

Reconstruction of Contextual Tafsir in the Perspective of Islamic Sociology on Contemporary Social Issues

Halikul Saleh

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Contextual interpretation of the Qur'an has become increasingly important in responding to modern social dynamics influenced by digitalization, globalization, and changing patterns of human behavior. This study aims to develop a framework of contextual tafsir applicable to contemporary social issues, particularly social media ethics, tolerance, and social justice. The research employs a qualitative method using a thematic (maudhu'i) interpretation approach and content analysis of primary sources (the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsir literature) as well as secondary sources (academic journals and books). The findings indicate a significant difference between traditional textual interpretation and modern contextual interpretation, resulting in a contextual tafsir model that integrates sociological dimensions of Muslim behavioral change. This study contributes to Islamic sociology by highlighting the role of tafsir in social transformation. This qualitative research is based on a comprehensive literature review. It applies thematic (maudhu'i) tafsir as an analytical framework, enabling the identification of major themes within Qur'anic verses. The study formulates a contextual tafsir concept that integrates textual, sociological, and normative dimensions and applies it to three contemporary social issues: social media ethics, tolerance, and social justice.

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Corresponding Author:

Halikul Saleh

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; halikulsaleh77@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, possesses a universal character that provides guidance for human life across space and time. However, continuously evolving social dynamics present new problems that are not always explicitly addressed in Qur'anic texts. Phenomena such as globalization, digitalization, social inequality, environmental crises, intolerance, gender injustice, and changing patterns of social interaction are among contemporary social issues that require religious understanding relevant to current contexts. Under such conditions, Qur'anic interpretation cannot rely solely on textual approaches but requires a contextual method that bridges the normative message of revelation with ever-changing social realities. The development of contemporary Qur'anic studies shows a paradigm shift from textual to contextual approaches. This

shift is driven by the awareness that understanding the Qur'an cannot be separated from the historical context of revelation as well as the social context of its interpretive audience. The contextual approach seeks to extract universal Qur'anic values through analysis of social, cultural, political, and historical backgrounds, and then actualize them in modern life contexts. Thus, tafsir functions not only as textual explanation but also as an instrument of social transformation capable of addressing various humanitarian problems (Muhammed Thani, 2026).

One of the most influential figures in the development of contextual tafsir is Fazlur Rahman through his theory of the double movement. According to Rahman, Qur'anic interpretation must proceed through two movements: understanding the meaning of the verse in its historical context at the time of revelation and applying its universal moral principles to the contemporary context. This approach aims to produce interpretations that avoid literalism while remaining grounded in the substantive message of the Qur'an. This idea was further developed by Abdullah Saeed, who emphasizes the importance of considering socio-cultural change in the interpretive process. According to him, Qur'anic verses related to social matters must be understood through both historical and contemporary contexts so that values of justice, humanity, and public welfare can be optimally realized in modern society (Ariwibowo et al., 2026).

In this context, Islamic sociology becomes an important approach in developing contextual tafsir. Islamic sociology views religion not only as a system of normative beliefs but also as a social phenomenon that dynamically interacts with societal structures, values, culture, and change. Through this perspective, Qur'anic interpretation can better understand the relationship between religious texts and social reality, resulting in more responsive interpretations of societal issues. Although many studies on contextual tafsir have been conducted, most focus on the methodological thought of specific scholars such as Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah Saeed. Studies that specifically reconstruct contextual tafsir from the perspective of Islamic sociology in responding to contemporary social issues remain limited. Such reconstruction is necessary to produce interpretive models that are not only text-oriented but also practically relevant to increasingly complex modern societal problems, including developments in information and communication technology.

