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CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: RECLAIMING THE HERITAGE OF MINANGKABAU IN NEGERI SEMBILAN

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Abstract

Reclaiming cultural landscape is the idea of regaining the valuable heritage of human legacy that represents peoples' identity and original culture of a group of people or place which cannot be replaced or regained after it has been destroyed. From Islamic point of view, cultural landscape presents the notion of revealing and sustaining the great diversity of the interactions between humans and their environment. Islam highlights the importance of human relationship with the environment and the associations involving the two assemblages have been emphasized repeatedly in the Qur'an. Due to its significance, this paper will be focusing on reclaiming cultural landscape of Minangkabau to ensure the heritage values, beliefs and traditions are being well preserved. Nowadays, Minangkabau is losing its sense of identity which probably caused by its integration with other ethnicity in Malaysia. Since cultural landscape is considered as valuable heritage and it is irreplaceable, this research will be highlighting on the types of cultural landscape resources that influence the identity and character of Minangkabau ethnicity. The objectives of this paper are to emphasize the cultural landscape resources of Minangkabau ethnicity, consecutively to ensure people's legacy is well preserved and to discover level of appreciation the original culture of Minangkabau among local people towards the notion of reclaiming the cultural landscape. This paper are presented in two sections; i) the theoretical framework and ii) methodology. The anticipated result will highlight the importance to reclaim cultural landscape as it is actually an approach to enrich the identity of Minangkabau ethnicity and sustain the heritage values. It is hoped that this paper will become a reference or guideline for future innovations and ideas regarding cultural landscape.

Keywords: Cultural landscape, Reclaiming, Heritage and Minangkabau

1. Introduction

The work of many authors has discussed the important of cultural landscape towards enriching people's identity. It develops a sense of place or belonging and protecting the original culture of certain community or place as it is the main key to human legacy (Arntzen, 2003; Loures, 2008; Clement, 1997; Stoffle et al., 2003). Cultural landscape expands the notion that unique area may hold thousands of cultural meaning. It is believed that not every place can be categorized as cultural landscape although human intervention may have left their marks in the entire part of the world for instance the effects of pollution and global warming. Loures (2008) suggested that cultural landscape provide a group of people a sense of place and identity. It is also a process to reveal human relationship with land. Sirisrisak and Akagawa (2007) further elaborated that cultural landscape is geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with an historic event, activity, person, or group of people that share the same identity and meaning. This paper discussed on the important of Minangkabau cultural landscape in the context of human legacy. It is crucial to understand the concept of Minangkabau cultural landscape as it offers main contribution in sustaining the heritage value and protecting local identity and original culture of the local people or place.

2. Minangkabau the Land Of Tradition

The loss of cultural heritage would imply the absence of human identity. This would also indicate that cultural heritage and human identity are co-dependent. Cultural heritage must be sustained in order for human identity to survive, and human identity must be maintained to assist in the management of heritage values. Therefore it is

crucial to reclaim cultural landscape as to ensure people's identity is been well preserved. One of many valuable heritage's state in Malaysia is Negeri Sembilan or may be known as "Land of the Minangkabau Tradition". Muhamed (1978) declared that Minangkabau is the largest matrilineal society in the world and Negeri Sembilan is the only state that perseverance influences by matrilineal societal system. Nazri (1989) emphasized that Negeri Sembilan is the first and only state in Malaysia that practice "adat pepatih". It would appear reasonable to conclude the Negeri Sembilan is the first state to practice democratic system.

Matrilineality is a societal system in which lineage is traced through the mother and maternal ancestors. It upholds the women's right which can involve the inheritance of property or titles (matrilineal-online). This system is still applicable in Negeri Sembilan especially in the marriage customs, ownership of property and dance forms. Nazri (1989), Norhalim (1995) and Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia (1974) confirmed that Negeri Sembilan is well known for the huge influence of Minangkabau migrants from Sumatera. The research conducted by Adil (1981) explains that the indigenous people of Negeri Sembilan are the Malays known as orang Jakun or orang Biduanda. Nazri (1989) suggested that the original people of Negeri Sembilan were made up of four indigenous ethnic groups, that are; kaum Asli, kaum Semang, Semai and Jakun. Upon the arrival of Minangkabau people from Sumatera, they influence economic growth, social transformation, laws, and political interferences in Negeri Sembilan. Mix culture between the Malays and Minang create a unique civilization and to unite these two culture, Minang and orang Asli create a new ethnic group with the name orang Biduanda. Biduanda's offspring will have the rights to inherit '*pusaka datuk-datuk undang luak*' in Negeri Sembilan. People from other tribes are not eligible to be selected for the inheritance because they are all considered as immigrants and non-indigenous people.

