

Victory Estate: Staff quarters built 2011



Babcock University

Photo taken from *The Experience: A Compendium on Babcock University*, edited by Olukunle Iyanda. Published by Babcock University, 2015.

# Babcock University

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Babcock University, named after David C. Babcock who pioneered Adventist work in Nigeria in 1914, is a co-educational institution of higher learning supported by the West-Central Africa Division and the three Union conferences in Nigeria, namely, Western, Eastern, and Northern Nigeria Union conferences.

## Overview

Established as a university in 1959, Babcock University in 2017 is the world's largest Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning with an enrolment of over 10,000 students in the 2016/2017 academic year. The university has institutional and program accreditation from the global Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AAA), Nigeria Universities Commission as well as professional organizations such as the Medical & Dental Council of Nigeria, Council of Legal Education in Nigeria, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, and Nursing & Midwifery Council of Nigeria, among others. Babcock University is one of the first three private universities to be granted recognition by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999. Its library has 72,780 titles, in addition to the e-library and archival materials. It is the only Adventist university in Africa offering academic programs in law, medicine, history and several other fields in arts, sciences, and computing and engineering. As of 2016/2017 academic session, the university has two colleges and eight schools, offering undergraduate and graduate programs.

## History<sup>1</sup>

The university traces its history back to the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist educational enterprise in Nigeria with the establishment of its first elementary school in 1914 at Erunmu, southwest Nigeria, by David Caldwell Babcock (1854-1932),<sup>2</sup> an American Adventist missionary. Over the years even as a network of elementary and secondary schools was established across the country, the Adventist church sensed an acute need for trained teachers, pastors, and leaders to care for the mushrooming growth of the church in Nigeria and neighboring countries. Even though two post-secondary training schools—one in southeast Nigeria (Adventist Training School, Ihie) and the other in Ghana (Adventist Training School, Bekwai)<sup>3</sup> emerged, they were not sufficient to meet the demands of the growing field for workers with collegiate training. At the 1954 General Conference session, the West African Union Mission appealed to the world church for the establishment of a degree-granting tertiary institution.<sup>4</sup> Soon search committees, tasked to find suitable locations, found possible sites in Ghana and southwestern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> After considerable feasibility studies and strategic inspections, the West African Union Mission Committee under the leadership of Roger Coon settled for Ilisan-Remo in Nigeria as the site for the future college. Soon a team of architects developed a campus master plan for 59 major buildings, which included a large administration building, a practice chapel and eight departmental classrooms. Other buildings envisaged included laboratories, dormitories, kitchen and cafeteria, married students' housing, faculty homes, and buildings for laundry and industries. Completion of the buildings was to span a twenty-year period.<sup>6</sup>

On September 17, 1959 the new institution under the name "The Adventist College of West Africa" opened its doors to an initial enrolment of seven students.<sup>7</sup> Grover C. Winslow, a professor at Middle East College, Beirut, Lebanon, with Master of Arts and Bachelor of Divinity degrees from Seventh-day Adventist Theological

Seminary, and doing doctoral studies at American University, was appointed as the first president of the college. To begin with, ACWA offered a three-year diploma program, but the college administration almost immediately initiated dialogue with government authorities for “permission to offer an undergraduate degree program in business administration and secretarial science, commencing with the 1960-61 academic year, if possible.”<sup>8</sup>

The same letter also noted that the “degree program” in theology was not in question, implying that the graduates of the theology program can be absorbed as pastors by the Church, and that government was not averse to this development. Two things immediately came to the fore. First, there was the push to operate the institution as a liberal arts college as in the United States, which led to offering degree programs in disciplines other than theology. Second, the theology program that began as a 3-year diploma training was to be upgraded as a four-year Bachelor of Arts program, as in other subject areas.

