IMAGE TILING FOR CLUSTERING TO IMPROVE STABILITY OF CONSTANT-TIME COLOR BILATERAL FILTERING

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ABSTRACT

Bilateral filtering is a typical edge-preserving smoothing and it is used in various applications. The main issue of bilateral filtering is the processing time. In order to solve this problem, constant-time bilateral filtering has been proposed. The constant-time bilateral filter is an effective method for grayscale images, but it takes high cost for color images because of the curse of dimensionality. Some algorithms specialize in constant-time color bilateral filtering for color images by using clustering. However, the clustering has randomness, and computational cost itself is also high. In this paper, we propose an acceleration method of clustering by using K-means++, tiling, and subsampling, and also achieve improvement of the stability.

Index Terms— edge-preserving filter, color bilateral filter, constant-time bilateral filter, tiling, K-means++

1. INTRODUCTION

Edge-preserving smoothing can preserve contours in an image while its smoothing process. A typical example of the edge-preserving filter is bilateral filtering (BF) [1]. The kernel in BF composites two kernels according to pixel positions (spatial kernel) and pixel value (range kernel). BF is used in various image processing applications, such as denoising [2], deblurring [3], detail enhancement [4], HDR [5], haze removing [6], stereo matching [7], and optical flow [8].

The problem of BF is its computational complexity. The computational time of BF is much higher than that of a linear filter, such as Gaussian filtering (GF), since BF is spatially variant filtering.

There are some acceleration methods for BF in gray and color images. For grayscale image, early works use FFT or separable filtering for acceleration [5, 9–12]. Recent works use constant-time Gaussian filtering (GF) [13, 14] for spatial convolution, then the cost of BF becomes constant per pixel [15–18], i.e., computational time does not depend on

the kernel radius. The O(1) BF is effective for grayscale images; however, its computational complexity increases exponentially for color or multi-channel images because of the curse of dimensionality.

For the curse of dimensionality in constant-time color bilateral filtering (O(1) CBF), early works spatially subsample images for acceleration [16, 19]. Following works use random sampling of approximating functions of the range kernel to reduce the number of convolutions [20–22]

Recent works [23–25] further improve the performance by using clustering. Therefore, the accuracy of O(1) CBF depends on the clustering result. Also, reasonable clustering methods utilize a randomized algorithm; thus, the filtering results have variance. Moreover, the computational cost of the clustering itself becomes overhead.

In this paper, we propose a method to solve the problems of the clustering-based O(1) CBF [24, 25], such as high computational cost and randomness, by using K-means++ clustering [26], tiling [17], and subsampling. The contributions of this paper are as follows:

- Revealing the problem of randomness in clusteringbased CBF and suppressing the variation of the accuracy due to random sampling by using tiling and K-means++.
- Showing that the tiling and K-means++ also improve the approximation accuracy per cluster.
- Showing that clustering is insensitive to subsampling, and then subsampling improves the speed of clustering processing itself. Also, tiling improves the speed of filtering.

2. O(1) COLOR BILATERAL FILTER

We firstly define color bilateral filtering (CBF). A *D*-dimensional *R*-tone color image $f : S \mapsto \mathcal{R}$, where $S \subset \mathbb{Z}^D$ and $\mathcal{R} \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ denotes the spatial domain and range domain (generally, D = 2 and R = 256), respectively. Using a pixel position $p \in S$, its color intensity vector $f_p \in \mathcal{R}$, and its neighboring pixels $N(p) \subset \mathcal{R}$, CBF [1] is defined as follows;

$$\hat{\boldsymbol{f}}_{\boldsymbol{p}} = \frac{\sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) w_r(\boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{p}}, \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}) \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}}{\sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) w_r(\boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{p}}, \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}})}, \qquad (1)$$

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where $w_s : S \times S \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ is a spatial kernel and $w_r : \mathcal{R} \times \mathcal{R} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ is a range kernel. The most common choice of the kernels is Gaussian distribution:

$$w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) = e^{-\frac{\|\boldsymbol{q}-\boldsymbol{p}\|_2^2}{2\sigma_s^2}}, \quad w_r(\boldsymbol{a}, \boldsymbol{b}) = e^{-\frac{\|\boldsymbol{b}-\boldsymbol{a}\|_2^2}{2\sigma_r^2}},$$
 (2)

where $\sigma_s \in \mathbb{R}_+$ is spatial scale and $\sigma_r \in \mathbb{R}_+$ is range scale.