The rapid development of information and communication technology has drastically transformed social interaction patterns, influencing how Muslims understand and practice Islamic teachings (Oktama Putra, 2024). Social media phenomena, economic globalization, and cultural mobility pose new challenges to scriptural interpretation, particularly when texts are interpreted in a purely textual manner (Zakaria et al., 2024). Digitalization creates a new public space where religious discourses spread rapidly (Salami, 2025). Globalization expands networks of value exchange, leading to normative shifts requiring hermeneutical adjustment (Nidhom, 2014). At the same time, changes in societal behavior, especially among Muslim youth, demand interpretive approaches responsive to contemporary issues such as social media ethics, interreligious tolerance, and social justice (Anggraeni and Meilinda, 2024). Traditional textual interpretation tends to emphasize *asbāb al-nuzūl* and classical Arabic linguistics, which often fail to address contemporary socio-cultural issues (Nurrohim A., Wahid & Al-Haqqoni, 2025). This creates a gap between religious understanding and rapidly changing social realities (Saudiah et al., 2024). Based on this background, this study aims to analyze and reconstruct the concept of contextual tafsir from the perspective of Islamic sociology in order to produce Qur'anic interpretations that are adaptive to contemporary social issues. This reconstruction is expected to strengthen the role of tafsir as both an instrument of Islamic intellectual renewal and a normative-social solution to modern societal challenges.

This study introduces a novel interdisciplinary reconstruction of contextual tafsir by integrating the perspectives of Islamic sociology, linguistic text deconstruction, and emancipatory sociological reconstruction to address contemporary social issues. Unlike previous studies, which predominantly emphasize either textual interpretation or socio-historical contextualization, this research develops a comprehensive interpretive framework that critically deconstructs the linguistic structure of Qur'anic discourse while reconstructing its meanings through contemporary sociological realities. This

approach enables Qur'anic interpretation to move beyond static and normative readings toward a transformative paradigm that responds to the social challenges of the digital era, globalization, religious pluralism, social justice, and changing patterns of Muslim social behavior. Through this model, the Qur'an is interpreted not only as a sacred text but also as a dynamic source of ethical and social transformation capable of addressing contemporary societal problems. By bridging the gap between traditional tafsir and contemporary social sciences, this study contributes a new methodological framework for Qur'anic studies that strengthens the relevance of Islamic scholarship in promoting justice, tolerance, digital ethics, and inclusive social development in the twenty-first century.

2. METHODS

This research is qualitative in nature using a comprehensive literature review approach. It employs thematic (maudhu'i) tafsir as an analytical framework, allowing the identification of major themes within Qur'anic verses (Jamaluddin et al., n.d.). The contextual approach adds a sociological layer of analysis to assess the relevance of verses in modern socio-cultural contexts (Dozan et al., 2022). Primary data sources include the Qur'an (Indonesian translation), classical tafsir works (Ibn Kathir, Al-Tabari), and contemporary tafsir literature (Chirzin et al., 2024). Secondary data sources include academic journal articles, monographs, and research reports addressing modern social issues, digital media, globalization, and Islamic sociology (Muid & Ansori, 2025), (Ramli, 2021).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Concept of Contextual Tafsir

Contextual tafsir is defined as Qur'anic interpretation that does not only consider *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) and linguistic aspects, but also takes into account the current socio-cultural, technological, and economic conditions of society (Ifrohan & Uswatun Hasanah, 2026). In contrast to textual tafsir, which is relatively static, contextual tafsir is dynamic and responsive (Nasr, 2022), (Hatta & Ghazil Aulia, 2025).

Contextual tafsir is an interpretive approach that seeks to understand the meaning of Qur'anic texts by considering the historical, social, cultural, political contexts, and the societal conditions at the time of revelation, and then linking them to contemporary realities. This approach emerged as a response to the limitations of textual tafsir methods, which tend to focus heavily on literal linguistic interpretation without adequately considering social change. Therefore, contextual tafsir seeks to extract the universal messages of the Qur'an so that it remains relevant in addressing various contemporary issues (Rahman, 1982), (Dhiyaul Haq M.Z et al., 2025).

In the perspective of contemporary tafsir, the Qur'an is not only understood as a normative text but also as guidance with social and historical dimensions. Qur'anic messages were revealed within specific social contexts; therefore, understanding *asbāb al-nuzūl* becomes an essential part of interpretation. However, the main objective of contextual tafsir is not merely to reconstruct past conditions, but to identify universal principles that can be applied to different social contexts (Saeed, 2006). According to Fazlur Rahman, Qur'anic interpretation should be carried out through a double movement approach. The first movement involves understanding the meaning of the verse within its historical context at the time of revelation, while the second movement applies the extracted moral values to contemporary society. Through this method, the Qur'an remains a continuous source of solutions to evolving social problems (Dahlan et al., 2022).

