

Research on the Development and Dissemination Status of Cantonese Songs of Ancient Poetry (2019–2024): Taking Douyin, BiliBili, and WeChat Video Numbers as Examples

Hongtao Wang, Chuhui Tang, Ruiji Shengchuan*

School of Music and Dance, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou 510006, Guangdong, China

*Corresponding author: Ruiji Shengchuan, S33c99rj-4@gzhu.edu.cn

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Abstract: As a unique form of music, Cantonese songs with ancient poems integrate the essence of Cantonese songs and classical poems, which not only retains the flavour of Cantonese songs but also embodies the rhyme of classical poems. Taking the Joyo platform as an example, this study collected video data of Cantonese songs with the high number of likes and conducted interviews with relevant creative figures, and put forward rationalization suggestions to promote the stable development of Cantonese songs based on relevant data to promote the inheritance and development of Chinese traditional culture and to promote the development of the Chinese traditional culture. Based on the relevant data, rationalization suggestions are proposed to promote the stable development of ancient poems and Cantonese songs, so as to contribute wisdom and strength to the promotion of the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese culture, as well as the sustainable development of Cantonese culture.

Keywords: Ancient poetry; Cantonese songs; Development and dissemination

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1. Origin and development of Cantonese songs with ancient poetry

1.1. The origin of Cantonese songs with ancient poetry

The Cantonese language is influenced by geographical factors and can be divided into six major basins such as Xijiang-Pearl River and Xunjiang-Yujiang. It originated from the oldest national common language in China, YaYan, and through the evolution and development of the times, it was finally finalized and established in the GuangXin area during the Han Dynasty. At that time, the imperial court implemented the policy of ‘Guangbu Enxin,’ which made Guangxin an important hub of trade and commerce in the early days of the Pearl River Basin. The prosperity of trade and commerce promoted language exchange, and the elegant languages imported from the Central Plains gradually became common in the region through trade and commerce. Guangxin not

only served as the capital and trade center of the Lingnan region but also became the gathering place of Lingnan culture, attracting a large number of literati and immigrants. During this historical process, the Cantonese language was gradually nurtured and formed^[1].

At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the establishment of a new style of academies led to the emergence of a singing culture called academy music, and the development of China's modern new music culture owes much to the active promotion of this factor. In ancient times, poetry was often combined with music and dance to form unique performance forms. The origin of Cantonese songs in ancient poetry can be traced back to the poetic tradition of the Lingnan region in ancient times. According to historical records, Cantonese poetry started in the Han Dynasty, became famous in the Tang Dynasty, and reached its peak in the Ming Dynasty. The recitation of poetry can be traced back to the Western Han Dynasty. Although it is difficult to conclude that Yang Fu and Zhang Bao were the originators of poetry in southern Guangdong due to the lack of detailed historical data, compared to the flourishing of Chinese poetry in the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties, Lingnan poetry was still in its infancy. During the Six Dynasties, Lingnan literati began to make their mark. For example, Feng Rong, a native of Xinhui, served as the assassin of Luozhou during the Liang Dynasty of the Southern Dynasties, attracting many literati to write poems, which led to the gradual formation of a unique poetic tradition in the Lingnan region. In addition, ancient poems and Cantonese songs were also inspired by ancient music, operas, and other art forms. In ancient times, poetry was often combined with music and dance to form a unique form of performance. Over time, this form of performance gradually evolved into Cantonese songs with ancient poems. The origin of Cantonese songs with ancient poems can be attributed to the poetic traditions of the ancient Lingnan region, which have fused with operas, ancient music, etc., to form the unique artistic style and charm of Cantonese songs with ancient poems.

1.2. Current development of Cantonese songs with ancient poetry and lyrics

In this paper, a comprehensive review of domestic literature on Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics is conducted. Through in-depth searches in the CNKI database, this study has systematically summarized the existing domestic research results, which mainly focus on the fusion of Cantonese and ancient poems, the development and challenges of Cantonese pop songs, the inheritance and innovation of Cantonese chanting, and the role of the new media in the promotion of Cantonese culture.

