

18th ASIAN Games and Indonesian's Nationalism

1st Anirotul Qoriah
Faculty of Sport Science
Universitas Negeri Semarang
 Semarang, Indonesia
 anirotulqoriah@mail.unnes.ac.id

2nd Aftina Nurul Husna
Faculty of Psychology and Humanities
Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang
 Magelang, Indonesia
 anhusna@ummgl.ac.id

Abstract— 18th ASIAN Games which was held in Jakarta and Palembang, Indonesia was phenomenal for Indonesian public. It was considered as an achievement for the nation and gained international praise for its execution. This multi-sport event appeared to be multi-facet not only as a stage for the competing athletes but also as festival of culture and exhibition of potentials of Indonesia. This paper discusses the social impact of an international sport event to the host country as it serves as a tool to boost the sense of nationalism. Using qualitative method, an observation was conducted to social media users' conversations and comments in regard of the event, specifically around its closing ceremonies. Data were analyzed using content analysis technique. It is found that public's sense of nationalism is expressed by positive perception toward the event as successful and unifying Indonesian people, feeling pride and respect toward the nation regarding its collective effort, cultural diversity, and sport achievement, and increasing trust to government as well as optimism to the future. In conclusion, 18th ASIAN Games has significant contribution to people nationalism, however it is considered only temporary and may faded without real actions to improve conditions of the country.

Keywords—18th Asian Games, Indonesian's nationalism, sociology of sport

I. INTRODUCTION

Among concerns on sociology of sport is that sport in 21st century increasingly goes beyond individual physicality. Sport is more than physical activity, but also about the interactions within sport social networks and the institutions that regulate sport, such as sport associations, government, health systems, and economy. How successful a sport is not defined only by championship and healthiness, but also the advantages it gives for community. That is why sport also holds social purposes, often obviously following government political and economic agenda. Another important aspect of sport is the event becomes international, such as Olympic Games, Asian Games and ASEAN Games. Sport events have potential to generate great social impacts where participants and spectators represent and manifest various nationalities. Championship is acknowledged to individual athletes as well as the nation.

Sport increasingly involves spectators and viewers and media facilitates sport more and more. Media delivers news report and broadcast the matches in real-time. In digital era nowadays, the influence of online social media is apparent as space for people to talk about sport events. As reported in media, FIFA World Cup 2018 can attract about 1.12 billion

people around the world mainly through television. Some millions people watched the program through digital platforms. Netizens also engaged themselves with the World Cup using social media application such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. They used the apps to discuss players, national teams, the tournament, brand sponsors, etc. The topics of discussions in social media could inform about the mind of sport fans and viewers and what they concern most.

Two phenomena in sociology of sport briefly portrayed above –nationality and the role of media– may have link deserved to study, to deepen our understanding about how sport contribute to society. As sport becomes instrument of civil community, media provides space for social interaction and socialization of values, especially which is preferred by government in managing a nation. This paper aimed to study the case that happen in Indonesia regarding 18th Asian Games, an international sport event, which was held in Indonesia in 2018, to see the relationship between media engagement and people' nationalism. Does hosting such big event contribute to public sense of nationalism? Does watching the event has certain contribution it?

A. Nation and Nationalism

Some views suggested that nationalism is becoming obsolete as result of globalization [1]. However when sport becomes global and international sport events become popular, sense of nationalism may trigger anti-globalization. In many countries, sport becomes tool for regimes as a nation-building strategy and to gain respect and legitimacy from global community [2].

Nation state contributes to the development of sport through the ideology of nationalism [3]. Sense of nationalism triggers domestic solidarity to spectate national players. It is behind strong motivation to be the champion among athletes i.e. to build international prestige for the country they represent. The most emotional moment during a match is often related to the nation: in medal ceremonies where national flag is waving and national anthems is played. In the context of sport, sense of nationalism is expressed through two things: the presence of national ambition and certain sport to be called national sport [3] for example, football as the sport of European and badminton for Indonesia. In many cases, nationalism has been a major driving force in sports development [3], but vice versa the development and achievement in sports may be a driving force for nationalism with the help of media.