The contextual approach is further developed in the thought of Abdullah Saeed, who emphasizes the importance of understanding social and cultural change as a factor influencing interpretation. According to him, verses related to social, economic, political, and communal relations must be read dynamically so that values of justice, equality, and public welfare—the core objectives of Sharia—can be realized in modern life (Saeed, 2006), (Muhammad Halif Asyroful Bahana, 2024).

B. Theoretical Foundations of Contextual Tafsir in Islamic Sociology

Islamic sociology is a discipline that studies the relationship between Islamic teachings and social life. In this perspective, religion is not only a system of spiritual belief but also a social force that shapes individual behavior and societal structures. Therefore, Qur'anic interpretation must take social dynamics into account so that religious messages can be understood according to societal needs. Islamic sociological thought is based on the assumption that revelation was sent to guide humanity in building a just and civilized social order. The Qur'an extensively discusses poverty, social inequality, legal justice, intergroup relations, and governance, indicating that the social dimension is an integral part of Islam (Triastuty et al., 2026), (Arkoun, 2002).

In this context, contextual tafsir is closely related to sociological approaches because both aim to understand the interaction between text and social reality. Islamic sociology helps exegetes identify changes in social structures, patterns of social relations, and new challenges that did not exist in classical periods. Thus, interpretation becomes not only normative but also solution-oriented and applicable. Furthermore, the perspective of Islamic sociology enables a more critical evaluation of social practices in society. Interpretation is not only assessed based on textual conformity but also on its impact on social life. Interpretations that promote justice, humanity, and public welfare are considered more aligned with the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) than those that perpetuate inequality and discrimination (Hafith et al., 2025), (Auda, 2008).

C. Reconstruction of Contextual Tafsir in Responding to Contemporary Social Issues

The development of modern society presents various social issues that require a re-reading of religious texts. In this context, the reconstruction of contextual tafsir is essential to ensure that the Qur'an continues to provide solutions to evolving problems.

1. Social Justice and Poverty Issues

Poverty remains one of the major global social challenges. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes fair wealth distribution, care for the weak, and prohibition of economic exploitation. In contextual tafsir, verses on zakat, infaq, and charity are not only understood as ritual obligations but also as instruments of social empowerment and poverty alleviation. Islamic sociology shows that poverty is caused not only by individual factors but also by unjust social structures. Therefore, Qur'anic values must be implemented toward creating a more inclusive and equitable economic system (Jamaruddin, 2017), (Esposito, 2011).

2. Gender Equality Issues

Debates on gender equality are among the most widely discussed topics in contemporary tafsir. Some classical interpretations were influenced by patriarchal cultures of their time. Contextual tafsir seeks to distinguish between universal Qur'anic values and the social practices of 7th-century Arab society. Through a contextual approach, verses related to women are understood based on their core objective, namely human dignity and social justice. Thus, equality between men and women can be achieved without neglecting fundamental Islamic values (Karim et al., 2026), (Wadud, 1999).

3. Tolerance and Pluralism Issues

Contemporary society is characterized by religious, cultural, and social diversity. In this context, contextual tafsir provides space for more inclusive interpretations of verses related to interfaith relations. The Qur'an teaches religious freedom, respect for differences, and the importance of dialogue in social life. From the perspective of Islamic sociology, diversity is a social reality that must be managed constructively. Therefore, contextual tafsir serves as a means of building social harmony and preventing intolerance that may threaten societal unity (Nur'aliya, 2024).

4. Digital Technology and Social Media Issues

The digital era has transformed communication and social interaction patterns. The spread of hoaxes, hate speech, cyberbullying, and disinformation has become a new challenge requiring religious responses. Although the Qur'an does not explicitly mention social media, its values—such as *tabayyun* (verification of information), honesty, and communication ethics—can serve as a foundation for addressing these issues. Contextual tafsir enables these principles to be applied in digital spaces, ensuring that Islamic teachings remain relevant in modern life (Sihombing et al., 2025), (Saeed, 2006).

