomy and autonomy (Note 8), and cultivated and exercised the independent political personality of the people. Bureaucracy and political corruption are the ills of the political society, it is not easy to control it, eradicate it, and the only way to deal with such problems is social supervision. One of the important functions of citizen participation in political life is to supervise the implementation of state power; the expansion of participation can play a better role in the supervision of citizens. The strength of such supervision lies in its mass character and political nature: it is not enough to be mass without political because it lacks political binding force; neither can it be political without mass because it lacks the broad support of the masses. Lonely politics is powerless politics. Citizens' political participation can effectively combine the two, especially as a means of political participation in the supervision of public opinion, has an irreplaceable important role.

4.2 Imperfect Political Participation Can Easily Lead to Social Conflict

The development of everything has two sides, and there are many potential and possible factors in the process of political participation that lead to social conflicts.

First, the high expectations of political participation will lead to social conflict. In the process of political democratization, based on the consideration of their own interests, various interest groups have a strong desire and request for political participation. It reflects the importance of social forces. Political participation may lead to social conflicts, mainly due to the contradiction between participation and institutionalization, and "the disconnection between the capacity of the political system and the needs of society" (Note 9). This is particularly true in developing countries. Political participation exerts too much pressure on the political system, which affects the stability of the political system. The disorder caused by the excessive participation of citizens will also cause social disorder, and some people may take the opportunity to make trouble, thus leading to social conflict.

Second, the emergence of non-institutionalized participation, protest participation and violent participation has a negative impact.

Generally speaking, political participation can enable the political system to adjust the public's interest demands in a timely manner, ease the dissatisfaction of social interest groups with social distribution, and increase the public's sense of identity with the political system. But it does not necessarily lead to the stability of the political system, because "the stability of any particular form of government depends on the degree of political participation and political institutionalization between the degree of correlation". If we want to maintain social stability, when political participation increases, the complexity, autonomy, adaptability and cohesion of the social and political system must also be improved (Note 10). If the political system cannot provide the public with a smooth channel of interest expression, perfect coordination mechanism of interests and the channels of individual political

participation, the public will exert external pressure on the political system, leading to social conflicts. Public participation is both a process and a result. As a process, it has objective inevitability; as a result, it has realistic inevitability.

5. Participation Boundary and Religion

5.1 The Consciousness of Participation Boundary

Through the above analysis, there is a problem to be discussed, that is, social development and political participation is not a one-to-one relationship, the development of political participation in a certain period of time can't play a positive role in the development of society as a whole, which is a paradox.

Huntington had a special study of this, and he had a formula (Note 11):

Social mobilization/economic development=social frustration.

Social frustration/mobility=political participation.

Political participation/political institutionalization=political conflict

Huntington used this formula to illustrate the relationship between political participation, political institutionalization and political unrest. According to this formula, the stability of the political system depends on the ratio between political participation and political institutionalization. If the ratio of political participation to political institutionalization is 1, the situation is balanced and the political system is stable. If the expansion of political participation exceeds the level of political institutionalization, it will bring about imbalance and conflict in the political system. In the period of social transition, political enthusiasm is excessive relative to the economy, which leads to social frustration, so people have to balance this frustration in their search for self-realization. However, the society of this period did not provide more opportunities, and people were dissatisfied and needed to seek change through political participation. However, the political system of this period was not perfect, and there was no strong regulatory capacity. As a result, there will be political instability, which in turn will have an impact on economic development.

Can political participation bring about immediate social development? We cannot generalize about this issue. Political participation does not necessarily bring about social development naturally; the key lies in how to find the boundary of participation.

The participation boundary mainly refers to the restriction of subjective and objective factors, which leads to the number of participants and behavior, the effect of participation, the realization of participation goal and so on, all of which will be restricted, restrained and restricted in one way or another. There are boundaries of participation. That is, there is scope for participation, and it does not create a transcendent social public sphere.