At present, the research on Cantonese songs with ancient poems shows a rising trend, which indicates that more and more people are beginning to pay attention to and devote themselves to this field. However, the development of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics is still at a nascent stage, and the attention it receives is insufficient and the number of creative groups is relatively small. Considering that Cantonese culture and the culture of ancient poems are not mainstream cultures in the process of development, the development of Cantonese songs of ancient poems maybe even longer and more difficult.

The development of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics nowadays is characterized by diversification and innovation. In order to make the data more objective, the study collected the data of representative works of Cantonese songs in ancient poems and verses from Douyin, Bilibili, and WeChat video numbers, which are as follows (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Detailed data of works on Douyin platform

Artwork	Performers	Likes	Comments	Favourites	Retweets
Calming the Waves	Alan Tam	134 k	5819	1854	5573
Over the Cave	Wong Cho-lam	39 k	2585	4577	3979
Nanxuan Song	Chen Songling	19k	1577	789	214
Pusaman Theme: Thick Mist Shrouds Flatland	Liang Zheng	12 k	963	1812	216
Invitation to Wine	Liang Zheng	9035	795	792	1599

The above data were collected from the Douyin short video platform. The three singers, Alan Tam, Joey Wong and Chen Songling, used Cantonese in the climax of their songs and Mandarin in the rest of the songs, while Liang Zheng's two songs were all performed in Cantonese.

Table 2. Details of works on the Bilibili platform

Artwork	Performers	Likes	Comments	Favourites	Retweets
The Troubleshooter	Alan Tam	5295	308 k	4944	3792
The Words of the Tanabata	He Jingxin	1378	17 k	309	135
The Arrival of a Guest	Chen Huiquan	10	594	12	1
The Sound of Sound	Sutong Qidong	10	404	4	3
Qing Ping Le - Where to Return in Spring	Canggeng Sings Ancient Poems	6	216	1	1

Table 3. Detailed data of works on WeChat Video

Artwork	Performers	Likes	Comments	Favourites	Retweets
Converse and Rhyme	Chen Hui Quan	1008	80	891	817
The Troubleshooter	Alan Tam	289	32	863	1764
Huanxi Sha · A new song with a glass of wine	Canggeng Sings Ancient Poems	216	34	214	171
Spring flowers and Autumn Moon--When will they be Ended?	儒哥粵劇	144	14	205	346
Qingyuan Theme: Lantern Festival	Canggeng Sings Ancient Poems	41	4	36	36

Only 'Calming the Waves' is sung in Cantonese at the climax, while all other works are sung in Cantonese. In summary, through the comparison of the works of classical poetry and Cantonese songs on the three platforms, the influence of Cantonese classical poetry and lyrics on the Douyin platform is greater. Although the development of Cantonese classical poems and songs has achieved some success, it still faces some challenges. On the one hand, with the diversification of modern entertainment methods, the competitiveness of Cantonese classical poetry songs in the market is gradually weakening. On the other hand, there is a gap in the transmission of some traditional repertoire, and the younger generation does not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of classical Cantonese poems and songs.

2. Current situation of the dissemination of classical Cantonese poetic songs on Douyin platform

2.1. Analysis of dissemination subjects

At present, the dissemination of Cantonese songs with ancient poems mainly relies on vocal music teachers, vocal music students, scholars in the field of musicology, singers and related programmes. A search of relevant literature on the China Knowledge Network (CNKI) reveals that there are relatively few studies on Cantonese songs with ancient poems by Chinese scholars, and the number of citations of these articles is also relatively limited. For example, the programme ‘The Classics in Cantonese,’ which adopts the format of ‘singing with poems’ and integrates traditional poetic classics with modern pop elements, has been broadcast for six seasons so far and has created many works that are loved by the people. On the Douyin platform, it can be found that some widely-circulated Cantonese-sung songs on ancient poems, such as Alan Tam’s ‘Calming the Waves,’ Joey Wong’s ‘Crossing the Dongting’ and Chen Songling’s ‘Nanxuan Song.’