The Right Honorable Chief Obafemi Awolowo, former Premier of the Western Region and Leader of Opposition in the Nigerian Parliament, gave tacit approval to the institution. On January 27, 1961, sharing the platform on the campus with Sanya Dojo Onabamiro, the Minister of Education, Awolowo declared that ACWA is “an institution of higher learning, sponsored by one of the famous Christian Organizations in the world.”<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the government’s reply to Winslow’s letter was not long in coming. The government stated that as “an institution devoted to the training of pastors” the college did not require any permission or approval to operate, but “should the college at a later date wish to change the character of the institution or widen its scope, it will become necessary” to seek and satisfy the applicable requirements of the government.<sup>10</sup>

Winslow was not to be discouraged at the turn of events. He sought the guidance of Nigeria’s minister of education, S. D. Onabamiro, on how ACWA could affiliate with a recognized university. “We are anxious,” he wrote to the minister, “that our institution measure up to the highest standards of entrance requirements, curriculum, physical plant, and teaching facilities, and in any other way possible.”<sup>11</sup>

The college grew well in the first eight years, but the enrolment plunged drastically during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), when students of Eastern Nigeria withdrew and new students were not enrolling. ACWA’s relations with the government, however, remained cordial both on the eve of the war and in the post-war period. Nevertheless, the war affected the college badly.

Shortly after the war, student enrolment at the college picked up again. The college had begun to offer its own degree programs. With a view to strengthening the academic offerings, the college sought in May 1972 permission from the government of the Western State of Nigeria to seek an affiliation with Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, the Adventist flagship institution of higher learning. The government directed the institution to seek the approval from “the Nigerian National Universities Commission,” but the commission declined the request.<sup>12</sup>

## The ASWA Years

In 1975 under the leadership of Percy Paul, ACWA, in consultation with the Board of Governors and at the urging of the student body, went ahead with affiliation arrangements with Andrews University. The affiliation covered B.A. programs with majors in theology, religion, business administration, and biology. The year 1975 also signaled a new beginning for the college: its name was changed to Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA). The change was due to the new political climate that no longer favored private ownership of degree-awarding universities and colleges. The seminary status protected the college from any threat of government take-over, and the affiliation with Andrews University brought to the ASWA degrees the weight of international recognition. ASWA graduates received Andrews University degrees, and they were received into the National Youth Service Corps of Nigeria, and also received equal treatment with graduates from other national universities.

The Andrews University affiliation also led to substantial upgrading of the academic staff. The affiliation also opened a new opportunity for students to get government *de facto* recognition by serving in the National Youth Service Corps. ASWA graduates who did not work as clergy joined the public service, banks, and academic institutions, and were prominent in all walks of life in Nigeria and West Africa. Thus ASWA made its mark on the national educational map.

In 1981 ASWA had a new administration under the presidentship of Roland L. McKenzie, originally from Panama. Within two years the institution faced student unrest, eventually leading to a change in leadership. Adekunle A. Alalade was appointed as ASWA president—a position he held until 1999 when Babcock University was formally established.

College enrolment declined because of government's shifting policies, particularly regarding Andrews-affiliated degrees, with the government not favoring extension or satellite campuses of foreign universities. In June 1988, the newly organized West Central African Division in the place of Africa Indian Ocean Division encouraged the ASWA board to introduce Andrews University's M.A. in pastoral ministry to serve the growing pastoral needs of an expanding constituency. M.A. in religion degree soon followed. These moves expanded and strengthened the acceptability and function of the Seminary throughout the Division and beyond.<sup>13</sup>

## Transition and Development

Meanwhile, the Seminary administration kept working throughout 1998 and 1999 for locally viable degree granting status. Such searches included affiliation arrangements with the University of Ibadan, a prominent institution in Nigeria, and possible autonomous university status. The latter led to the Seminary filing an academic brief with the government for permission to operate as a private university. On May 10, 1999 the long-held dream of the Seminary and the Division was at last realized: the government issued a charter to operate an autonomous university. Alalade retained his old position with the new nomenclature of Vice-Chancellor of what

had now become Babcock University.<sup>14</sup>

The inaugural activities of Babcock University stretched from June 11-20, 1999. The university was among the first three private universities established in Nigeria, the other two being Igbinedion and Madonna Universities. With its pioneering efforts, Babcock University in a way initiated the birth of some sixty private universities in Nigeria as of 2018.