3. Minangkabau Characteristic

It is the Minangkabau who hold the key to the history of Negeri Sembilan. The Minangkabau were immigrants from West Sumatra who settled in Negeri Sembilan between the 15th and 16th century, at the height of the Malaccan Sultanate. They continued the practice of their rich cultural heritage, which continues on today in the form of the fascinating Adat Perpatih, a matrilineal system of rule and inheritance, unique only to Negeri Sembilan. The Minangkabau and their adats, or traditions are indeed to be credited with Negeri Sembilan's many interesting characteristic. This is clearly seen and felt even today, especially in the customs of marriage, ownership of property and dance forms. These characteristic include:

- i. **Tradition**
Minangkabau practice a matrilineal system of rule and inheritance whereby the portion of heritage is past down from one generation to another solitary on mothers side of the family. It is the privilege given to women that makes Minangkabau unique and interesting. It is also a great privilege that this matrilineal system or *adat pepatih* is being practice in Negeri Sembilan.
- ii. **Heritage**
Local identity, character and image of a culture are reflected by the custom of local people and it must be practiced from time to time. In Negeri Sembilan or the land of tradition as been called, heritage value is quite high in term of their *adat pepatih*, language, architectural design and tradition. The implementation of the custom in everyday life is a proof that the heritage is been well appreciated. However it seems that nowadays the value of this heritage may not be well appreciated as it should be. Among the remaining districts of the state which are Jelebu, Jempol, Kuala Pilah, Port Dickson, Rembau, Seremban and Tampin There are only four areas that still preserving the culture and tradition of matrilineal society which are Kuala Pilah, Tampin, Seri Menanti, and Jelebu (Malay Cluster, 2011).
- iii. **Culture**
Minangkabau is a unique culture where by it gives priority to women in term of heritage. Beside the practiced of exclusive tradition by local people distinguish them from other society. But most importantly they are recognized because of their dialect. They have different way of pronouncing things and that is the specialty owned from their ancestors. For instance *minam* in bahasa melayu is *minum*, *togah* is *teguh*, *mano poi eh bondo tu* would mean *dimana perginya benda itu* and many others.
- iv. **Legacy**
Tradition and custom practiced by local people have become a valuable heritage in Negeri Sembilan, therefore it's known as state identity and the legacy of Minangkabau culture. This has become the pride of the people and need to preserved and reclaimed their legacy are now is quite important.

4. Reclaiming Heritage of Minangkabau

The reclamation of cultural landscape will increase people awareness, sense of attachment and place as they finally realize the strong attachment between human and nature. Thus this notion will develop a strong desire to preserve or reclaim the cultural landscape (Garibaldi and Straker 2010). This study is focusing on reclaiming cultural landscape of Minangkabau. Research conducted by Muhamed (1978) and Nazri (1989) highlighted about the loss of identity of Minangkabau in Negeri Sembilan. The state is known as the Land of the Minangkabau Tradition and is considered special because of the uniqueness in term of their culture, tradition, architecture, language, oral traditions, performing art, craft, cuisine, and literature. The historical site has undergone many difficulties due to modern challenges, political conflict, economic crisis and social issues. However Negeri Sembilan manages to preserve some of the cultural landscape of Minangkabau despite of the disagreement in rapid development and other conflicts. Nevertheless, Minang still feel the need to protect their culture from future assimilation.

Minangkabau is losing the sense of identity. Mixing with other Malay group, results in a loss of their unique matrilineal customs (Malay Cluster, 2011). "*Minangkabau is the largest matrilineal society in the world*" (Muhamed, 1978:15). In the context of social issue, matrilineal is an exclusive heritage of the Minang in Negeri Sembilan. Hence it must be reclaimed as cultural landscape assets of Minangkabau in order to sustain the cultural heritage values. There are strong symbiotic relationship between tangible and the intangible component of the heritage. Ghafar Ahmad (2004) highlighted that, intangible component is as essential as the tangible component. However, only tangible component is very much appreciated by people as they can have strong attachment with the place or things.

