

**RELIGIOUS AND RITUAL
CHANGE**

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
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**RELIGIOUS AND RITUAL
CHANGE**

COSMOLOGIES AND HISTORIES

Edited by

Pamela J. Stewart

and

Andrew Strathern

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Durham, North Carolina

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Religious and ritual change : cosmologies and histories / by Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, editors.

p. cm. — (Ritual studies monograph series)

Papers originally presented at a conference held in Taipei, Taiwan, in May 2005.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-59460-576-5 (alk. paper)

1. Anthropology of religion—Taiwan—Congresses. 2. Anthropology of religion—Papua New Guinea—Congresses. 3. Rites and ceremonies—Taiwan—Congresses. 4. Rites and ceremonies—Papua New Guinea—Congresses. 5. Conversion—Christianity—Congresses. 6. Taiwan—Religion—Congresses. 7. Papua New Guinea—Religion—Congresses. I. Stewart, Pamela J. II. Strathern, Andrew. III. Series.

GN635.T28R45 2008

306.6'61209953—dc22

2008025951

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
700 Kent Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Cover photo: the Kivisia church of the Bunun Presbytery, Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, Christmas, 2003. Inscriptions on the church read “God loves everyone” and “Jesus loves you”. The church stands in mountainous country between Hualien and Taitung, south-east Taiwan. (Thanks to Shih-hsiang Sung for help in identifying this photograph, which was taken on a field journey with Yi-tze Lee from Taitung to Hualien). (Photo P. J. Stewart / A. Strathern Archive)

Printed in the United States of America

To those persons who show kindness to others,
respecting them for themselves.

PJS & AJS
11 April 2008

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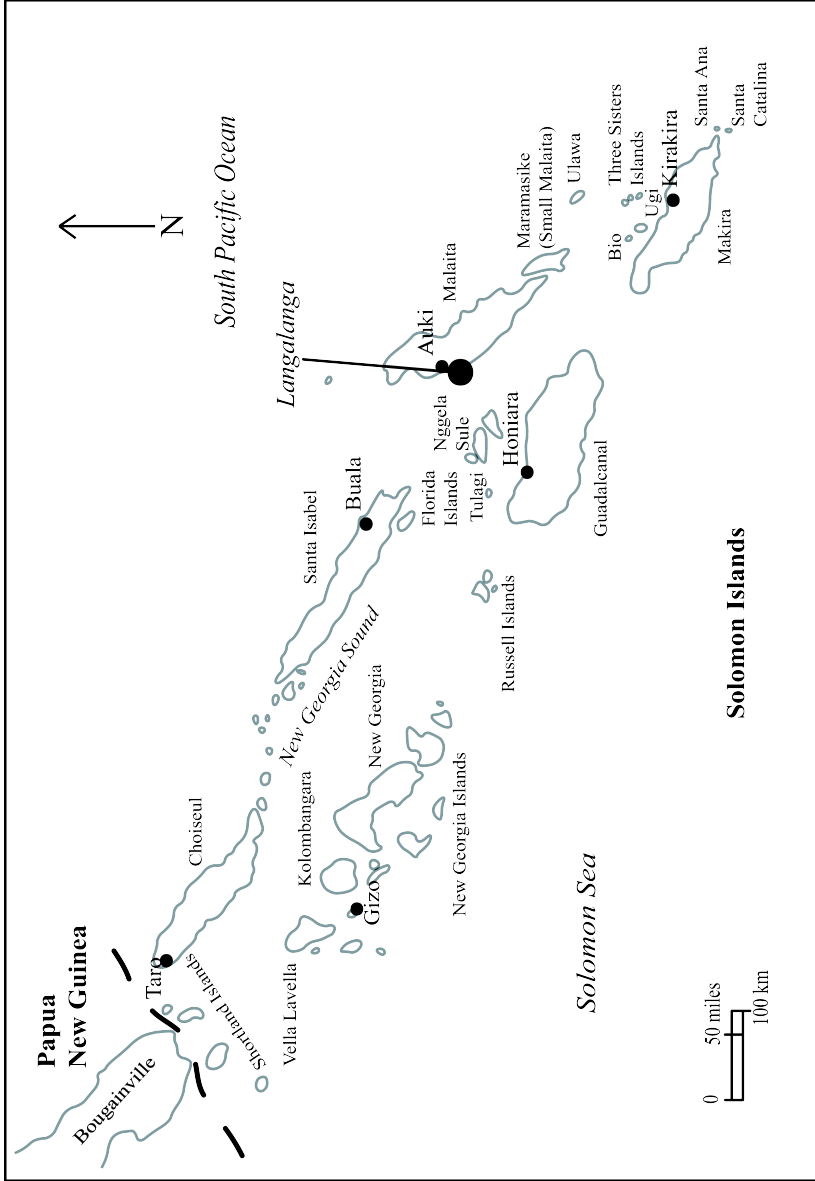
SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern
University of Pittsburgh