## University Development

As of 2016/2017 academic session, the university had 26 academic offerings under two colleges and nine schools:

- . College of Health and Medical Sciences
- . College of Postgraduate Studies
- . Veronica Adeleke School of Social Sciences (VASS)
- . School of Science & Technology (SAT)
- . School of Computing & Engineering Sciences (CES)
- . Joel Awoniyi School of Education & Humanities (EAH)
- . School of Law & Security Studies (LSS)
- . School of Nursing Sciences (SON)
- . School of Public & Allied Health (PAH)
- . Ben Carson Sr. School of Medicine
- . School of Management Sciences

Such phenomenal growth in such a short period did not occur by accident. A lot of prayer, planning, networking, fund raising, administrative stewardship and infra-structure development on the part of church and university leadership went into the process particularly during the ten-year (2006-2016) leadership of vice-chancellor J. A. Kayode Makinde. During Makinde's 10-year tenure, the university established a School of Law and a College of Health Sciences (later renamed the Benjamin S. Carson Sr. School of Medicine) which make Babcock University the only Adventist university in Africa with such offerings. Other disciplines the university offers include accountancy, nursing, mass communication, computer science, international law and diplomacy, and political science. The oldest school on campus, the Joel Awoniyi School of Education & Humanities, offers Christian religious studies, history & international studies, languages & literary studies, and Department of Music and Creative Arts, and Department of Education with five degree programs.

The School of Law and Security Studies and the Benjamin S. Carson Sr. School of Medicine are two major developments that made Babcock University the first Adventist institution to offer such programs in Africa. The School of Law is located at the satellite campus of the university in Iperu-Remo, about five kilometers from the main campus. The school has its own student halls of residence, lecture theaters, and staff housing.

The initial baccalaureate degree of the School was in International Law and Diplomacy (ILD). The LL.B degree in Law was later added with full accreditation from both the Nigeria Legal Council and the National Universities Commission. While the ILD program has since been moved to the Department of Political Science and Public Administration on the main campus, the LL.B degree program remains as the prime discipline of the School, and is always fully subscribed. Graduates of the school do well at the bar examinations of the Nigerian Law School. Enrolment as of 2015/2016 session stood at 526.

The establishment of the Medical School in 2001 marked a watershed in the history of Babcock University. The *raison d'être* for the founding of the medical school was to produce medical evangelists in accordance with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to train doctors who will serve the cause of health and healing throughout West Africa and beyond. Named after the world renowned Adventist pediatric neurosurgeon, Benjamin S. Carson Sr., the School of Medicine operates as part of Babcock University College of Health and Medical Sciences, which also includes schools of Nursing and Public Health. The school is accredited to grant a Bachelor of Medicine-Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) degree under the British model of post-secondary medical education.

The first provost of the medical college was Iheanyichukwu Okoro, who also doubled as Senior Vice-President/Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) of the university. Other academic administrators instrumental in the development of the medical school were Barnabas Madong (Dean), A. B. Desalu (Chair, Anatomy), Olowookorun (Chair, Physiology), and Olugbenga Adebawo (Chair, Biochemistry).

Resource verification visits were done by both the Medical and Dental Councils of Nigeria and the National Universities Commission. While the accrediting bodies did not approve the university's initial proposal for MBBS and Ph.D. programs, both bodies encouraged the offering of an MBBS degree program preparing physicians and surgeons. Subsequently, following preclinical accreditation, approval was given to Part I MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine). The approval of Part II MBBS (Bachelor of Surgery) required the construction of the Babcock University Teaching Hospital, a 200-bed facility. Major infrastructure initiatives were undertaken, such as the Anatomy Building and the Clinical Sciences Building. The former provided housing for the Department of Anatomy as well as a complement of laboratories, classrooms and offices. The Clinical Sciences Building houses the ultra-modern Medical School Library and the office of the Chief Medical Director (CMD) of the Teaching Hospital. Part III MBBS accreditation was received towards the end of 2016, thereby allowing the university to graduate the first set of medical graduates in December 2016. Over a period of time the medical school and accompanying facilities, along with needed personnel, equipment and other infrastructure kept up with the

rigorous scrutiny of the accrediting bodies. The teaching hospital also has a complement of consultants, resident doctors and house officers. By 2016 the medical program has maintained all levels of accreditation from the National Universities Commission and the Nigeria Dental and Medical Council. The first 13 medical graduates were inducted into the profession in January 2017.