Nationalism is a political ideology rooted in the concept of nation. A nation refers to a large group of people organized under a government and in a certain territory. They are people who share common history, origins, customs, and language. Nationalism is a political belief with concern in emphasizing the goals of the nation rather than international goals and often expressed through devotion to the interest of the nation-state. This definition corresponds with the idea suggested by Anderson [4] that nationalism is a sense of being tied to visions and hopes for the future of the nation. The orientation of nationalism is to act in the present on a common project for the benefit of the nation in the future, while the common project has to be made a strong living reality [4].

In other source, nationalism is related to sense of national identity and patriotism. Perceptions that the world is divided into nations naturally establish distinction between the in-group, people of the nation, and the foreigners, those from other community. This perception becomes foundation of national identity which is a degree to which a person feels himself as member of a nation [5]. Patriotism is a deep feeling of affective attachment to the nation, a degree of love and pride in one's nation. Patriotism is also a sense of national loyalty, a love of national symbol such as emblem, flag, anthem, and head of state, and beliefs about the nation superiority [6].

Based on the accounts above, how sport contributes to nationalism should be defined by the ability of sport event induces the sense of nationalism. The sense of nationalism itself is consisted of the sense of national identity, patriotism, and common project oriented to certain national ambition in the future.

B. Sport and Nationalism

International sport events mostly have something to do with sense of nationalism. Phenomenon of sport and nationalism is well described by Archetti [7] in the context of FIFA World Cup for example. Polakovic expressed that the international event is the manifestation of the national where each person participating is part of a nation. Nationality is attached to every individual and forms his personality [7]. The national team represents the best of a nation and thus is protected and prided by the nation.

As suggested by Archetti [7] and Tomlinson and Young [8], the sociality of sport is made possible by the consolidation of transnational media network which grow rapidly with technological advancement and expansion sport in globalization era. Sport competition held in international level is usually called mega-sport events due to its high profile and large scale as well as global significance culturally, economically, and politically. It is intensively broadcasted by media and popularly attracts millions views around the world [8].

Sport becomes cultural and economic commodity, and is politically exploited. How sport event influences people's sense of nationalism indicates political dimension of sport. The nature of mega-sport event is multi-dimensional and multi-functional. From sociological standpoint, mega-sport event serves as stage for collective achievement exhibition and provides moment for sharing and belonging experiences [8].

Hosting mega-sport event consequently gives a lot of significances. For example, it promotes community building, modern urban development, and formation of collective identity as a nation. The events may serve as powerful social medium for authorities or governments to spread messages to people about imagination and hope for their country ideally should be in the future in comparison to other countries [8].

Hosting mega-sport event considerably becomes part of nation building process. Sport becomes symbol which is useful for constructing narratives and discourse about people's character, culture, and historical trajectory in the future. Sport achievements, regarding the competition itself or capability to manage the mega-event, contribute to nation's sense of greatness, unification, and identification. Nationalism induced by sport events can be observed from conversation and discussion of people who watch it or spectators [8]. This interaction can be easily found now in various platforms of online social media. Nevertheless, media does not only give space for people to talk, but also deliver messages through broadcasting sport live event. Media has a huge contribution in cultivating a shared national consciousness among people watching [8].

Relationship between international or mega sport events and nationalism is frequently studied. Different facets of nationalism in various countries and geographical regions are captured. In Arab world, Henry, Amara, and Al Tauqy [11] discussed about complex relation between Arab nationalism and Pan-Arab Games. Pan-Arab Games holds by League of Arab Nations aiming to give space for Arab people to express their cultural unity or Arab nationalism. However, difficulty rises as there is no consensus for what is to be called Arab; if it is ethno-cultural identity, geographical division, or philosophy of multiculturalism and universalism. Arab world are torn for example by continuous conflict between Arab countries with Israel. This causes Pan-Arab Games faces difficulty to achieve its purpose of unification of Arab people.

In Korean peninsula, Cho [10] discussed the use of sport as instrument for political propaganda of North Korean government. Despite its isolation, North Korea regularly participates in various international sport competitions and invites international athletes to visit the country. Sport is North Korea has mission to create communist individuals and to prepare people for work and national defense by popularizing sport in daily basis. Through sport, healthy and strong people would defend the country. How sport is politically exploited is apparent. In South Korea, sport event were utilized by government to serve various reasons from time to time [12]. In early decades of the country, sport event were held to divert people from political issue and to assert superiority to North Korea. "Physical strength is national power" was advocated as national slogan which is pretty similar to North Korea's patriotism. Spirit to beat North Korea was never ceased. Hosting international sport event became an agenda to prove economic success and to gain global recognition as a leading country not only in the peninsula, but also in Asia, especially in relation with Japan.