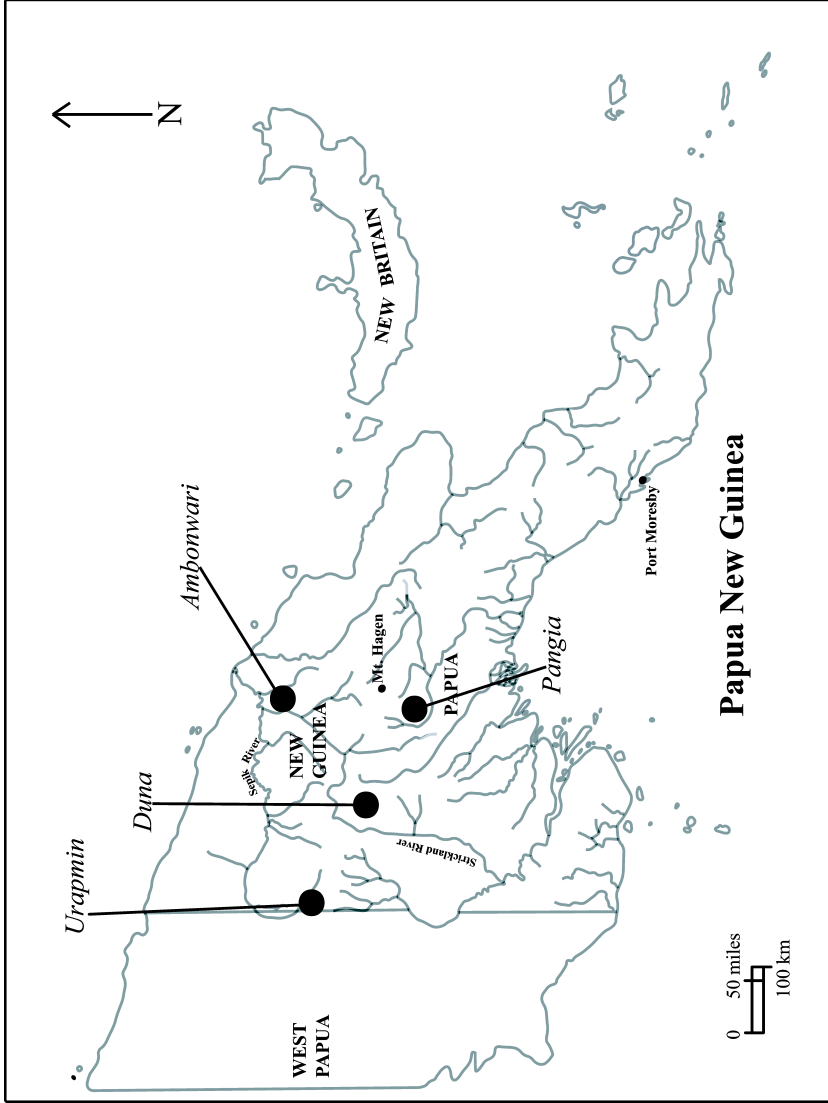
We are very pleased that this volume is included in this Ritual Studies Monograph Series. The research and publication in ritual studies has increased over the years and continues to grow. We want to thank the set of scholars who contributed papers to the workshop from which this volume stems.

