



Beattie, M. (2010) 'Zero to Hero? Aineas in the *Iliad* and the *Posthomerica*'

Rosetta **8.5**: 1-15.

http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/issue8supp/beattie_aineas/

Zero to Hero? Aineas in the *Iliad* and the *Posthomerica*

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Part I. Introduction:

As founder of the Roman race in Vergil's *Aeneid*, the titular character of Aeneas has received a great deal of scholarly attention. What has been lacking, however, is similar study of the character in Homer's *Iliad* and the *Posthomerica*. This paper will begin to address this by examining the glimpses of Aineas, as he is called in the Greek, and developing a general character sketch. This will then be briefly compared to the Aeneas of the *Aeneid*, and possible reasons for the differences noted will be suggested.

In order to make clear whether I am referring to the character in his pre-Vergilian or Vergilian aspect, I shall refer to the Trojan ally from the *Iliad* and the *Posthomerica* as 'Aineas', in a transliteration of the Greek, and the protagonist of Vergil's *Aeneid* as 'Aeneas'. Other characters who appear in both works will similarly be called by transliterations from the Greek when referring to Homer and their Latin names when referring to Vergil.

Part II. Aineas in the *Iliad*:

For a character with such a great destiny, it is perhaps surprising to note that Aineas only appears eleven times in the work as it has come down to us. Of those eleven, only five have any significant depth or action. To begin, however, let us address the brief mentions of the character.

There are two instances in which the reference to Aineas is scarcely more than a throwaway. In II.820-823, Aineas is in a list of those present at Troy, and in XXIII.291-2, after Aineas has left the narrative, his stolen horses get a brief mention. Neither of these references is at all significant to a discussion of the character, so they can now be put to one side. There are four slightly more

extensive references, but even these do not give much of an idea of his character. In VI.75-101, Aineas and Hektor are both approached by Helenos for aid; though it is stated that the *ponos* of war is heavy on both, Aineas then drops out of the narrative entirely, with only Hektor taking any action. In XI.58, Aineas, with Hektor and Poludamas, have Trojan forces marshaled around them; this is not surprising as Aineas commands his own people and is something of a lieutenant to Hektor, but there is nothing particularly significant here either. Similarly, in XII.98-99 Aineas leads a fourth group of soldiers, and in XV.332 he has killed two Achaians. Neither of these is a significant contribution to the narrative.

The first of the major appearances of Aineas takes place in Book V. After encouraging Pandaros to join him on his chariot (V.169), Aineas makes for Diomedes and his forces. Sthenelos warns Diomedes of their approach but Diomedes refuses to flee, ultimately killing Pandaros (V.243-297). This leads to Aineas' hip being broken by a stone hurled by Diomedes (V.297-310), a stone which is described as being twice what could be lifted now by mortals, though Diomedes lifts it easily. However, this instance illustrates that Aineas is not a normal soldier but a demi-god; rather than being left to die, his mother Aphrodite comes onto the battlefield and attempts a rescue (V.311-335). When she is struck in the wrist by Diomedes' spear (V.335-336), the rescue is completed by Trojan ally Apollo (V.343-344). After an excursus, Apollo thwarts Diomedes' four attempts to kill Aineas (V.431), and Aineas is healed in the temple of Apollo in Pergamon by Leto and Artemis (V.444-450) whilst an *eidôlon* takes his place on the battlefield (V.449). Ares, in the guise of Akamas, encourages the Trojans to rescue their leader (actually the *eidôlon*), who is 'honoured equally to godlike Hektor' (V.467-469); Aineas, healed, is returned to the battle by Apollo (V.514), kills two Achaians after one of his comrades is killed (V.533-560), and is prevented by Menelaos from stripping their bodies (V.560-575) before dropping out of the narrative.

Aineas' next major appearance is also one of his more interesting, for reasons discussed below. In Book XIII, Aineas is said to have withdrawn from battle

because he felt Priam was never giving him his due. He is said to be enraged, *epimênis*, (XIII.460-461) meaning that he is angry with someone; the word *mênin*, of course, being the first word of Book I, and relating to Akhilleus' withdrawal from battle because of Agamemnon's disrespect. Aineas is, however, induced to return to battle by Deiphobus, in order to help rescue the body of Aineas' brother-in-law. He successfully kills Aphareus, a comrade of the killer, Idomeneus, (XIII.541-545) before again dropping out of the narrative.