## University Library

The Laz Otti Memorial Library, formerly the Adekunle Alalade Library, has developed over the years serving as a college, seminary and now a university library. While Aaron EsiNna Adiele is remembered as one of the first librarians of note both in the ACWA and ASWA days, John O.U. Odiase transitioned as ASWA librarian to become the first librarian of Babcock University in 1999. By then, the library was rehoused in a commodious new administration building and renamed the Adekunle Alalade Library, after the then seminary president and later Vice-Chancellor. The resumption of Clara Okoro as university librarian in April 2011 serves as a watershed in the history of the Library as she oversaw its development into an ultra-modern stand-alone facility rechristened the Laz Otti Memorial Library. The facility was donated by Adventist philanthropist, Dr. Alex Otti.

The Laz Otti Memorial Library is located close to student dormitories. It seats about 540 users and has 42 service providers. Its e-library with 135 systems and 30 tablets enables users to log into the On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) for information as required. In addition to the Laz Otti Memorial Library (LOML), the university has six branch libraries located within the host schools, departments and colleges. The library contains approximately 73,000 volumes spread through all the disciplines. In addition, the library subscribes to several electronic resources/databases: EBSCOHOST, AGORA, HINARI, LEXIS NEXIS, HEIN ONLINE, MEDLINE COMPLETE and JSTOR, etc.

The Library uses the Library of Congress (LC) Classification Scheme and Elizabeth Moys for Law materials. Information resources are accessed through an open shelf system where users can retrieve the books they need and scan through other related materials on the stacks. Theses and dissertation abstracts are also available through OPAC. The library subscribes to several newspapers, magazines and journals. In addition, it has a robust collection of bound periodicals and special collection of theses and dissertations. Inter-library cooperation and fact-finding tools are available to assist student research and study.

## Ellen G. White Research Center

The library houses the Ellen G. White Research Center that caters to Adventist scholars and researchers in 22 countries under the West-Central African Division. The Center attempts to promote an accurate understanding of the ministry and writings of Ellen G. White, one of the principal founders of the Adventist church, and one in whom Adventists believe God's prophetic gift was manifest, and whose writings provide guidance and counsel in

Christian faith, life and witness. The Center houses Ellen G. White's materials such as books, articles, letters and manuscripts, microfilm and microfiche of early Adventist periodicals and writings. The Center was founded on November 24, 1990 on ASWA campus under the leadership of ASWA president, Adekunle Alalade. The first director of the center was James B. Kio.

## University Life

Spiritual development, leading to a mature, personal relationship with God, is one of the primary missions of Babcock University. While students are not expected to be Seventh-day Adventist Church members, they are expected to respect and support the religious programs of the university. Morning personal devotions, resident hall worships, university chapel hour, and mid-week prayer meetings are regularly conducted to foster student spiritual growth. Week-end services including Friday vespers, Sabbath School, Sabbath worship hour and vesper are geared to foster and develop spiritual development among the student body.

Food services focus on the importance of healthful living. The Central University Cafeteria promotes a vegetarian menu, offering students a balanced healthy diet, in line with the Adventist philosophy of health and development. The University also provides opportunities for social development and conduct of students. A handbook stipulating principles of student conduct, dress codes, and general student life is given to each student at the beginning of the school year. The university stadium provides a venue for sports, concerts and other outdoor activities for students, staff, and faculty. Extra curricular activities such as debates and speech competitions are organized regularly. Babcock University is part of All Nigeria Private Universities Games Association (NPUGA) that promotes an annual games festival among private universities in Nigeria.

In addition, all academic divisions in the university conduct "Departmental Week" once a year to promote both departmental and interdepartmental opportunities that challenge students to participate and relate in interdepartmental activities in order to have a wholistic understanding of university life. Distinguished visiting lecturers are brought in to stimulate interdepartmental understanding and relationships in university life.