This is the first volume of its sort which brings together a set of scholars working in Taiwan and a set working in the South-West Pacific (formerly referred to as Melanesia) to discuss comparatively aspects of religious and ritual change in contemporary contexts. This volume also uniquely brings together works that are presented to an English reading audience. It would be good if this set of papers could also be translated into Chinese and published in its entirety as a unitary project.

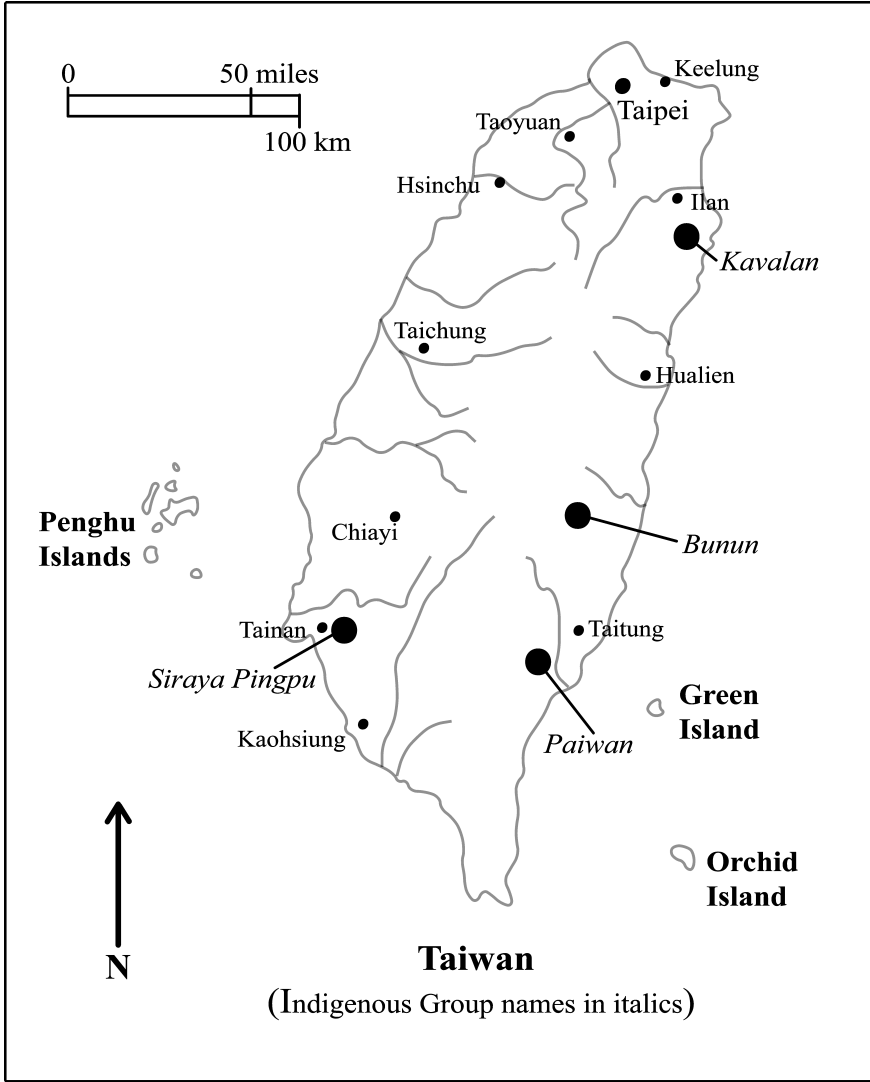
Autumn 2008
Cromie Burn Research Unit
PJS and AJS



(after Michael N. Scott 2007, *The Severed Snake: Matrilineages, Making Place, and a Melanesian Christianity in Southeast Solomon Islands*, Carolina Academic Press, Durham, N.C., USA)



(after Peter Hastings 1971, *Papua New Guinea: Prospero's Other Island*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, Australia)



(after Gerald A. McBeath 1998, *Wealth and Freedom: Taiwan's New Political Economy*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, England)

PREFACE

THE COLLABORATIVE MODEL OF RITUAL TRACKWAYS¹

Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern²

“Now time”, as we are defining it, is the here and the experienced moment of being as it is linked to a history that is meaningful in framing and structuring the moment of current awareness, emplacement, and experience. “Now time” is used by people to develop and provide meaning to ritual performance and religious expression. The papers that are presented here are engaged with discussion of these “now times” from Taiwanese contemporary contexts and South-West Pacific contexts (e.g., Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands). Since the “contemporary” is always changing it is important to note that emplaced practices are representations of what we are calling “Now time”.