In Book XVI, Aineas is asked (immediately before Hektor) to help defend Sarpedon's body. He does so, and engages in somewhat loquacious battlefield discourse with Meriones (XVI.536-625). Patroklos, in Akhilleus' armour, immediately tells Meriones that words are less helpful than battle (τὼ οὐ τι χρῆ μῦθον ὀφέλλειν, ἀλλὰ μάχεσθαι XVI.631).

In Book XVII, Aineas is encouraged by a disguised Apollo to attack the Greeks (XVII.323-334). Aineas recognises the god and heeds the advice, persuading Hektor to advance and himself wounding an Achaian (XVII.335-345). Hektor and Aineas subsequently team up in a chariot (XVII. 484-534) and, though forced to retreat in XVII.534 are able to provoke an Achaian retreat in XVII.754-759.

Book XX features Aineas' best known event from the *Iliad*. In XX.79-114, Apollo (disguised as Lykæon and not recognised) encourages Aineas to step out of the throng and fight Akhilleus. Aineas is unwilling, as Akhilleus bested him in an earlier meeting, but he does ultimately confront the vengeful Myrmidon (XX.160-292). Akhilleus says that he defeated Aineas once, he will do it again, and even should Aineas be victor Priam will never properly honour him, as Priam has his own children (XX.183-184). In contrast, Aineas is quite verbose in his battlefield discourse; Edwards comments that it seems like nervous patter from an outmatched opponent.¹ Aineas in fact seems to be deliberately inflating his own importance, though whether his intention is to

¹ Edwards 1991: 313.

shore up his own courage, impress Akhilleus, or impress others on the battlefield (if not all three) is unclear. He does point out, as the disguised Patroklos said to Meriones in Book XVI.631, that words are less important than deeds; whether this is intended as irony on Homer's part is unclear. Aineas pretends to remember little about his earlier loss to Akhilleus, though we of course know that he remembers quite well; this can only be a case of Aineas attempting to make it appear as though that defeat did not affect or frighten him. When it comes to reciting his genealogy, a common enough feature of battlefield discourse, Aineas takes care to point out that his ancestry is from a higher goddess than Akhilleus', Aphrodite to Akhilleus' mother Thetis. In XX.285, Aineas decides to use a rock against Akhilleus, with the same description as when Diomedes cast a stone at him in Book V; it is at this point that Poseidon decides to intervene and save Aineas, because he always gives pleasing gifts to the gods and because there is a prophecy that he would survive (XX.293-308). He carries Aineas far away and tells him in no uncertain terms to stay out of the front ranks until Akhilleus is dead, as the gods prefer him to Aineas (XX.318-339).

Edwards points out that this whole encounter is rather odd, as the enraged Akhilleus suddenly takes time out from his single-minded pursuit of Hektor to engage with Aineas.² Not only that, but Akhilleus does not cut off Aineas' speech in a scene which extends 132 lines, 79 of which are dialogue (20 lines for Akhilleus and then 59 for Aineas). While this does offer some much-needed characterisation for Aineas, it could also be interpreted in one of two ways relating to Aineas' socio-political position. For Homeric heroes, the higher the reputation of the opponent, the greater the gain in one's own reputation by defeating him. As enraged as Akhilleus is, he could still regard Aineas as being someone of a high enough standing for him to want to defeat him properly, going through all of the usual, almost-ritualised motions of battlefield discourse. One could also argue that the rhapsode and/or later editor or scholar who was responsible for this section of Book XX felt that Aineas was worthy of this, and its presence is due to later traditions, but one

² Edwards 1991: 298-329.

can only speculate in that regard. It is possible that Akhilleus could simply have esteemed Aineas highly enough as a warrior to feel that defeating him would be a necessary step in order to clear a path toward Hektor, and Aineas does step out of the throng to challenge him. This is much the same as the above, but removes the political aspects; Aineas is a good warrior and a clear threat, but his social position is unimportant. The hierarchical nature of the society, however, based clearly on bloodlines, argues against this omission.

