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Abbatissae uenerabili Heanfled agnominatae. An etymological-onomastic note on a unique (?) Anglo-Saxon woman's name (S904)[*]

VALERIA DI CLEMENTE

Abstract Records reveal only one occurrence of an Anglo-Saxon woman with the name Heanfled (S904, c. 1002). This has led to a general interpretation that this unique name is a scribal error (the true version being Eanfled, Eadfled, or Heahfled). Nonetheless, despite its long-standing rejection in the literature, the hypothesis remains that the spelling is no error and that Heanfled is in fact the real name. It is possible that Heanfled was a (Christian) first name in its own right, deliberately created or spelt according to the rules presiding over the formation of Germanic dithematic anthroponyms.

Keywords Old English, first names, dithematic names, name elements, Heanfled

1. Heanfled

In the Anglo-Saxon document S904,[1] dating from c. 1002, it is made known that King Æþelred grants some privileges to the Benedictine monastery of Wherwell in Hampshire. Additionally, the king grants and confirms that 60 *cassati* at Æþelingadene (Sussex) and 70 *mansae* in the vicinity of Wherwell, belong to the monastery. This is done by transferring properties previously owned by the king's late mother, Ælfþryþ, who had founded the abbey in 986 and had retired to live there in her last years, dying there on 17 November (although the precise year remains uncertain, the death occurred between 999 and 1001) (Stafford 2004). It seems that Æþelred was fulfilling his mother's last will in making and confirming these land donations. A note dating from 1008 confirms that 29 messuages in Winchester were given to the abbey and 10 hides (*mansae*) were granted in Bullington, Hampshire.

The abbess who ruled Wherwhell at the beginning of the 11th century is called by name in the document:

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1   S904; also printed in Alford (1663: 430–431); Dodsworth and Dugdale (1655: 257–258); Dugdale et al. (1846: 636–638); Kemble (1845: no. DCCVII, 322–325, esp. 324); Pierquin (1912: part 4, no. 75, pp. 315–319, esp. 317). The document is extant in eight copies: London, British Library, MS Egerton 2104 A, fols. 15r–16r; London, Public Record Office, C 53, 44 Hen. III, m. 1; C 56, 21; C 56, 39, no. 9; C 66, 41 Edw. III, m. 33; C 66, 9 Hen. VI, pt. 1, m. 2; C 66, 22 Edw. IV, pt. 1, m. 18; Oslo and London, Schøyen Collection, 1354.

Ut uero istud nostrum decretum stabile capiat solidamentum,
huius curam regiminis commendo abbatissae uenerabili Heanfled
agnominatae.

Heanfled, as a woman's first name, is a *hapax legomenon*, since it only occurs
in this source. It represents a dithematic, i.e. a compound name, whose second
element is the West Saxon *-flǣd* (in the Anglian and Anglian-influenced form
-flēd, Latinised as *-fleda* or *-flet(h)a*).

Flǣd-names appear rather frequently in the Anglo-Saxon female anthro-
ponymy, as well as among the Franks and the origin of this name element
has been the subject of various interpretations. It might ultimately derive
from a noun meaning 'beauty, grace, purity, cleanness', not attested in Old
English (Feilitzen 1937: 251, Kitson 2002: 97, Okasha 2011: 57), while a second
hypothesis puts forward the possibility that it comes from the adjective
flede meaning 'full' (Okasha 2011: 57). The hypothesis of a derivation from
flǣd < Germanic **flē1þi-* 'beauty, purity', a strong feminine i-stem, is shared
by Insley, Rollason and McClure (2007: 117), and Morlet (1968: 29), see for
instance s.v. *Albofledis*.[2] In this case, *-flǣd* would thus etymologically refer to
"the elegance or daintiness as of a courtly lady, not the radiant beauty which
[...] is expressed by the adjective *scīene*" (Kitson 2002: 97). What should be
considered here, however, is the possibility that *flǣd*, as a name element,
might not have maintained any association with its possible original meaning
(on the relationship between lexis and name elements, see for instance
Okasha 2011: 114–117, Colman 1992: 68).

