

# Historical Empathy Learning Model for Strengthening Character Education 2013 Curriculum

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**Abstract**—This paper discusses and proposes *Historical Empathy* as a learning model in studying Indonesian history. The research was conducted as a response to the demand of the revised edition of Curriculum 2013 policy about the need to strengthen character education. The aim of this paper is to introduce *Historical Empathy* as an effort to strengthen character education through the study of history. The discussion and offer of *Historical Empathy* is obtained through literature study, from which conceptual framework and the learning model of *Historical Empathy* are proposed in the study of Indonesian history. The learning model is expected to be implemented by the practitioners of history education (teacher dan lecturer) in building the students' character by instilling important behavioral values from the studied historical figures. Through this

learning model, students are cognitively and affectively exposed to stories of a number of prominent figures so that they can contextualize the life experience of historical figures learned. The strengthening of historical empathy to the learners is trained through three aspects, namely historical contextualization, historical perspective taking and affective connection with the past. The learning model *Historical Empathy* is done in four phases: introduction, investigation, display, and reflection. Students are invited to explore the contexts and perspectives of a history of historical figures and are affectively connected to the life experiences of the historical figures.

**Keywords**—*historical empathy, historical contextualization, historical perspectives taking, affective relations with the past, learning model, historical learning*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The revision of the 2013 curriculum is the answer to the challenges of today's fast-paced and paradigmatic changes based on the spirit of sustainable development. The revision of the 2013 curriculum has impacted on the rearrangement of national education through the strengthening of character education as the deepest dimension of students' learning competence. Teachers are required to realize character education in learning, including in the learning of history. The following issue is how to realize the strengthening of character education in the learning of history in

accordance with the demands of the 2013 curriculum.

History teachers recognize that the values of character can be very potentially developed in the learning of history as it has usually been written in the lesson plan. However, the implementation of this plan is not maximal, partly because teachers more focus on the mastery of lessons, so that potential behavioral characters from the lessons are not maximally learned. Therefore, the implementation of character education in history learning needs to get serious attention and becomes the priority for history teachers, one of which is through the

introduction of the concept of historical empathy and its learning model. There have been limited literature studies on the potential of historical empathy as a learning model to achieve the realization of character education in history learning in Indonesia.

This study focuses on literature studies and explores the conceptual study of historical empathy, the learning model of historical empathy, and the examples of its application in the study of Indonesian history in accordance with the demands of the 2013 curriculum. This is important because the concept of historical empathy has not been popular in Indonesia [1], let alone known and trained to students by history teachers. Historical empathy is the entrance to dive and internalize exemplary characters of the historical figures historical figures which is studied. Hence, history teachers are expected not only to focus on the completeness of the lessons but also to prioritize the learning of characters through the application of historical empathy learning model.

### 1. Reviews of Literature

The study of the concept of historical empathy has been widely studied in various literatures abroad. In Indonesia, however, it remains very difficult to discover the references about the study. Experts and practitioners of history education in Indonesia have had little interest in understanding the concept of historical empathy in the teaching of history. This paper primarily refers to the literature from Jason Lee Endacott [2,3,4]. In addition, the researchers also pay attention to other scholars who have discussed the usage of historical empathy in classroom learning, including Yilmas [5], Colby [6], Brooks [7], Jensen [8].

Yilmas [5] examined the concept of historical empathy (definitions, nature and characteristics) of various reviews done by researchers both theoretically and practically and concludes that the term historical empathy is still ambiguous. Therefore, a clearer picture of the components of historical empathy is required in teaching and studying history. Thus, a clearer description of the historical empathy components is not only required [5]

but also needs to be studied and researched theoretically and practically. Colby [6], for example, has designed the inquiry model of historical narrative to stimulate students' empathical perception of some historical figures. Brooks [7] also undertook research to see the impacts of writing assignments on the ability to demonstrate historical empathy. The writing assignment that requires students to articulate the conclusions of historical stories can train their ability to demonstrate historical empathy. Jensen [8] did an action research to develop historical empathy by training students to distinguish the past events from the present ones and to present historical perspectives based on historical sources or evidences. However, the results show that the students experienced difficulties in understanding the historical contexts, making it hard to distinguish the past and the present.