To some extent, establishing the consciousness of participating in the boundary means the dilution of political participation: first, from the main body of political participation, the consciousness of

participating in the boundary does not advocate the participation of the whole people in politics; second, from the scope of the object of political participation, consciousness of participating in the boundary requires political participants to position themselves in the political field, instead of misplacing their roles; finally, from the perspective of political participation, political participation requires political participants to make use of legitimate political participation channels. Instead of engaging in politics through illegal means. Therefore, from the main body of political participation, the scope of objects and ways, political participation is defined and subject to certain restrictions, rather than unconditional, unlimited.

In view of this, it is all the more necessary to emphasize the establishment of the consciousness of participation boundary, require the moderate political participation of the people, change the concept of political participation, that is, the political participation of citizens is no longer as a duty, but as a right. This will not only cause a change from the traditional concept of political participation to a modern and democratic view of political participation, but also mean that citizen participation in politics should not be a passive, forced, or blind behavior. It is a kind of active, voluntary and rational behavior, which protects citizens' freedom of choice in the process of participation.

5.2 Right to Freedom and Religion Symbiotic Development

In my opinion, in the past, Chinese society, state and government had a relatively conservative attitude towards religious organizations and always adopted the way of restriction and control, which made religious organizations marginalized and developed. The main reason is that the government is worried that the political participation of religion may lead to the weakening of government authority. In particular, when religious belief evolves into religious bigotry and fanaticism, the political participation of religion will cause social instability, which then threatens the stable development of political society. In fact, this fear stems from the government's biased understanding of "political stability". Political stability is not only reflected in the orderliness and continuity of the political system, but also in the dynamic balance of various elements in the interaction process. That is to say, political stability is the unity of authority of government and identity of all citizens. We tend to value the stability of national sovereignty, power, government and policy, while ignoring the support of the social psychological system, namely the political consensus of citizens, political identity and public political participation.

This neglect is also reflected in the development of religion. The political participation of religion is an aspect of political democratization and political stability in modern society. As an interest group, religious groups at least represent the interests and political aspirations of believers. However, as the Chinese house churches, religion has its own specific belief system and the way of association, and its political participation has a complex impact on the development of social and political stability. "Religion can both sustain and shake the world". In modern society, religious groups, as a civil society or one of the social forces, play a certain public role in civil society and cultural life. Therefore, the

political participation of religion is helpful to strengthen the organized public participation in modern society, which is the way of political expression and interest appeal, and becomes the “safety valve” of social stability. In this way, religious symbiotic development is a major force to promote social progress, a major manifestation of the road of social pluralistic symbiosis, but also the trend of future social development. God’s to God, Caesar to Caesar.

6. Conclusion

Religion and conflict are two different social phenomena, but they are closely related. Social conflict is the realistic condition and soil on which religion comes into being, and it plays a decisive role in the development and evolution of religion. Religion is not only the practice of “true and alive”, but also the belief; it is not only a special political actor, but also a special social ideology.

Since the 1960s American Civil Rights Movement, with the rise of political participation, the United States has launched a fierce debate on these phenomena, some scholars believe that religion has played a negative effect on the American Black Civil Rights Movement; Some scholars believe that religion played a catalytic role in the African-American civil rights movement. Clearly, the great practice of the African-American civil rights movement has provided the answer. Pastors played a leading role in the civil rights movement, while the church played a better organizational role in the civil rights movement. The majority of blacks actively participated in the civil rights movement by participating in the religious way of the civil rights movement and made great achievements, so that Martin Luther Kings’ “dream” gradually shone into reality.

Social conflicts or social movements with religious participation are not all “great scourges”. Excessive demonizing of social conflicts and religions is not desirable. It is not important that social conflicts should be allowed to occur, that religious factors should be allowed to participate in them; It is how we view them, how we standardize and institutionalize this approach of political participation, and how we can become a positive force for social adjustment, balance, reconstruction, integration and communication, so that the value identification of all parties in society can reach a new height, and the consensus of social symbiosis can be formed, so that Chinese society can be more optimized and perfected.

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Notes

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