Indeed, from testimonies handed down to us, it is clear that Anglo-Saxon
dithematic names which have *flǣd* as a second element and a noun or
adjective as their first element are well attested. Some examples include:
Ælflǣd, Beornflǣd, Burgflǣd, Eadflǣd, Ealhflǣd, Eanflǣd, Leodflǣd, Sigeflǣd,

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2   The stem is attested as an autonomous noun in the Middle High German *vlāt* 'beauty,
     cleanness' and has the same root as the verbs *vlæjen* 'to clean' (Benecke, Müller and
     Zarncke 1854–1866, Lexer 1872–1878 and Köbler 2014, *Althochdeutsches*, s.v.) and
     the Old High German *fleuuen* 'to wash', which in turn are connected to *fleuuen* 'to
     flow, to spring (of water)' (Karg-Gasterstädt and Frings 1954– s.vv.), probably related
     to the Greek *pléō* 'to sail, to float' and the Latin *pluō* 'to rain, to fall like rain' (Liddell
     and Scott 1940, Lewis and Short 1879 s.vv.).

Stanflæd, Tudeflæd (ms. *Tutflet*), *Wilflæd, Wulfflæd, Wynflæd* (Boehler 1930:
passim; Feilitzen 1937: *passim*; Okasha 2011: 16–54, 57; PASE, *passim*), to
which *Sæflæd* must also be added.[3] These examples all have a noun as the first
element, the meanings of which are as follows: *ælf* 'supernatural creature',
beorn 'warrior', *burg* 'town (fortified)', *ēad* 'riches, patrimony', *ealh* 'residence,
temple, sanctuary', *ean-* (uncertain etymology, see infra), *lēod* 'people, nation,
race, district occupied by a people', *sæ* 'sea', *sige* 'victory', *stān* 'stone', *will*
'will', *wulf* 'wolf', *wynn* 'joy' (Bosworth and Toller 1898–1921 and OED 2018
s.vv.). *Tutflet*'s first element is not clear: it might be *þēod* 'people', but also a
man's name, *Tud(d)a* (Redin 1919: 71). *Æþelflæd, Beorhtflæd, Leofflæd* (Boehler
1930: *passim*; Feilitzen 1937: *passim*; Okasha 2011: 16–54, 57; PASE, *passim*)
contain the adjectives *æþele* 'noble',[4] *beorht* 'bright, illustrious', *lēof* 'dear'
(Bosworth and Toller 1898–1921 and OED 2018 s.vv.).

What is of interest here, is that with the exception of Ælfflæd,[5] Ealhflæd[6]
and Eanflæd,[7] which are already attested in the early Anglo-Saxon period
and are borne by a number of women, the other names are generally more

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3   Hyde *Liber vitae,* MS London, British Library, Stowe 944, fol. 29r, not recorded in
Okasha 2011 and PASE; PASE s.v. *Sæflæd* 1 (S1519).
4   Possibly also the feminine/neuter noun *æþelu* 'nobility' (Okasha 2011: 64).
5   The most ancient Ælfflæd is an abbess of Whitby who lived between the 7th and
the 8th century, cited in the third book of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*
(Plummer 1896: 178–179, 267); the name is recorded in sources from the 7th to the
11th century.
6   The first Ealhflæd is a 7th-century queen, daughter of Oswiu of Northumbria and
wife to Peada, king of the Middle Angles and South Mercians. Her name is recorded
for instance in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum,* see Plummer (1896: 170).
The second Ealhflæd is a widow cited in S1293.
7   PASE records two Eanflæds. The first Eanflæd is the Northumbrian queen, daughter
of Edwin and wife to Oswiu (7th century), later abbess at Whitby (Thacker 2004b),
frequently cited by Bede, see Plummer 1896: 99, 126, 157, 179, 267, 323, in the *Vita
Wilfridi* (Krusch and Levison 1913: 196), in the anonymous *Vita Gregorii* (Colgrave
1985: 102), in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* (Preest 2002:
141) and also appearing in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* see Plummer and Earle (1892:
24–25), Baker (2000: 32), O'Brien O'Keeffe (2001: 34), Irvine (2004: 24) and in the
Durham *Liber Vitae* (Rollason and Rollason 2007: 93). Ælfflæd, abbess of Whitby,
was Eanflæd's daughter (Thacker 2004a): the relationship between the two women
is highlighted by the alliteration and the functional variation in their names. The
second Eanflæd lived in the 10th century and granted a land donation to Ely Abbey
(*Liber Eliensis* II.22, Blake 1962: 96). See also Insley, Rollason and McClure (2007: 112).