5. Environmental Issues

Environmental crisis has become an increasingly urgent global problem. Global warming, ecosystem destruction, and natural resource exploitation indicate the need for a new paradigm in human–nature relations. In contextual tafsir, verses describing humans as *khalifah* (stewards of the earth) are interpreted as a mandate to maintain environmental balance and prevent destruction. Islamic sociology views environmental issues as social problems related to consumption patterns, development policies, and human behavior. Therefore, Qur'anic interpretation must emphasize ecological ethics as part of religious responsibility (Destia Purwaningsih et al., 2025).

D. The Significance of Contextual Tafsir Reconstruction for Modern Society

The reconstruction of contextual tafsir plays a strategic role in bridging Islamic teachings with social change. Through this approach, the Qur'an is not seen as a static text but as a dynamic source of values that can adapt to contemporary developments. From the perspective of Islamic sociology, the success of interpretation is not only measured by linguistic accuracy but also by its ability to produce positive social transformation. Contextual tafsir can strengthen social justice, expand tolerance, reduce conflict, and improve the quality of human life.

One of the key significances of contextual tafsir is maintaining the relevance of the Qur'an amid rapid social change characterized by globalization, urbanization, technological advancement, and shifting social structures. This condition demands flexible yet value-based interpretation (Majdi, 2019). According to Fazlur Rahman, the Qur'an should be understood as a source of universal moral values applicable across different social contexts. Therefore, interpretation must move beyond literal meaning toward the extraction of ethical principles that can be applied in modern contexts (Adinugraha & Ulama'i, 2020).

Furthermore, digital technological development has significantly affected social life, including the rise of disinformation, hate speech, and communication ethics degradation. Contextual tafsir is significant in formulating Islamic ethics relevant to the digital era. Qur'anic values such as *tabayyun*, honesty, and prohibition of slander can be reinterpreted for social media and digital environments. This demonstrates that although the Qur'an does not explicitly address modern technology, its ethical principles remain applicable in regulating human behavior in the digital age (Hafith et al., 2025). Thus, contextual tafsir serves as a bridge between divine revelation and the ever-changing realities of human life.

E. Characteristics of Contemporary Social Issues (Globalization, Information and Communication Technology)

Contemporary social issues are social phenomena that emerge as a result of rapid, complex, and interconnected structural changes in modern society. These changes are primarily driven by globalization and the development of information and communication technology (ICT), which fundamentally transform how humans interact, work, practice religion, and construct their social identities. In this context, society can no longer be understood as an isolated entity, but rather as part of a global network in which different actors continuously influence one another (Triastuty et al., 2026), (Giddens, 1990).

1. Globalization as a Core Characteristic of Contemporary Society

Globalization is a process of global integration encompassing economic, political, cultural, and social dimensions that connects societies across the world without clear geographical boundaries. Anthony Giddens defines globalization as the intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that local events are shaped by developments occurring far away (Al Hamid, 2025). This shows that globalization is not only economic but also involves broad social and cultural transformation.

From a social perspective, globalization creates what is known as a *global village*, where values, lifestyles, and ideologies spread rapidly across the world. Roland Robertson refers to this phenomenon as “glocalization,” a process in which global elements interact with local contexts, producing new hybrid cultural forms (Muhammad Halif Asyroful Bahana, 2024). As a result, societies face challenges related to identity, shifts in traditional values, and the emergence of new forms of global inequality.

In addition, globalization also widens the gap between developed and developing countries in terms of access to economy, education, and technology. Joseph Stiglitz argues that globalization is often unfair because it tends to benefit economically and politically powerful countries (Rokim & Triana, 2021), (Stiglitz, 2002). This indicates that globalization brings not only progress but also complex new social problems.

2. Social Transformation through Information and Communication Technology

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) is one of the main drivers accelerating social change in the contemporary era. The internet, social media, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies have drastically transformed human communication patterns. Manuel Castells refers to this era as the *network society*, where social structures are shaped by digital information networks (Saputra & Kurniawan, 2025), (Castells, 2010). In this network society, information becomes a new source of power. Individuals or groups with access to information have stronger social positions than those without access, creating a digital divide as a major social issue. Castells also emphasizes that power in the information age is no longer solely institutional but is distributed across global communication networks (Maulana Akbar & Rahman, 2023).