## II. METHOD

The exploration of historical empathy concept and learning model is obtained through literature study. The primary literature used as a reference are articles of Jason Lee Endacott. Three articles from Endacott were referred to in this paper, namely; reconsidering affective engagement in historical empathy (2013); An updated theoretical and practical model for promoting historical empathy (2013); and Negotiating the process of historical empathy (2014), not to mention some other relevant literatures. The literatures referred to in this study are generally obtained through online searches on the internet by utilizing search engine, Google.

Numerous keywords were typed in Google search engine, some of which are historical empathy, historical teaching, and historical learning. Other literatures related to the studies of historical empathy were obtained by looking at references used by Endacott and other authors in their papers. The search focus on the keywords used is intended to get relevant literatures to explore the theoretical study of the historical empathy concept and its application in history learning. These literatures are of significant value to give a new nuance in the practice of history learning in Indonesia. Moreover, the literature search was also

directed to the studies of character education and 2013 curriculum.

The obtained literatures were then read, reviewed and processed in accordance with the objectives of the study, which is exploring studies of the concept of historical empathy, its learning model, and examples of its applicative guidelines in Indonesian history learning for strengthening character education in accordance with the demands of the 2013 curriculum. The results were then presented in form of written report. The report of literature review begins with a discussion of character education in the 2013 curriculum, character education in history learning as well as historical empathy and its learning model.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### a. Character Education in 2013 Curriculum

The 2013 curriculum emphasizes three primary learning competences: attitude, skills and knowledge. The attitude competence consists of spiritual and social attitudes [9]. In its development, attitude competence turns to be the main focus in the revision of the 2013 curriculum in the form of strengthening character education. Character education has been the primary foundation in running the national education system. Character education becomes increasingly urgent considering the severe moral degradation of today's children. The cases of moral depravity are not only happening in society but also in the education environment. On the other hand, Indonesia seeks quality human resources with meritorious characters to support the development of the nation and to face the era of global competition. Through time, the government of Indonesia continues efforts to improve the moral characters and the quality of its human resources by issuing policies on character education. The most popular policy as a manifestation of such vision is regulated in Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 on strengthening character education on September 6, 2017. The PKK character education movement is a part of the larger National Movement of the Mental Revolution and is a continuation of the policy aiming to cultivate the cultural and character education

initiated by the Center of Curriculum Advancement in 2010.

The implementation of character education according to the Presidential Regulation is done through the harmonization of ethics, spiritual and aesthetic state, literacy, and sports for students by educational institutions in cooperation with family and community. The implementation of character education policies in educational institutions is done by integrating them into school subjects. The learning process is aimed at developing religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard-working ethic, creativity, independency, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, love to the homeland, appreciation to achievements, communicativeness, love of peace, reading, environmental and social care, and responsibility. The prioritized values of the character education movement include religion, nationalism, independency, mutual cooperation, and integrity. Teachers design learning materials and methods which instill these values in order to achieve the demands of character education movement.

#### b. Character Education in History Learning

Character education is closely related to history learning because it relates to stories with a lot of exemplary characters. History studies life experiences of past human beings with their own set of values. Character values are reflected in the attitudes, actions, decisions of both individuals and groups learned from the historical learning. A concrete example of this is the way in which ancient human beings live. Ancient humans survived by hunting and moving from one jungle to another. Most of them live in caves to adjust to the challenges of nature. What students can learn from the history of human being in prehistoric era is the spirit to fight in order to survive the challenges of unfriendly nature. Similarly, the younger generation today is also expected to work hard so that they can exist in the midst of changing environment.

The internalization of characters in by the students in history learning has actually been reflected in the learning materials as well as the teaching method used by teachers. The learning

materials of history generally demonstrate struggle, heroism, exemplary attitudes, pioneering, patriotism, nationalism and unyielding spirit that underlies the formation process of students' personality [10]. These values are reflected in the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, decisions, and actions of historical figures response to conditions that they faced in the past. In the Regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture No. 21 of 2016 about the Standard of Contents, it is explained that one of demanded competences after studying history is to understand meanings of a particular historical event and to learn the attitudes and exemplary characters of historical figures in the community. In other words, students are expected to internalize certain exemplary characters from some historical figures and put them into practice in their social life after studying the live experiences of historical people.