Spiritual development and cultivation of a personal relationship with God is one of the primary missions of Babcock University. While students are not expected to be Seventh-day Adventist Church members, they are expected to respect and support the religious programs of the University. Resident hall worships, university chapel hour, and mid-week prayer meetings are regularly conducted to foster the spiritual growth of students. Week-end services including Friday vespers, Sabbath School, Sabbath worship hour and vespers are geared to foster and develop spiritual development among students.

## New Facilities and Developmental Plans

Since its founding, the university has never ceased expanding. New halls of residence, staff housing, library facilities, and a semi-automated central cafeteria with a dining capacity of 5,000 have been added recently. A School of Postgraduate Studies has been established. For future expansion purposes, the University has acquired a 212-acre property at the back of the School of Law and Security Studies at Iperu-Remo.

After ten years of growth and development, J. A. Kayode Makinde handed over university leadership to Ademola S. Tayo in December 2015. Soon after the new administration was installed (2016), full accreditation was achieved for medicine and law in a multi-stage approval process. All other academic programs are within their accreditation tenure with the National Universities Commission of Nigeria, the International Board of Education (IBE) and the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA). The University has won the Global Brand Award in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

## Evangelism

Evangelism has remained a key focus of Babcock University since its founding. This has led to dynamic approaches to soul winning. The earliest available accounts from 1959 show that the college had approached evangelism from an all-inclusive perspective. Though the first enrollment was only seven students, the earliest missionaries did their best to inculcate spiritual care, fellowship, and witness to this nucleus student group and to the skeleton staff of the university. From then on teachers, staff and students were regularly involved in outreach activities to establish branch Sabbath Schools in surrounding villages such as Ikenne, Irolu and Ilara. The Ilisan area where the college was located saw by 1967 the establishment of ten churches.

As ACWA transited into a Seminary in the mid-1970s, Professors Joel Dada Awoniyi, Silvanus Anuligo and Herman V. Kumah planned and executed various missionary outreaches. Anuligo was particularly noted for the Student Message Ambassadors, a program exclusively for summer outreaches. Under this initiative students were sent to remote parts of the country to establish churches and, in turn received scholarships to cover fees for one session. One such church was established in 1980 at Odogbolu.

With Babcock University taking shape in 1999, a chaplaincy department was created to provide spiritual nurture, guidance and counseling on a systematic basis to the increasing number of students. From barely 1,000 students in 1999, student enrolment spiked to about 10,000 as of the 2016/2017 session, and this growing student body demanded a strong chaplaincy program. The chaplaincy, under the Division of Spiritual Life (DSL) has been key to providing prayer, visitation and psychological-spiritual counseling to students as well as faculty and staff. Since a large percentage of the student population is non-Adventist, the campus has become on its own a mission field. Chaplaincy staff lead out in worship centers with the support of a core of pastors, elders and student chaplains. The chaplaincy ministries presently conduct their activities through twenty-three (23) DSL workers and 120 student chaplains to various departments and hostels. Weeks of Prayer and outreach programs at the university stadium have become regular tools of evangelism, leading to large baptisms.

The Babcock University church has grown from one worship center to twenty-three (23). The church ministers through pastoral care, spiritual empowerment, prison ministry, and the Nigeria Association of Adventist Students (NAAS) Babcock University chapter. The 300- students (Juniors) of the Department of Religious Studies aid pastoral nurturing through branch Sabbath Schools outside the campus. This constitutes part of their in-service training and practicum. A charity foundation operating on the campus is devoted to finding financial assistance to needy students.

The university's commitment to spiritual nurture and development of students embraces both in-reach and out-reach approaches. Churches were planted in and outside the Babcock University environs. Staff and students are fully involved ministering to the students. However, the enormous and consistently increasing growth in student enrollment remains a great challenge to the limited pastoral and chaplaincy staff as they extend their spiritual service to the student body. The university remains unrelenting in facing this challenge.

## Prospects and Challenges

The opening of Babcock University in 1999 was a major development in the history of Adventist education in Africa. From seven students the university's forerunner enrolled in 1959, the university now has over 10,000 students. This growth in student population has provided a new field for evangelism, ongoing in 23 worship centers. Babcock University's evangelistic thrust is felt throughout Nigeria and different parts of the African continent, either as a provider of trained personnel or by direct involvement.