In American context, Buffington [13] studied American nationalism in relation with sport. This case is unique because

sport is pretty neglected topic to American public. Sport is considered only giving a little significance to national identity so that mega event like World Cup gains ambivalence public response. The reason for this phenomenon lies in American national sport style which is not favoring football due to the country political and cultural history. This study gives an insight that mega-sport event is not always related to sense of nationalism.

Indonesia has relatively similar pattern of sport event utilization as political tool to promote nationalism [14]. Indonesia has history hosting a mega-sport event, 4th Asian Games 1962 in Jakarta. To a newborn Asian nation, ability to hosting such event is achievement. Through the event, Indonesia did not only begin to adopt modern sport management and international athletic standards, but also establish national identity and self-esteem. The game became symbol of breaking West countries hegemony, indicating ideological goal of sport. Hosting the game was mainly politically driven and consumed much economic resources, however it succeed intensifying national sentiment and bringing significant sociocultural changes. For example, 4th Asian Game forced government to build sport facilities and the host city, Jakarta. A sport stadium, Gelanggang Olahraga (Gelora) Bung Karno, is part of the legacy of 4th Asian Game.

Nationalism is differently cultivated in various countries and sport does not always become its instrument. In countries where sport becomes tools for increasing and maintaining nationalism, it is able to do so because sport has potential to gain mass attention and direct people to focus on one same purpose at the same time. However, it does not guarantee success because of the influence of greater contextual factors like dynamic of regional politic, culture, history, and the meaning of sport being broadcasted to people collectively.

C. *Object of Recent Study*

After 18th Asian Games, this topic has not yet been explored in sport science. So far, the impact of 18th Asian Games is only seen from economic and law perspective as in Ningrum et al. [15] and Ariningsih et al. [16].

This research continues previous research conducted by Lutan [14] regarding how sport event influence Indonesian spirit of nationalism. The difference is Lutan [14] studied the case of 4th Asian Games 1962 which was held in Soekarno's Old Order era. In this study, we focus on the impact of 18th Asian Games 2018 which was held in Reformation Era. The socio-political situations and public demands are completely different. The previous event was held when Indonesia was still a very young and poor whilst several separatist groups rebelled and the country was divided by conflicting political ideologies. The later was held when Indonesia is more mature and economically stronger, and public expects a brighter future that Indonesia will become a developed country and be respected by the international community. Public expressions are expected to be different.

This research thus will add in literature about how international sport event can influence public sense of nationality and especially, how it would benefit sport in Indonesia. This study may inform government, society, sport

management, athletes, as well as academicians in this area about how influential sport in affecting social changes and how useful it is to promote progressive movement.

II. METHODS

This research used descriptive qualitative approaches to answer research questions. The source of data is conversation in comment section in Youtube video of the closing ceremony of 18th Asian Games 2018 in Indonesia. The video was chosen because it is the culmination of the event for Indonesian public. The ceremony was held after Indonesian public were informed that the country achieved fourth place in medal acquisition and the event was so successful exhibiting Indonesians' potential to international public in event management, cultural diversity and richness, and finally, sport achievement. The video is a recording of the ceremony, uploaded in January 4, 2019, about four month after the event. The video has duration of 2 hours 19 minutes and been viewed more than six hundred thousand times. It gained more than seventeen thousand likes and more than two thousand comments.

The data in form of viewers' comments were downloaded and selected by its degree of significance. The main criterion used is the relevance to the sport event. Researcher excluded: first, comments which contain only exclamation while lacking main focus regarding the sport event; second, discussions focused on the musical concert and the singers or bands performing in the stage during the event; and third, comments written in English which may indicate that the writer is not Indonesian. As results, only about a half of the comments were used for further analysis. Researcher used the technique of content analysis to examine the data. First, researcher read the comment one by one and then grouped them based on the similarity of topic of the sentence. Second, researcher examined the main theme of the comments in the groups. Third, researcher described the findings and constructed an explanation on how sport event contributes on sense of nationalism.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Description of Background Context*

The 18th Asian Games was held again in Indonesia, on August-September 2018 in two cities, Jakarta and Palembang. The pan-Asia multi-sport game was considered more spectacular than the previous. There were 45 countries competing with more than 11.000 athletes participating. It cost about US\$3.2 billion to prepare the game, mostly to build sport infrastructures such as sport venues and construction of mass transportation facilities.

