

ROAD NETWORKS IN THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE

¹MAHMOOD SEYYED, ²MOHAMMAD AKVAN, ³MAHNAZ BABAI TOOSKI

¹Dr of History, Assistance Professor, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran ,Iran
²Dr of Philosophy , Associate Professor, Central tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran ,Iran
³PH.D Student in History , Njaf Abad Isfahan , Islamic Azad University.
E-mail: ¹mahmood.seyyed@yahoo.com, ²m-Akvan2007@yahoo.com

Abstract— Caravan routes which were established across Achaemenid Empire, have been Darius the first's outstanding and dramatic action that itself was the most effective means to facilitate transportation, merchandise travelling and also establishing nations close to others. The territorial extent like that of the Achaemenid which has been required fast and efficient message, army and commodity handling were so important, therefore roads were extremely essential. Cyrus the great, Darius and sometimes Xerxes have been allocated large sums in establishing road networks, because of that major streams and roads were joined each other all around the monarchy. Kings, generals, businessmen, farmers for spending their life and affairs were depended on in that way. In fact, governing the vast territory of Achaemenid Empire required efficient communication between the Achaemenid central royal court and also state authorities. These administrative routes were the roads of army and helped to facilitate the movements of troops in order to bring safety to the states. Caravans' traveling around the Empire also required the existence and movements of the military escorts and guards to ensure the safety and health to get to the destinations. Most of these roads were not paved solely, but they were so smooth which were appropriate for horses, chariots and also to travel on feet. First, this research has been focused on important army routes and somewhat economical ones; next, it will explain the importance and applications of roads at the Achaemenid era and finally, the role of roads at that period of time will be analyzed.

Keywords—Achaemenid, Routes, Persepolis, Susa, Sardis and etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

At the time of dynasties before the Achaemenid Empire, there have been a wide communication at the imperial domains, as well as with the study of the history of Assyrians, Elamite and the Medes it can be realized, and the government which was in the range of power and status cannot be ignored. The large extension of Achaemenid domain dominated by them and needed to have communication among all these states in order to have business prosperous and also to have control over their inhabitants and Rulers; construction of new roads or connecting the older ones for mentioned dynasty was something so important that it was inevitable to be ignored. The first king that realized the importance of that was Darius the first that perhaps rebellions happening early in his reign in different states and their prolonging led him to do such an act. After the administrative organization, the most important factor or the other words, the essential factor for administering monarchy, has been the establishment of continuous communication with the states nearby and also construction of roads. Gradually, during the Achaemenid period, roads were developed and new roads known as the imperial ones that brought the major cities and centers of the States or satraps all together. The political - Business prosperity were only possible in conditions like that and paved roads and communication routes between the cities were safe and smooth and also social arrangements were presented in the host cities in order to support foreign businessmen. Admittedly, the network's political and commercial relations among the neighbor countries were existed since the

beginning of the third millennium BC and people in these lands have become interwoven into one system. At that time improvements have been established and also a major transformation in terms of qualitative and quantitative were undergone. Among the ancient kings, under the reign of Darius could be realized that the success of a nation must be made based on the sound economic prosperity. The Imperial era of Darius the first, the majority of military and Political roads from India to the coast of Asia have been taken up. After creating lands he sought to take the control of Mediterranean Sea and with creating canals and bridges have had important steps in this regard. The next Achaemenid kings especially Xerxes was also established canals and roads therefore can be mentioned that with continuing this policy so many contentions between the Achaemenid and Greece governments have been occurred.

Susa - Persepolis Route :

Following the arrival of the Persians to the South West of Iran, and establishment of the Achaemenid Empire by Cyrus the Great (53-559 BC), and its extension by Cambyses and Darius the Great, Pasargadae and Persepolis, were made as the capital of their empire. At that time, Persia became the administrative and the communication center. Before Shiraz have become the capital of Iran, Marvdasht that Persepolis is located there, was the convergence center of roads which were inside and outside of the Persia. The most famous road which transplanted Persia to Khuzestan or rather to Susa has been the imperial road named Susa - Persepolis. This route was the terminus of the Achaemenid Monarchy that