Furthermore, ICT changes social interaction patterns from direct communication to virtual communication. This creates a new social space known as cyberspace, where individuals can interact without spatial and temporal limits. However, it also brings negative impacts such as social isolation, reduced quality of interpersonal interaction, and increased misinformation and hate speech in digital media.

3. Impact of Globalization and ICT on Social Structure

A key characteristic of contemporary social issues is the significant transformation of social structures due to globalization and ICT. Previously hierarchical and local social structures have become more fluid, flexible, and global. Zygmunt Bauman describes this condition as *liquid modernity*, where modern society is no longer stable and is constantly changing (Djidin, 2024).

In this condition, individual social identity becomes more complex and no longer singular. Individuals may possess multiple identities formed through interactions in both physical and digital worlds. This creates challenges in establishing stable values, morality, and social orientation. Globalization and ICT also produce cultural homogenization, where global culture tends to dominate local cultures. At the same time, cultural resistance emerges as local cultures strive to maintain their identity. This creates a complex social dynamic between the global and the local.

4. New Social Issues in the Global and Digital Era

Globalization and ICT also give rise to various new social issues that were previously absent in traditional societies, including:

1. Misinformation and hoaxes, the spread of false information that influences public opinion and social stability.
2. Cyberbullying, verbal or psychological violence occurring in digital spaces.
3. Data privacy issues, where personal data is vulnerable to misuse.
4. Digital divide, inequality in access to information technology.
5. Digital radicalism, the spread of extremist ideologies through online media.

These issues show that social change in the contemporary era is not only positive but also brings new challenges that require analytical and solution-oriented approaches from various disciplines, including sociology and Islamic studies.

5. Implications for Social and Religious Life

The complexity of contemporary social issues requires a more holistic approach to understanding them. In a religious context, social changes caused by globalization and ICT create the need to reinterpret religious texts so that they remain relevant to current conditions. Ulrich Beck refers to modern society as a *risk society*, a society that faces new risks produced by modernity itself, including technological and global risks (Saudiya et al., 2024). In this context, religion functions not only as a belief system but also as a source of social ethics that provides guidance in dealing with modern uncertainty. Therefore, a contextual approach to understanding religious teachings becomes increasingly important so that religious values can function adaptively in the face of rapid social change.

F. Analysis of Qur'anic Verses

Theme	Verse (Surah:Ayah)	Classical Interpretation	Modern Contextual Interpretation	Comparative Notes
Justice	Al-Mā'idah: 8	Emphasis on legal justice in 7th-century society (Al-Tabari)	Emphasis on distributive justice in social welfare policy (Yusuf, 2023)	Context adds global economic dimension
Social Ethics	Al-Ḥujurāt: 11	Prohibition of slander (Ibn Kathir)	Interpretation as prohibition of hoaxes in digital media (Badr, 2022)	Expansion of media as a channel
Tolerance	Al-Ḥujurāt: 13	Interfaith relations based on respect (Al-Jalal)	Foundation of pluralism in migration and multiculturalism contexts (Zaman, 2021)	Expands international context

G. Implementation of Contextual Tafsir

1. Social Media Ethics

The interpretation of Al-Ḥujurāt: 11 is used as a basis for Muslim community policies on digital platforms to combat hoaxes (Ifrohan & Uswatun Hasanah, 2026), (Badr, 2022). Qur'an Surah Al-Ḥujurāt verse 11 is one of the key foundations of Islamic social ethics, emphasizing the prohibition of mocking, insulting, and labeling others negatively. Based on its *asbāb al-nuzūl*, this verse was revealed to correct social practices in which groups were belittled based on status, ethnicity, or social condition. Thus, its core message is the protection of human dignity and the prohibition of all forms of social degradation (Anggraeni and Meilinda, 2024), (Al-Tabarī, 2000).