The final interpretation of this odd encounter is admittedly far more speculative, but it is worth noting that Aineas, in Book XIII, has withdrawn from battle for the same reason as Akhilleus, (*epi*)*mênis*. Akhilleus' re-entry into battle is of course precipitated by the death of his kinsman and *philos* Patroklos, but Akhilleus' *mênis* does still need to be dealt with. Aineas, being similar in that regard - his return to battle was to protect the body of his brother-in-law who was raised with him as a kinsman - can act almost as a surrogate for Akhilleus to attack and defeat. In conquering Aineas in this way, he has conquered his rage at Agamemnon and can now successfully destroy Hektor. Supporting this admittedly speculative interpretation is that, of all the characters in *The Iliad*, the only two characters who are not gods but who are called (*epi*)*mênis* are Akhilleus and Aineas.

Ultimately, the character of Aineas as expressed in the *Iliad* is a leader of men fighting under Hektor's overall command. He is a reasonably good fighter but when alone against members of the top rank (e.g. Akhilleus, Diomedes, and Menelaos) he is either forced to retreat or, more often, must be rescued by the gods. He is part of a bloodline which competes with Priam's for power and, when insulted by Priam, Aineas withdraws from battle. Of his eleven appearances only five are particularly notable. He is, in short, a minor, background character. In order to advance him to the starring role, a good deal of work must yet be done.

Part III. Aineas in the *Posthomerica*:

Examination of Aineas in the various works between the events of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* is difficult for two reasons. The first is that most of the original sources are fragmentary, which means that we must frequently rely upon the work of Quintus of Smyrna written in the fourth century AD. As this work postdates the well-known *Aeneid*, it is difficult to discern how much of an influence Vergil's work, and indeed other variant traditions, had upon Quintus' *Posthomerica*, also sometimes called *The Fall of Troy*.

In most of the extant epic fragments, Aineas is not shown as having any particularly strong or defining characteristics, though alternate versions of his fate are given. According to Tzetzes, in the *Little Iliad* Aineas and Andromache were both captured and given to Neoptolemus, son of Akhilleus; Aineas is said to have been made to go aboard ship by Neoptolemus (Αἰνεΐαν ἐν νηυσὶν ἐβήσατο) having been taken as a special prize out of all the Danaans (ἐκ πάντων Δαναῶν ἀγέμεν γέρας ἕξοχον ἄλλων).³ Tzetzes specifies that Aineas and Andromache are both taken to Pharsalia, called Akhilleus' homeland, so it does not appear that, in this tradition, Aineas directly founds the Roman race by defeating the Latins.⁴ It does, however, imply a high status for him, both militarily and politically.

Aineas is mentioned again in the *Iliou Persis*, attributed to Arctinus of Miletus. This may be yet another tradition, though it is not necessarily mutually exclusive with others. After the death of Laocoon and one of his sons, Aineas and his men have a bad feeling about the event and sneak away to Ida (ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τέρατι δυσφορήσαντες οἱ περὶ τὸν Αἰνεΐαν ὑπεξῆλθον εἰς τὴν Ἰδην).⁵ This does not necessarily mean that he did not return later nor that he was not captured by the Achaians, but because these are mere fragments we cannot tell for certain.

³ The use of the first aorist here reinforcing that Aineas was caused to go aboard the ship, rather than going of his own volition.

⁴ Preserved in Tzetzes Commentary on Lycophron 29-30. Scheer, *Scholia in Lycophronem* 1268; see also West (tr.) 20003: 138-140. Aeneas' visitation of Andromache in Achilles' homeland, her having been taken there by Neoptolemus, could be interpreted as an attempt at reconciliation of the two traditions. *Aeneid*, Book III.300-343.

⁵ Preserved in Proclus' *Chrestomathia* (with additions and variants from Apollodorus) 5.16-25. West (tr.) 2003: 142-144.