was extended from the province of Susa to the south - East and from there to the most southern point and also was extended from Persia to southern Zagros, Ramhormoz and Arjan (the current city; Pehbahan). Darius for integrating administration of the Achaemenid has established a wide network of roads. These roads primarily served the royal messaging, with horse-riding couriers and fastrunners. Trade Expansion and travelling were in second grade. The roads between Susa and Persepolis have had the most importance. With the help of Elamite clay tablets of the royal treasury of Persepolis, we know the existence of countless villages and towns along these roads (Hints, p 307). Probably stations for trips of the king, resting convoys, troops and Chaparha over this route were made in distances close together (Sami, volume 2, p 158). On the Persepolis tablets, various road stations were mentioned that about 20 stations have been deployed along the 600 km between Persepolis - Susa road. This means that each station was distanced about 30 km from the stations before and after each other (Graf, page 263). It appears that along this route, Arjan (An Elamite - Achaemenid place) have had an extraordinary importance, this is where the road have been the main station reached to Fahlian and Kazeroon Region and from there were located toward the northwest of Susa (Hansman, pp 101-124). In the area of Fahlian according to the exploratory reports, works from the Achaemenid fortifications have been found and in some paved path parts and moreover some remains of a royal canopy with stone column bases with the pure Susa or Persepolis style have been known. Between Fahlian and Bishapour, this route was kept to the left, and through Pars routes were opened to Iranian plateau (Ghirshman, p 158). Arfaie, an explorer of this type concluded that the mentioned fortifications were protected by massive walls. He fortified this place as Hidali that 23 times has mentioned in Persepolis texts have been disputed. It is possible that at the time of Darius the first, this fort has been made for military purposes, especially taking care of the troops and the king himself. According to the documents, thousands of kilos of goods were stored at this fortress that likely was needed on the road for supporting passengers coming along Susa and Persepolis route (Arfaie, 1991, pp 37-43). Halouk has also mentioned this place as a major center for travelers traveling between Susa - Persepolis, Kerman and India (Hallock, 596-597). Along this route have been Chaparkhaneh, each of which had its share of economic ties with the surrounding villages. From Persepolis to Susa there had been existed 22 Chaparkhaneh which were located about 24 kilometers far from each other and their exact location has been lost and could not truly be found. Oumstd has been introduced Achaemenid as the inventor of post (Chapar). According to the Egyptians and then later Greeks this invention obtained from Iranians and then has been expanded to

the West (Oumstd, p 278). Xenophon in the book "Education of Cyrus", attributes creating royal courier to Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid (Xenophon, p 351). Must be noted that, these roads have had guards and they were responsible for the peace, order and protection of roads. It is often observed that these road-guards moved there before the king arrival and inspected roads and waited until the king arrival to the designated place in order to report road safety to the king (Cokh, p. 87). Also in the treasury tablets, the roads' spearman guardians have been mentioned. Apparently they were constituted an independent unit that has been served under the supervision of some people. The clay tablets of October, 501 BC have been mentioned that five officers of the station were sent to the Hazhareh village and waited there until the king and his companies to be arrived (Hints, p 309). Strabon about the Susa - Persepolis road states "The mountainous region that has located between Susa and Persia and this route is so tough. There are clumps of narrow and rocky valleys, not only difficult to pass, but also would be habitat and providing shelter for so known bandits, that even kings when they wanted to travel the distance between Susa and Persia, had to pass them ransom and tribute. Alexander also had passed this road" (Strabon, p 318). Dioudorous is also in describing this road during the Ouman (one of the commanders of Alexander the Great) in 317 BC states "The first part of the road as far as called Klimakous, was so narrow and have been burned under the heat of sun and no food could be found, but the second part was so high with fine weather. This section in fact includes the overshadow valleys that were at short distances from each other so that those who follow this road portion enjoyed living in that place which is perfectly suited" (Dioudorsisili, book 19, Chapter 21, Section 3-2). By comparing rampart tablets, the tablets of the Persepolis Treasury and classical sources can be realized that the imperial road from Susa to Persepolis (Takht-e Jamshid) into Persia was divided into three major branches: the north, middle and south.