The question interested to be proposed is did 18th Asian Games also give social impact to Indonesian nationalism like the previous one? Both events are held in different era of Indonesia and with different background story. While the first one cannot be separated from Indonesian first president, Ir. Soekarno, leadership of a new nation and a vision of a new world order [14], the second one for some extent is merely luck. Indonesia replaced Vietnam as the original host country that withdrew itself due to economic consideration and lack of

experience conducting international sport event. The second game was held during the tenure of Ir. Joko Widodo, Indonesian seventh president which focuses much on infrastructure development and economic growth while struggle against the issue of terrorism, poverty, corruption, and lack of national achievement in world competition, especially in sport arena.

Despite of its hundreds millions people, vast territory, and rich natural resources, Indonesia is not leading in sport achievement. Indonesia falls behind countries like China, United States of America, and even Singapore in South East Asia region. For years, Indonesian sport must face problems like tight budget, corruption in sport management, and weak youth system, cadre training, and sport education. Effort to bring back glory days of Indonesian in world competition seems pointless when, prior to 18th Asian Games, Indonesian sport achievement touch its lowest level in South East Asia. Indonesia was only in fifth position in 29th SEA Games, Malaysia 2017. Indonesian public was pretty disappointed by this fact and challenged government for improvement. When Indonesia hosting Asian Games was announced, it turned to be public gambling of the results. People did not dare to target high achievement and showed doubt to government. That is why when the games' results and event management were outstanding (Indonesia got fourth place after China, Japan, and South Korea) and praised by other countries around the world, it was shocking and rising public awareness of Indonesian potentials in sport and event management.

B. Public Perception of 18th Asian Games 2018

Almost Indonesian public perceive the process and results of 18th Asian Games 2018 for Indonesia as the host of the international sport event is very positive. The event management is considered spectacular, highly festive, and world class so that people see the event as successful and the best event in the world sport. Public seems very well informed that the 18th Asian Games is an ambitious project in a very short time of preparation and previously is expected to fail. The fact that the event was opened, carried out, and closed gloriously and gained worldwide compliment, people are somewhat shocked.

A user said, *"What makes us a successful host country was that in very limited time for preparation, we could carry it out well. Thanks God we have GBK [Gelora Bung Karno] and Jakabaring in Palembang. About the festivity, almost all events were very festive. That is why OCA [Olympic Council of Asia] president was so happy because it was unexpected. Maybe he was somehow a little bit anxious if the event is successful or not."*

Some people bragged that 18th Asian Games 2018 was the best event in the world. It had the best opening and closing ceremony ever and was perfect due to the cultural diversity theme it held. The event was the best present in 2018 from Indonesia to the world.

C. Perceived Impact of 18th Asian Games 2018

People watched the event, either live or from television or Youtube video, are in consensus that the event has a very great

impact for them personally. The event was considered historical and memorable/ unforgettable. The execution was so cool and precious. It is once in a life time. That is why some people wanted to show this event to their children sometime in the future and bragged that for some moment they are part of Indonesian history. They wanted their children to watch this, the biggest achievement of Indonesia.

A user said, *"Tomorrow, our children and grandchildren should know that Indonesia had ever hosted the biggest Asian sport event."*

18th Asian Games 2018 is not only precious by the memory it given to people, but also its social impact perceived by public. The event unified people of Indonesia despite of different background in ethnic, religion, and political preference. This impact was very well perceived and become most popular topic. The impact is not limited to Indonesian, but also nations throughout Asia which live in diversity.

A user said, *"Despite of Indonesian political strife which makes Indonesia looked bad, at least Asian Games 2018 could unify us and makes Indonesian people feel proud."*

"I miss Asian Games 2018 where Indonesian people were united despite of ethnicity, race, religion, and groups, and politic."

The moment where Indonesians united are source of positive emotions, such as happiness and pride. It gave optimism and hope that Indonesia can be better.