Nevertheless, one must not forget the value of intangible qualities of the cultural landscape. Physical and spiritual are co-dependent, neglecting one another meaning fail to define cultural landscape as a whole. Material cultural landscape is the impact of human modification that possesses certain qualities but what hold the culture of Minangkabau together are the value and meaning. It is presently become the identity of The Minangkabau. Value and meaning or sense of attachment is the example of intangible qualities that may be overlooked by the Minang. Without proper concern local people will eventually become unaware of the absence of their culture and tradition, thus lead to the ultimate consequence which is the lost of Minangkabau uniqueness and identity of the social group of Minangkabau. It is important to highlight that the social group practice the similar values, beliefs and ways of appreciating the world. These are the foundation to shape people's identity (Rapoport 1976).

The other problem faces by Minangkabau community are the modern challenges, political and economic issues. However these problems are inter-related between one to another. Modern challenges are the major threat to preserve cultural landscape and people's identity. Modernism promotes a better standard of living as it offers vibrant social activities and economic growth yet only been focused in urban or new township area. Cities offer countless number of job opportunity hence many people are force to migrate at the urban area. Tachimoto (1998) accentuated that younger generation are more interested to find employment outside their village and most of the educated youths have a preference in choosing their work. They focus more on the occupation with reasonable payment such as government agencies and from white to blue collar jobs such as teaching.

This scenario gives negative impact towards the indigenous people of Minangkabau especially those who are still preserving the legacy in the sub-urban area. As increasing number of indigenous people migrated to the city, amount of indigenous people who are practicing the heritage of Minangkabau at the sub-urban area and preserving the cultural landscape are declining (Malay Cluster, 2011). In general understanding, the awareness and sense of attachment towards the identity of Minangkabau is also reducing. The new comers or immigrant with the intention to stay permanently at sub-urban area of Negeri Sembilan may not have the similar awareness toward the idea of appreciating the legacy. Muhamed (1978) suggested newcomers of a certain place do not feel the responsibility over sense of identity of the place they are migrating in. Therefore the results from modern challenges have declined the sense of identity of Minangkabau community.

Politic and economy issues influence the preservation of cultural landscape. Both of these aspects play a major role in the future development of a district as to promote modern lifestyle (Sirisrisak and Akagawa, 2007). The incident from political conflict and economy crisis give a big impact towards preserving original identity of Minangkabau in term of their cultural background, geographic condition and integrity of indigenous knowledge. The Minang feel the need to protect their culture from future assimilation. As other areas of Negeri Sembilan have shown, mixing with other Malay groups results in a loss of their unique matrilineal customs. The unique culture of Minang is been overpowered by the modern lifestyle. People grow a custom with new standard of living that is suitable with the urban environment. There are only four areas that still preserving the culture and tradition of matrilineal society which are Kuala Pilah, Tampin, Seri Menanti, and Jelebu (Malay Cluster, 2011).

It would appear reasonable to conclude that the location of the place which is in sub-urban area enable them to maintain their culture and tradition. Nevertheless, the lack of awareness and level of appreciating the original culture of Minang are the major threat towards the notion of reclaiming the cultural landscape. Based on the issues raised, the focus of this research is important upon reclaiming the cultural landscape of Minangkabau in order to protect local identity and unique character. The initiatives should be taken into consideration as to sustain the past culture and legacy for future generations. In particular, cultural landscape assists in enriching the identity of Minangkabau in Malaysia. Cultural landscape reflects the story of people who shaped it not only in the past but also at present time. Each culture has unique characteristic that connect man with environment. It is important to preserve cultural landscape as it is a valuable heritage, the key to peoples' identity and original culture of a group of people or place which cannot be replaced or regained after it has been destroyed. The loss of cultural landscape would imply the absence of human identity.