1. First branch: the northern branch extended from a mountainous area with narrow valleys and passed along the east side and reached to the Kaman Defiles and Shirin River, and from there stretched to Ardakhan (Ardakan) (in western north part of Marvdasht) and from Ardakan, the road extended towards Kamfirouz and from that place by passing the north of Marvdasht mountains reached to the Persepolis. Perhaps it was the road that Alexander the Macedonian and his army were headed from there to Persepolis; at the same time some armies and troops led by Parminioun with Tesalicavalry from southern road along the Sheshpir or Shoul River attacked from the Eastern side of Persepolis (Razmara, pp 89). A branch of this road reached to Khelar (Khalar) in Western part of Marvdasht which was less mountainous. According to Muslim geographers, this

road was extended from Khalar to Goyem and from there to the modern Shiraz - Ardakan road (Ibn-e Balkhi, pp. 284-285). From Khalar and along Marvdasht plain, the mentioned road, most likely during the Achaemenid and Sassanid period was led to Persepolis and Istakhr. 2_ the second branch: the extension of this large road reached from northwest part of Goyem, Khalar and Beiza to the West part of Marvdasht. This road bypassing the west and along the Sheshpir River, Kharareh, Korejan and valleys of Bavanatin Doshmanziare region reached to Nobandegan. It is inferred that the mentioned route was less mountainous and mostly plain. 3. The third branch: the Southern road that was led from south Nourabad to Shahpour area and along Kazeroon Highway reached to Nourabad (New Nurabad). This imperial Road reached from Nurabad to Firoozabad and then extended to Persepolis.

II. IMPERIAL ROAD

From the Greek point of view, the most famous road that was known at that time, the route known as Imperial road which was drawn from Susa to Sardis. This road in fact was connected the Imperial center to one of the peripheral areas in its northwestern corner. The Imperial Road was primarily used for the rapid delivery of troops and equipment and the transfer of information in the fastest possible time (Vishofer, p 102). This road was the only known road in the Achaemenid period and because of their proximity to Greek literature, it has been reflected on their books, and nowadays we have got more data sets (Vakili, pp. 274). Herodotus about the Imperial road writes "throughout this road, Imperial building and beautiful caravansaries have been built. All along this route, we are crossing the territories which are inhabited totally safe. All across Lidi and Farigieh there would be a 20 day's journey road followed by each other, which all together became 94 Parsang and a half and across the Farigieh, Halis River flows. For taking care of the river strong fortress has been built. After crossing the river, we arrive to Cappadocia and from there until Cilicia limit there would be a 20 day's journey with 104 Parsang. In Cilicia limit must pass two mountainous and narrow routes and also two fortified castles. If we calculate the Imperial road's length by Parsang and if Parsang would be equal to 30 Setad, from Sardis to the headquarters of the King (Susa) together would be 13500 setad, therefore it means 450 Parsang and if each day 150 setad could be marched, passing on this distance will exactly last about 90 days" (Herodotus, volume 5, p 45). This road was built by Darius. The importance of act of Darius in building the roads was that along the roads houses and good guest houses have been provided. He had established Chaparkhaneh which have been equipped and ready horses permanently held. Military Sakhlohayeh had been deployed in mountainous areas to provide safety in roads and the couriers (chaparha) could quickly