It is from Quintus that we have the most complete variant tradition of Aineas. In the *Posthomerica*, Aineas appears five times, exclusively in a battlefield context. In III.214 he is merely mentioned as crowding around Akhilleus' body and in VI.622 he is referenced as killing two Cretans. In X.25-44 Aineas encourages the Trojan forces and appears killing Achaians in battle (X.112-113). His main appearance, however, is throughout Book XI, where Quintus shows Aineas as a strong warrior who kills Achaians of no particular note, but predominantly as the main defender of Troy as it is being besieged (XI.353-501). This gives Aineas a much higher political position, doubtless based upon the decimation of Priam's line, but also preserves the tradition of Aineas being so impressive that the Achaians granted him permission to carry out the most precious thing to him. Aineas, of course, chooses Anchises, who himself carries the Penates of Troy. During the final battle, however, Aineas is saved from Neoptolemus by Thetis turning aside his anger (out of reverence for Aphrodite) and again by his mother Aphrodite snatching him away and covering him in a cloud (XI.287-291). One assumes, though it is not specifically stated, that she transports him to the Skaean gates, as that is where Aineas is reported to be defending the city by rolling large stones from the towers onto what is unmistakably a Roman *testudo* transposed onto the Achaian forces.⁶

Though most of Book XI features Aineas successfully killing Achaians, there is one section, XI.129-169, that is particularly noteworthy because it has Aineas (and ally Eurymachos) stirred up by the god Apollo against the Argives. Whilst this in and of itself is not unusual, the words used in XI.144-145 are μαίνετο δέ σφι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι; literally, that they were maddened with rage, and the word *maineto* is clearly related to *mênis*. Though there is not room to discuss either the vast scholarship on Stoic and Epicurean influences upon Vergil or that on Aeneas' anger in general, one can see here echoes of Aineas' *epimênis* in *Iliad* XIII or, as I think more likely, echoes of Vergil's Aeneas in Book XII. There is still something of a 'chicken and egg' dilemma, however.

⁶ XI.353-369 for the *testudo*; this particular part of the siege lasts through XI.501.

Aineas' final appearance in Quintus is at the end of the city in Book XIII. This clearly shows Vergilian influence, as the very specific prophecy of his founding of the Roman race is given (XIII.335-349). Showing both an Homeric influence and a recognition of Aineas' status, it is Kalchas, the mantis who determined that Chryseis, Agamemnon's prize, must be given back to her father to appease Apollo in *Iliad* I.92-99, who states this prophecy and thus allows Aineas to leave the city.

The fragmentary Trojan Cycle only features Aineas being either captured or deciding to take his men and go to Mount Ida after Laocoon was killed. The character of Aineas in the *Posthomerica* is shown to be a capable fighter and *de facto* leader of Troy, and the work features him carrying Anchises (who carried the Penates) as in Vergil; Aineas' mad anger also corresponds with Aeneas in Book XII. Because Quintus' work was written after Vergil's, however, it is difficult to determine how much influence that work had upon the representation of Aineas, despite its use of a variant tradition.

Part IV. Comparison:

Having examined the instances where Aineas appears pre-*Aeneid*, we can now begin to develop a character sketch of him before Vergil's interpretation. We can begin by looking at his Homeric epithets. Of the many used for him, the only epithet unique to Aineas is *eus pais*, 'good son'. Aineas is never referred to as either *sebas* or *eusebas*, the Greek equivalents of *pious*, in either Homer, The Trojan Cycle or Quintus, and no later extant works call Aineas *eus pais*. The *Little Iliad* calls him *kluton gonon*, or famous son, but that is his only surviving epithet.⁷ Quintus uses *thrasus pais* in X.26 and *'uios daiphronos* in XI.166, but these both clearly have different connotations, praising personal values (e.g. courage and being of warlike mind, though the latter can also mean skillful or prudent) rather than the more abstract 'eus'. The brief

⁷ Preserved in Tzetzes Commentary on Lycophron 29-30. Scheer, *Scholia in Lycophronem* 1268; see also West (tr.) 2003: 138-140.

sentence about Aineas' flight in ps-Apollodorus *Epitome* 5.21 does say that he was permitted to leave on account of his being *eusebas*, but that work is of uncertain date.