As with every conference or workshop, an evolution of thinking and presentation develops as the project moves through time. The first title that we

1. In previous publications we have used the phrase “Collaborative Model” as our usage to describe aspects of gender relations (Stewart and Strathern 1999; Strathern and Stewart 2004) and we have used the phrase “Ritual Trackways” to describe physical pathways within the landscape on which ritual significance is placed in relation to ritual activities (Stewart 1998). Here we use these term Collaborative Model in a new way to indicate the collaborative exercise of comparative studies such as those represented in this edited volume where scholars working amongst communities in the South-west Pacific and Taiwan joined together to discuss related aspects of their research findings. The Ritual Trackways here are those of movements of new religious philosophies into existing religious and ritual world-views.

2. We have a wide range of research interests and diverse geographical arenas of research, including the Pacific, Asia, and Europe.

Our webpage is (www.pitt.edu/~strather). It lists a number of the publications stemming from these interests.

proposed for the Workshop, from which these papers in this volume came, was “Identity, Moral Order, and Historical Change: Religious Practices among the Austronesian speaking peoples of Taiwan and among South-West Pacific Islanders”. We began organizing this event in 2002. One of the underlying premises of the project, as we stated it at that time in our project proposal, was:

“to explore how people use religion as a vehicle for the expression of their ideas regarding moral order and as a means of dealing with their experience of historical change. This process can be usefully conceptualized also as a search for the expression of identity at different social levels. The Workshop will therefore seek to understand and explain people’s attempts to come to terms with their experience of change through their concepts of moral order and individual placement within a cosmic scheme of moral values. The histories of colonial control, missionary influence, economic change, and political aspirations and circumstances will all be considered through the analysis of changing religious ideas and ritual practices.

One of the best ways in which we can explain our thinking about identity, moral order, and historical change is through our work among the Duna people of Papua New Guinea (Stewart and Strathern 2002, *Remaking the World: Myth, Mining, and Ritual Change among the Duna of Papua New Guinea*). One of the main points here is that people think through issues of their identity in terms of the experiences of history. But historical experience is fluid and unpredictable, so people also try to relate it to ideas of the moral order that express continuities in their lives, restricting their actions and / or motivating them. In the Duna case this is done partially with reference to their *malu* stories of group origins. In our terminology, these *malu* represent cosmological ideas that unite people and their environment in terms of values of fertility, prosperity, health, good fortune, etc. The Cosmos can also be represented in terms of ideas of bodily humors and substances that flow through people and their experienced world. This is very important in integrating ideas of the dead and the spirits into local cosmologies. The interactions between historical experience and these notions of the cosmos give rise to people’s overall senses of themselves or their feelings of identity, which can remain relatively constant, or can change over time. Alterations in people’s vision of the cosmos feed into shifting senses of identity. These processes can be very slow or very rapid, depending on the types of influences that impact people’s ways of seeing their placement in the cosmos. Ritual practices are crucial because they often ex-

press both continuity and change and therefore reconcile experience with ideas of order.” (Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, e-mail missives, private Archive, with some paraphrasing, shortening of texts and / or expansions of text)

The essays in this volume are ones that were first presented at the International Workshop that we finally entitled “Power and Hierarchy: Religious Conversion, Ritual Constructions, and Cosmological Belief Systems in Asia and the Indo-Pacific”³ and that we co-organized along with Dr. Pei-yi Guo of the Institute of Ethnology. The event was held on May 30th to June 1st, 2005, at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, where we have been affiliated as Visiting Research Fellows for many years now.⁴ Six of the papers presented here are from Taiwanese scholars and three are by scholars from Europe and the USA.