Liang Zheng and Chen Huiquan are representatives of the creators of related content on the Douyin platform. Liang Zheng, who mainly focuses on composing and singing ancient poems, has developed a unique style and has 42,000 followers and 250,000 likes on the Douyin platform. Chen Huiquan, as a veteran of the Guangdong pop music scene, has multiple identities, including pop music producer, composer, arranger, and guitarist, etc. He has 36,000 followers and 219,000 likes on Douyin platform.

This study searched the three platforms using ancient poems and Cantonese songs as keywords, but no users were found on the Bilibili platform. According to the data collected from the users of the platforms, more users sang Cantonese pop songs, appreciated poems and recited their works, and fewer who composed Cantonese songs with ancient poems.

2.2. Creative experience of songwriters

After in-depth exchanges with two teachers on the Douyin platform, it was learned about their initial intention, unique style, and vision for Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics. Leung Ching shared that his creative journey began with a chance attempt. He found that reciting ancient poems in Cantonese could bring out a different flavour. So, he started his creative journey. Leung’s works have distinctive personal characteristics, each work is accompanied by his unique image of a soft-footed turban, and he creates his works with the basic configuration of guitar, bass, drums and other instruments. Browsing through Leung’s works, one finds that his compositions are unique. This is due to the fact that he always adheres to the Cantonese pronunciation principle of nine tones and six keys when adapting ancient poems. At the same time, he believes that the style of songwriting for ancient poems should not be limited to the Chinese style, but should actively explore more new possibilities. Despite the challenges of the creative process, he always keeps a ‘playful’ mindset and continues to create to the best of his ability. This has led to numerous praises for his works in the comments section, such as ‘singing ancient poems in Cantonese has a special flavour’ and ‘more flavourful than reciting in Putonghua’, etc.

Another creator was Chan Fai-kuen, whose works covered a wide range of areas such as Cantonese chanting, Cantonese pronunciation recitation, Cantonese songs of ancient poems and Cantonese nursery rhymes. Chan revealed that his love for Cantonese poems and songs began in 2016. Chan has always been deeply interested in ancient poems and loves reciting them, in the process, he discovered by chance that the words and phrases in the poems were very catchy to sing, and so began his journey of composing Cantonese ancient poems and songs. In the process, Chan studied the ancient poems in depth, referred to a large number of ancient books and sought advice from experts. His daughter became the source of inspiration for his compositions.

Subsequently, Chen Huiquan has been actively involved in the creation of Cantonese poems and songs, aiming to provide a rich learning resource for learners. Primary schools and some kindergartens in Yuexiu District have incorporated such songs into their recess activities, and some schools have special competitions to stimulate students' interest in learning. Chen has created two albums of more than a dozen Cantonese poems and published a songbook to accompany the albums. The book can be scanned by mobile phones to listen to Chan's readings. In addition, he has also written two books for reading poems aloud, namely 'Cantonese Rhymes with Tang Poetry' and 'Cantonese Rhymes with Song Lyrics.'

This interview provides a deeper understanding of the creation of ancient poems and Cantonese songs, and at the same time, admires the artistic pursuit and persistence of the two teachers. Both interviewers are native Cantonese speakers. Their creative direction is based on the combination of Cantonese and ancient poems with their understanding, and all of their compositions cannot be created without respecting the source material itself. All of them share the same vision that they want Cantonese poems to be more widely known and disseminated. However, due to regional limitations, the scope of dissemination is limited, and they hope that more lovers of ancient poems in Cantonese and even non-Cantonese-speaking regions will try to sing and recite them in Cantonese.

3. Difficulties in the dissemination of Cantonese songs of ancient poetry

3.1. Changes in the cultural identity of the subjects of dissemination

Cantonese is a lesser-used language, and the recognition of the culture of ancient poems is relatively low. Combining the two is undoubtedly a great challenge. The group of people who sing Cantonese poems is mainly limited to those who speak Cantonese and were born in Cantonese-speaking areas, and therefore the scope of dissemination is mainly confined to Cantonese-speaking areas. Nevertheless, the number of such songs in the Cantonese-speaking region is still relatively small. Since the nationwide promotion of Putonghua, the proportion of foreigners in the Cantonese-speaking region has gradually increased, and this objective environment and practical factors have led to a gradual decline in the use of Cantonese in the Cantonese-speaking region.