So what of characterisation, then? This is a topic which has been discussed in many works on the *Aeneid*; though a full discussion of this work is outside the scope of the present work, what is striking about the main discussions, e.g. Mackie, Feeney, and then to a lesser extent Fowler, Thomas and Wiltshire, is that they do not examine the character of Aineas, only the Vergilian interpretation of him.⁸ This does, however, allow a starting point; we can take these main points of characterization in the *Aeneid* and look for parallels to them in the earlier Greek works. Commonly-held character attributes of Aeneas are *pietas*, taciturnity and/or inability to communicate, and great military skill. Can any of these be seen or interpreted in Aineas? Let us begin with *pietas*, a difficult and particularly Roman concept which for our purposes here will be interpreted to mean a three-fold devotion to family, gods, and state.⁹ Aineas is called *eus pais* of Anchises, though we have only that epithet in either the *Iliad* or the fragmentary Trojan Cycle to support his being devoted to his family. We can, perhaps, give Aineas the benefit of the doubt in this case, as he is the only character in the work called thus. Aineas also is only convinced to return to the battlefield to rescue the body of his brother-in-law, which can, again, be interpreted as filial piety.

For religious devotion, we can see a few instances. Poseidon decides to save Aineas in XX.293 because he always gives pleasing gifts (...κεχαρισμένα δ' αἰεὶ δῶρα θεοῖσι δίδωσι τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν;). This could certainly be understood as reflecting the legalistic relationship between Romans and gods. Aineas also abides by Apollo's encouragements in Books XVII and XX, though he admittedly does not recognise the god in the latter case. In Book V.174, Aineas tells Pandaros to pray to Zeus before casting at the enemy, though several heroes pray to a god before firing their missiles. One could also

⁸ Mackie 1988: *passim*; Feeney 1983: *passim*; Fowler 1997:16-35; Thomas 1991: 261; and Wiltshire 1989: *passim*.

⁹ For a more in-depth discussion see Johnston 2004.

interpret his apparent staying away from the front lines until Akhilleus dies to be in accordance with Poseidon's wishes, and even Aineas' misgivings about the deaths of Laocoon and his son from the *Iliou Persis* could be seen as acting in accord with the gods' wishes, i.e. abandoning the city to its fate.

Finally, there is the matter of devotion to the state, and it is in this that Aineas reflects his Trojan past rather than Roman-interpreted future. Aineas is clearly in a bloodline that is engaged in something of a power struggle or at least a struggle for status with Priam. He seems only to be part of the war because Akhilleus defeated him earlier, though this is unclear. Most tellingly, however, is Aineas' leaving the battle *epimênis*, just like Akhilleus. Whilst this certainly gives support to those who see Aeneas as an *alter Achilles*, rather than the *Paris alter* Iuno calls him, this sort of behaviour wherein personal pride is placed above what is best for the State would not conform to *pietas*.

As for taciturnity and a lack of true and useful conversation, Aineas does not reflect this at all. He engages in the typical battlefield discourse, even to the point of being quite verbose in Books XVI and XX. Patroklos' admonition to Meriones, however, about 'deeds not words', which Aineas himself says (albeit more loquaciously) in XX.244-258, may be understood to have been a lesson learnt here by Aineas, which was then carried through the rest of his narrative life in Vergil.¹⁰

Finally, let us consider martial skill. As can be seen in his exploits in the *Iliad*, Aineas, though able to compete against the average Achaian and to fight effectively with others, was unable to defeat either Diomedes or Akhilleus on his own, and was prevented from stripping a casualty by Menelaos. In the first two cases, Aineas had to be rescued by the gods, and, according to the *Little Iliad*, he was ultimately captured and enslaved by Akhilleus' son, albeit in a context which suggests a high status. He does not appear in Homer to be an effective leader, though he does not appear ineffective either. He is, by and

¹⁰ It is also possible that Vergil was simply expressing a common response to prolonged violent trauma, i.e. alienation and an inability to connect emotionally.

large, kept in the background. In Quintus of Smyrna he is shown leading the defence of Troy whilst it is being besieged, but as discussed above it is unclear how much of that derives from later tradition and practice, including Vergilian tradition. The main connection between Aineas and Aeneas as far as martial skill is concerned is the letter sent by Diomedes in XI.282-293 of the *Aeneid*, where he refuses to help Turnus' forces. Diomedes says:

*...Stetimus tela aspera contra
contulimusque manus: experto credite, quantus
in clipeum adsurgat, quo turbine torqueat hastam.
Si duo praeterea talis Idaeus tulisset
terra viros, ultro Inachias venisset ad urbes
Dardanus, et versis lugeret Graecia fatis.
Quidquid apud durae cessatum est moenia Troiae,
Hectoris Aeneaeque manu victoria Graium
haesit et in decimum vestigia rettulit annum.
Ambo animis, ambo insignes praestantibus armis
hic pietate prior. Coeant in foedera dextrae,
qua datur; ast armis concurrant arma cavete.*