In O(1) CBF, the color information is clustered using the K-means method, and the dominant color vectors are determined at K points, where $\mu_k \in \mathbb{R}^3$, (k = 1..., K) is the dominant color vectors. The main idea of O(1) CBF is to decompose BF into the sum of multiple Gaussian filters, using the dominant colors as sampling points.

2.1. Soft-assignment Coding [24]

Sugimoto et al. apply soft-assignment coding [27, 28] CBF [24] Soft-assignment coding is known in general object recognition tasks. This approximation generates component images corresponding to some dominant color vectors. The approximate accuracy is enhanced by utilizing linear combinations of them derived from soft-assignment coding. The soft-assignment coding based CBF is defined by;

$$\hat{f}_{p} \approx \sum_{k=1}^{K} \alpha_{k}(f_{p}) \frac{\boldsymbol{\xi}_{\boldsymbol{\mu}_{k}}(\boldsymbol{p})}{\boldsymbol{\zeta}_{\boldsymbol{\mu}_{k}}(\boldsymbol{p})}, \qquad (3)$$

and $\boldsymbol{\xi}_{\boldsymbol{\mu}_k} : \mathcal{S} \mapsto \mathcal{R}$ and $\zeta_{\boldsymbol{\mu}_k} : \mathcal{S} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ are defined by

$$\boldsymbol{\xi}_{\boldsymbol{\mu}_{k}} = \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{ w_{r}(\boldsymbol{\mu}_{k}, \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}) \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}} \}, \tag{4}$$

$$\zeta_{\boldsymbol{\mu}_{k}} = \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{ w_{r}(\boldsymbol{\mu}_{k}, \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}) \},$$
(5)

where α_k is weights derived by soft-assignment coding, μ_k is dominant color vector determined by clustering.

$$\alpha_k(\boldsymbol{x}) = \frac{\exp\left(-\lambda \|\boldsymbol{x} - \boldsymbol{\mu}_k\|_2^2\right)}{\sum_{l=1}^K \exp\left(-\lambda \|\boldsymbol{x} - \boldsymbol{\mu}_l\|_2^2\right)},\tag{6}$$

where λ is a smoothing parameter. Note that the convolution of $\sum_{q \in N(p)} w_s(p, q) \{\cdot\}$ can be calculated in O(1) by constant-time Gaussian filtering (O(1) GF) [14]. The required number of convolutions is 4K, where K in the denominator and 3K in the numerator.

2.2. Nyström Approximation [25]

Nair et al. [25] apply Nyström approximation [29] to the problem of eigen value decomposition (EVD) in O(1) CBF. First, we explain O(1) BF [30, 31] using EVD of the range kernel matrix. Let $\mathcal{T} = \{f_x : x \in S\}$ be a list consisting of pixel values and let $\mathcal{T} = \{t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_m\}$ be some ordering of the elements in \mathcal{T} , where m is the number of elements. This means that, given $l \in [1, m], t_l = f_x$ for some $x \in S$. We track the correspondence by the index map;

$$\tau(\boldsymbol{x}) = l \quad \text{if } \boldsymbol{t}_l = \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{x}}. \tag{7}$$

We next define the kernel matrix $\boldsymbol{W} \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times m}$ given by

$$\boldsymbol{W}(i,j) = w_r(\boldsymbol{t}_i, \boldsymbol{t}_j). \tag{8}$$

Substituting (8) for (1) gives

$$\hat{f}_{p} = \frac{\sum_{q \in N(p)} w_{s}(p, q) W(\tau(p), \tau(q)) f_{q}}{\sum_{q \in N(p)} w_{s}(p, q) W(\tau(p), \tau(q)))}.$$
(9)

Since W is a symmetric matrix, EVD of W is as follows;

$$\boldsymbol{W} = \sum_{k=1}^{m} \lambda_k \boldsymbol{u}_k \boldsymbol{u}_k^{\mathrm{T}}, \qquad (10)$$

where $\lambda_k(\lambda_1 \ge ... \ge \lambda_m) \in \mathbb{R}$ are its eigenvalues, and $u_k \in \mathbb{R}^m$ are the corresponding eigenvectors. Substituting (10) to (9) gives

$$\hat{f}_{p} = \frac{\sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \sum_{k=1}^{m} \lambda_{k} \boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{p})) \boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{q})) \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}}{\sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \sum_{k=1}^{m} \lambda_{k} \boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{p})) \boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{q}))}.$$
 (11)