recent, rare or, indeed, unique. So while Ælfflæd is recorded throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and Æþelflæd appears during the 8th century, the remaining names date mainly from the 10th and 11th centuries. The following list illustrates this: one Leodflæd is found three times in the *Domesday Book*;[8] nine Leofflæds are recorded in sources relating to the 10th and 11th centuries, as are seven Eadflæds, ten Wulflæds and eight Wynflæds; two Sæflæds can be found in the Hyde *Liber Vitae* and in a document (S1519); four Sifflæds appear between the end of the 9th and the 10th centuries; one Beorhtflæd is cited twice in the *Domesday Book*; a Beornflæd appears once in S1497, at the end of the 10th or the beginning of the 11th century (as *byrnflæde*); Burgflæd is recorded in the middle/second half of the 10th century (*Liber Eliensis*, II.16, see Blake 1962: 92) and in the Hyde *Liber vitae*; Stanflæd and Tudeflæd are each cited once in the *Domesday Book*, as is Wilflæd in the document S1534, c. 1000 (see Okasha 2011: 17–54, *passim*, and PASE, s.vv.).

It is probably no coincidence that most forms contain a first element which is a noun or an adjective in Old English. Eanflæd is an exception here as its first element is not attested in the language and additionally, it is clearly a much older first name. Nonetheless the other examples could well prove that women's names composed with the second element *-flǣd* were commonly used throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. The naming pattern was still dynamic and productive in the 10th and 11th centuries and new dithematic names could be formed by using transparent nouns or adjectives as first elements.

But let us go back to abbess Heanfled: *-flǣd* being sufficiently explained, let us put the first element *Hean-* under the lens. According to Okasha (2011: 35), Insley, Rollason and McClure (2007: 112), and see also Boehler (1930: 64), it might be a variant or rather a wrong form of the more common *Ean-*. This could ultimately derive from the Germanic **auna-*, and although its precise meaning remains unclear (Boehler 1930: 64, Förstemann 1900: 207–209) it is thought to be associated with strength and good luck (Boehler 1930: 64; Grimm 1843: 144–146; Dietrich 1845: 222–223; Förstemann 1900: 207–209; Francovich Onesti 1999: 182–183 'joy'). Alternatively it may originate from the Old English verb *ēanian* 'to bear or give birth (to a lamb)' (Grimm 1843:

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8   Considered a male in PASE.

144–146; Bosworth and Toller and DOE s.vv.); see also the Middle English *ēnen* 'to bear or give birth to a lamb or a kid' and the Modern English (dialectal) *ean* (OED s.v.). The related Old English noun also provides a similar link *eane 'lamb' here of uncertain gender (Okasha 2011: 65), whereas in Middle English its use can only be seen in the collocation *(ewe) with ene* 'ewe bearing a lamb', see Kurath et al. s.v. *ēne*.[9]

Whatever its original lexical meaning may be, *ean* is quite common in Old English as a first element of both female and male dithematic names. See for instance *Eammer < *Eanmær, Eanbald, Eanberht, Eanfrith, Eangeard, Eangisl, Eanhere, Eanmund, Eanred, Eanstan, Eanwald, Eanwine, Eanwulf* (male; see PASE, *passim*) and *Eanburg, Eangyþ, Eanleofu, Eanswiþ, Eanþryþ* (female: Okasha 2011: 35–36; PASE, *passim*). Furthermore, it forms the male hypocorisms *Eana, Eanna* and perhaps *Eama* (the shortened and contracted form of **Eanmær, Eanberht*, see Redin 1919: 63, and PASE, *passim*, or *Eanmund*, my hypothesis). <h> might also possibly represent an 'inorganic h' (Boehler 1930: 65, quoting Alois Hruschka 1884: 39), whereas Müller (1901: 104) associates *ean-* to *ead-* < the Germanic **auda-* 'patrimony, riches'.