Usually, the exemplary values of historical figures are not always explicitly outlined in historical learning material. Students are therefore required to find the values. To do so, they need to empathize with the historical figures. The sense of empathy can be easily cultivated should the students are able to understand the contexts of historical events they learn. The understanding may lead students to be connected to historical atmosphere that influences the person in question. To put it more precisely, students are expected to be able to empathize with the historical figures (Historical Empathy). The concept of historical empathy is an approach to the character education in learning history.

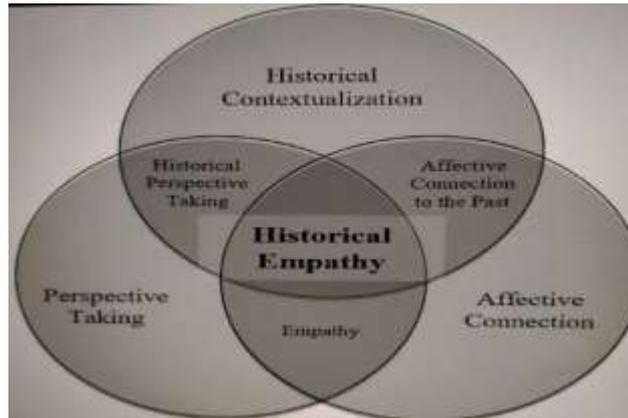
### **c. The Concept of Historical Empathy**

The study of historical empathy has been widely discussed and it has become a new discourse in the study of history since the 1970s. Some scholars define historical empathy as being able to enter the foreign world in the past, as far as possible to regain, and to demonstrate a deep understanding of the past realities [6, 11-13]. In its simple sense, Historical Empathy is interpreted as an affective response to the past as an intellectual effort [14]. Historical empathy is the ability to recognize how the past differs from the present, to distinguish various

perspectives of the past, the perspective of the author, and to defend it with historical evidence [15] [16]. The most recent definition of historical empathy is a process where a person relates cognitively and emotionally to past events or historical figures to better understand comprehensively how people in the past thought, felt, and acted (Dillenburg) [17].

The term historical empathy in the history learning refers to the process of cognitive and affective involvement of students with historical figures in order that students be able to contextualize life experiences, decisions, or actions of studied historical figures [2] [3]. The sense of historical empathy appears if a person manages to position himself in two conditions at once, that is, their own present condition and the condition of others in the past. Historical empathy encompasses two aspects, namely cognitive and affective [18] so-called 'dual processes' [17]. Cognitively, students seek to know and comprehend the perspectives and realities of foreign society in the past. Affectively, on the other hand, students learn "to be concerned with people in the past, what happened to them, and how they experienced their lives".

The coaching of historical empathy requires three interconnected things that apply simultaneously. The first one is historical contextualization, which senses temporal differences, including a deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of a particular period of time and the knowledge of events leading to certain historical situations and other events occurring at the same time. The contextualization considers the sense of difference used by teachers to avoid being trapped in *presentism* [19]. The second one is the usage of perspective that is, understanding one's experiences, principles, positions, attitude, and beliefs in attempt to visualize how people (historical figures) are thinking about the situation in question. The third one is affective relationships, that is, the judgment on the life experiences, situations, or actions of historical figures are influenced by students' affective responses with similar yet different life experiences.



Source: Endacott & Brooks (2013:44); Endacott (2014: 5-6)

Figure 1. The Conceptualization of Historical Empathy

Figure 1 shows the concept of Historical Empathy. To sense the historical empathy, students need to explore historical contexts, have historical perspectives taking and be able to connect affectively with the life experiences of historical figures or groups of people in the past (Endacott, 2013: 46). Historical empathy can be felt by involving oneself as if living in the life of past people with its political, social, and cultural situation (context), but on the other hand, the student should also realize that he lives at the present with different social, political, and cultural conditions (contemporary context). Empathizing with contemporaries (here and now) involves affective relationships, that is, understanding situations faced by others, formed by a cognitive understanding of the person's perspectives and circumstances. The people we empathize with had simultaneous cognitive and affective reactions to the situation they face. Our relationship with them, in turn, should also include both domains (cognitive and affective) in order to better understand their condition. We attempt to understand how they think and feel, and how these two elements shape their response to the situation they face [20] [21] [3]. Sparking historical empathy within students is not an easy job. Teachers must be creative in bringing students as if they were living in the past with all of its historical contexts. In other words, teachers should lead students to be able to provide a historical perspective and connect affectively with the studied historical figures.