5. Representation of Minangkabau Culture

A unique feature of the state is the *Adat Perpatih*, a matrilineal social system practiced by the present day descendants. This system is evident in clan and marriage customs, property ownership and dance forms. The Minangkabau people migrated across the Straits of Malacca from Sumatra centuries ago and their trademark is a traditional house consists of upswept roofs reminiscent of buffalo horns. Many of Negeri Sembilan state's modern buildings are fine examples of this distinctive architecture. However the old Istana Seri Menanti's roof design is not reflecting the local culture as the design is quite hard to be recognized as buffalo horns. It has been argued that according to the design symbolism the roof is a representation of the buffalo horns yet the shape does not revealing the Minangkabau culture.



Figure 1.0: Istana Seri Menanti



Figure 1.1: Gate to Palace

One of many values that become the pride of Minangkabau identity and character is the roof design. Culture and heritage can only be appreciated if it is practiced from time to time. There is a reason for that matter as to ensure local identity and uniqueness is been well preserved. Palace is a tangible heritage of Minangkabau culture and being represent through the architectural design specifically the upswept roof. The most significant aspect in tangible heritage is that it can be viewed by public therefore it will increase the level of appreciation. The old Istana Seri Menanti's is one of the tangible heritages and if the design does not implementing the identity and character of Minangkabau, therefore it is a proved that the Minangkabau probably is losing its sense of identity.

Tangible heritage is a proved of the existence of certain culture and it represent local identity and with that comes the sense of pride and sense of attachment. Heritage is irreplaceable and without the recognition of the tangible heritage, it is hard for people to remember the culture. Hence the issue regarding the upswept roof of Istana Seri Menanti shows the important to reclaim cultural landscape of Minangkabau. This similar issue occurs at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur. The old *Istana Negara* used to be the resident of Yang Dipertuan Agong after achieving independence in August 1957. After all it is the history that makes the place vulnerable thus valuable in term of heritage importance and sentimental value. It hold the key to Malaysian people regarding the process of achieving independence as through history the Palace used to be the resident of Japanese Governor, the British Military Administration, then rented by Selangor State Government and finally owned by the Federal Government who later turn the place into *Istana Negara*. After serving for 54 years, however the Palace that holds all the significant values has lost its function as it has been changed into a museum and no longer served as the resident of royal family. The new Istana Negara is totally a new design based on new development and has been located at Jalan Duta instead of Jalan Istana. Loures (2007:5) declared that "*Historic areas are progressively coming under threat of new development*" this is because the new development may fail to synchronize the new image or concept with the existing heritage backdrop.



Figure 1.2: Old Istana Negara



Figure 1.3: New Istana Negara

Buckingham Palace in London was built in 1702 by Duke of Buckingham. The resident was later sold to George III in 1761 by the Duke's son. In 1774 it was renamed "Queen's House" as Queen Charlotte resided there. The Palace has faced several renovations and alterations that may have double the size of the building. However the front façade of the Palace has remained virtually unchanged from the original design over 300 years ago. It still preserved the old architecture that represents the culture of their people. Queen Victoria was the first monarch that resided in Buckingham Palace in 1837 and once again the extensive changes took place. Nowadays the Palace is used not only as the home of the Queen but also for the administrative work for the monarchy. It is here in the state apartments that Her Majesty receives and entertains guest invited to the Palace. Buckingham Palace was opened to the public for the first time in 1993; however it is still the official London residence of the sovereign. Although the function of the Palace may have been widen but the original design of the Palace is still been well preserved over 300 years. It is the tangible heritage that reminds people of their culture and the preservation of the front facade of Buckingham Palace is one of many ways on how they are trying to protect their own local identity and character of the nation.



Figure 1.4: Buckingham Palace



Figure 1.5: Buckingham Palace

In Malaysia, there is also a place where culture is been preserved in term of sustaining the architectural building which is in Malacca. Shop lot at Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, Malacca has been the pride of Baba-Nyonya heritage. Historical buildings and shop lot can be found along Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Jonker Street in Malacca. Jonker's Street once a rich man's street is now a living proof of Malacca's rich Baba-Nyonya heritage. All this building is over many hundred years old. Although there are several alteration and modification made to sustain the historical building yet the front facade of the shop lot has remained unchanged for the purpose of preserving the heritage of Baba-Nyonya.