It is even possible to maintain that *Hean-* might represent a scribal mistake for an otherwise unattested **Heahfled. Heah-*, ultimately from *hēah-* 'high', was common as a first element in dithematic male names, but is witnessed in women's dithematic names only occasionally, for instance in *Heahburg* (Okasha 2011: 39), PASE s.v. Heahburg 1–2. The first *Heahburg,* also known as Bucge (Bugga/Bugge), was the 8th-century abbess who corresponded with St Boniface (Tangl 1916: 21–26, 26–28, 48–49, 214–215, 229–231, 252–253); the second, whose mother was also called Bucga, was the daughter of Ridda, minister of Offa, King of Mercia (S109).

However, the Wherwell abbess is listed not among the women called Eanflæd in the PASE database, but as a single Heanflæd; see PASE s.v. *Heanfled* 1 (Female).

On the basis of the previous considerations, we can reasonably hypothesise that *hean* might be the exact form of the name's first element, corresponding

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9   In Old English the derivative adjective *geēan* is attested, referring to a ewe big with lamb (Bosworth and Toller and DOE s.vv.), Middle English *yeene, yene, yn*, Modern English †*yean* 'young lamb, yeanling', OED s.v.).

to the Old English adjective *hēan,* and the Middle English *hēn* 'poor, humble, of humble condition, miserable, wretched' (Bosworth and Toller 1898–1921, Kurath 1952–2001, OED s.v.).[10] Nonetheless, this idea has been considered "wegen seiner Bedeutung ganz unwahrscheinlich" in the older literature (see for instance Boehler 1930: 64).

As we have seen, an adjective as a first element in *flǣd*-names is plausible; we cannot thus exclude that Heanfled is the correct name, which was perhaps attributed at birth to a girl belonging to a religious noble family or to a girl whose family had decided to destine her to the cloister from birth. Not casually, indeed, *hēan* recalls two moral and material conditions held in high consideration in Christianity, that is humility and poverty. As the document cites an *abbatissa Heanfled agnominata,* we can bear in mind that the verb *agnominare* could mean "to call someone by a certain proper name" but also "to call someone by a certain nickname" or "to name, cite" (Latham 1975–2013 s.v. *agnominare*; Prinz 1967– s.v. *agnomino*);[11] perhaps the abbess originally bore the traditional name Eanflæd, whose first part had been deliberately re-interpreted as *hēan* on the basis of the phonetic resemblance, to highlight that the abbess, as a religious woman, professed the Christian and Benedictine values of poverty and humility (on re-etymologising name elements, see Colman 1992: 67–69). Might perhaps *Heanfled* be a Christian name chosen by professing the monastic vows?

We must consider that the second half of the 10th century was a period of religious revival. It is possible that in these years Christian names were coined using Germanic name-giving rules: for instance, the sources tell us that *Godgifu,* perhaps a calque from Latin *(A)deodata, Donata* or Greek-Latin *Theodora,* became fashionable from the end of the 10th century onwards (see PASE s.v. *Godgifu* 1–8).

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10   It should also be noted that *hēan* shares the same origin as the Old High German *hōni,* the Middle High German *hœne* 'disgraced, humiliated, discredited, shameful' and the Gothic *hauns* 'low, humble', which translates the biblical Greek *tapeinós* 'poor, miserable' (see Köbler 2014, *Althochdeutsches*; Köbler 2014, *Gotisches*; Lehmann 1986: H48).

11   We can exclude the sense "to cite" because the abbess is never cited in the text before the passage where her name appears.

2. *Hēan* in Anglo-Saxon first names

In the *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* few names containing *hēan* are recorded: the monothematic *Hean* and the dithematic *Heanflœd, Heanfrith* (*recte Heahfrith* and *Heinfred*), *Heanheard Henhart, Heanric, Heanthryth Hendrud* and *Heanwulf Henulf* (Searle 1897: 285). As Searle's list is often not reliable, the occurrences have been checked directly in the documents where they appear.