#### d. The Learning Model Historical Empathy to Foster Character Education

The application of the concept and learning model of historical empathy is rarely found in Indonesia. This is certainly a new and potential thing to foster character education. In learning history, students attempt to understand the life of people in the past. When studying past people, students tend to imagine themselves as empowered agents to move history [22]. Endacott [3] offered the theoretical historical empathy learning model including its stages of application, and it is recommended that history teachers experiment this model in the learning process. The stages of application include four phases: introduction, investigation, display, and reflection.

##### 1. Introduction

This phase is intended to introduce students to historical situations and/or at the same time certain historical figures with which they are led into historical empathy. Students who develop historical empathy will be able to understand a person's situation which is different from his. This is the process of understanding historical figures by contextualizing their actions [18] [7]. The introduction of historical figures along with the historical context can be done by utilizing learning media relevant to the materials being studied, and it is highly recommended to use authentic and credible historical sources. Teachers facilitate students with different types of resource, documents or other historical

sources to introduce them to moments, situations or historical events [14]. Through the historical sources, students are asked to explore certain background or historical context (historical contextualization). A variety of historical sources can be used, including textbooks, short movie, documentaries, posters, chronicles, photographs, posters, journals, and speeches of the historical characters. By studying the various sources, it is expected that students can begin to imagine and appreciate the historical atmosphere of past events experienced by the figures. The usage relevant films and documents is quite effective ignite the empathic response of the students.

The criteria for selecting historical sources as references to bring up historical empathy should be oriented on those that are able to provide information about the dominant sentiments of a given historical period. Students are directed to explore as much information as possible about the background,

life experiences, beliefs and principles of life of historical figures, such as Sukarno, Moh. Hatta, Tan Malaka, Sjahrir, Soeharto, etc. For instance, students are invited to listen to a recorded speech or documentary of Sukarno delivering speech at the moment of proclamation of Indonesian independence. Students are asked to observe the video carefully.

After watching the documentary films, the students are asked to analyze and discuss the similarities and differences of the historical context between the past and the present. The aim is that students recognize the historical context surrounding the event (the events around of proclamation), and to recognize the figure of Soekarno in those events. There are three aspects used as guidance for learning in the introduction phase. The three aspects (see table 1) contain general questions to bring students to the historical atmosphere surrounding the events experienced by historical figures.

**Table 1**  
**Examples of Questions in Introduction Phase**

Aspect	Questions
Understanding personal similarities and differences between students and historical figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Have you ever made a difficult decision?</li> <li>✓ What made it difficult to decide it?</li> <li>✓ How did you handle the situation?</li> <li>✓ How do you think you are similar or different with the figure, such as Soekarno?</li> <li>✓ Do you think Soekarno is a type of person willing to collaborate with Japan?</li> <li>✓ How do you explain the situation faced by Soekarno at that time?</li> </ul>
Attracting attention to historical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Tell me how Indonesia has changed from the past in a number of fields?</li> <li>✓ Could you explain how pre-independence movement differs from the current movement?</li> <li>✓ What events were taking place during the proclamation of Indonesia independence?</li> </ul>
Emphasizing the importance of historical events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Why do you think Soekarno proclaimed Independence on August 17, 1945?</li> <li>✓ In what ways are Indonesia Independence important?</li> </ul>

**2. Investigation**

This phase aims at inviting students to study the true context of history while exploring the thoughts and actions of historical figures in a particular historical situation by analyzing

the primary and secondary sources relevant to the event. The purpose of this investigative activity is for students to explore in depth the nuances of the historical context regarding the thoughts and feelings of historical figures

involved in certain situations and actions. In this phase, teachers need to clarify that they deliberately select visual and textual sources (usually photos/videos/documents) that allow the students to hear and see the people with whom the teachers want them to empathize [14] [3]. Through this historical source, students are led to understand the socio-cultural, economic and political situation during that period.