spread Imperial orders and instructions to the other parts of the royal injunctions. Thus, couriers (chaparha) were on the move day and night, and the orders and instructions of the central government were delivered to all sectors and provinces that had been addressed (Shabbani, pp. 108-107). Imperial Road unlike other Imperial roads of the Achaemenid Empire was often wide and the ancient writers have described them so horse-drawn carriage roads (Kaleskehro). Imperial Roads passed everywhere from residential areas, this means that in these roads there were not the risk of starvation or being caught in a bandits trap. From historians point of view, these roads were passes in which army could have been easily provided by nutrition and other necessary things. But in order to enter to these roads formal permission were needed that they were in popular clay tablets from Persepolis (R series) which has been named so-called Halmi and complete example of a letter is that of Arsham given by him to his consulter (Berian, volume 10, pp. 604-603; Court, pp. 117-116). From the perspective of Achaemenid power, major communication and transportation in the first place have been had a political and strategic function. According to Kouintous Kourtious imperial road have been a military road (Brian, quoted from Kouintous Kourtious, volume 10, p 616). This road helped to the mobilization of military units to be joined together in certain areas where they have been set for the meeting. Satraps were also instructed in roads to build warehouses to store food and ammunition (Xenophon, Book VII, pp. 241-139). The Achaemenid Empire along the imperial pass also tracked another route from Susa to Babylon, along the Euphrates to the borders of Cilicia, and from there to Lydia. It was not only shorter, but also had another advantage; by crossing the sea goods had been exchanged. This road has been stretched along the Tigris River around the central region of the ancient Assyria Kingdom. Other cities like Erbil and Aupis were on the way of this route (Landring, p 20). On the other hand, Minor Asia have been had an important was the route was established by Xerxes in preparation for invasion to Greece. This king for preparation in order to attack to Greece ordered to build a road in Turkey that shocked habitants even after a generation, it would be possible that shaved cliffs over Yaltoria in Aida mount had been a road by his order. Can be partly sure that; roads built by Xerxes toward the Macedonian were well mapped and made his way smooth (Cook, p 199). In Minor Asia, regardless of the imperial roads, side roads were also existed. For example, it is true about the road between Sardis and Miletus and allowed the Greeks with the help of guiders able to attack to Lidy. Tisafren (the period of Artaxerxes II), later passed this road, and when he tried to prevent Agzias troops advance passing from Great Sardis sidetrack to Ephesus (Bryan, 1386, p 268). Cook believes that the imperial Road from residential areas that have been among the Persians and they had their own

interference and the security they provided, but for travelers who wanted to distract from the road and to enter into the hills and mountains, there were no guarantees for their safety (Cook, 1385, p 103).

Road from Susa to Mesopotamia :

Main Road between Achaemenid Iran and Western satraps, Surat - Palestine were probably the same traditional and old roads of Mesopotamia and Ollie. This road joined Egypt through Jerusalem and Damascus to the imperial center (Brosious, 1388, p 82). On Euphrates area, there were two important roads: one was of that extended to the West and through Gouzan and Harran reached to the northern part of Syria. The Other major road in Mesopotamia Ollie extended along Khabour and Euphrates Rivers towards the south. This south road became of one of the Achaemenid royal road network, after reaching Damascus extended to the coastal areas of the eastern Mediterranean and would say that Damascus was the better junction of main roads in those areas. One way around the ancient southern city went beyond the Jordan, and went to the Aqaba Port. Along this way Achaemenid presence in cities like Oman, Habshoun, and Tolle Khalife has been approved by exploratory (Graf, Vol 8, p 274). The other route stretched from Damascus to the West and after crossing the Bekaa Valley reached to Sidon (Sida), the fifth capital of Persian and in the northern part the other road along Ornets River (Nahrollasi) stretched to the east side and reached to the west to Aleppo and Amsa (Homs). These roads had vital effect over Iranian and Sure communication system. Near Petra this route encountered by another route that crossed from west to the east and reached to Black Sea and also the countries near Ghafghaz (Diakonf, p 123). In other route of Euphrates direction, from Tapsak, another road stretched to Aleppo and Cilicia. The people were crossing this road were moved from Cilicia coast to Minor Asia or Greece. According to Xenophon this road through Cilicia, Cappadocia, Frigieh, Great Frigieh and finally Menander Valley reached to Sardis (Xenophon, pp. 17-24).

Susa Road to Median (Hamadan):

Contrary to what has been highlighted in history books, Susa-Medes road could be the most ancient road in Achaemenid period because there is no doubt that this road has been existed before Cyrus. As the conquest of Persia by Darius by his own hand and his civil wars, armies had crossed it. In other words, this road was older and longer, and important political events have been carried out (Vakili, pp. 274). One of the major roads in Achaemenid period, has been a highway from Susa to Babylon, and through gates of Biestoun and Zagros stretched to Ecbatana or Hamadan and marched the plateau then had been reached to Ragheh (Ray) and after passing this state reached to the gates of Caspian, East of Iran (Bactria, Balkh) and Hindu Kush mountains. Along this road