Hean is attested four times in documents from the second half of the 7th century. Each case refers to a single person, the nobleman Hean, founder and later abbot at Abingdon Abbey. Hean is named in the testament he made before becoming abbot (Birch 1885–1893: I.1, no. 29), then in gifts of land (Birch 1885–1893: I.2, nos 74, 100, 101 and S252, S239, S241) made by Ini, King of Wessex, to Hean's monastery. The authenticity of these documents is debated: the copies handed down to us, which are relatively recent, might incorporate authentic parts of earlier documents (Birch 1885–1893: I.1, no. 29, and I.2 nos. 74, 100 and 101; S252, S239 and S241). The name has been analysed and interpreted by Mats Redin in his study on Old English uncompounded names (Redin 1919: 25). As the subject is a man with a religious vocation, who later became an abbot, *Hean* might be a vocational Christian name (*hean* being here a rough translation of Latin *Humilis* or *Pauper*).

Two dithematic names recorded by Searle, *Heanheard* and *Heanthryth* are probably the re-interpretation by Searle himself of two first names appearing as *Henhart nomen viri* and *Hendrud nomen mulieris* in the *Liber confraternitatis Sancti Galli* (Piper 1884: 50, 52). The first element of both could conceal different name elements deriving from continental Germanic stems, such as *agin-* 'edge, blade', *haima-* 'world, universe, fatherland, home', *hagana-* 'order, utility' or *ham-*, of uncertain meaning (see Förstemann 1900: 38, 719, 732, 745 and Morlet 1968: 24–25, 122). *-hart* and *-drud* (*-drut, -trud, -trut*) come from the Germanic *hardu-* 'strong', which is frequently used as a second element in male dithematic names among Western tribes, and from the strong feminine noun *þrūþi-* 'strength', which is quite frequent as a second element in female dithematic names among Angles and Saxons, Saxons, Franks, and German tribes. In the case of the German *-trut, -drud, -trud* female dithematic names, an etymology connected to the adjective *trūt* 'familiar, dear, beloved' may also be taken into account (see Karg-Gasterstädt

and Frings 1954–, Köbler 2014, *Althochdeutsches,* Lexer 1872–1878, Benecke, Müller and Zarncke 1854–1866 s.vv.).

A minister called *Heanoth,* not listed by Searle, appears as the twelfth witness in a donation made by Ecgberht as King of Wessex in the first half of the 9ᵗʰ century (c. 833): *ego Heanoth minister consensi 7 subscripsi.* In this case the name might be interpreted as *Hea-noth* (*Heahnōþ*), the first element referring to the Old English adjective *hēah* 'high, excellent' (Birch 1885–1893: I.2, no. 300; S270a; a hypothesis also shared by PASE s.v. *Heahnoth* 1).

Heanfrith (*Heanferð*) is recorded under a gift of land by Edward the Elder to the church of St Peter in Winchester. *Heanferð dux* is the tenth witness. Here, too, the reference is to a man appearing as *Haehferð, Heaferd, Heahferd, Heahferth, Heahferð, Hehferd* in other documents: it is highly probable that here *Hean-* stands for *Heah-* as well (Birch 1885–1893: II.1, no. 604; S374; PASE s.v. *Heahfrith* 15).

A *minister* of King Eadgar called *Heanric* is cited in the documents S779 (*Heanric m' [minister]*), S781 (*Ego Heanric minister*), S789 (subscription: *ego Heanric minister*), c. 970–972;[12] a Henricus de Waneting (in PASE as Heanric de Wantage) is involved in a property purchase that happened between the middle and the end of the 10ᵗʰ century. Both S779 and S781 and the occurrence in the *Liber Eliensis* fall between the years 970–975 and show records and transactions concerning Ely Abbey and King Eadgar. It is thus possible that *Heanric minister* (not the most important among Eadgar's functionaries) and *Henricus de Waneting* were the same person. In the *Liber Eliensis,* written in the 12ᵗʰ century, the name appears as *Henricus,* which could be graphemically adapted to the latinised form of the continental name *Henri, Henrik, Heinrich.* Heanric, who came from Wantage (Oxfordshire), is recorded as a witness in at least two royal documents with concessions granted to Ely Abbey (Cambridgeshire).[13] *He(a)nric* is also used to render the French name *Henri,* as is found in the *Peterborough Chronicle* with reference to King Henry I of