The common outcome of historical empathy is a reconstruction of one's beliefs, values and goals [23]. Students who are given a variety of historical sources in the study of certain historical figures are able to show historical empathy better than those who only use textbooks as a source of history. Consequently, teachers should provide variation of sources to spark students' sense of empathy with certain historical figures. Endacott [2] suggests that primary sources such as journals, letters or speeches of historical figures are most effective in leading students to comprehend how historical figures made certain decisions and did particular actions. Teachers must be selective on the best sources that can ignite historical empathy. They should also be creative in presenting them by extracting the essence from reading materials, selecting a particular quote, and editing videos to present relevant and significant materials for tracing the historical atmosphere that influences the

thoughts and actions of the historical figure so that the students can dive into and connect with the historical atmosphere. Learning activities in the investigation phase can be done in various ways, such as observation (watching videos), listening to the speeches of historical figures, reading literature, and discussion.

Teachers need to take an active role to support students in the process of 'searching' by complementing written sources with oral material and visual sources, giving useful vocabulary, doing repetition for slow learners, and asking students to provide different angles through more challenging questions [24] [3]. At this stage, students are expected to analyze in a more detailed manner the historical atmosphere during historical events, contemplating the thoughts, characters, attitudes, beliefs, decisions and actions of historical figures in response to the situation they faced. They are encouraged to understand why people in the past thought a particular idea or acted something, and ultimately try to give their own perspective. Such perspective acquisition can serve to train their ability to explain historical events [22]. Thus, at the end, students are able to provide a historical point of view of historical figures and events. The following are examples of questions to be discussed in the learning activities of the investigative phase.

**Table 2**  
**Examples of Questions in Investigation Phase**

Aspect	Questions
General investigative questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Does this source (photo, video, documentary) tell you how historical figures think of the situations they face?</li> <li>✓ What does this source tell you about the feelings of historical figures at that time?</li> <li>✓ Can you relate the feelings with similar events you experienced in your life?</li> <li>✓ How are they similar or different?</li> <li>✓ Do you think we can really understand how they felt? Why not?</li> <li>✓ What does it mean to you?</li> </ul>
Specific questions about documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What can you learn from this document (documentary)?</li> <li>✓ How is the past portrayed in the documentary?</li> <li>✓ How would people living in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century be likely to respond to this documentary?</li> </ul>

Important questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Why did Soekarno-Hatta proclaim Independence during World War II?</li> <li>✓ How did Soekarno-Hatta resist pressures from different parties regarding the proclamation?</li> </ul>
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### 3. Display

The display phase is an exercise and an opportunity for the students to sense historical empathy after they have been aware of the experiences of historical figures with all of their historical contexts. Students present their arguments and conclusions both orally and in writing to what has been studied and discussed in the investigation phase about the experience, actions, beliefs, values, decisions and actions of historical figures. In this phase, students are given space to synthesize their own knowledge about historical context and perspective and their affective relations to the past (to historical figures and events).

Performing historical empathy requires that learners contextualize their statements by referring to historical evidence or sources. Students are commonly asked to express historical empathy through writing [3] in the form of a structured essay (historical essay) or verbal presentation. For example, students express their point of view about Sukarno's attitude and actions on events surrounding proclamations and provide logical arguments based on the historical evidences they observed from aired documentary. The essay encourages aired to write accurate, factual statements supported by existing historical evidences.

Another alternative activity in this phase is a debate role play in which students play the role as a historical figure, for example, Sukarno. The role play debate greatly helps students to compare between different historical perspectives. This is supported by the condition under which students should act according to the circumstances surrounding given event such as the proclamation. Another variation is in the form of reportage. In this activity, a student acts as Sukarno and the other acts as a reporter. Both are involved in an interview activity. The student who acts as a reporter asks his friend to explain what may

have been experienced, felt, wanted and believed in the proclamation. Students are then expected to be able to understand the thoughts, actions and attitudes of Sukarno according to the historical atmosphere he experienced.