To further explore the difficulties in the dissemination of Cantonese songs with ancient poems, this study has selected Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Macao as representative Cantonese-speaking regions. These three regions show different characteristics and trends in terms of Cantonese cultural identity, as follows:

(1) Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)

Cantonese is not only a tool for daily communication, but also a symbol of culture and identity. The majority of Hong Kong residents have a deep affection for Cantonese, which they regard as an important part of Hong Kong's culture and is widely disseminated and influential in areas such as film, music and theatre. Therefore, Hong Kong residents have a strong sense of identity with Cantonese culture. Before the reunification, Hong Kong was a British colony where English was the main language, but since the reunification, people usually live in English, Cantonese and Mandarin, making Hong Kong a multilingual society where three languages are spoken side by side. There have been three language campaigns in Hong Kong: the first one took place in 1949, when the linguistic tendency of Hong Kong society as a whole was to emphasize English at the expense of Chinese, and the campaign ended in victory when it was decided that Chinese was the official language. The second language campaign took place in 1978 when the Official Languages Ordinance was enacted, but the language of the community was still in favour of English, both at work and at school, and the campaign ended in failure. Finally, in 1997, the Hong Kong Government encouraged schools to implement measures to promote

bilingualism. The Government assisted primary and secondary schools in effectively implementing the ‘Mandarin as the Medium of Instruction for Chinese Language’ programme. However, the Hong Kong community has always questioned the quality of teaching and learning of this policy, which is considered to be a threat to the preservation of the Cantonese language^[2]. The current city of Hong Kong uses Cantonese as its first language for daily communication and work.

(2) Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR)

Local residents identify with Cantonese culture to a slightly lesser extent than in Hong Kong. According to the statistical analysis of the data on the language of instruction of secondary school students in Macao, the results show that, in both Chinese- and English-medium schools, Macao students generally have a higher identity value for English than for their mother tongue (Cantonese). This data reveals the actual situation of the value status of different languages in the city of Macao. Among the group of subjects, there is a general opinion that English has a higher status value than Cantonese. This result is not just based on individual subjective preferences, but is influenced by practical considerations^[3]. This suggests that the importance and value of English as an international lingua franca is widely recognized in practical applications in the language environment of urban Macau. At the same time, it also reminds us that when evaluating the value of a language, it is necessary to take into account the actual role and influence of the language in social, economic and cultural aspects. This phenomenon also indirectly reflects that the importance attached to Cantonese as a language in Macao may be declining.

(3) Guangdong Province

Due to geographical, historical and cultural differences, there are some differences in the degree of recognition of Cantonese culture among residents of different regions. Residents in the Pearl River Delta region generally have a higher sense of identification with Cantonese culture, and they consider Cantonese an important bridge for inter-regional communication and a link between history and modernity. However, in the Northern, Western and Eastern parts of Guangdong, due to the large number of dialects, residents have a relatively low sense of identification with Cantonese culture. They prefer to use their dialects for daily communication, and have a relatively low level of understanding and recognition of Cantonese culture. In Guangdong Province, for example, according to the results of a survey on the use of Cantonese among Guangzhou residents, 52.8% of the interviewees believe that the number of Cantonese speakers will gradually decrease over time; 26.2% of the interviewees are optimistic that the number of Cantonese speakers will gradually increase, and the vitality of the language will be strengthened; and 21% of the interviewees believe that the number of Cantonese speakers will remain unchanged. Another 21% of the respondents believed that the number of Cantonese speakers would remain unchanged. In short, more than half of the Guangzhou people are pessimistic about the future of Cantonese^[4].

To sum up, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macao show different characteristics and trends in terms of Cantonese cultural identity. Despite certain differences, Cantonese, as the common language and cultural symbol of the region, still has strong cohesion and influence. In order to promote the inheritance and development of Cantonese culture, the three regions should strengthen co-operation and exchanges, and work together to build the prosperity and development of Cantonese culture. At the same time, it is also necessary to respect the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the three regions and promote the harmonious coexistence of multiple cultures. Through joint efforts, the three regions can become an important region of cultural diversity and mutual understanding.