We provided a theoretical foundation for the Workshop which developed during and after the event through exchanges of ideas and concepts with the contributors. The initial outline for the group’s discussion, as presented by Stewart and Strathern at the opening of the Workshop, was as follows:

“Some of the themes of the conference include the topic of religious conversion, not just involving Christian conversion but changes of religious affiliation in the broader sense. Another important theme is the transmission of ritual knowledge from knowledgeable ritual experts, such as, to junior “shamans” in the ritual practices of Austronesian-speakers of Taiwan,⁵ or in contexts of Han Religion, or Christianity; thus, the transmission of ritual knowledge in general. All of the presentations are based on an ethnographic exploration of the topic in specific contexts and our challenge here is to discuss the dynamic processes that we see involved as described in our presentations over the next few days during this Workshop. Some of the talk-

3. The incorporation of “Hierarchy and Power” into the title was one that was an adjustment to accommodate the work of some scholars interested in this topic at that time.

4. We have presented numbers of public lectures and have published research materials from our research and collaborations within Taiwan. Our publications webpage lists many of these, see (www.pitt.edu/~strather/sandspublicat.htm)

5. We are working in collaboration with Drs. Hu Tai-li and Liu Pi-chen on a research project exploring contemporary Shamanic Performance. The first workshop on this was held in December 2007 at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, and a conference on it is scheduled to occur in December 2008 at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei. The following webpage (www.sinica.edu.tw/ioe/chinese/research/Shamans.htm) details some of the aspects of this working group of scholars.

ing points that we hope to pursue include a few items that we will mention here:

1. The diffusion of religious and ritual practices as forms of ritual transfers of meanings and values within political and cultural spaces.
2. The “plays” or “uses” of power(s) from both inside and outside of the specific ethnographic case under investigation that lead to changes in religious and ritual practices.
3. The individual vs. group “pressure” or “drive for conversion to take place”. Here we should remember that the group and the individual must both be considered in our analysis as well as the interactive fields of practice which constitute the domains of social experience.
4. The conflict and tension produced through the processes of conversion and altered ritual practices. And also, the positive gains or reduction of conflict and tension that may be produced by religious conversion.
5. The temporal aspects of conversion. Fast or gradual adaptation and acceptance of new religious and ritual practice should be considered.
6. The partial nature of conversion in which certain new ritual practices are adopted, while others are adapted, and various older practices are retained and sometimes even strengthened. Here too we should explore the overall contextual changes of meanings that accompany such complex transformations.
7. The “moral” codes or “values” that motivate religious conversion and altered ritual practices.
8. Generational and gendered aspects of these processes of change.
9. The politics of ritual and religious practices in general.
10. The performance of the processes of ritual and religious change, including forms of expressive genres such as oration, songs, dance, and specific uses of the body (see Stewart and Strathern eds. 2005, *Expressive Genres*).

We have requested that all the papers reflect on the cosmological belief systems of the peoples studied through explorations of processes of conversion and / or the transmission of ritual knowledge. Along with the transmission of knowledge we include training, induction, habituation, and alterations in older practices through the processes of historical change and the incorporation of new ideas through transnational flows of influence and by other mechanisms of change. Religious and ritual power are involved here as are components of hierarchy.

Many scholars have focused on the topic of religious conversion as a way of understanding the dynamics of religious and ritual change over time. The concept of conversion tends to imply personally motivated and unidirectional change in religious orientation. However, a broader and more pluralistically developed perspective allows for a better understanding of the longer-term processes that are involved. Three viewpoints can be identified here:

- a. one concentrates on personal experience;
- b. a second on external historical forces;
- c. and a third takes into account the interplay between external forces and internal processes of social competition, conflict, and power-seeking activity.

Each of these viewpoints has its own validity.

The first enables us to see the dynamics of change at the personal and interpersonal levels, in which an increased religious awareness or intensified practices can develop in people's experience, altering their cosmological and moral view of the world.

The second viewpoint highlights the significance of major historical and political changes, such as the imposition or removal of colonial rule or the impingement of new economic, environmental, and / or cultural influences, or a novel configuration of inter-ethnic relations. This viewpoint can also accommodate longer periods of time than the life-span of an individual.