On switching the sums, this becomes

$$\hat{\boldsymbol{f}}_{\boldsymbol{p}} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{m} \lambda_k \boldsymbol{u}_k(\tau(\boldsymbol{p})) \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{ \boldsymbol{u}_k(\tau(\boldsymbol{q})) \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}} \}}{\sum_{k=1}^{m} \lambda_k \boldsymbol{u}_k(\tau(\boldsymbol{p})) \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{ \boldsymbol{u}_k(\tau(\boldsymbol{q})) \}}.$$
 (12)

Let $\hat{W} \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times m}$ be the matrix of low rank approximation of W using the top K ($K \ll m$) eigenvalues and eigenvectors.

$$\hat{\boldsymbol{W}} = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \lambda_k \boldsymbol{u}_k \boldsymbol{u}_k^{\mathrm{T}}, \qquad (13)$$

Using \hat{W} instead of W in the formula of (12), CBF can be approximated as

$$\hat{f}_{p} \approx \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{K} \lambda_{k} \boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{p})) \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{\boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{q})) \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}\}}{\sum_{k=1}^{K} \lambda_{k} \boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{p})) \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{\boldsymbol{u}_{k}(\tau(\boldsymbol{q}))\}}.$$
 (14)

As a result, CBF can be processed in constant time [30, 31], similar to Sugimoto et al. [24]. The required number of convolutions is 4K, where K in the denominator and 3K in the numerator.

In the grayscale case, the size of the matrix W is 256×256 . However, in the color case, the matrix size is millions \times millions, i.e., 256^3 . Therefore, EVD of W is difficult. For Nyström approximation [29] of EVD of W [25], we first construct a small range kernel matrix A and then extrapolate its eigenvectors to approximate those of W. $A \in \mathbb{R}^{K \times K}$ is defined using dominant color vectors μ_k determined by clustering as

$$\boldsymbol{A}(i,j) = w_r(\boldsymbol{\mu}_i, \boldsymbol{\mu}_j) \quad (i,j \in [1,K]).$$
(15)

The size of A is much smaller than that of W. Thus, we can easily compute EVD:

$$\boldsymbol{A} = \sum_{k=1}^{N} \lambda_k \boldsymbol{v}_k \boldsymbol{v}_k^{\mathrm{T}}, \qquad (16)$$

where $\lambda_k \in \mathbb{R}$, and $v_k \in \mathbb{R}^K$. We next construct $B \in \mathbb{R}^{K \times m}$:

$$\boldsymbol{B}(i,j) = w_r(\boldsymbol{\mu}_i, \boldsymbol{t}_j) \quad (i \in [1, K], j \in [1, m]).$$
(17)

This matrix is used to extrapolate u_k as follows;

$$\boldsymbol{u}_k = \frac{1}{\lambda_k} \boldsymbol{B}^{\mathrm{T}} \boldsymbol{v}_k. \tag{18}$$

These calculations eliminate the need to solve EVD of W and solve the problem of the curse of dimensionality.

3. PROPOSED METHOD

In this section, we introduce three techniques for clustering in CBF, such as K-means++, tiling, and subsampling. First of all, formulating O(1) CBF, Sugimoto et al. is as follows;

$$\hat{\boldsymbol{f}}_{\boldsymbol{p}} \approx \sum_{k=1}^{K} \alpha_k \frac{\sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{ w_r(\boldsymbol{\mu}_k, \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}) \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}} \}}{\sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_s(\boldsymbol{p}, \boldsymbol{q}) \{ w_r(\boldsymbol{\mu}_k, \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}}) \}},$$
(19)

and Nair et al. is as follows;

$$\hat{f}_{\boldsymbol{p}} \approx \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{K} \frac{1}{\lambda_{k}} X_{(\boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{p}},k)} \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p},\boldsymbol{q}) \{ X_{(\boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}},k)} \boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}} \}}{\sum_{k=1}^{K} \frac{1}{\lambda_{k}} X_{(\boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{p}},k)} \sum_{\boldsymbol{q} \in N(\boldsymbol{p})} w_{s}(\boldsymbol{p},\boldsymbol{q}) \{ X_{(\boldsymbol{f}_{\boldsymbol{q}},k)} \}}$$
(20)

where α_k is coefficient and $X_{(f,k)} = \sum_{j=1}^{K} w_r(\mu_j, f) v_k(j)$. From these equations, filtering results depend on the value of μ_k . In other words, the accuracy can be improved by improving how to take μ_k , i.e., sampling points.