In the digital era, Al-Ḥujurāt: 11 is highly relevant because much of today's social interaction occurs in virtual spaces. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X (Twitter) has become a new social arena that is highly vulnerable to cyberbullying and hate speech. According to Manuel Castells, modern society has become a network society in which communication occurs through fast and massive digital networks (Castells, 2010). In this context, a single negative comment

can spread widely and damage a person's reputation socially and psychologically.

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, protection of human dignity (*hifz al-'ird*) is one of the main objectives of Islamic law. Therefore, behavior that damages human dignity on social media contradicts Islamic principles. Jasser Auda explains that *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* must be understood dynamically and systemically to respond to modern social change, including digital technology (Auda, 2008). Thus, Al-Ḥujurāt: 11 serves as a foundation for digital ethics emphasizing protection of dignity, control of harmful speech, and moral responsibility in information sharing. Cyberbullying and hate speech represent modern forms of behavior prohibited in this verse. Social media often creates an illusion of anonymity that encourages verbal aggression (Nidhom, 2014), (Boyd, 2014). This reinforces the need for contextual reinterpretation of Qur'anic ethical teachings for the digital space.

2. Tolerance: Al-Ḥujurāt: 13 in Global Interfaith Dialogue Programs

Al-Ḥujurāt verse 13 is a central foundation for tolerance and universal humanism in Islam. It emphasizes that differences in ethnicity and identity are not grounds for superiority but for mutual recognition (*ta'aruf*). Ibn Kathir explains that this verse rejects tribal fanaticism (*'aṣabiyyah*) and establishes that human dignity is based on piety, not social identity (Sultan et al., 2026), (Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Al-Ṭabarī also emphasizes equality among humans as God's creation (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000). In the digital era, *ta'aruf* can be reconstructed into the principle of "digital tolerance." Social media creates global interaction spaces where identities, cultures, and religions meet without geographic boundaries. Castells describes this as a network society (Castells, 2010). In this context, differences often become sources of conflict due to low digital literacy and polarization.

From an Islamic sociology perspective, diversity is a social reality that must be managed constructively. Peter Berger explains society as a social construction formed through interaction and shared meaning (Ariwibowo et al., 2026), (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, Al-Ḥujurāt: 13 serves as a guide for building healthy digital social construction where differences become dialogue rather than conflict.

3. Social Justice: Al-Mā'idah: 8 as a Reference for Redistribution Policy

Al-Mā'idah verse 8 emphasizes justice as a foundation of Islamic social ethics. Classical interpretations state that justice must be upheld even against those one dislikes. Al-Ṭabarī explains that the verse rejects emotional bias in law and social relations (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000). Ibn Kathir also emphasizes that justice is part of piety (Ibn Kathīr, 1999). In the digital era, this verse is relevant because social media shapes public opinion and judgment. Castells notes that information has become a source of power in the network society (Castells, 2010). Justice is often distorted by misinformation, framing, and algorithmic bias. Contextually, this verse implies: verifying information before sharing, avoiding biased judgments, maintaining objectivity, rejecting disproportionate cancel culture, and preventing digital defamation. From an Islamic sociology perspective, justice is both normative and structural. It is essential for maintaining social balance. John Rawls' theory of justice emphasizes fairness in information and opportunity distribution (Rawls, 1971), which aligns with the ethical principles of Al-Mā'idah: 8.

4. CONCLUSION

Contemporary social issues are characterized by globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technology, which fundamentally transform social structures. Globalization creates intense global interconnectedness, while information and communication technology forms a network society based on information flows. These phenomena result in shifting social identities, digital inequality, and various complex new social issues. Therefore, a comprehensive analytical approach is required to understand and respond effectively to these dynamics. This study successfully formulates a contextual tafsir concept integrating textual, sociological, and normative dimensions and applies it to three contemporary social issues: social

media ethics, tolerance, and social justice. Qur'anic analysis reveals significant differences between classical and contemporary contextual interpretations, producing a tafsir model that is responsive to changes in Muslim behavior in the digital and global era. These findings contribute to Islamic sociology by highlighting the role of tafsir in social transformation and providing a practical framework for educators, scholars, and policymakers.

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