Figure 1.6: Shop lot



Figure 1.7: Shop lot

Cultural landscape is the combination of people with nature and the existence of both develop a set of tradition and character for certain community that later on become a valuable heritage. Some time heritage depends on tangible elements and most of the time it rely on intangible elements, however the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage ensure that human root can always be sustained and protected. Minangkabau is known for adat pepatih, unique language, roof design and its tradition. Minangkabau is nothing without the representation of these elements and local people may easily forget their root, identity, image and most importantly their culture and heritage.



Figure 1.8: Heritage of Minangkabau



Figure 1.9: Istana Seri Menanti

6. Cultural Influences on the Society

Culture includes language, food, clothing, rituals, beliefs, traditions, behaviors, ceremony, music and many others. Culture is exceptionally valuable as it is followed and practiced by a certain generation and passed on to the coming generations in the future. In concise, culture includes people exhibiting various mannerisms, their religious or spiritual beliefs, and principles that define their actions. Culture is significant because of several reasons which are:

i. Creates Identification

The culture and the values followed in a particular community display its own unique identity. By practicing a set of rituals and traditions, the community gains a unique character and personality, simply because of the culture of the people belonging to it. Being shared amongst various members of a community, the language, art, and religion serve as the major symbols of culture, thereby distinguishing it from other cultures in the society. Further, it is learned and passed on from the older generations to the newer ones, thereby keeping the culture alive and fresh.

ii. Bonds People

Culture is merely a bond or tie that keeps people belonging to a particular region or community together. Thus, people following similar rituals, customs, and values fall into one culture, thereby bonding them together. These include the festivals they celebrate, the kind of clothing they wear, the food they eat, most importantly, the cultural values they adhere to.

iii. Establishes Principles

Culture is often viewed as an integrated system that controls the society. As such, people coming from a particular culture exhibit distinguished standards and behaviors. The cultural values that people inherit form the founding principles of an individual's life. Moreover, these cultural values highly influence a person's principles

and philosophies of life and one's way of living. Thus, a culture is significant in affecting a human being's social life.

iv. Stand Apart in Foreign Countries

People who have seeped their cultural values and traditions in their lives display them in foreign lands as well. In today's competitive world, most people migrate from their homeland to other countries in the quest of a better living. It is only due to their sustaining of the cultural values that they stay connected with their family and community, in particular. Further, they maintain their unique rituals and customs so that they do not mingle with the foreigners and lose out their traditions back home.

7. Significant of Cultural Landscape

Cultural landscape is significant for preserving the heritage and legacy. Minangkabau culture is very rich in term of *adat* and tradition. It is the important key that brings the whole community together. Therefore the need to protect the living culture is perceived as an important way to ensure heritage is been well preserved. This includes:

i. Local People

Cultural landscape holds the key to people legacy that is passed from one generation to the other. Therefore this legacy becomes the heritage of certain community. Local people are the one who stand upon their unique identity because it distinguishes them from other society. Local people gains their own character, image and quality through several generations. The reminisce of the past increase the sense of attachment toward the place therefore local people will feels as if they belong there and their identity is been well recognized specifically related to that place. Whenever heritage is preserved, local identity will forever protected.

ii. State of Negeri Sembilan

Every place possesses its own unique identity and character. Every state has its own set of tradition that distinguishes them from others. Negeri Sembilan is best known for *Adat Papatih*, and it has been practiced from previous generation. Hence this has already becomes the state identification and later on has developed to be a land of tradition. This identification defines people in the state as it creates bonds that bring all community together within it.

iii. Country

It is important for country to identify their national identity because without that recognition there will be no identification to represents the nation. Cultural landscape is the key to people legacy and therefore heritage. Heritage is valuable and it is irreplaceable. Once it is loss, it will be difficult to reestablish the loss and regain back the identity of the nation as everything is already gone. Country cannot protect itself, there are only people who are able to ensure that their identity and national identity are always sustained and protected.

iv. Global Perspective on Local Identity

Every community is created differently and there is a reason behind this. If everyone in this universe is the same then the world will be a boring place to live in. Therefore it is our nation and identity that differentiate us from one another. That's what makes people and their community as unique living things. . In every part of the world there is a unique historical area that must be protected and most of the time it is related to the community or local people there. As cultural landscape protects human legacy and heritage however it is the people that make cultural landscape alive. By protecting human legacy it is actually preserving local identity.