3.2. Lack of dissemination and further creation of works

In the current environment of the integrated media era, big data algorithms are more inclined to promote highly clicked and highly exposed video works to the public. However, it must be pointed out that the quality of Cantonese-language works in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao has generally declined, which has directly led to the difficulty in attracting the attention of the general audience, thus seriously affecting the effectiveness of their video promotion. With the gradual flow of market capital towards Mandarin media content which has a wider audience and is more in line with the national development strategy, Mandarin quality productions have achieved significant growth in market share. This phenomenon has undoubtedly aggravated the unfavourable position of Cantonese-language media works in the competitive market. Against this background, it has become particularly difficult to create quality Cantonese productions, and the challenges to their development and dissemination have become more severe. This phenomenon may not only cause Cantonese media to lose more potential non-Cantonese speaking users, but also lead to a gradual decrease in the interest of existing Cantonese speaking users in Cantonese works ^[5].

In the current society, fast pace and fast fashion have become the mainstream, and most readers are more inclined to pursue fast life experiences. According to the relevant data, the circulation and readership of mainstream poetry publications such as Chinese Poetry and Kyushu Poetry are on a downward trend, while the number of followers and readers of e-book apps and WeChat public numbers have increased dramatically. This phenomenon reflects that Cantonese cultural communication needs to adapt to new forms, especially content that can quickly attract readers' interest ^[6]. With the advent of the integrated media era, there are unprecedented opportunities for the development of Cantonese language works. At the same time, in the process of creating Cantonese works, many of them seem to have gradually forgotten the unique charm of traditional Cantonese culture, which makes the works appear thin and lack substance at the auditory level, showing a tendency of 'fast food culture.' In the face of this serious situation, the study has the responsibility to explore how to attract more people to learn about Cantonese culture and its related works. Only based on a deep understanding of Cantonese culture can Cantonese works be better appreciated and understood, thereby promoting the continuation and promotion of Cantonese culture. At the same time, creators should also pay attention to the artistic quality of their works, dig deep into the profound connotation of Cantonese culture, and create more Cantonese works that are rich in depth of thought and artistic charms to stimulate the novelty and far-reaching vitality of Cantonese culture contained in classical works.

4. Implications for the dissemination of ancient poetry and Cantonese songs

4.1. Expanding publicity channels and strengthening cultural identity

With the rapid development and change of new media in recent years, widening the publicity channels for Cantonese poems and songs can not only increase their popularity and influence in the society, but also expand the art market and cultural industry. As people's interest in and awareness of Cantonese poems and songs increase, the related fields of music composition, singing and education will be better developed, thus promoting the prosperity and development of the cultural industry. New media platforms can be made use to enhance the interactivity of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics, so as to make them more responsive to the needs of contemporary society, thereby increasing their popularity. This important measure will help people in the Cantonese-speaking region to explore more common issues in their communication, enhance their emotional rapport and understanding, and improve their emotional identity and sense of belonging to the regional culture.

According to Bourdieu's field theory, a field is defined as a network or structure composed of objective relationships between positions, which are all limited by objective factors. From this theoretical perspective, language plays a crucial role in the network of social relations, and it connects the whole society by transmitting rich human information. In the culturally diverse and rich context of Guangdong, the Cantonese language has become a common bridge connecting various cultural elements, allowing people in the Cantonese-speaking region to share a unique cultural identity^[7].

4.2. Optimizing cultural mechanisms and expanding regular audiences

As an important part of Chinese culture, ancient poems and Cantonese songs carry rich historical, cultural and emotional connotations. To optimize the cultural mechanism and expand the regular audience, it is necessary to pay attention to cultivating the younger generation's interest in and love for classical poems. This can be done through campus lectures, poetry recitation competitions, promotion of poetry culture weeks, etc. Famous Cantonese singers can also be invited to give campus performances so that classical poems can be combined with modern music and presented to young people in a more vivid and interesting way. While expanding the regular audience of Cantonese songs with classical poems, it is necessary to pay attention to the needs and feedback of the audience. Questionnaire surveys and online interactions can be used to understand the audience's preferences, expectations and suggestions on Cantonese songs with ancient poems. Based on the audience's needs, the creation and promotion strategies of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics should be adjusted and optimized to meet the aesthetic needs of more people.