castles and barracks has been made along the Oksous River (Amoudarya) in Bactria and Saghadiana, it had its own function and later the famous Abrisham road has been passed from this area and therefore it proves the importance and long existence of this road (Tuplin, pp 167-171). Kourtiou Rufus it has mentioned this road as a "military road" (Cook, quoted from Kourtiou Rufus, p 199) and also extended from Ecbatana to the coasts of Caspian Sea and stretched along the coast of the East to Bactria and Central Asia (Brosious, 1387, p 82). Diodorus about This road says: "When Antigonus encountered with Ouman attack, decided to move from Susiana (Susa) to the north and to Ecbatana in Media. He described the road as "passing through both the roads that led to Medes was difficult. The road down to the Colon was as good as royal road, but by the heat of sun it has been burned and also was too long. Since passing of it would take forty days but the road that has been passed from ethnic Casey territories (Lorestan) was narrow and had steeply sloping" (Dioudorsisily, Book 19, Paragraph 2). Minorski says when the Achaemenid had to pass Hamedan-Babylonian road, through the Casey territory had had to pay their ransom (Minorski, pp. 17-16). After defeat from Alexander, Darius III has chosen this way because he thought that Alexander would chose Susa and Babylon Road which was smoother, and in which, however, Susa -Medes road for a large army movement was difficult, because of that this road was selected (Bryan, Vol 10, p 617). A highway that led to the Iranian plateau was the road from Ecbatana to Isfahan, Male Amir Valleys (Ize), Castle Tolle, and also reached to Malek garden and then continued its way towards Southwest Ramhormoz. From this location in order to join Susa - Persepolis highway or moving toward south or crossing from the valleys of southern Behbahan and Hendijan and reached the Persian Gulf (Bushehr) was made easy (Carter, p 122; Beryan, Vol 10, p 59).

Eastern road:

In Iran plateau, Khorasan, especially in the north of ancient gynecology unit at its zenith in the Parthian period, there has been a significant road. Due to the vastness of the land and the roads in which it seemed that there was an important center of life. Several roads was attached this large part to Sistan, Soghd, Kharazm, Caspian Sea, Persia and Kerman (Bokhtootash, p 257). Khorasan and Persia were connected with a width road. That was the same road that Cyrus the Great and the Macedonian Alexander marched and then through Aria (Herat) and Zarangian (Sistan) travelled to the Hilmand River area and Aryasps' land and Kandahar (Bryan, Vol 10, pp. 594 -593).

Persepolis - India Route :

There were a direct path between Persepolis and India, which existed from the south that passed from

Kermania areas (Kerman) and Gedrouzia (Baluchistan). In Persepolis Treasury documents the activities of workers in the eastern region Narhazesh, Neiriz, are pointed. This place is undoubtedly has been one of the home or stations that through satrap centers in Kermania expanded to the Eastern region, this road existence could perhaps be an explanation on why Indians Arakhouzia Kandahar, Arians Hormozians and Kermanians all through Takht-e Jamshid moved to Susa. Journey of a satrap named Abtameh in this direction are visible in tablets of Persepolis (Brosious, 1388, p 86). Another road began from this side of the Sand River with passage of Gondareh (Roud-e kabel Valley) and other important cities in the east and joining together in roads that were sewn into the capital come to Egypt. The road would link India to Egypt (Bayani, p 201). One other minor road was also through the center Derangiana satrap finally ended to Kandahar and Sand. The described road was easy to travel therefor it has been described in Takht-e Jamshid documents as well.

Shipping ways :

Darius for identifying the seas and opening seas routes to the military and commercial fleets, the discovery of two separate groups sent from East to West. In the year 512 BC Iran's military expedition to India could attach the banks of the Sand River to Iran. At the time Darius decided to send Askilas in order to discover the source of the Indus River to this area so according to Herodotus after returning the discovery of the group helped Darius be able to get Hindi under its order (Herodotus, Vol 4, pp. 110-109). We could say that these expeditions could pass Baluchistan and Makran coast and from there through the Gulf of Aden entered the Red Sea and through Bab- el Mandab that was constructed by Darius command in 517 BC able to inter Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea and then to research on the Mediterranean shore (Montesquieu, page 475). Stated that, he reported his work on the book, which is the first book in the field of geography. This journey of discovery and research, has been sewn Indian Ocean through Persian Gulf to the Red Sea that in the past, travelers and offshore trips have been performed in this direction (Zarrinkoub p. 152). The second group was under Demakis; the Athenian physicians commend that went on from the shores of the Aegean Sea to Greece and Italy in order to identify new lands. This delegation first went to Greece in Sidon in southern Italy and later moved to the city of Tarant. It was here that Demakis fled and then Persians were trapped (Herodotus, Vol 3, pp. 229-227). Among all the achievements of the Achaemenid period associated with waterways, digging the Suez Canal would be a remarkable achievement, according to sources of Nakha for first time, Egypt Pharaoh, shortly before Achaemenid, had begun the channel drilling operations (Vakili, pp. 283). Along 84 km of the