D. Emotions during 18th Asian Games 2018

Several emotions were identified as expressed by 18th Asian Games 2018 viewers after watching the event: pride to Indonesian identity/ respect to the nation, being emotionally touched/ shed tears of joy, thrilled, excited/ happy, awe, and love for the nation. Among those emotions, the first three, pride/ respect, feeling touched, and thrilled are the most reported.

Pride and respect were the most dominant felt by people. The reason is clear; 18th Asian Games 2018 was so glorious and considered as proof that Indonesia is a great country, acknowledged by the world, and has capability to achieve great thing. People said that they were so proud to Indonesia, to be Indonesian, and to Indonesian culture, because finally they saw great achievement. Indonesia seemed to mobilize all human capital, from athletes, creative workers, and even military men to perform. For some people, those indicate how strong Indonesia as a country.

"The Asian tiger [Indonesia] begins to wake up," said a user.

"I don't know what to say, I just feel so proud as Indonesian. Thank you for always giving the best to the world. I am sad because the event has been already over, but this pride will become story for our children and grandchildren in the future. I am proud to be Indonesian."

The feeling of pride is accompanied with being emotionally touched to the point where people shed tears of joy. Some people directly watched the event in the stadium, while some

other watched it through Youtube. They felt amazed, astonished. They were so impressed by the hard work of the athletes, volunteers, and artists. They were touched when national anthem, “Indonesia Raya” was played and perceived as sacred. They felt thrilled.

“I don’t know why I always cry out of joyance watching Asian Games. I feel so proud as Indonesian for being able to show achievement and Indonesian culture to the world.”

“Always the last moment makes me cry. This is my country, Indonesia, be the best. Indonesia will always be the best. I am proud as Indonesian child. Indonesia, you can!”

These emotional experiences show how intense the event affects Indonesians. Some people re-watched the video for nostalgia of the great event and every time they experience the same thrill. They wished to experience this again.

“I am sad when will Asian Games come back to Indonesia? When will Indonesia host it again?”

E. Acknowledgement after 18th Asian Games 2018

For the success of 18th Asian Games 2018 hosted by Indonesia, people congratulated INASGOC (Indonesia Asian Games 2018 Organizing Committee) and Indonesian government. They expressed thank especially for Indonesian president, Mr. Joko Widodo, for his effort to make the event successful. Only in his tenure, Indonesia drastically improved the sport achievement from only 14th place in the past to be 4th and increase public sense of nationalism. It was regarded as incredible. The success of Asian Games is the success of the president.

“Thanks, Mr. Jokowi for your honesty, optimism, and genuineness in leadership. You are a hard worker who wills to check the ground every day. I am very proud. Now Indonesia is respected by the world...”

F. Future Expectations

All positive perception and emotion as well as benefits people experienced after 18th Asian Games, undoubtedly made people expect something bigger in the future. They were dared to dream big that someday Indonesia would host other global sport events like Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, and MotoGP. The dream was so strong so that people claimed Indonesia is ready to host Olympic Games 2032. They wished Indonesia becomes the fourth Asian country that host Olympic Games after Japan, South Korea, and China.

“It is remarkable seeing all athletes’ enthusiasm and spirit even though the day is raining. I miss Asian Games. May Indonesia become host of Olympic.”

However this claim is considered to have no strong basis by and only driven by emotion. Some people have skepticism and they criticize some aspects of 18th Asian Games 2018. First, it is about Indonesians’ mentality who still lack of proper attitude or etiquette in interacting with people from other countries. Second, Indonesians are well-known for their lack of concern to keep the sport venues and infrastructure built for Asian Games. Third, Indonesia is not suitable for hosting Olympic Games because Indonesia refuses to accept Israel. Lastly, 2032

is still so long and nobody knows who will lead Indonesia in the future.

G. Discussion

In the context of sport, Indonesian nationalism is indicated by three aspects: sense of national identity, patriotism, and collective ambition. Sense of national identity is seen from how strong a person feels themselves as a member of Indonesia nation. Patriotism is about whether an Indonesian loves his country and feels proud or believes in Indonesia superiority. Collective ambition is shown from the presence of collective national goals for the goodness of Indonesia. From the results above, we can see that for some extent, 18th Asian Games contributes to the rise of Indonesian nationalism. However, it is only for the first and second aspect of nationalism.