For the promotion of Cantonese songs with ancient poems, modern technological means, such as the Internet and social media, can be used to expand the scope of their dissemination. A special zone for Cantonese songs with ancient poems can be launched on major music platforms to provide listeners with a wealth of music resources. At the same time, short video platforms can be utilized to produce creative videos on Cantonese songs with ancient poems to attract the attention of more young people. In addition, they can co-operate with the entertainment industry such as films and TV dramas, and incorporate Cantonese songs with ancient poems into the storylines to enhance their influence in popular culture.

4.3. Comply with the trends of the times and create songs in line with the times

As part of Chinese culture, Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics carry rich historical, cultural and artistic values, and their dissemination needs to keep up with the times. In the context of the digital era, traditional communication methods are no longer able to meet the public's growing demand for information. Therefore, modern technological means can be made use of, such as the Internet and mobile devices, to build a broader platform for the dissemination of Cantonese songs with ancient poems. For example, webcasting and short videos can be used to enable more people to understand and appreciate Cantonese songs with ancient poems. The dissemination of Cantonese songs with classical poems and lyrics needs to focus on the excavation of cultural connotations. Classical poems and songs often contain deep cultural connotations and humanistic spirit, which is their unique charm. In the process of dissemination, their cultural connotations need to dug deep into and let more people understand their historical, cultural and artistic values through explanation and interpretation. This will not only raise people's awareness of and interest in ancient poems and Cantonese songs, but also promote the inheritance and development of Chinese culture.

The dissemination of ancient poems and Cantonese songs also needs to be combined with modern aesthetic demands. As times change, people's aesthetic needs are also changing. Therefore, appropriate innovations and

developments to make ancient poems and Cantonese songs more in line with the aesthetic demands of modern people need to be implemented. For example, ancient poems and Cantonese songs can be combined with modern music elements through adaptation and fusion, to create more modern and fashionable works. This will not only attract more young people's attention and love but also inject new vitality into the inheritance and development of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics.

5. Conclusion

With the change of time, the dissemination of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics is facing a series of new requirements and challenges. Currently, in the context of new media, there is a relative lack of dissemination paths, a lack of content, and a lack of creativity. To address these problems, this paper proposes the following communication strategies:

- (1) Actively broaden the communication channels and increase public awareness of Cantonese songs by combining them with popular social software;
- (2) Optimize the relevant mechanisms and use the planning and institutional support of the government departments to achieve the effective inheritance and dissemination of Cantonese songs in society.

As the core cultural symbols of the Cantonese-speaking region, Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics are of great significance to the inheritance and promotion of Cantonese culture. In the face of the current communication challenges, improvements need to be made in terms of expanding audience groups, innovating communication channels, and promoting creativity and innovation. Looking ahead, with the advancement of technology and the development of new media, the dissemination of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics will usher in more opportunities and challenges. Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics will continue to promote innovation so that they can shine even brighter in the current of the new era.

Emphasizing the importance of Cantonese culture in enhancing young people's cultural identity in the Cantonese-speaking region is of great strategic significance in promoting cultural integration and collaborative development in the region. Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics are a fusion of two cultural elements, namely Cantonese and ancient poems and lyrics, and play an important role in enhancing the identification of the youth with the regional culture of Cantonese. It not only transmits the Cantonese language but also enriches the cultural heritage of the Cantonese people. In recent years, the Chinese government has promulgated several policies and measures for the protection of traditional culture. For example, the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) puts forward the important spirit of 'promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture.' This strategic direction signals that art forms with deep historical and cultural heritage, such as ancient poems and Cantonese songs, will receive wider attention and be sung in the future. Therefore, the study of Cantonese songs with ancient poems and lyrics is of great significance in strengthening the cultural ties of the Cantonese-speaking region.

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