### 4. Reflection

This phase is intended to guide learners to find similar historical situations which can help explain present-day problems. For instance, students are led to think of today's nation disintegration problem and discover a similar example in the past. As an example to illustrate this, the case of *Republik Maluku Selatan* of the Old Order Era is somewhat similar to the case of today's *Operasi Papua Merdeka*. Students are challenged to illustrate the similarities and differences between the past and the present in such case of nation disintegration. In addition, students can also be invited to reflect on the similarities and differences in Indonesian life before and after the proclamation of independence. From this activity, they are expected to appreciate the differences in historical contexts of the present and the past.

A reflection phase is necessary if the ultimate goal of building a historical empathy has been achieved. Reflection focuses on guiding learners to use their understanding of the past events for examining the changes and sustainability of the past in form of thoughts, emotions, and actions in the present. Furthermore, the reflection phase also focuses on encouraging students to develop deep awareness of the needs of others and consequently turning them into an 'agent' that will respond to those needs. They should be encouraged to morally assess some aspects of the past and to express an opinion on current actions [18] [3]. Historical empathy allows students to see themselves and historical figures as potential agents of change. Teachers need to deliberately create a space for students to express their reactions to historical events, establish moral judgments, and use these

responses to motivate action in the present [3]. The ultimate goal of historical empathy is for students to understand that past and present ideas are the products of historical context. To achieve this, teachers need to open opportunities

for reflection. The following table presents some examples of questions that can be used as reference for learning activities in the reflection phase.

**Tabel 3**  
**Examples of Questions in Reflection Phase**

Aspect	Questions
Inspiring reflection on present context of perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How does proclamation shape the way Indonesia thinks of independence at present?</li> <li>✓ In what ways are perspectives of past people similar or different with the current perspectives?</li> <li>✓ What factors influence these differences?</li> <li>✓ What do you think about the continuous changes of historical situations?</li> </ul>
Contemplating the similarities between the past and the present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How is massive workers dismissal during the New Order Era similar or different with that of Reformation Era in Indonesia?</li> <li>✓ What are the causes of massive workers dismissal during the Reformation era?</li> <li>✓ What are the causes of massive workers dismissal during the New Order era?</li> </ul>
Demanding moral judgment and tendency to act for the sake of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Do you believe that Soekarno-Hatta really want to collaborate with Japan? Why not?</li> <li>✓ What difficulties are faced by Soejarno-Hatta at that time?</li> <li>✓ Why is it important to study the lives of past people?</li> <li>✓ How do we determine what is right or wrong in the past and at present?</li> <li>✓ Can something be said right in the past but wrong today?</li> </ul>

The reflection phase is the last phase in the application of historical empathy learning model. The main target of this learning model is to induce a sense of historical empathy of the students in understanding and appreciating the historical figures and events as history learning takes place. Through historical empathy, students are expected to find exemplary values from the historical figures and events being studied. Exemplary values of historical figures are characters that emanate from their personality. Exemplary values of any kind learned from historical figures are decent value to be internalized by the students. The values include courage, responsibility, willing to sacrifice, love the homeland, persistence, commitment, cooperation, and independence.

**IV. CONCLUSIONS**

One of the emphases in the revision of 2013 curriculum in 2017 is character education.

Strengthening character education in historical learning can be implemented through the concept and learning model of historical empathy. Historical empathy learning model requires students to understand historical contexts, make historical perspectives taking and affective connections with historical figures and events. There are four stages in the implementation of historical empathy learning model, namely 1) Introduction phase, which is the introduction of historical context through historical sources as a learning medium, 2) Investigation phase, which is the process of understanding historical context by studying historical sources and discussing the thoughts, decisions and actions of historical figures, 3) Display phase, whose goal is for students to express historical empathy in oral and written form a historical perspective, and 4) Reflection phase, which leads students to appreciate that past and present ideas are the products of a

historical context. Historical empathy learning model can be applied by history teachers to nurture students' characters by internalizing exemplary values of historical figures learned during a particular history learning process.

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