3.1. K-means++

K-means++ [26] is a variant of K-means. K-means randomly takes initial centroids. By contrast, K-means++ determines the initial centroids by the following procedure. Let $c_i \in \mathbb{R}^3$, (i = 1..., K) be the initial centroids to be determined.

- 1. Choose one centroid c_1 at random from data points.
- 2. For each data point x, compute D(x), which is the shortest distance between x and the closest centroid, where we have already chosen.
- 3. Stochastically choose one new centroid c_i according to weighted probability distribution $\frac{D(\boldsymbol{x})^2}{\sum D(\boldsymbol{x})^2}$.
- 4. Repeat Step 2 until K-point centroids are chosen.

Each initial centroid is placed away from each other by K-means++ because of weighted probability distribution; thus, bias among sampling points are smaller than K-means. Therefore, K-means++ improves clustering accuracy and stability.

Table 1 shows the minimum, maximum, variance, and the average of the within-cluster sum of squares (WCSS) [32] when the color vector clustering is performed 1000 times for the image "Kodim04", where the number of clusters is K = 15). The clustering is performed by setting the luminance range of the image from 0-255 to 0-1. The statistics show that stability and accuracy are improved from K-means.

3.2. Tiling

Tiling is a technique that divides an input image into multiple images (sub-images) and then performs image processing for each sub-image. Finally, the processed sub-images are combined into an output image. When applying the tiling method,

Table 1: Within-cluster sum of squares (WCSS) statistics for each method (K = 15). * is the total WCSS for each tile.

| Statistics\Method | K-means | K-means++ | K-means with tiling* | K-means++ with tiling* |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| minimum | 1495.99 | 1493.02 | 1000.21 | 831.40 |
| maximum | 3002.58 | 1713.60 | 1436.63 | 875.64 |
| variance | 42195.58 | 1126.32 | 5229.76 | 58.94 |
| average | 1836.37 | 1544.17 | 1178.75 | 849.36 |



Fig. 1: 3D plot of pixel values of image "Kodim04" and clustered color vectors (gray points and white points).

it is necessary to pad the sub-images by the kernel radius. The padding introduces redundant processing.

The tiling technique limits the dynamic range of input images to improve the performance in the grayscale bilateral filtering case [17]. For the color image case, the color space of each sub-image is generally smaller than that of the whole image. Therefore, by performing O(1) CBF for each sub-image, O(1) CBF works effectively with fewer dominant color vectors. Also, the clustering result becomes more stable.

Figure 1 shows the images of 8 clustered color vectors without tiling and 8 clustered color vectors for each subimage using tiling, where we divided the image into 4×4 for tiling. Gray points represent pixel values in the image "Kodim04" and white points represent clustered color vectors. This figure suggests that the use of tiling covers a broader range of cluster points. Table 1 shows the total WSCC for each tile. This table means that the pixel values are dense near the sampling points due to tiling.

Furthermore, the tiling method can accelerate O(1) CBF itself [17]. The tiling method adopts the granularity of the parallelization and improves its efficiency. Also, the locality of data access increases, which improves cache efficiency.

3.3. Subsampling

To accelerate clustering, we subsample an input image for clustering. If we subsample the input image for entire image processing, the quality of filtering becomes obviously degraded. However, we utilize the subsampled image only for clustering. Subsampled and full-sampled 3D image histogram, e.g., Fig. 1, is similar; thus, the side-effect of the subsampling is small. Also, the variance of the tiled subimage is smaller than the full image; thus, we can keep higher quality with tiling than the non-tiled case.



4. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

We evaluated the performance of our method for approximation accuracy and stability. All the codes were implemented in C++ and developed on Visual Studio 2017, parallelized by OpenMP and vectorized by AVX on Intel Core i9-9900K @ 3.60GHz. The accuracy was quantified as peak signal-tonoise ratio (PSNR) between the naïve CBF and O(1) CBF. For clustering, we used K-means (conventional), K-means++, K-means with tiling, K-means++ with tiling, and median cut. The median cut is a typical color quantization, e.g., used in GIF image format, and the method does not have randomness. In the experiment, we used O(1) GF [14] for the spatial convolutions. We used the test image Kodak 24 image set (512×768) . For tiling, we divided input images into 4×4 . For Sugimoto et al. [24], we set a parameter $\lambda = \frac{0.5}{255}$. The kernel radius was $3\sigma_s$ for both methods. We subsampled the input image width and height into 1/2 before clustering.