This description and strong praise is despite Diomedes' thorough defeat of Aineas in *Iliad* Book V as described above. Whilst it is certainly possible that the two had a subsequent confrontation that is simply not extant, the description given by Diomedes almost sounds as though he were remembering a different person. Certainly the extant sources do not at all match. This could perhaps be interpreted as Aineas being one of the best fighters at Troy simply by attrition; if we accept the implication that Aineas would be seen in the second-best rank of fighters (i.e. inferior to the level of Akhilleus and Hektor), then once those warriors had killed each other off the second-best became the best remaining. This argument, however, seems somewhat unsatisfying, and we are left with the dichotomy; it seems that Vergil may simply have decided to transpose Aeneas' martial prowess onto Aineas.

Part V. Conclusion:

As can be seen, the Aineas in the *Iliad* and the *Posthomeric* does show

certain differences to the character of Aeneas from Vergil. What remains is briefly to suggest reasons why these discrepancies might exist. I must stress that none of these reasons should be seen as mutually exclusive. First of all, Vergil needed to take a background character and bring him to the fore, as well as having to decide which of the variant traditions about the character he wanted to use. He clearly opted for the path that gave both the best dramatic tension and the most agency to his protagonist; Aeneas was not captured in the *Aeneid* as he was in the *Little Iliad*, nor is he simply allowed to leave after surrendering the city to the Achaians as in Quintus. Instead, he fights his way out, only leaving after saving his father and son and getting permission from a spectral vision of Creusa to leave her behind. The increased taciturnity and martial prowess could certainly be seen as both Vergil 'fleshing out' the character and as character growth taking place throughout the Homeric and Trojan Epic Cycles, also aided by the deaths of the upper tier of fighters, e.g. Akhilleus, Hektor, etc. Therefore at least some of the changes can be viewed as having taken place over the lifetime of the character, possibly influenced by Vergil's own observations of returned soldiers and refugees.¹¹

If the above consideration is predominantly driven by the poet's own desire to write a compelling story, then the next aspect is in direct opposition. Vergil's patron for the *Aeneid* was, of course, Augustus, who was seeking both to legitimise his rule and to glorify the Iulii via this foundation myth. This, of course, forces Aeneas not only to be the main character but also requires that he be made far more 'heroic'. This requires him to be considered one of the highest warriors of the Trojans, as Diomedes says he is (*Aeneid* XI.282-293), who is favoured by the gods and prophesied to found a great race, rather than Hektor's lieutenant or adjutant who must frequently be rescued by the gods when he is outmatched.

Finally, there is the matter of *pietas*. Looking at Aeneas through Roman eyes, one can certainly see how filial and religious *pietas* can be interpreted in the

¹¹ For an examination of modern readings of post-traumatic stress disorder in Homeric heroes, the reader is directed to Shay 1995 and 2002.

character, though one does have to interpolate somewhat; this may well be where intermediate traditions which do not survive apart from Vergil and Quintus come into play. But the devotion to the state which is evinced by Roman *pietas* is not particularly evident pre-*Aeneid*, although it is something required in most Roman heroes.¹² Thus I would argue that, in order to be understood as a 'proper' Roman hero, Aeneas would need to express all three aspects of *pietas*.

Thus the path from Aineas, minor character in Homer's *Iliad*, to Aeneas, hero of Vergil's *Aeneid* and glorious founder of both the Roman race and the Iulii is neither smooth nor unambiguous. His evolution has several missing links and variant traditions, but most important to recall is that his final expression in Vergil is based upon a Roman interpretation from the first century BC of a Greek work that was first written down (we believe) in the eighth century BC, and dates back much earlier. Identity in the ancient world is a very complex issue and not one that can be debated within the scope of this work, but because one is predisposed toward certain interpretations by virtue of one's own upbringing, Vergil's understanding of the Aineas he read in Homer and then expressed in his own *Aeneid* may well have been vastly different from the original audience's response or rhapsode's intention. Thus Aineas' journey from 'zero to hero' in 0.7 millennia represents no simple path, but a long and winding road.

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