Watching 18th Asian Games increases sense of national identity and patriotism in many Indonesians. The expression stating “I love Indonesia” or “I am proud to be Indonesian” have reasons behind it. It originates from the fact that the event was a huge success. Compliment from world community for Indonesia as host country strengthens positive perception and attitude toward the event. The event is considered very beneficial for people unity and affects people heart deeply. It becomes history of Indonesia denoting its power, capacity, potentials, and influence. It becomes collective memory of millions of Indonesian and is shared to next generations.

However, the interesting question here is what would people possibly do if the event was a failure and Indonesia lacked medals? Do they still feel the same? Probably not, instead it would be a public embarrassment. Answering these questions gives insightful idea that increasing nationalism may not due to the event itself and the fact that Indonesia is the host country, but the achievement. Without achievement there will be no appreciation, pride, and respect. This explanation makes sense why many people thank for INASGOC and government because without their great effort, public will not watch the spectacular event in their life time.

Positive evaluation lead people to dream and expect more that Indonesia might suitable and capable for other world event such as Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup. However, this tends to be only wishes. Nationalism demands public collective ambition to achieve national goals and this is not well expressed by netizens. People’s positive attitude toward sport is needed but it is not necessary condition for organizing world sport event. Instead, Indonesia needs strong leadership, better sport infrastructure support, financial capacity, and appropriate mentality more. Considering these aspects, constructive skepticism is reasonable as part of sense of nationalism. Some people argue that Indonesia must carefully prepare and Indonesian must change their negative behavior to meet higher international standards.

This research support previous notions that media has great role in socializing sport event [9, 10]. In digital era, sport is not only reported through television and newspaper, but broadcasted through various digital platforms, for example online newspaper and YouTube video. It is greatly penetrative and affecting millions viewer and can be repeatedly watched as long as the record available in the channel. This technological

advancement spread the political and social messages faster, broader and longer. If nationalism is depended on how intensive sport event and the messages are received by public as audience, the use of digital platform may be determining factor. It is indicated in this research investigating the conversation of a thousand people while viewing the video of 18th Asian Games closing ceremony. The event still gives thrill even months after it was held.

Triandafyllidou [7] and Huddy and Khatib [8] stated that nationalism is about three things: the sense of national identity, patriotism, and common project orientation. These are evident in the results of this research. Sense of national identity and patriotism are apparent through people sayings that the success of the sport event is attributed to all Indonesian as a united nation. People said that they love Indonesian, and they are proud to be Indonesian and what they are capable do together. However, it seems lacking on the aspect of common project orientation. People are dreaming that Indonesia should host other international/ mega sport events in the future because the recent achievement has proved Indonesian potentials. This expression is not enough to be considered as common project oriented to certain national ambition in the future. There is still no national action to achieve further greatness in sport after the event whereas the common project has to be made a strong living reality [6].

Therefore, it is suggested that international sport event as watched through YouTube only influence people' nationalism in individual level, i.e. positive perception and strong emotions. It needs more to translate people positive motivation into favorable action and in this matter, government intervention in form of programs is necessary.

This research only used limited data from social media. In reality, how sport influence people sense of nationalism can be examined through various sources of data such as news articles and interview and used quantitative research methods. It is recommended that future research approaches this issue using different method so that we gain better picture about the dynamic between sport and nationalism. Also, the influence of event is not long lasting. The greatness of the event firstly impacts people emotionally and as time goes, the emotion is slowly faded so that people have only memory about it. However, this problem can be prevented if the event is followed with programs that remind people to their ambition for a greater sport achievement. In this case, government policy is needed to regulate sport education/ training in community.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Preserving the nation needs continuous efforts to maintain nationalism among people. Sport event and competition may function as media to achieve this goal. However, it is not always successful. It depends on how people perceive the event if successful or not and how government responds to it with appropriate sport programs and improvements. Positive perception and emotions toward 18th Asian Games 2018 are valuable, but criticism from people should be taken into consideration seriously and translated into real program related to sport: maintaining good governance and economic growth for example through developing sport tourism [17, 18],

improving sport infrastructure, improving sport education for new generation of athletes, and educating people to behave in accordance to sport ethics.

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