Firstly, we compared the approximation accuracy. Figures 2, 3 show the results of accuracy comparison, and plot the relationship between the number of clustered colors K and averaged PSNR with 1000 trials. Note that the number of convolutions is 4K. From these results, PSNR is slightly improved by K-means++ or tiling. Moreover, it is significantly improved by K-means++ with tiling.

Secondly, we evaluated the stability because the accuracy of O(1) CBF using clustering varies depending on the clustering result. Table 2 shows the minimum, maximum, variance, and average PSNR of 1000 trails of O(1) CBF. We confirm that our approach decreases the variance and improves the average PSNR; thus, the stability is improved.

Thirdly, we visually compared Naïve CBF and O(1) CBF (using K-means++ with tiling). Figure 4 shows the filtered images of each method. We confirm that the approximation of O(1) CBF is sufficiently accurate.

Lastly, we compared the computational time. Table 3 shows the computational time [ms] for each method. The tiling method is faster in full/sub-sampling cases. In addition to the reason described in section 3.2, the overhead of clustering for large numbers of data is considerable.



(c) Sugimoto (44.9 dB) (d) Nair (50.7 dB) **Fig. 4**: Visual comparison and PSNR [dB] between naïve and O(1) CBF ($\sigma_s = 5, \sigma_r = 30, K = 15$).

Table 2: PSNR statistics for each method with sub/full sample ($\sigma_s = 5, \sigma_r = 30, K = 15$) (a) K-means, (b) K-means++, (c) K-means with tiling, (d) K-means++ with tiling. * means full-sampled, and no mark means sub-sampled. Note that (a)* is conventional conpetitives [24, 25].

| Sugimoto et al. | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Statistics\Method | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a)* | (b)* | (c)* | (d)* |
| minimum | 32.49 | 37.17 | 37.65 | 44.95 | 32.94 | 37.83 | 38.19 | 44.91 |
| maximum | 44.84 | 44.00 | 45.76 | 46.68 | 45.37 | 44.56 | 46.37 | 46.73 |
| variance | 4.75 | 1.26 | 2.21 | 0.06 | 4.70 | 1.01 | 1.48 | 0.06 |
| average | 38.48 | 40.29 | 43.05 | 45.77 | 39.45 | 41.77 | 43.61 | 45.78 |
| Nair et al. | | | | | | | | |
| Statistics\Method | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a)* | (b)* | (c)* | (d)* |
| | | | | () | () | () | (-) | (4) |
| minimum | 30.14 | 30.22 | 34.94 | 50.34 | 30.27 | 30.55 | 34.82 | 50.44 |
| minimum maximum | 30.14 47.94 | 30.22 47.45 | 34.94 52.35 | 50.34 53.80 | 30.27 48.54 | 30.55 47.53 | 34.82 53.16 | 50.44 53.90 |
| minimum maximum variance | 30.14 47.94 16.84 | 30.22 47.45 8.95 | 34.94 52.35 10.18 | 50.34 53.80 0.24 | 30.27 48.54 14.93 | 30.55 47.53 3.20 | 34.82 53.16 8.49 | 50.44 53.90 0.17 |

Table 3: Computational time [ms] for each method with sub/full sampling ($\sigma_s = 5, \sigma_r = 30, K = 15$). * means conventional method [24, 25].

| $O(1)$ CBF\Method | K-means (a) | K-means++ (b) | K-means with tiling (c) | K-means++ c) with tiling (d) | |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Sub-Sugimoto | 80 | 79 | 56 | 52 | |
| Sub-Nair | 120 | 120 | 58 | 58 | |
| Full-Sugimoto | *196 | 218 | 142 | 145 | |
| Full-Nair | *236 | 260 | 159 | 159 | |

5. CONCLUSION

This paper proposed a method to improve accuracy of O(1) CBF using K-means++ and tiling, and accelerate it by tiling and subsampling. In the experiment, our method showed higher performance in accuracy, stability, and computational time.

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