The third viewpoint gives us the opportunity to combine the study of local social processes and their cultural contexts with insight into how these articulate with external influences and how people find ways to express their agency and forge identities for themselves.

We can employ the same logic to explore the transmission, alteration, and creation of ritual practices and ideas in contexts outside of those pertaining to formal process of religious conversion. In all cases issues to do with cosmological worlds of thought and associated beliefs and how these become altered over time are involved. Cosmology is thus an important concept for all of the contexts that will be explored in this Workshop.

We also see the Workshop assisting to deepen understanding of how local and global elements come together in the process that scholars have termed "glocalization". Also, we want to explore the term "conversion". The word implies a kind of instant transformation. While this is a part of folk rhetoric and Christian narratives and may have

some experiential reality, most scholars agree that it is misleading in some respects because what we really have to deal with is sets of longer-term processes of both a biographical and a collective kind. What is important to ask is what factors drive this process of “conversion”. One aspect of this process is the introduction of new frameworks or scales of values. Christianity, for example, it may be argued, dislocates / transforms older scales of value. Once new scales of value are adopted, they in turn become tradition with the passage of time. In early phases of experience with new religious practices, people make up their own minds about the validity of ritual practices, often as a result of experiments or tests of ritual power. In the short term, the new forces may prevail. Over a longer period people often try to synthesize and put more of the old considerations back in, because these were perhaps never fundamentally driven out. Also, we should consider the aspects of nostalgia that are involved in reviving older ritual practices in the longer run of time.

It must be remembered that local / indigenous knowledge often remains in the background of new ritual and religious practices. For example, ideas of the power of ancestors or environmental spirits in general may remain for a long time and become intertwined with the introduced religious notions, via experiences in dreams or visions.

Another concept in our analysis should be that of the imagination (see for example Strathern and Stewart 2006). “Here we want to consider the role of the imagination in relation to religious and ritual practices and the conversion process in general. By imagination, we mean the ways that people conceive of their personal realities as well as desires in their own minds. We include individual / personal imagination and collective imagination and how these come together in the experience of and the response to new religious and ritual practices. One of the factors that is often involved in the imagination is fear, which can be one of the driving forces in religious conversion or change generally. Imagination can also transcend the physical world and bring further or alternative “realities” into being for the person involved or for followers of the person’s teachings. Imagination is an important concept because it is involved in the interpretations people place upon events, based on their hopes, fears, suspicions, and aspirations.” (Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, orally presented text [30 May 2005], private Audio Archive, with some paraphrasing and shortening of texts and or expansions of text).

There is much more that can be done in this arena of comparative research on this topic. The papers that are presented here are an excellent beginning and foundation for future work.

We wish warmly to thank all of the contributors to this volume for their collaborative efforts and their contributions to this area of scholarship (see also our Note 1 in our Introduction for further acknowledgement of thanks). All of our Contributors to this volume were asked to obtain any relevant permission for materials. A Chinese version of Chapter 9 appeared in *Constructing Siraya: Selected Conference Papers*, Chuen-rong Yeh, ed., pp. 199–225 (Xinying: Tainan County Government), and an English version of Chapter 7 has been scheduled to appear in an upcoming issue of the journal *Social Analysis*. We thank Mr. Hao-li Lin for his assistance in checking the Chinese pieces in the text and Mr. James A. Johnson for his assistance in generating the three regional maps that appear in the front of this volume. We thank Prof. Glenn Summerhayes for providing us with office space and Visiting Scholars positions in 2008 in the Department of Anthropology, Gender, and Sociology at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, when we were working on the first proofs of this edited volume in preparation to taking the materials on to Taiwan to work with our Taiwanese collaborators. We thank also the staff at Carolina Academic Press for their support, including Keith Sipe, Linda Lacy, Tim Colton and others at the Press who have helped to bring this project to publication.

Having spent a life together, working and sharing all aspects of our experiences and existence, we note that the respect and love we share for each other is our foundation and our strength. Every day we are thankful for this.

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