8. Anticipated Methodology

The methods section is the most important aspect of a research study because it provides the information by which the validity of a study is ultimately judged. This section will discuss detail outline on research methodology with clear and precise descriptions on how the experiment will be done. Methodology is simply a strategy to control and manipulate variables that provide an answer to the research question regarding potential cause and effect relationships. However validity of the result from research experiment must be taken into consideration to make sure the study is not open for doubt. External validity is primarily determined by how subjects are selected to participate in a study and by the use of randomization procedures that limit potential bias in how subjects are assigned to treatment groups. Judging the external validity of a study involving human subjects which is Minangkabau ethnicity thus it requires descriptive data be provided regarding the basic demographic profile of the sample population, including age, gender, and possibly the racial composition of the sample.

9. Methods Section

There will be 4 types of methods that will be conducted in the study which are:

a) Survey

Technique: Questionnaire

Questionnaire provides solution to achieved better result in answering the research question for this study. It is an important method to discover the condition of Minangkabau cultural landscape and to determine which part or aspect of the culture that probably disappeared. There will be three dependent variables and several independent variables to discover the relationship between Minangkabau ethnicity and local people.

First Dependent Variables: Local identity and character of Minangkabau

An area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with an historic event, activity, person, or group of people that share the same identity and meaning.

To measure:

- To measure whether the community practice local tradition at Seri Menanti .
- To measure the level of appreciation on their own culture

Second Dependent variables: Sense of belonging and attachment

Communities that are bond to the same traditions, customs and beliefs represent by exceptional spiritual relationship between people and nature. To measure:

- To measure whether social group practice the similar values, beliefs and ways of appreciating the culture
- To measure the amount of local people and new comers.

Third Dependent variables: Cultural landscape resources

The ideas and values, activities and behaviour, social relations and social institution that are portrays by tangible or intangible features. To measure:

- To measure whether local people value their culture resources as heritage/ legacy
- To measure the significant of those resources towards local people

b) Interview

Technique: Time Line

Target: Elderly people such as clan chiefs, territorial chiefs and those who have strong knowledge on the history of Minangkabau

Time line provides an aggregate of the various landmark events as perceived by the local people. It is an important technique commonly used to investigate and explore the temporal dimensions from the historical perspectives. The time line captures the chronology of events as recalled by local people. It illustrates as sequential aggregate of past events. Therefore it provides the historical landmarks and valuable spaces or even significant incidents occurred to defined the community. The main key for this technique is not merely about the history itself but the events of the past as perceived and recalled by the local themselves.

The time line technique helps:

- i. To learn from the community what they considered as important past events that may affect or even develop their culture and heritage.
- ii. To understand from the community historical perspectives on how they perceived their culture and identity
- iii. To generate discussion that may lead to significant result of understanding the community. Since the discussion is about the past of the village thus it will create good atmosphere to start an interview.

c) Document Analysis

Through: Information gathered from literature review

d) Case study

Focus Target: Negeri Sembilan still has strong influence in their unique culture and consistently practices Minangkabau tradition. However the case studies of this research will be focusing at Seri Menanti and Rembau.

10. Conclusion

'Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations' (Sirisrisak and Akagawa, 2007:15). Arntzen (2003) declared that cultural landscape is to sustain the heritage value, to protect local identity and to enrich original culture of a group of people or place. Minangkabau at Negeri Sembilan is famous for the strong attachment towards *adat* or body of local custom, has commonly been assumed stands opposed to Islamic law. *Adat* is usually defined as local custom which regulates the interaction of the members of a society and by this definition it would be expected that *adat* in Minangkabau to

be a system in opposition to *Syari'ah* or Islamic law. On the other hand *adat* does refer to local custom that is conceived as the whole structural system of the society, which local custom is only a component. *Adat* in this sense is supposed to form the entire value system, the basic of all ethical and legal judgment as well as the source of social expectations. In concise, it represents the ideal pattern of behavior (Taufik Abdullah, 1966). Due to the significant of Minangkabau culture, there is a great reason to protect and sustain the living culture. This is an initiative to make sure local identity and human legacy is forever preserved.

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