The signature programs of Medicine and Law are the first and only ones among Adventist educational centers in Africa. Due to the combined factors of high academic standards and the integration of faith and learning, Babcock University programs unlike many other private universities in Nigeria are always well subscribed. However, the university still has many challenges to overcome. These include maintaining academic standards, sufficient quality infrastructure, and continuing to provide spiritual nurture at its optimum quality to the teeming population of students, faculty and staff. The university is also shaping up to meet the expectations of stakeholders—the Adventist Church, parents, faculty, staff, students and the Nigerian community. Testimonies from the larger community that the university serves, the prospective employers of the university graduates, parents and graduates attest to the quality of education offered at Babcock University. The institution maintains both its Adventist heritage and its commitment to excellence in education.

## Babcock University Presidents

The institution's Presidents since 1959 are as follows:

Grover C. Winslow (1959-1962); Howard Welch (1962-1967); Stuart Berkeley (1967-1971); Percy Paul (1971-1975); Julius Korgan (1975-1980); Roland L. McKenzie (1981-1983); Adekunle A. Alalade (1983-2006); J.A. Kayode

Makinde (2006–2015); Ademola S. Tayo (2015 – ).

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## NOTES

1. Several individuals provided valuable information for this article. Oluseyi Oduyeye, associate professor, Department of Business Administration, interview by author, March 1, 2017, Babcock University; Felix Adetunji, Director E. G. White Center, interview by author, March 2, 2017, Babcock University; Patience Chioma, professor at Babcock University, interview by author, March 22, 2017, Babcock University; Clara

Okoro, librarian at Babcock University, interview by author, March 24, 2017, Babcock University; Ademola Stephen Tayo, University Vice-Chancellor, interview by author, March 29, 2017, Babcock University; Olugbenga Adebawo, professor at Babcock University, interview by author, April 3, 2017, Babcock University; Iheanyichukwu Okoro, professor at Babcock University, interview by author, April 9, 2017, Babcock University; Samuel Amanze and Ojewole, Afolarin Olutunde, interview by Emmanuel O. Eregare, January, 15, 2017, Babcock University.

2. Abiodun Ayodeji Adesegun, "Christian Education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria (1959-2004)" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, 2009), 50.
3. Babalola, *On Becoming a Conference*, 123.
4. Adesegun, *Christian Education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 65.
5. Grover Winslow, "Adventist College West Africa," 2
6. Ibid.
7. What impression did these first students have of the college as they began their academic journey in life? Winslow, the college chronicler, in his *Adventist College of West Africa*, p. 3, notes each student's take-away. To Luke Anosike and Benjamin Oferen, it was the all-vegetarian food service. Joel Awoniyi praised God for the organization of the new college church as the first in the whole of Ijebu province and the ordination of student J. A. Adeogun as a deacon. David Izima recalled the prophetic voice of Zechariah, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zech. 4:10), and thanked God for the campus library of 5,000 books, and the luxury of electricity and potable water, blessings that indicated greater things God had in store for the college. Daniel Magaji saw true education as "the harmonious development of the mental, physical, and spiritual sides of life," and rejoiced that he could work and earn one Nigerian shilling and six pence per hour (c. 120 NGN or 0.33 USD in today's currencies) even as he learned. Isaac Nwaobia saw the work program making him a physically fit person to pursue life's challenges. "The spiritual dimension pervading all the college activities is what remains with me," is the testimony of James Okwandu.
8. Letter from Grover C. Winslow to Ministry of Education, Nigeria, September 16, 1960.
9. Joel D. Awoniyi, *History of ACWA*, 1. Unpublished pamphlet.
10. Letter to Grover Winslow from the Permanent Secretary, Western Region Ministry of Education, April 7, 1961.
11. Grover C. Winslow's letter to Dr. S. D. Onabamiro, May 17, 1961.
12. Ministry of Education letter to ACWA principal, August 13, 1972.
13. Adesegun, *Christian Education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 70.
14. Ibid., 71.

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