canal dug up twelve stone pillars to explain how the canal was installed. Darius with pride about this column declares in four languages: I ordered this canal dug from the river called the Nile that flows in Egypt to the sea that originates from Persia. The canal was dug as I did and as I was commanded and ships through the canal will pass between the Egypt and Persia (Brosious, 1387, p. 85).

In this period, major sea routes, ports and coasts would link countries together. Persian Gulf Seaway, West Sea and Egypt before digging of the Suez Canal by Darius, crossed the Tigris and Euphrates. Therefore by this seaway shipped to Syria and from there to West sea and Egypt and if they were headed on land to Egypt they would pass Palestine and Sina Island. But this way would have passed from desert so there were water and food shortage for the travellers. Moreover, Cambyses for conquering Egypt passed through this land (Brent George, p 131). Passenger and commercial seaways that from there stretched to the shores of India and Persian Gulf to Suez, and from there to the coast of Minor Asia, Greece and Bahroljzayer and from West Sea to the coast of North Africa, therefore this way would be better than passing from hot Saudi Arabia and Sina Islands (Sami, pp. 160-161).

Important achievements of the sea and canal digging occurred at the time of Xerxes, in Persian invasion of Greece in 492 BC on Mardonieh command, since the Iranian navy were passed from slopes of Mount Athos (on the east coast of Greece) and the Aegean Sea, Iranian ships due to severe storms hit to the mountains and was crushed. Therefore, Xerxes in order to prevent lost and injures and also supporting the navy power, commended to dig a seaway in order not to pass by Atos Mountain. According to Herodotus, the digging of the canal lasted three years (Herodotus, Vol 7, paragraph 20). Achaemenid' other achievement was to facilitate traveling has been to create a bridge on the river (Frie, p 179). In fact, one of the means of communication were in dealing with rivers were building bridges which might cause the Achaemenid Empire to use construction engineers (Barter, P. 57) on rivers such as Euphrates and the Dardanelles, to build strong bridges, according to Will Durant, hundreds of elephants had crossed safely (Durant, p 527). According to sources, Darius III in 331-332 BC has been had design for military use from the Euphrates River. It has been stated that, before the Arbil Battle (Gogmel) tried to come up through the Euphrates River, to get his troops equipped in order to fight Alexander the Macedonian (Bryan, Vol 10, p 63).

CONCLUSION

At the end of this discussion could be considered that Achaemenid Kings for improving political relationship and having power over different regions, road policy was among the most important objectives

and have been made their best effort. But this type of activity is far true about Darius the third, because other Achaemenid Kings especially from the Xerxes era have been used treasury in order to add to the Empire that this policy brought great destruction. Darius and then Xerxes have been created roads for military objectives and tried by creating imperial routes get informed of all information and actions about the countries around his empire. This reason would be considered as one of the main policies of Achaemenid Kings in creating roads. As the construction of the roads in front of Susa - Persepolis, Susa - Sardis were in line with these goals. Existence of Persepolis tablets, archaeological discoveries and writings of Greek historians proves the goal and function of these roads and can be pointed considerably. It would seem important to the development and expansion of the road, the elaborate protection by the Greek writers, especially quoted from the father of history, Herodotus. In fact, the main function of the roads were of political than economical. More royal passengers were the couriers of the king's message to the satraps and officials in the province or they brought reports and messages to the king. These messengers or couriers called Piradzhish means Express Courier and acute horses. Extremist Couriers or messengers daily rations of food and wine from the royal storehouses were placed at their disposal by the roads. The other passengers on these roads or satraps were who traveling to do the mission between the capital and the states Center. In these roads, kings, royal brokers, couriers, imperial men, military units, tribute bearers, ambassadors and representatives of ethnic groups have been commuted. It was confirmed that this would be part of the caravan trade route for the transportation of goods and commodities have been using for their businesses. The problem is that nowhere all over these roads about the merchant who was traveling across mentioned explicitly .

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