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12   Electronic Sawyer, single documents; PASE s.v. *Heanric* 1. Doubts have been expressed on the authenticity of S779, see also Blake 1962: 78, footnote f, and 414–415; S781 is generally considered authentic, see also Blake 1962: 113, footnote l.

13   The hypothesis of an original form *Eanric* has been proposed also for *Heanric* (Boehler 1930: 65). There are no Eanrics in PASE; Searle (1897: 210) cites an Eanric/ Enric on the basis of a moneyer's name on a coin of Edward the Confessor's epoch,

England (annals for 1086 and 1087).[14] We cannot exclude that the 10th-century He(a)nrics could have borne the foreign name *Henrik, Heinrik* (the forms from which the Norman French *Henri* developed, see Forssner 1916: 147)[15] which had been adapted to Old English. Whether native or foreign, however, the name could have been re-interpreted bringing together the adjective *hēan* and the second element *-rīc*.

Finally, a *Henwulf* is cited in a document from the 870s where Bishop Ealhfrith and the Winchester community lease 8 hides of land near Easton to Cuþred and his wife Wulfþryþ. The fifteenth witness is a *Ego Henulf Diac* (Birch 1885–1893: II.1, no. 543, S1275, PASE s.v. *Henulf* 1). The copy of the document dates from the middle of the 12th century; it is thus certain that the writing of the name has been influenced by language developments[16] or the presence in 12th-century England of a nearly homophonous name of continental origin (see Morlet 1968: 122–123, s.vv. *Haima-, Han- (H)aimawulfus, Henulfus, Hennolfus*). The status of *diaconus* might possibly suggest the Christian re-interpretation of a slightly different original name (perhaps *Heahwulf*, which is found in 9th- and 10th-century English sources, see PASE s.v. *Heahwulf* 1–10, or the even more common *Eanwulf*, see above).

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recorded as Endric or Enric in Grueber (1893: 331), as Enfdici in EMC/SCBI, number 1054.0396, perhaps to be read DNRIC (my reading).

14 In discussing the forms *Hean-, Henric* of the *Peterborough Chronicle,* Kitson hypothesises that *hēan* 'poor, humble, miserable, wretched' is not compatible with a kingly name, and proposes to interpret the phonetic sequence as a fossilised dative [masculine, singular] of the adjective *hēah* 'high, elevated', since it appears in several compound toponyms (Kitson 2002: 91–131, esp. 107–108). However, while an adjective in the dative case is plausible in compound place-names which often represent fossilised locative complements, its presence in a personal name is more difficult to justify. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that Norman French *Hen-* has been adapted by substitution using a nearly homophonous native word.

15 A dithematic name formed by **haima-* 'world, universe, fatherland, homeland' and **rīk(j)az* 'wealthy' (see Förstemann 1900: cols 731–736, 1253–1271, and Morlet 1968: 121–122).

16 I.e. the development of /ēa/ as a middle-low/low front vowel, rendered by <e>.

3. Concluding remarks

The analysis of the corpus seems to suggest that the presence of *hēan* in the Anglo-Saxon name system was not well established, but occasional. Furthermore, on closer scrutiny, the names containing this element with a reasonable degree of certainty are very few; their rarity if not uniqueness and the social status of most of their bearers seems to corroborate the hypothesis that their creation, or their re-shaping, was mostly motivated by the fact that they were somewhat linked to religious life or simply to Christian spiritual values. Therefore, the name of Heanfled, the Wherwell abbess cited in S904, far from being a writing mistake (instead of Eanfled, Eadfled, or Heahfled), might represent a woman's name in its own right, which displayed a precise lexical meaning and was probably supposed to be of social and cultural significance. N

VALERIA DI CLEMENTE

UNIVERSITY OF CATANIA

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